



Contact: Teri Frady/508-495-2239

For Immediate Release

May 16, 2016

NOAA Fisheries Releases Draft Northeast Climate Science Action Plan

Public comment period open through July 29, 2016

NOAA Fisheries is seeking comments on a draft plan to help guide our approach to increase the production, delivery, and use of climate-related information and to reduce impacts and increase resilience of fish stocks, fishing-dependent communities, and protected species.

As part of its efforts to increase the production, delivery, and use of climate-related information, NOAA Fisheries has released a draft climate science action plan for the U.S. Northeast. It outlines a strategy and specific actions for increasing understanding of, preparing for, and responding to climate change effects on the region's ocean species -- including marine and anadromous fish, invertebrates, marine mammals, sea turtles and seabirds -- and the people that depend on them.

The draft action plan was developed to meet the growing demand for information to better prepare for and respond to climate-related impacts. Ultimately, this information will be used to develop science-based strategies to sustain our marine resources and human communities that depend on them during this time of changing climate. Each NOAA Fisheries' region will have a climate science action plan that helps implement the [NOAA Fisheries Climate Science Strategy](#).

"Our science center is studying how climate variability is affecting fishery species and marine communities in the region," said Bill Karp, Director of NOAA's Northeast Fisheries Science Center. "Warming oceans, rising seas, and ocean acidification are affecting marine life and also disrupting fisheries and local economies. We hope this plan will help us provide the kind of information needed to support actions that will ensure sustainable fisheries and coastal communities in this time of great change."

The Northeast region includes waters that extend from Cape Hatteras, North Carolina to the western end of the Scotian Shelf, the Mid-Atlantic Bight, Southern New England, Georges Bank, and the Gulf of Maine. These waters are among the fastest warming in the world's oceans, a result of both human-caused climate change and natural climate variability. Fish, shellfish, marine mammal, and sea turtle populations are already responding to this changing environment, which is also affecting habitats that these species use, predator-prey relationships, and competition in the ecosystem. Human communities that depend on the function and health of this ecosystem are also feeling the effects.

“With water in the Gulf of Maine warming at a significant pace, understanding how environmental changes are affecting our species is critical to planning for a sustainable fisheries future,” said John Bullard, regional administrator for NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Region.

NOAA Fisheries’ Northeast Fisheries Science Center collects, analyzes and provides scientific information necessary to fulfill the agency’s mission to sustain marine species in watersheds, estuaries and the coastal ocean. The NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Regional Office ensures effective science-based management of these resources to achieve the same goals. The Northeast Regional Climate Action Plan focuses on present climate variability and future climate change in this large marine ecosystem.

“This plan builds on the work already underway in the region to address climate change,” said Jon Hare, of NOAA’s Northeast Fisheries Science Center and lead author of the plan. “For instance, we’ve been leaders in long-term monitoring needed to explain change, linking stock assessment and climate models, and working toward an ecosystem-based understanding of sub-regions like Georges Bank. We are also providing biannual and annual state-of-the-ecosystem reports to federal fishery managers to support their efforts to implement fishery management in a more holistic way, accounting for ecosystem factors as well as the biology of the fish.”

The core elements of the Northeast Regional Action Plan include developing new multispecies models that incorporate environmental terms such as temperature and ocean acidification, conducting work to better understand how climate change is forcing change in species distribution and habitat use, initiating a Northeast Climate Science Strategy Steering Group, cooperative research with the fishing industry, and integrating social science into ecosystem assessments in order to better account for human dimensions.

Designed to increase the production, delivery, and use of climate-related information, the plan will guide efforts to provide timely information to managers to reduce impacts and increase resilience of fisheries, protected species and coastal communities.

If you have questions about the plan, please contact jon.hare@noaa.gov. Written comments can be submitted via email to NMFS.GAR.NERAP@noaa.gov by July 29, 2016.