

Climate-Ready Updates to the Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Source Documents: Life History and Habitat Characteristics for Federally Managed Fish in the Northeast



PROJECT OVERVIEW – IRA PROJECT #4

Description

EFH source documents were published by the Northeast Fisheries Science Center to support the Mid-Atlantic and New England Councils' work on fish habitat in the early 2000s. These were comprehensive documents that described what was known about fish species and their habitat requirements and provide support for EFH designations. These documents also supported other needs within the region such as stock assessments and fishery management actions. However, they have not been updated in nearly 20 years and are not available for newly added managed species (e.g., blueline tilefish). This project will update or create EFH source documents for all fishery council managed species in the Northeast to include new information on life history and ecology, distribution, habitat requirements, and climate impacts.

Objectives

1. Develop 4 new and 38 updated EFH source documents for federally managed species of the Mid-Atlantic and New England Councils.
2. Develop and/or update all baseline, foundational life history and ecology information, including climate change effects, for all 42 species to facilitate uptake of climate information to support fisheries management needs.
3. Create an efficient update process to simplify future source document updates.

Anticipated Timeline

Oct 2024 – Feb 2025: Request for proposals released, contractor selection, and oversight team formation.

Mar 2025 – Feb 2026: Begin literature reviews, initial document prototyping for select species, and development of complete source documents for half of species.

Mar 2026 – Feb 2027: Continue literature review and complete source documents for remaining species.

Feb 2027: Finalize source documents for all 42 species and anticipated completion of project.

For additional information, documents, and updates, visit: www.mafmc.org/ira-projects.

Project Team

Contractor: Dr. Gavin Fay, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth

Oversight Team: Jessica Coakley (staff lead), Michelle Bachman (NEFMC), Tori Kentner (MAFMC), David Packer (NEFSC), Jim Vasslides (NEFSC), and David Stevenson (contracted)