

**NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office
Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Assessment & Fish and Wildlife
Coordination Act (FWCA) Consultation Worksheet
August 2021 rev.**

Authorities

The Magnuson Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) requires federal agencies to consult with NOAA Fisheries on any action or proposed action authorized, funded, or undertaken by such agency that may adversely affect essential fish habitat (EFH) identified under the MSA. This process is guided by the requirements of our EFH regulation at 50 CFR 600.905, which mandates the preparation of EFH assessments and generally outlines each agency's obligations in the consultation process.

The Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (FWCA) requires that all federal agencies consult with NOAA Fisheries when proposed actions might result in modifications to a natural stream or body of water. The FWCA also requires that federal agencies consider the effects that these projects would have on fish and wildlife and must also provide for improvement of these resources. Under the FWCA, we work to protect, conserve and enhance species and habitats for a wide range of aquatic resources such as shellfish, diadromous species, and other commercially and recreationally important species that are not federally managed and do not have designated EFH.

It is important to note that these consultations take place between NOAA Fisheries and federal action agencies. **As a result, EFH assessments, including this worksheet, must be provided to us by the federal agency, not by permit applicants or consultants.**

Use of the Worksheet

This worksheet can serve as an EFH assessment for **Abbreviated EFH Consultations**, and as a means to provide information on potential effects to other NOAA trust resources considered under the FWCA. An abbreviated consultation allows us to determine quickly whether, and to what degree, a federal action may adversely affect EFH. Abbreviated consultation procedures can be used when federal actions do not have the potential to cause substantial adverse effects on EFH and when adverse effects could be alleviated through minor modifications.

The intent of the EFH worksheet is to provide a guide for determining the information needed to fully assess the effects of a proposed action on EFH. In addition, the worksheet may be used as a tool to assist you in developing a more comprehensive EFH assessment for larger projects that may have more substantial adverse effects to EFH. However, for large, complex projects that have the potential for significant adverse effects, an **Expanded EFH Consultation** may be warranted and the use of this worksheet alone is not appropriate as your EFH assessment.

An **adverse effect** is any impact that reduces the quality and/or quantity of EFH. Adverse effects may include direct or indirect physical, chemical, or biological alterations of the waters or substrate and loss of, or injury to, benthic organisms, prey species and their habitat, and other ecosystem components. Adverse effects to EFH may result from actions occurring within EFH or outside of EFH and may include site-specific or habitat-wide impacts, including individual, cumulative, or synergistic consequences of actions.

Consultation under the MSA is not required if there is no adverse effect on EFH or if no EFH has been designated in the project area. However, because the definition of “adverse effect” is very broad, most in-water work will result in some level of adverse effect requiring consultation with us, even if the impact is temporary or the overall result of the project is habitat restoration or enhancement. It is important to remember that an adverse effect determination is a trigger to consult with us. It does not mean that a project cannot proceed as proposed, or that project modifications are necessary. An adverse effect determination under the EFH provisions of the MSA simply means that the effects of the proposed action on EFH must be evaluated to determine if there are ways to avoid, minimize, or offset adverse effects. Additional details on EFH consultations, tools, and resources, including [frequently asked questions](#) can be found on our [website](#).

Instructions

This worksheet should be used as your EFH assessment for **Abbreviated EFH Consultations** or as a guide to develop your EFH assessment. It is not appropriate to use this worksheet as your EFH assessment for large, complex projects, or those requiring an Expanded EFH Consultation.

When completed fully and with sufficient information to clearly describe the activities proposed, habitats affected, and project impacts, as well as the measures taken to avoid, minimize or offset any unavoidable adverse effects, this worksheet provides us with required components of an EFH assessment including:

1. A description of the proposed action.
2. An analysis of the potential adverse effects on EFH and the federally managed species.
3. The federal agency’s conclusions regarding the effects of the action on EFH.
4. Proposed mitigation, if applicable.

When completing this worksheet and submitting information to us, it is important to ensure that sufficient information is provided to clearly describe the proposed project and the activities proposed. At a minimum, this should include the public notice (if applicable) or project application and project plans showing:

- location map of the project site with area of impact.
- existing and proposed conditions.
- all in-water work and the location of all proposed structures and/or fill.
- all waters of the U.S. on the project site with mean low water (MLW), mean high water (MHW), high tide line (HTL), and water depths clearly marked.
- Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPCs).
- sensitive habitats mapped, including special aquatic sites (submerged aquatic vegetation, saltmarsh, mudflats, riffles and pools, coral reefs, and sanctuaries and refuges), hard bottom or natural rocky habitat areas, and shellfish beds.
- site photographs, if available.

Your analysis of effects **should focus on impacts that reduce the quality and/or quantity of the habitat or result in conversion to a different habitat type** for all life stages of species with designated EFH within the action area. Simply stating that fish will move away or that the project

will only affect a small percentage of the overall population is not a sufficient analysis of the effects of an action on EFH. Also, since the intent of the EFH consultation is to evaluate the direct, indirect, individual and cumulative effects of a particular federal action on EFH and to identify options to avoid, minimize or offset the adverse effects of that action, is it not appropriate to conclude that an impact is minimal just because the area affected is a small percentage of the total area of EFH designated. The focus of the consultation is to reduce impacts resulting from the activities evaluated in the assessment. Similarly, a large area of distribution or range of the fish species is also not appropriate rationale for concluding the impacts of a particular project are minimal.

Use the information on the our [EFH consultation website](#) and [NOAA's EFH Mapper](#) to complete this worksheet. The mapper is a useful tool for viewing the spatial distribution of designated EFH and HAPCs. Because summer flounder HAPC (defined as: “ all native species of macroalgae, seagrasses, and freshwater and tidal macrophytes in any size bed, as well as loose aggregations, within adult and juvenile summer flounder EFH”) does not have region-wide mapping, local sources and on-site surveys may be needed to identify submerged aquatic vegetation beds within the project area. The full designations for each species may be viewed as PDF links provided for each species within the Mapper, or via our website links to the [New England Fishery Management Councils Omnibus Habitat Amendment 2](#) (Omnibus EFH Amendment), the [Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils FMPs](#) (MAMFC - Fish Habitat), or the [Highly Migratory Species](#) website. Additional information on species specific life histories can be found in the EFH source documents accessible through the [Habitat and Ecosystem Services Division website](#). This information can be useful in evaluating the effects of a proposed action. Habitat and Ecosystem Services Division (HESD) staff have also developed a technical memorandum *Impacts to Marine Fisheries Habitat from Non-fishing Activities in the Northeastern United States*, [NOAA Technical Memorandum NMFS-NE-209](#) to assist in evaluating the effects of non-fishing activities on EFH. If you have questions, please contact the [HESD staff member](#) in your area to assist you.

Federal agencies or their non-federal designated lead agency should email the completed worksheet and necessary attachments to the HESD New England (ME, NH, MA, CT, RI) or Mid- Atlantic (NY, NJ, PA, DE, MD, VA) Branch Chief and the regional biologist listed on the [Contact Regional Office Staff section](#) on our [EFH consultation website](#) and listed below.

We will provide our EFH conservation recommendations under the MSA, and recommendations under the FWCA, as appropriate, within 30 days of receipt of a **complete** EFH assessment for an abbreviated consultation. Please ensure that the EFH worksheet is completed in full and includes detail to minimize delays in completing the consultation. If we are unable to assess potential impacts based on the information provided, we may request additional information necessary to assess the effects of the proposed action on our trust resources before we can begin a consultation. If the worksheet is not completely filled out, it may be returned to you for completion. **The EFH consultation and our response clock does not begin until we have sufficient information upon which to consult.**

If this worksheet is not used, you should include all the information required to complete this worksheet in your EFH assessment. The level of detail that you provide should be commensurate with the magnitude of impacts associated with the proposed project. You may need to prepare a more detailed EFH assessment for more substantial or complex projects to fully characterize the effects of the project and the avoidance and minimization of impacts to EFH. The format of the EFH worksheet may not be sufficient to incorporate the extent of detail required for large-scale projects, and a separate EFH assessment may be required.

Regardless of the format, you should include an analysis as outlined in this worksheet for an expanded EFH assessment, along with any additional necessary information including:

- the results of on-site inspections to evaluate habitat and site-specific effects.
- the views of recognized experts on habitat or the species that may be affected.
- a review of pertinent literature and related information.
- an analysis of alternatives that could avoid or minimize adverse effects on EFH.

For these larger scale projects, interagency coordination meetings should be scheduled to discuss the contents of the EFH consultation and the site-specific information that may be needed in order to initiate the consultation.

Please contact our Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office, [Protected Resources Division](#) regarding potential impacts to marine mammals or threatened and endangered species and the appropriate consultation procedures.

HESD Contacts*

New England - ME, NH, MA, RI, CT

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***Please check for the most current staffing list on our [contact us page](#) prior to submitting your assessment.**

3. Site Description

EFH includes the biological, chemical, and physical components of the habitat. This includes the substrate and associated biological resources (e.g., benthic organisms, submerged aquatic vegetation, shellfish beds, salt marsh wetlands), the water column, and prey species.

- | | | |
|---|-----|----|
| Is the project in designated EFH ³ ? | Yes | No |
| Is the project in designated HAPC? | Yes | No |
| Does the project contain any Special Aquatic Sites ⁴ ? | Yes | No |
| Is this coordination under FWCA only? | Yes | No |

Total area of impact to EFH (indicate sq ft or acres):

Total area of impact to HAPC (indicate sq ft or acres):

Current range of water depths at MLW Salinity range (PPT): Water temperature range (°F):

³Use the tables in Sections 5 and 6 to list species within designated EFH or the type of designated HAPC present. See the worksheet instructions to find out where EFH and HAPC designations can be found. ⁴Special aquatic sites (SAS) are geographic areas, large or small, possessing special ecological characteristics of productivity, habitat, wildlife protection, or other important easily disrupted ecological values. These areas are generally recognized as significantly influencing or positively contributing to the general overall environmental health or vitality of the entire ecosystem of a region. They include sanctuaries and refuges, wetlands, mudflats, vegetated shallows, coral reefs, and riffle and pool complexes (40 CFR Subpart E). If the project area contains SAS (i.e. sanctuaries and refuges, wetlands, mudflats, vegetated shallows/SAV, coral reefs, and/or riffle and pool complexes, describe the SAS, species or habitat present, and area of impact.

4. Habitat Types

In the table below, select the location and type(s) for each habitat your project overlaps. For each habitat type selected, indicate the total area of expected impacts, then what portion of the total is expected to be temporary (less than 12 months) and what portion is expected to be permanent (habitat conversion), and if the portion of temporary impacts will be actively restored to pre- construction conditions by the project proponent or not. A project may overlap with multiple habitat types.

Habitat Location	Habitat Type	Total impacts (lf/ft ² /ft ³)	Temporary impacts (lf/ft ² /ft ³)	Permanent impacts (lf/ft ² /ft ³)	Restored to pre-existing conditions?*

*Restored to pre-existing conditions means that as part of the project, the temporary impacts will be actively restored, such as restoring the project elevations to pre-existing conditions and replanting. It does not include natural restoration or compensatory mitigation.

6. Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPCs)

HAPCs are subsets of EFH that are important for long-term productivity of federally managed species. HAPCs merit special consideration based their ecological function (current or historic), sensitivity to human-induced degradation, stresses from development, and/or rarity of the habitat. While many HAPC designations have geographic boundaries, there are also habitat specific HAPC designations for certain species, see note below. Use the [EFH mapper](#) to identify HAPCs within your project area. Select all that apply.

Summer flounder: SAV ⁷	Alvin & Atlantis Canyons
Sandbar shark	Baltimore Canyon
Sand Tiger Shark (Delaware Bay)	Bear Seamount
Sand Tiger Shark (Plymouth-Duxbury-Kingston Bay)	Heezen Canyon
Inshore 20m Juvenile Cod ⁸	Hudson Canyon
Great South Channel Juvenile Cod	Hydrographer Canyon
Northern Edge Juvenile Cod	Jeffreys & Stellwagen
Lydonia Canyon	Lydonia, Gilbert & Oceanographer Canyons
Norfolk Canyon (Mid-Atlantic)	Norfolk Canyon (New England)
Oceanographer Canyon	Retriever Seamount
Veatch Canyon (Mid-Atlantic)	Toms, Middle Toms & Hendrickson Canyons
Veatch Canyon (New England)	Washington Canyon
Cashes Ledge	Wilmington Canyon
Atlantic Salmon	

⁷ Summer flounder HAPC is defined as all native species of macroalgae, seagrasses, and freshwater and tidal macrophytes in any size bed, as well as loose aggregations, within adult and juvenile summer flounder EFH. In locations where native species have been eliminated from an area, then exotic species are included. Use local information to determine the locations of HAPC.

⁸ The purpose of this HAPC is to recognize the importance of inshore areas to juvenile Atlantic cod. The coastal areas of the Gulf of Maine and Southern New England contain structurally complex rocky-bottom habitat that supports a wide variety of emergent epifauna and benthic invertebrates. Although this habitat type is not rare in the coastal Gulf of Maine, it provides two key ecological functions for juvenile cod: protection from predation, and readily available prey. See [EFH mapper](#) for links to text descriptions for HAPCs.

7. Activity Details

Select all that apply	Project Type/Category
	Agriculture
	Aquaculture - <u>List species here:</u>
	Bank/shoreline stabilization (e.g., living shoreline, groin, breakwater, bulkhead)
	Beach renourishment
	Dredging/excavation
	Energy development/use e.g., hydropower, oil and gas, pipeline, transmission line, tidal or wave power, wind
	Fill
	Forestry
	Infrastructure/transportation (e.g., culvert construction, bridge repair, highway, port, railroad)
	Intake/outfall
	Military (e.g., acoustic testing, training exercises)
	Mining (e.g., sand, gravel)
	Overboard dredged material placement
	Piers, ramps, floats, and other structures
	Restoration or fish/wildlife enhancement (e.g., fish passage, wetlands, mitigation bank/ILF creation)
	Survey (e.g., geotechnical, geophysical, habitat, fisheries)
	Water quality (e.g., storm water drainage, NPDES, TMDL, wastewater, sediment remediation)
	Other:

8. Effects Evaluation

Select all that apply	Potential Stressors Caused by the Activity
	Underwater noise
	Water quality/turbidity/contaminant release
	Vessel traffic/barge grounding
	Impingement/entrainment
	Prevent fish passage/spawning
	Benthic community disturbance
	Impacts to prey species

Select all that apply and if temporary ⁹ or permanent		Habitat alterations caused by the activity
Temp	Perm	
		Water depth change
		Tidal flow change
		Fill
		Habitat type conversion
		Other:
		Other:

⁹ Temporary in this instance means during construction. ¹⁰ Entrainment is the voluntary or involuntary movement of aquatic organisms from a water body into a surface diversion or through, under, or around screens and results in the loss of the organisms from the population. Impingement is the involuntary contact and entrapment of aquatic organisms on the surface of intake screens caused when the approach velocity exceeds the swimming capability of the organism.

Details - project impacts and mitigation

Briefly describe how the project would impact each of the habitat types selected above and the amount (i.e., acreage or sf) of each habitat impacted. Include temporary and permanent impact descriptions and direct and indirect impacts. For example, dredging has a direct impact on bottom sediments and associated benthic communities. The turbidity generated can result in a temporary impact to water quality which may have an indirect effect on some species and habitats such as winter flounder eggs, SAV or rocky habitats. The level of detail that you provide should be commensurate with the magnitude of impacts associated with the proposed project. Attach supplemental information if necessary.

What specific measures will be used to avoid and minimize impacts, including project design, turbidity controls, acoustic controls, and time of year restrictions? If impacts cannot be avoided or minimized, why not?

Is compensatory mitigation proposed? Yes No

If compensatory mitigation is not proposed, why not? If yes, describe plans for compensatory mitigation (e.g. permittee responsible, mitigation bank, in-lieu fee) and how this will offset impacts to EFH and other aquatic resources. Include a proposed compensatory mitigation and monitoring plan as applicable.

9. Effects of Climate Change

Effects of climate change should be included in the EFH assessment if the effects of climate change may amplify or exacerbate the adverse effects of the proposed action on EFH. Use the [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change \(IPCC\) Representative Concentration Pathways \(RCP\) 8.5/high greenhouse gas emission scenario \(IPCC 2014\)](#), at a minimum, to evaluate the future effects of climate change on the proposed projections. For sea level rise effects, use the intermediate-high and extreme scenario projections as defined in [Sweet et al. \(2017\)](#). For more information on climate change effects to species and habitats relative to NMFS trust resources, see [Guidance for Integrating Climate Change Information in Greater Atlantic Region Habitat Conservation Division Consultation Processes](#).

1. Could species or habitats be adversely affected by the proposed action due to projected changes in the climate? If yes, please describe how:
2. Is the expected lifespan of the action greater than 10 years? If yes, please describe project lifespan:
3. Is climate change currently affecting vulnerable species or habitats, and would the effects of a proposed action be amplified by climate change? If yes, please describe how:
4. Do the results of the assessment indicate the effects of the action on habitats and species will be amplified by climate change? If yes, please describe how:
5. Can adaptive management strategies (AMS) be integrated into the action to avoid or minimize adverse effects of the proposed action as a result of climate? If yes, please describe how:

10. Federal Agency Determination

Federal Action Agency's EFH determination (select one)	
	There is no adverse effect ⁷ on EFH or EFH is not designated at the project site. EFH Consultation is not required. This is a FWCA only request.
	The adverse effect ⁷ on EFH is not substantial. This means that the adverse effects are no more than minimal, temporary, or can be alleviated with minor project modifications or conservation recommendations. This is a request for an abbreviated EFH consultation.
	The adverse effect ⁷ on EFH is substantial. This is a request for an expanded EFH consultation. We will provide more detailed information, including an alternatives analysis and NEPA documents, if applicable.

⁷ An adverse effect is any impact that reduces the quality and/or quantity of EFH. Adverse effects may include direct or indirect physical, chemical, or biological alterations of the waters or substrate and loss of, or injury to, benthic organisms, prey species and their habitat, and other ecosystem components. Adverse effects to EFH may result from actions occurring within EFH or outside of EFH and may include site-specific or habitat-wide impacts, including individual, cumulative, or synergistic consequences of actions.

11. Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act

Under the FWCA, federal agencies are required to consult with us if actions that the authorize, fund, or undertake will result in modifications to a natural stream or body of water. Federal agencies are required to consider the effects these modifications may have on fish and wildlife resources, as well as provide for the improvement of those resources. Under this authority, we consider the effects of actions on NOAA-trust resources, such as anadromous fish, shellfish, crustaceans, or their habitats, that are not managed under a federal fisheries management plan. Some examples of other NOAA-trust resources are listed below. Some of these species, including diadromous fishes, serve as prey for a number of federally-managed species and are therefore considered a component of EFH pursuant to the MSA. We will be considering the effects of your project on these species and their habitats as part of the EFH/FWCA consultation process and may make recommendations to avoid, minimize or offset and adverse effects concurrently with our EFH conservation recommendations.

Please contact our Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office, [Protected Resources Division](#) regarding potential impacts to marine mammals or species listed under the Endangered Species Act and the appropriate consultation procedures.

Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act Resources

Species known to occur at site (list others that may apply)	Describe habitat impact type (i.e., physical, chemical, or biological disruption of spawning and/or egg development habitat, juvenile nursery and/or adult feeding or migration habitat). Please note, impacts to federally listed species of fish, sea turtles, and marine mammals must be coordinated with the GARFO Protected Resources Division.
alewife	
American eel	
American shad	
Atlantic menhaden	
blue crab	
blue mussel	
blueback herring	
Eastern oyster	
horseshoe crab	
quahog	
soft-shell clams	
striped bass	
other species:	
other species:	
other species:	

12. Useful Links

[National Wetland Inventory Maps](#)

[EPA's National Estuary Program \(NEP\)](#)

[Northeast Regional Ocean Council \(NROC\) Data Portal](#)

[Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean \(MARCO\) Data Portal](#)

Resources by State

Maine

[Maine Office of GIS Data Catalog](#)

[Town shellfish information including shellfish conservation area maps](#)

[State of Maine Shellfish Sanitation and Management](#)

[Eelgrass maps](#)

[Casco Bay Estuary Partnership](#)

[Maine GIS Stream Habitat Viewer](#)

New Hampshire

[NH Statewide GIS Clearinghouse, NH GRANIT](#)

[NH Coastal Viewer](#)

[State of NH Shellfish Program](#)

Massachusetts

[MA DMF Shellfish Sanitation and Management Program](#)

[MassGIS Data \(Including Eelgrass Maps\)](#)

[MA DMF Recommended TOY Restrictions Document Massachusetts](#)

[Bays National Estuary Program](#)

[Buzzards Bay National Estuary Program](#)

[Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries](#)

[Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management](#)

Rhode Island

[RI Shellfish and Aquaculture](#)

[RI Shellfish Management Plan](#)

[RI Eelgrass Maps](#)

[Narragansett Bay Estuary Program](#)

[Rhode Island Division of Marine Fisheries](#)

[Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council](#)

Connecticut

[CT Bureau of Aquaculture](#)

[Natural Shellfish Beds in CT](#)

[Eelgrass Maps](#)

[Long Island Sound Study](#)

[CT GIS Resources](#)

[CT DEEP Office of Long Island Sound Programs and Fisheries](#)

[CT River Watershed Council](#)

New York

[Eelgrass Report](#)

[Peconic Estuary Program](#)

[NY/NJ Harbor Estuary Program](#)

[New York GIS Clearinghouse](#)

New Jersey

[Submerged Aquatic Vegetation Mapping](#)

[Barnegat Bay Partnership](#)

[NJ GeoWeb](#)

[NJ DEP Shellfish Maps](#)

Pennsylvania

[Delaware River Management Plan](#)

[PA DEP Coastal Resources Management Program](#)

[PA DEP GIS Mapping Tools](#)

Delaware

[Partnership for the Delaware Estuary](#)

[Center for Delaware Inland Bays](#)

[Delaware FirstMap](#)

Maryland

[Submerged Aquatic Vegetation Mapping](#)

[MERLIN \(Maryland's Environmental Resources and Land Information Network\)](#)

[Maryland Coastal Atlas](#)

[Maryland Coastal Bays Program](#)

Virginia

[VMRC Habitat Management Division](#)

[Submerged Aquatic Vegetation mapping](#)