



# 2021 Implementation Plan

*Approved December 14, 2020*

This Implementation Plan is a companion document to the Council's 2020-2024 Strategic Plan. The 2020-2024 Strategic Plan identifies five goals, 21 objectives, and 87 strategies. Implementation of the strategic plan will be a long-term process supported through the annual development of one-year implementation plans that identify specific tasks necessary for achieving the Council's goals and objectives. Annual implementation plans are used as a planning tool by the Council and staff and as a way to update the public on progress toward achieving the goals and objectives of the strategic plan. Each year's plan is designed to provide a comprehensive and realistic framework for merging the Council's ongoing projects with new initiatives.

The 2021 Implementation Plan identifies specific activities the Council expects to undertake in 2021 to make progress toward achieving the goals and objectives of the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan. The document is organized into two sections:

1. The **2021 Proposed Actions and Deliverables** section provides a high-level overview of the activities, amendments, frameworks, specifications, and other projects the Council expects to initiate, continue, or complete during the year. This section is organized by Fishery Management Plan (FMP) and topic areas.
2. The **Strategic Plan Framework and 2021 Priority Activities** section organizes the Council's planned activities for the upcoming year under the five goal areas and 21 objectives defined in the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan. This section provides information about the anticipated timeframe for each item.

## STRATEGIC PLAN OVERVIEW

### Vision

Healthy marine ecosystems and thriving, sustainable fisheries and fishing communities that provide the greatest overall benefit to the nation.

### Mission

The Council manages fisheries in federal waters of the Mid-Atlantic region for their long-term sustainability and productivity consistent with the national standards of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. The Council is committed to the stewardship of these fisheries, and associated ecosystems and fishing communities, through the collaborative development of effective, science-based fishery management plans and policies.

### Core Values

The Council's activities, operations, and decisions are guided by the following core values:

- Stewardship
- Integrity
- Effectiveness
- Fairness
- Competence
- Transparency

*The complete 2020-2024 Strategic Plan and other related documents are available at [www.mafmc.org/strategic-plan](http://www.mafmc.org/strategic-plan).*

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# 2021 Proposed Actions and Deliverables

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## SUMMER FLOUNDER, SCUP, BLACK SEA BASS

1. Develop 2022-2023 specifications for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass
2. Develop 2022 recreational management measures for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass
3. Review and potentially revise commercial minimum mesh size regulations and exemptions for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass
4. Develop advisory panel fishery performance reports
5. Continue development of a framework action and technical guidance documents to address the prioritized Recreational Reform Initiative topics.
6. Begin development of an amendment to consider recreational sector separation and recreational catch accounting for summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish.
7. Evaluate commercial scup discards and gear restricted areas
8. Complete the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Commercial/Recreational Allocation Amendment
9. Continue development of the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM) management strategy evaluation (MSE) for summer flounder
10. Support management track assessments for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass

## BLUEFISH

11. Develop 2022-2023 bluefish specifications
  12. Develop 2022 bluefish recreational management measures
  13. Develop advisory panel fishery performance report
  14. Complete the Bluefish Allocation and Rebuilding Amendment
  15. Initiate action to implement a possession limit for frigate and bullet mackerel in the Mid-Atlantic
  16. Support management track assessment for bluefish
- Note: Deliverables #5 and 6 in the previous section will also address bluefish recreational management issues*

## GOLDEN AND BLUELINE TILEFISH

17. Review 2022 specifications and develop 2023-2024 golden tilefish specifications
18. Develop 2022-2023 blueline tilefish specifications
19. Develop advisory panel fishery performance reports
20. Review performance of private recreational tilefish permitting and reporting
21. Support management track assessment for golden tilefish
22. Initiate golden tilefish multi-year specifications framework (EO 13921 recommendation)
23. Review 2020 tilefish survey report and consider funding/logistics for 2022 survey

## MACKEREL, SQUID, BUTTERFISH (MSB)

24. Review 2022 Atlantic mackerel, chub mackerel, longfin, and butterfish specifications
25. Develop 2022 *Illex* specifications
26. Consider modifications to the *Illex* incidental possession limit during closures (EO 13921 recommendation)
27. Consider modifications to the butterfish minimum mesh size regulations (EO 13921 recommendation)
28. Develop advisory panel fishery performance reports
29. Review butterfish cap performance report
30. Review HMS/chub mackerel diet study final report
31. Support management track assessment for Atlantic mackerel

32. Support research track assessments for butterfish and *Illex* squid (including possible additional *Illex* working group products)

#### RIVER HERRING AND SHAD (RH/S)

33. Review RH/S cap performance and RH/S update

#### SPINY DOGFISH

34. Review 2022 spiny dogfish specifications
35. Develop advisory panel fishery performance report
36. Develop spiny dogfish trip limit white paper (EO 13921 recommendation)

#### SURFLAM AND OCEAN QUAHOG

37. Review 2022 specifications for surfclam and ocean quahog
38. Develop advisory panel fishery performance reports
39. Continue work on an action to address issues with surfclam and ocean quahog species separation requirements
40. Review surfclam genetic study final report

#### SCIENCE AND RESEARCH

41. Convene a workshop to review and consider redevelopment of the research set-aside (RSA) program
42. Conduct a biennial review and update of the 2020-2024 research priorities document
43. Convene a joint Council/SSC meeting
44. Review outcomes and recommendations from SSC Economic Workgroup
45. Support the Fishery Dependent Data Initiative (GARFO lead)

#### ECOSYSTEM AND OCEAN PLANNING/HABITAT

46. Develop and review the 2021 EAFM risk assessment report
47. Coordinate the Northeast Regional Habitat Assessment (NRHA)
48. Continue work on the Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Redo
49. Maintain joint MAFMC and New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) offshore wind web pages
50. Develop habitat- and fishery-related comments on offshore energy development
51. Continue development of East Coast climate change and distribution shift scenario planning initiative

#### GENERAL

52. Review commercial landings of unmanaged species
53. Complete advisory panel reappointment for all APs
54. Develop comment letters to various agencies regarding E.O. 13921 recommendations

#### COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH

55. Continue to implement the Council communication and outreach plan
56. Develop and maintain Council action web pages
57. Develop fact sheets and outreach materials as needed
58. Establish a Communication/Outreach Advisory Panel
59. Conduct virtual or in-person workshops to support commercial eVTR implementation
60. Maintain general and issue-specific email distribution lists

#### STAFF WRAP-UP ON COMPLETED ACTIONS

*The following actions have been, or are expected to be, approved by the Council by the end of 2020 but will require staff work in 2021 to finalize for submission to NMFS:*

61. Black Sea Bass Commercial State Allocation Amendment

62. *Illex* Permit and MSB Goals and Objectives Amendment

POSSIBLE ADDITIONS

*To be considered for addition to the 2021 implementation plan if time and resources allow:*

63. Establish a working group to evaluate potential approaches for incorporating additional stakeholder knowledge and input in the stock assessment process
64. Review red crab and lobster fishery exemptions for discrete deep sea coral protected zones
65. Initiate action to address right whale issues
66. Develop a white paper on collecting fixed/variable costs and employment information (for all Northeast fisheries)
67. Modify list of ecosystem component species from Unmanaged Forage Amendment (e.g., addition of cancer crabs)

# 2021 Priority Activities

## COMMUNICATION

**Goal:** Engage stakeholders and the public through education and outreach that foster sustained participation in, and awareness of, the Council process.

Objective	Priority Activities for 2021	Deliverable <sup>1</sup>	Timeframe
1. Use a wide range of communication tools and methods tailored to engage target audiences.	Continue to employ a variety of traditional, web-based, and social media tools to disseminate relevant information, updates, and communication materials (as outlined in the Council’s communication and outreach plan).	Y	Ongoing
	Complete website updates and improvements.	N	2021
	Expand the use of “interested-parties” email lists to deliver fishery- and action-specific information and updates to interested stakeholders.	Y	Ongoing
2. Increase stakeholder participation in the Council process.	Establish a Communication/Outreach Advisory Panel.	Y	2021
	Evaluate the current online commenting system and identify potential new public comment opportunities (or ways to improve the utility of existing comment forms).	N	2021
	Utilize webinars, conference lines, and other technology to expand remote access to and/or participation in Council and advisory body meetings.	N	Ongoing
	Continue to adapt Council webinar technology and procedures to support the increased need for virtual meetings due to COVID-19.	N	2021
	Develop outreach materials to facilitate constructive stakeholder input on proposed management actions (e.g. scoping guides, video presentations, fact sheets, etc.).	Y	Ongoing
3. Broaden the public’s understanding and awareness of the Council and its managed fisheries.	Develop fact sheets and outreach materials to provide information on current fisheries issues and topics of public interest.	Y	Ongoing
	Continue to promote relevant educational opportunities.	N	Ongoing
	Collaborate with science partners to develop outreach materials related to stock assessments for Council-managed species.	N	Ongoing
	Ensure that Council documents use plain language and minimize the use of acronyms to the extent possible.	N	Ongoing

<sup>1</sup> The Deliverable column indicates whether the item is listed in the list of proposed actions and deliverables in the previous section.

## SCIENCE

**Goal:** Ensure that the Council's management decisions are based on timely and accurate scientific information and methods.

Objective	Priority Activities for 2021	Deliverable	Timeframe
4. Collaborate with science partners and research institutions to ensure that the Council's science priorities are addressed.	Support stock assessments for Council-managed species.	Y	2021
	Review the surfclam genetic study final report.	Y	2021
	Review the HMS/chub mackerel diet study final report.	Y	2021
5. Support the use of collaborative research to meet the Council's science, data, and information needs.	Review 2020 tilefish survey report and consider funding/logistics for 2022 survey.	Y	2021
	Convene RSA program review workshop.	Y	2021
	Identify research needs that can be addressed using collaborative approaches with commercial, for-hire, and recreational fishery participants.	N	Ongoing
	Continue to support development of cooperative research programs that use "vessels of opportunity" from all sectors to address science and research needs.	N	Ongoing
6. Promote efficient and accurate data collection, monitoring, and reporting systems.	Continue to support the Fishery Dependent Data Initiative (GARFO lead).	Y	2021 - TBD
	Review performance of private recreational tilefish permitting and reporting.	Y	2021
	Conduct virtual or in-person workshops to support commercial eVTR implementation.	Y	2021
7. Promote the collection of relevant social and economic data and on-the-water observations.	Collaborate with the Northeast Regional Coordinating Council (NRCC) Stock Assessment Communications Group to facilitate increased stakeholder involvement in (and awareness of) the stock assessment process.	N	Ongoing
	Review outcomes and recommendations from SSC Economic Workgroup.	Y	2021
	Engage the Council's SSC to identify existing studies or other sources of social and economic information that could be used to inform management decisions.	N	Ongoing
8. Identify and prioritize the Council's research needs.	Conduct a biennial review and update of the 2020-2024 research priorities document.	Y	2021

## MANAGEMENT

**Goal:** Develop effective management strategies that provide for sustainable fisheries and healthy marine ecosystems while considering the needs of fishing communities and other resource users.

Objective	Priority Activities for 2021	Deliverable	Timeframe
9. Strengthen state, federal, and interstate partnerships to promote coordinated, efficient management of fishery resources.	Participate on the Northeast Regional Coordinating Council.	N	Ongoing
10. Adapt management approaches and priorities to address emerging issues and changing fishery conditions.	Review commercial minimum mesh size review for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass.	Y	2021
	Develop Recreational Reform Framework and technical guidance documents.	Y	2021
	Begin development of Recreational Sector Separation and Catch Accounting Amendment.	Y	2021 - TBD
	Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Recreational/Commercial Allocation Amendment (joint MAFMC/ASMFC action)	Y	2021
	Evaluate commercial scup discards and gear restricted areas.	Y	2021
	Complete the Bluefish Allocation and Rebuilding Amendment (joint MAFMC/ASMFC action)	Y	2021
	Action to address surfclam and ocean quahog species separation requirements	Y	2021 - TBD
	Consider modifications to <i>III</i> ex incidental possession limit during closures.	Y	2021
	Consider modifications to butterfish minimum mesh size regulations.	Y	2021
11. Ensure that management decisions consider social, economic, and community impacts and opportunities.	Continue development of summer flounder EAFM management strategy evaluation.	Y	2021
	Continue to utilize multi-year management approaches.	N	Ongoing
	Develop spiny dogfish trip limit white paper.	Y	2021

*Continued on the following page*

## Specification-Setting Activities

<p>In addition to the activities associated with specific management objectives, the Council will also develop new or review existing specifications for each of its managed species. These activities are listed below.</p>	
<p>Develop and approve new specifications:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2022-2023 summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass specifications</li> <li>• 2022 summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass recreational management measures</li> <li>• 2022-2023 bluefish specifications</li> <li>• 2022 bluefish recreational management measures</li> <li>• 2023-2024 golden tilefish specifications</li> <li>• 2022-2023 blueline tilefish specifications</li> <li>• 2022 <i>Illex</i> specifications</li> </ul>
<p>Review specifications and recommend changes if needed:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2022 golden tilefish specifications</li> <li>• 2022 Atlantic mackerel, chub mackerel, longfin, and butterfish specifications</li> <li>• 2022 spiny dogfish specifications</li> <li>• 2022 surfclam and ocean quahog specifications</li> </ul>



## ECOSYSTEM

**Goal:** Support the ecologically sustainable utilization of living marine resources in a manner that maintains ecosystem productivity, structure, and function.

Objective	Priority Activities for 2021	Deliverable	Timeframe
12. Implement the Council's Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM) as described in the EAFM Guidance Document.	Develop and review the 2021 EAFM risk assessment report.	Y	2021
13. Collaborate with management partners to develop ecosystem approaches that are responsive to the impacts of climate change.	Continue development of the East Coast climate change and distribution shift scenario planning initiative.	Y	2021
14. Identify, designate, and protect habitat using an ecosystem approach.	Northeast Regional Marine Fish Habitat Assessment Project	Y	2021-2022
	EFH Redo	Y	Ongoing
15. Engage in the offshore energy development process to address impacts to Council-managed species and associated habitats.	Develop habitat- and fishery-related comments on offshore energy development.	Y	Ongoing
	Maintain joint MAFMC-NEFMC Offshore Wind web page and Offshore Wind Notices to Mariners web page.	Y	Ongoing
	Engage offshore wind developers to support effective communication and outreach with the fishing industry.	Y	Ongoing
16. Support the maintenance of an adequate forage base to ensure ecosystem productivity, structure, and function.	Consider and account for, to the extent practicable, the role of Council-managed species in the ecosystem, including roles as prey, predator, and food for humans.	N	Ongoing
	Consider and account for, to the extent practicable, the impact of Council-managed fisheries on the forage base.	N	Ongoing
	Review report on unmanaged species landings and respond to changes if necessary.	Y	Annually
	Initiate action to implement a possession limit for frigate and bullet mackerel in the Mid-Atlantic	Y	2020-2021
17. Develop management approaches that minimize adverse ecosystem impacts.	Review State of the Ecosystem Report	N	Annually
	Develop management measures that consider ecological interactions to reduce regulatory discards, promote greater utilization of catch, and minimize impacts to habitat.	N	Ongoing

	Consider fishery management approaches that avoid or reduce negative impacts on protected resources.	N	Ongoing
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## GOVERNANCE

**Goal:** Ensure that the Council's practices accurately represent and consider the interests of fisheries, fishing communities, and the public through a transparent and inclusive decision-making process.

Objective	Priority Activities for 2021	Deliverable	Timeframe
18. Maintain an open, accessible, and clearly defined process.	Convene joint Council-SSC meeting.	Y	2021
	Provide an update on Council activities and a summary of implementation Plan progress.	N	Annually
	Provide conference lines or Webinar access to Council and advisory body meetings whenever feasible.	N	Ongoing
19. Engage management partners to promote effective collaboration and coordination.	Track relevant MSA/fisheries legislation and develop comments as requested.	N	Ongoing
	Review the composition and operation of Council committees.	N	Annually
	Collaborate with GARFO on outreach to support commercial eVTR implementation.	Y	2021
20. Ensure that stakeholder interests are understood and addressed.	Work with advisory panels to develop annual fishery performance reports	Y	Annually
	Complete the 3-year reappointment process for all Council Advisory Panels.	Y	2021
	Explore options to improve communication regarding the use of public input in management decisions.	N	2021
21. Provide training and development opportunities for Council members and staff to enhance organizational performance.	Provide Council member training on Robert's Rules of Order.	N	2021
	Support the ongoing professional development of Council staff.	N	Ongoing
	Continue to participate in staff-to-staff meetings and collaborate with GARFO, NEFSC, and ASMFC on other initiatives.	N	Ongoing