

*This booklet summarizes the Fleet Visioning Project, including a review of the process, participation, outcomes, and implications for future management.*

*The comprehensive, unabridged report contains further details, as well as a complete compilation of participant stories, action ideas, acknowledgements, and more. The full report is available at the Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance web site: [www.namanet.org](http://www.namanet.org).*



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# Fleet Vision



## **The Northeast Region's Vision for the Future of the Groundfish Fleet**

**December, 2005**



## Executive Summary

For nearly 30 years, the Northeast's commercial fishing industry has been locked in a highly contentious debate over how to best manage the region's depleted groundfish stocks (cod, haddock, flounder, and other species that dwell near the seafloor). The dispute generally involves four groups: fishermen, scientists, managers, and environmentalists. Previous conflicts and continuing misperceptions between these groups have led to a deep well of distrust that has made collaborative decision-making nearly impossible.

Many close to the conflict agree that before fish stocks recover, these groups must first reach consensus on the direction and goals of management.

To that end, the Fleet Visioning Project engaged diverse stakeholders from throughout the Northeast region to develop a vision for the future of the groundfish fleet.

In the end, 250 individuals responded to a survey that asked the following:

1. If anything were possible, what is your vision for the future of the groundfishing fleet?
2. Why is the future of the groundfishing fleet important to you?
3. How can your vision of the groundfishing fleet be most effectively implemented, and what might you do to help?

Sixty-five of the survey respondents participated at geographically-distributed workshops that ultimately led to the region's vision for the future of the groundfish fleet. This vision serves as guidance for decision making that involves managers, environmentalists, fishermen, and other members of the fisheries community.

*I would like to see more cooperation and less hostility between us because when it comes down to it, we all want conservation.*  
- Fleet Visioning Participant

Northeast region, this vision can help guide strategies for the coming years. In addition, this vision paves the way for collaboration between groups and organizations, thereby increasing the likelihood of any endeavor's success. After all, if various stakeholders are involved in the development of a project or plan, it is unlikely that someone will be motivated to sabotage it in the end.

There was a clear call by participants for governance to be dominated by a representation of stakeholders and the greater good. It was agreed that as future decisions are made, shared accountability is very important. The call for a more democratic, participatory decision-making process is one that, if carefully considered and adopted, would lead to more widely accepted and self enforced plans of action.

This vision provides guidance endorsed by a substantial portion of the community. The participants did not align themselves behind a single policy action, be it a quota program, sector allocation, conservation method, or anything else. The discussions to develop specific strategies that will realize the vision come next. Now armed with a vision for the future, the fisheries community is poised to collaboratively decide how best to get there.

Based on the experiences of the Fleet Visioning Project, collaborative problem solving that includes multiple and diverse stakeholders is the key to building a unified and involved community. In addition, by following a business model of first deciding where the community wants to end up, and then contemplating how to get there, lasting solutions to complex marine resource management problems that make long-term sense will more easily surface.

*Fishing is something that should be passed on along with the culture of hard work that is getting lost in our society.*  
- Fleet Visioning Participant

## Conclusion

Commercial and recreational fishermen, researchers, environmentalists, managers, business owners, and other members of the fisheries community generated the vision using the Collaborative Change Approach, a visioning process that addresses change, conflict, and loss. Grounded in shared values, the vision provides guidance for future management and policy decisions.

This guidance is invaluable, particularly for managers at the local, state, regional, and federal levels. As managers search for solutions to end over fishing of groundfish stocks, while maintaining a maximum sustainable harvest, this vision should be constantly reviewed, discussed, and referenced.

Would a proposed solution maintain diversity in the fleet? Has there been a focus on economic viability that includes shoreside infrastructure and maximum job opportunities? Were stakeholders at the most local level engaged in the process, and are there measures of accountability in place? Finally, is the decision consistent with the long-term health of the ecosystem?

Participants in the Fleet Visioning Project stressed that everyone has a role to play in realizing this vision. A collaborative approach to fisheries management requires both empowerment of individuals in the decision-making process, and participation by individuals. To that end, many of the participants at the final workshop made commitments to being more engaged in policy discussions by attending Council meetings, drafting management plans in partnership with other stakeholders, and pursuing collaborative research projects.

For industry and environmental organizations in the

*When I say sustainability, I mean using the resources but also making sure they are available for future generations.*  
- Fleet Visioning Participant

## The Need for a Vision

The past decade has been a tumultuous time for the Northeast groundfishery. Depleted resources have led to management decisions that impact who is fishing, where fish are landed, what gear is used, how shoreside businesses operate, and much more.

Amidst all of this change, more adjustments to the groundfish fleet are on the horizon. As overfishing and poor recruitment continue, and as the National Marine Fisheries Service communicates its desire for a smaller fleet, the Northeast fisheries community is bracing itself for even more cuts in groundfishing.

How do we create a situation in which the catching capability of the fleet matches a sustainable, yet dynamic harvest of a renewable resource? This is a complex question with many potential answers.

What are we managing toward? Who's in and who's out? Is efficiency important? Open access? Flexibility? Diversity? Profit?

As the saying goes, *If you don't know where you're heading, any (and every!) road will take you there.* Without a clear and concise understanding of where the community wants to go, it is impossible to determine the best avenue for getting there.

In addition, it is important to recognize what the community values as management decisions are made that determine the future of the groundfish fleet.

A vision for the future based on collaboration and shared values is essential in guiding difficult fisheries management decisions.

*We all share responsibility for taking care of the earth—land and water.*  
- Fleet Visioning Participant

## Project Genesis

In March, 2004 the Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance (NAMA) Board of Trustees and staff identified the need for a vision as a priority. NAMA resolved to engage the Northeast fisheries community in discussions to develop a vision for the future of the groundfish fleet.

Initial funding for the project was secured through the Andrus Family Fund, a foundation focused on community reconciliation. In addition, a project director from outside of the industry was hired to work with consultants who specialized in the Collaborative Change Approach, a process that includes community reconciliation and conflict resolution strategies in visioning.

The Project Director engaged a steering committee of individuals who represented diverse stakeholder groups and geographies. The Steering Committee set the project's goals and direction, and assisted in communicating about this effort to various networks.

## Project Goals

The Fleet Visioning Project had two primary goals:

1. To develop a vision for the groundfish fleet that would serve as guidance for new regulations. The vision would reflect the community's desired future as changes in the fleet continue.
2. To engage individuals from the groundfish community, across all stakeholder groups, and throughout the entire northeast region in productive discussions. The project aimed to build meaningful and lasting relationships among formerly divergent groups.

*I don't want to see the fishery become about power. I don't want to see the fishery sustain just a few.*

*- Fleet Visioning Participant*

Additionally, openly acknowledging these losses, as well as the gains, will enable greater acceptance of the action plan.

## Management Strategies

Now that the Northeast region has articulated a vision for the groundfish fleet, it is appropriate to start discussing strategies to realize that vision.

During the survey phase of the Fleet Visioning Project, participants shared their thoughts on how to realize their personal vision. No effort was made in this project to develop consensus around the best strategies for moving forward. To view the list of action ideas from the individual surveys, download a comprehensive report at [www.namanet.org](http://www.namanet.org).

### *More About the Collaborative Change Approach... The Process Used in the Fleet Visioning Project*

*The Collaborative Change Approach is a unique process that helps engage multiple stakeholders in the creation and implementation of lasting change. The CCA is an integration of two models: the Transitions framework developed by William Bridges and the ARIA C3 process developed by Jay Rothman. The integration of these two methodologies forms a unique union of process and methodology to create:*

- *A collaborative process for assisting diverse and often conflicting parties to reach high-level agreement on the change they would like to achieve.*
- *A participatory and value-based process for ensuring broad and deep involvement and ownership of a change initiative.*
- *A systematic way to support people to make effective transitions so that the changes they implement can be effectively sustained.*

*We need to get to a place where people can run their businesses with freedom.*

*- Fleet Visioning Participant*

## Realizing the Vision

The fisheries community's next task is to implement the vision. By addressing a few questions, the most successful options will more easily surface.

### Who's Responsible?

Throughout the Fleet Visioning Project, it was apparent that everyone has a role to play in achieving the vision. Rather than ask, "Who's responsible?" the more pertinent question is "What is each stakeholder's role in achieving this vision?" Researchers, managers, fishermen, and environmentalists working together are more likely to find a point of balance and solutions to complex resource management issues. Thankfully, this vision provides a starting point of agreement, leaving behind the more common impulse to focus on areas of dispute.

### Who Stands to Lose What?

Fleet Visioning participants expressed the awareness that in order to achieve this vision, there are likely to be some losses in favor of the greater good. The better the community anticipates and addresses the reasons for resistance, the more effective it will be in realizing the vision. To ensure that a plan has the greatest potential for implementation, it is important to recognize and acknowledge the resistances individuals and groups in the community might have to this change. Some losses could include income, power, authority, flexibility, or tradition.

As action plans are developed, asking "Who stands to lose what in the implementation of this plan" can lead to ideas that will mitigate or replace those losses.

*I'm here because I want to hear what others are saying and I want to be informed enough to help guide this into the future and make it thrive.*

*- Fleet Visioning Participant*

## Project Summary

The Fleet Visioning Project reached out to thousands of people in the groundfishing community, including recreational and commercial fishermen, researchers, managers, environmentalists, shoreside business owners, and others to answer important questions about what the community values and what the community should be working toward.

The first method of gathering information for the vision was a survey.

The survey asked three questions:

1. *If Anything Were Possible...What is your vision for the future of the groundfishing fleet?*
2. *Why is the future of the groundfishing fleet important to you?*
3. *How can your vision of the groundfishing fleet be most effectively implemented, and what might you do to help?*

Ten area workshops, distributed geographically, invited survey respondents from each area to discuss their responses and develop consensus around vision statements.

Workshop participants revised, refined, and developed vision statements that clearly communicated their desires

### Workshop Schedule:

June 14 – Bourne, MA	Oct 12 – Portsmouth, NH
July 26 – Rockland, ME	Oct 14 – Gloucester, MA
July 28 – Narragansett, RI	Nov 9 – New Bedford, MA
Sept 20 – Manomet, MA	Nov 11 – Riverhead, NY
Oct 11 – Winter Harbor, ME	Nov 14 – Portland, ME

*The solution of what happens to the future of groundfishing has to come from the community.*

*- Fleet Visioning Participant*

for the future of the groundfishing fleet. The 65 individuals who participated in area workshops were then invited to the Full Final Northeast Regional Workshop held December 6, 2005 in Danvers, Massachusetts. This final workshop sought consensus across stakeholder groups and geographic areas to develop a final vision for the future of the region's groundfishing fleet.

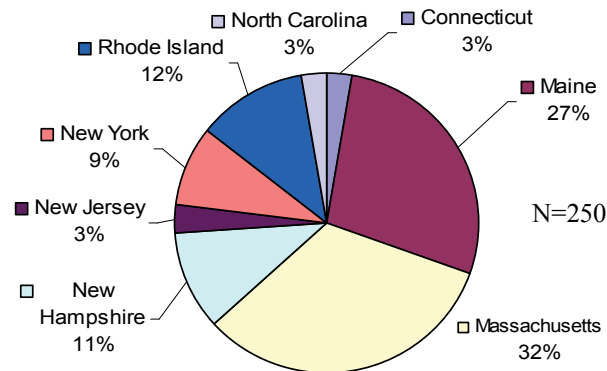
## Participation

A total of 250 individuals responded to the surveys, 65 participated at area workshops, and 21 attended the Full Final Northeast Regional Workshop.

Participants represented a diversity of stakeholder groups, geographic locations, boat sizes, and gear types. The project clearly attracted interest from throughout the industry.

The breadth of participation, support, and guidance from throughout the fisheries community paved the way for

### Breakdown of Participation by State



*We have to treat the fishery like we own it, not like something we take advantage of. This conservation is an ongoing mindset.*  
- Fleet Visioning Participant

## The Community's Values

### Why the Groundfish Fleet Is Important

fairness  
 pride  
 cooperation  
 future  
 tradition  
 heritage  
 smell  
 diversity  
 balance  
 community-based re-  
 sponsibility  
 respect  
 sustainability  
 working waterfront  
 identity  
 eco-system  
 culture  
 personal responsibility  
 stability  
 subsistence  
 Inclusion  
 conservation  
 potential  
 freedom  
 consideration  
 place  
 community  
 local food supply  
 tradition  
 entrepreneurship  
 personal connection  
 future generations  
 lived it  
 healthy eco-system  
 legacy  
 participation  
 family  
 community integrity  
 connections  
 personal relevance  
 love of fishing  
 income  
 passion

Everyone has a story. Being a part of the Northeast fisheries community signifies a personal connection to the resource, the community, family tradition, and much more.

Answering why the issue is important is a vital aspect of the Collaborative Change Approach used throughout this effort. These stories speak volumes and ground the industry in what is important.

By sharing these stories at the workshops, participants established a better understanding of each other's values, as well as a foundation to begin articulating the vision.

The words listed to the left are the participants' passion points summarizing their stories.

To gain a more intimate understanding of what underlies the vision, peruse the stories in full available in the complete report on line at [www.namanet.org](http://www.namanet.org).

*Since I've been on the east coast and in New England, I've seen not just the decline of fish populations, but the decline of communities and cultures.*  
- Fleet Visioning Participant



environmental responsibility and active participation in governance. Participants believe that individual opportunities in decision making need to be expanded, and that this empowerment leads to people taking greater responsibility for care of the resource.

“A diverse, economically viable, and environmentally sustainable fleet that is managed through a participatory governance structure” is the summary vision statement. This is what the groundfish community chooses to work toward.

This vision has incredible significance especially when one considers the diversity of individuals who came to agreement that this is what the fisheries community is working toward. Now that the community can point to this vision and recognize that it is working toward the same goal, solutions to today’s complex marine resource issues are much more likely to surface.

**Special thanks to the following individuals for their participation on the Fleet Visioning Steering Committee**

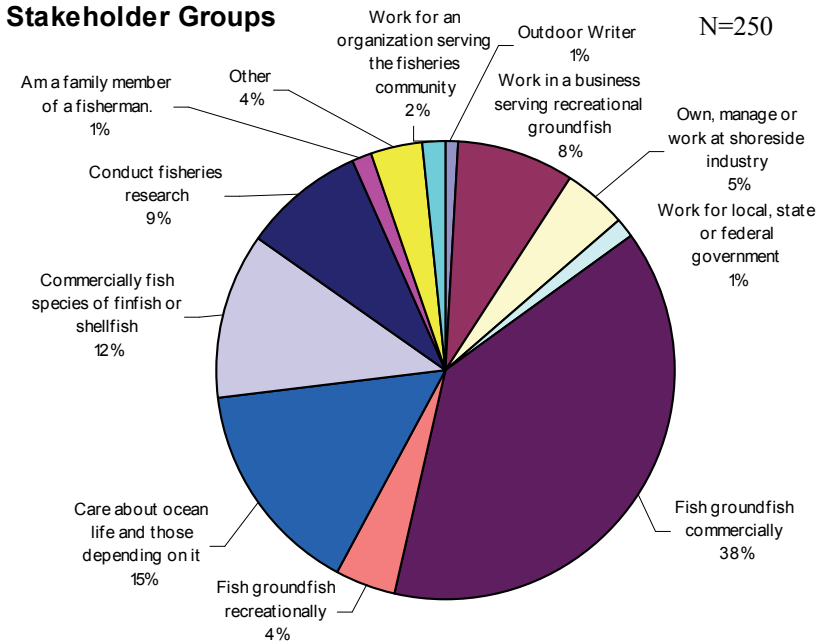
- David Borden, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, retired
- Chris Brown, fisherman, Point Judith, RI
- Richie Canastra, Whaling City Auction, New Bedford, MA
- Sima Freierman, Montauk Inlet Seafood Inc, Montauk, NY
- Paul Howard, New England Fishery Management Council, Newburyport, MA
- Allyson Jordan, fisherman, Portland, ME
- Peter Kendall, fisherman, Portsmouth, NH
- Hank Lackner, fisherman, Montauk, NY
- Arthur Medeiros, fisherman, Stonington, CT
- Jackie Odell, Northeast Seafood Coalition, Gloucester, MA
- Jim O’Grady, fisherman, Point Judith, RI
- Mike Richardson, New England Marine & Industrial, Portsmouth, NH
- Mike Russo, fisherman, Chatham, MA
- Geoff Smith, The Ocean Conservancy, Portland, ME
- Proctor Wells, fisherman, Phippsburg, ME
- Bob Withee, recreational angler, Brookline, NH

*I’ve been supported by fishing my whole life. I’ve always felt that fishing is a natural thing and that seafood is a natural food source.*  
- Fleet Visioning Participant

the development of a meaningful vision for the future of the groundfish fleet, as well as new relationships between individuals and stakeholder groups.

*Note: More details on participation are available in the comprehensive report available at [www.namanet.org](http://www.namanet.org).*

**Stakeholder Groups**



*This is what I do for a living. I’ve invested heavily in it. I would like to see other people be able to do it.*  
- Fleet Visioning Participant

## The Northeast Region's Vision

At area workshops, participants established consensus around vision statements that clearly communicate their desires for the future of the groundfish fleet. All area outcomes are available in the comprehensive report available at [www.namanet.org](http://www.namanet.org).

Once each area had defined its vision, representatives from throughout the region met at a December 6, 2005 workshop in Danvers, Massachusetts. Focusing on similarities between area vision statements, participants collaboratively forged a vision that transcends geographic areas and stakeholder groups.

### What Does the Vision Mean?

The four aspects of the vision – Diversity, Economic Viability, Governance, and Environmental Resilience – are parts of the whole and can and should be accomplished simultaneously. It is important to emphasize that participants were very aware of the challenges that face the industry; that action must be taken to establish a balanced fishery where the sustained harvest matches the capacity of the fleet.

The community values and understands the need for many different boat sizes and gear types that provide diverse products to markets. The community strongly dislikes the possibility of a fleet that is consolidated either by ownership or geography, and participants in this project advocate many jobs and coastal community welfare over economic efficiency.

Discussions highlighted a firm conservation ethic and a sense that everyone shares responsibility for stewardship of the resource. Stewardship includes both

*I want to be able to take my kids down to the pier and do what we used to do when I was a kid, to watch the boats unload.*  
- Fleet Visioning Participant

## The Northeast Region's Vision for the Future of the Groundfish Fleet

### DIVERSITY

A geographically distributed commercial and recreational fleet that includes all gear types and boat sizes.

### ECONOMIC VIABILITY

An economically viable, safe, and sustainable fleet that works with shoreside infrastructure to supply seafood and job opportunities for coastal communities.

### GOVERNANCE

Participatory, accountable, and decentralized governance structures at various scales that include local involvement in decision-making and maintain an adaptive regulatory environment.

### ENVIRONMENTAL RESILIENCE

Fishery stakeholders who exhibit stewardship of resources that is consistent with the long-term health and restoration of the marine ecosystem.

### In Summary,

A diverse, economically viable, and environmentally sustainable fleet that is managed through a participatory governance structure.