

EAST COAST CLIMATE CHANGE SCENARIO PLANNING INITIATIVE

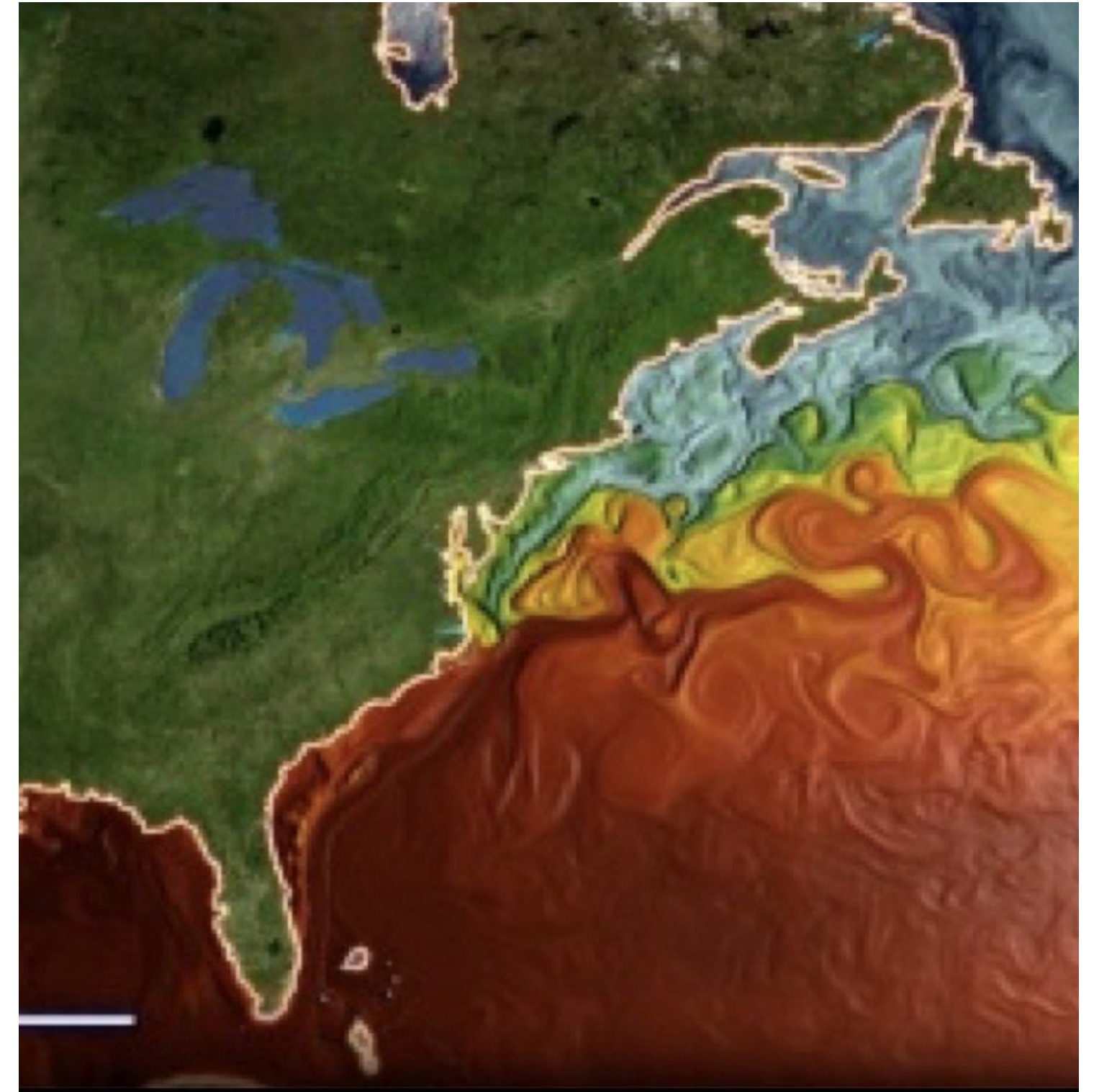
Process Outcomes, Potential Actions, and Next Steps
for the Mid-Atlantic Council

August 9, 2023
Annapolis, MD



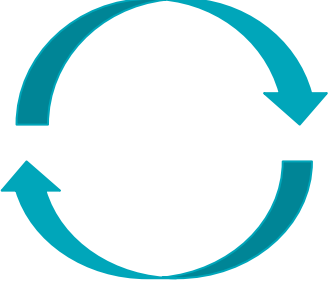
Initiative Objectives

1. Explore how **East Coast fishery governance and management issues** will be affected by climate driven change in fisheries, particularly changing stock availability and distributions.
1. **Advance a set of tools and processes** that provide flexible and robust fishery management strategies, which continue to promote fishery conservation and resilient fishing communities, and address uncertainty in an era of climate change.



East Coast Scenario Planning Initiative Timeline

Steps in this Multi-Year Initiative



Resulting Scenarios: East Coast Fisheries in 2040

Ocean Pioneers:

A 'wild west' of new ocean users, risk-taking fishery operators taking advantage of confusing, unpredictable but ultimately positive conditions.

Unpredictable changes & conditions, low ability to assess

Compound Stress Fractures:

A world with multiple sources of stress face operators and managers, where the industry fractures between some who play it smart, and others who lose out.

Mostly maintained

Checks & Balance:

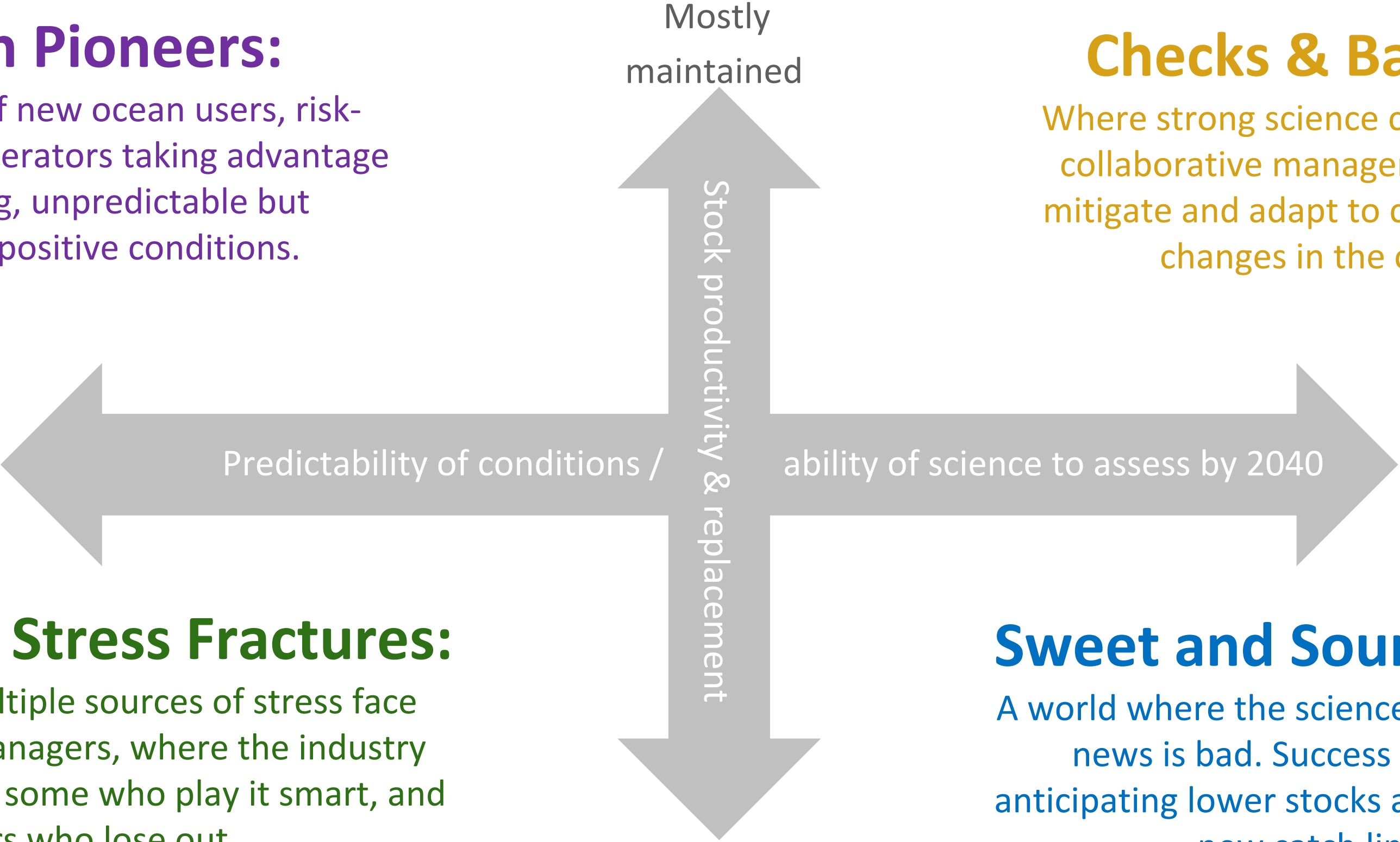
Where strong science combines with collaborative management to help mitigate and adapt to climate-driven changes in the ocean.

Predictable changes & conditions, high ability to assess

Sweet and Sour Seafood:

A world where the science is good, but the news is bad. Success comes from anticipating lower stocks and preparing for new catch limits.

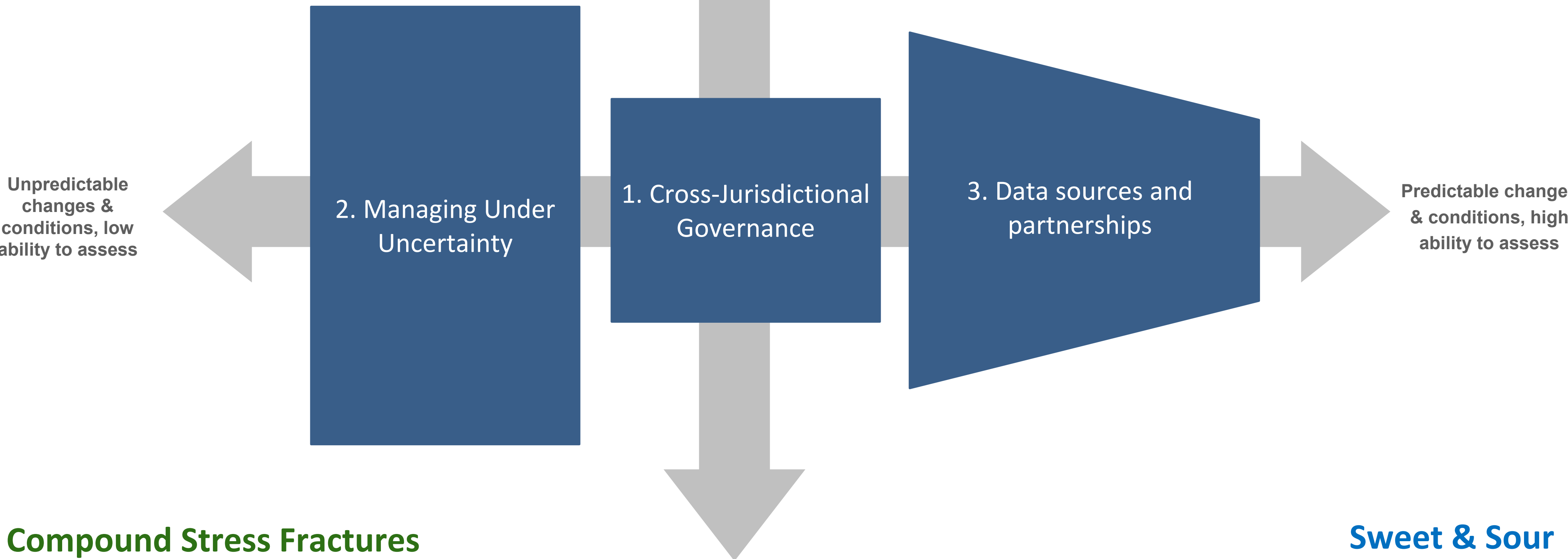
Mostly declining



Key Topics identified by Councils/Commissions

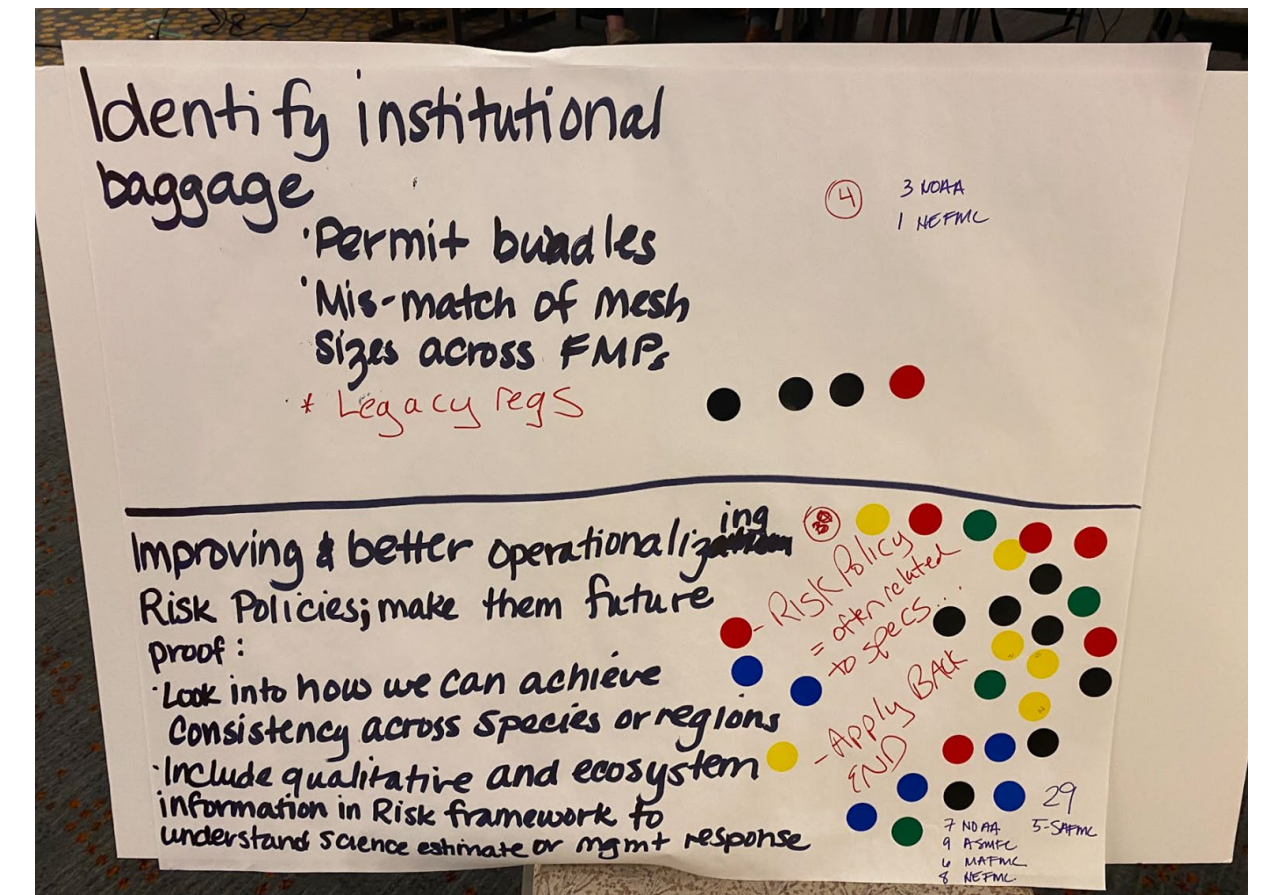
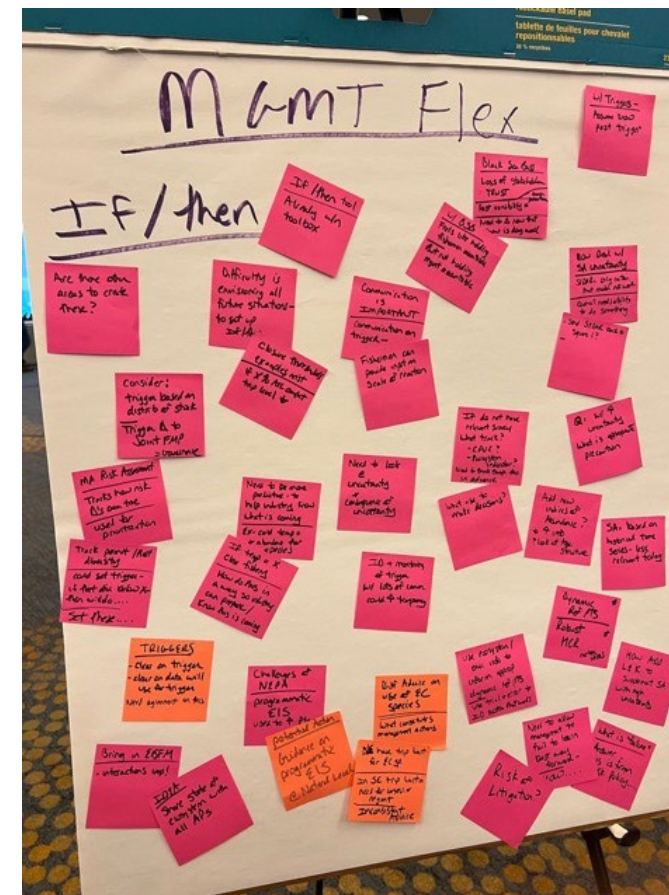
Ocean Pioneers

Checks & Balance



Summit Meeting - February 2023

- **Goal:** develop set of potential governance & management actions resulting from scenario-based exploration of the future
- Capstone meeting of East Coast Scenario Planning Process
- Attended by over 50 fishery managers representing 3 East Coast Councils, ASMFC, and NOAA Fisheries
- Discussions focused on 3 main themes, with breakout conversations, prioritization of potential actions, discussions regarding next steps
- Materials: [East Coast Climate Change Scenario Planning Summit — Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council \(mafmc.org\)](https://www.mafmc.org)



Summit Report

Executive Summary

1. Introduction

2. Overarching Themes

3. Summit Design & Agenda

4. Theme Details:

- Summary of Breakout Group Conversations
- Summary of Suggested Potential Actions
- Plenary Discussion on Next Steps

1. Reflections & Concluding Thoughts

2. Appendices:

- Summit Participants
- Breakout Groups: Details Notes by Theme
- Results of Prioritization Exercise

Cross-Jurisdictional Governance Potential Actions	
Coastwide Council with varying voting representation by FMP	
Committee-Based decision making where committees have final vote	
Committee-Based decision making with final Council approval	
Clarify and potentially expand the roles of liaisons between Council	
Change state representation on councils	
Consider allowing proxies for Council members	

Re-evaluate and potential revise Advisory Panel	Identify and establish best practices for if/then trigger management
Evaluate mechanisms for cross pollination of S managed species	Look into streamlining NEPA compliance and documentation
Move to more consistent use of committees a committee representation for each committee	Include spatial considerations in management
Improve coordination across NOAA Fisheries and General Counsel	Improve the use of risk policies to better account for current and future climate impacts on species (both negative and positive impacts)
Review joint management plans along coast t efficiency	Consider risk assessments to identify fisheries at risk of not meeting management goals
Develop more explicit agreements for joint m	Move toward robust management options rather than trying to account for all kinds of uncertainty within stock assessment models.
	Use qualitative information to improve management, including our

Data Sources and Partnerships Potential Actions	
Modernize data management to facilitate better sharing of data and prepare for an influx of new data streams (e.g. offshore wind data)	
Focus on AI/tech development to <u>more rapidly get data</u> into assessments	
Develop a process between management and science organization to prioritize data needs for climate-ready management (e.g., human dimensions data)	
Prioritize recreational data collection to reduce uncertainty including developing incentives for better reporting	
Hire staff dedicated to fostering partnerships and coordinating data collection/sharing between other ocean users, management bodies, and within Federal agencies	
Expand study fleet, include recreational fisheries, and ensure data are used, include shovel-ready data projects	
Use survey mitigation around offshore wind to transition to industry-based surveys or other survey platforms	
Standardize data collection to breakdown geographic barriers along the East Coast (both state and federal)	

ation of local ecological management is needed.
certainty when making policy/
its
assessments in management

Introduction to Action Menu

Purpose of Action Menu

- Expand on ideas discussed at summit, particularly next steps for potential actions that did not receive plenary discussion
- Group actions by theme, and after NRCC meeting, by priority
- Identify next steps and who might work on each one
- Use as **planning tool to guide work on collective and individual priorities**
- Intent that this becomes **living document** that is regularly revisited

Structure of Action Menu

- Introduction
- Leadership and staff roles
- High priority potential actions
- Medium priority potential actions (Watch List)
- Parking Lot actions
- List of all actions, by priority

East Coast Climate Change Scenario Planning
Potential Action Menu
June 2023

INTRODUCTION

The U.S. East Coast Fishery Management Councils (Councils, New England, Mid-Atlantic, and South Atlantic), the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission), and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) conducted an East Coast Scenario Planning Initiative to explore jurisdictional, governance, and management issues related to climate change and fishery stock distributions. Representatives from these fishery management organizations have worked collaboratively and engaged diverse stakeholders to explore how climate change will affect fishery management. This exploration was based on a multi-stage scenario planning process, where stakeholders generated several different possibilities for how climate change might affect east coast fisheries.

East Coast Scenario Planning Summit

The capstone to this initiative was the East Coast Scenario Planning Summit, held on February 15-16, 2023. It was attended by representatives from each of the organizations identified above. The goal of the Summit was to develop a set of potential governance and management actions resulting from a scenario-based exploration of the future. It was not possible for the Summit to cover all the issues raised throughout the scenario process. Instead, focus was placed on three overarching themes: Cross-Jurisdictional Governance, Managing Under Increased Uncertainty, and Data Sources and Partnerships. A report of the Summit meeting proceedings is available at: https://www.mafmc.org/s/ECSP-Summit-Report_April-2023.pdf.

As described in the Summit report, participants discussed ideas already generated throughout the process, reflected on them, and added new ideas for potential actions. The core team then grouped comments and ideas raised by participants into potential areas for action. After a prioritization exercise, Summit participants identified potential practical next steps for a limited number of ideas under each of the three themes. There was not time to develop practical next steps for all potential actions that generated some level of support.

Role and Structure of Potential Action Menu

This potential action menu reviews the actions identified at the Summit and suggests possible next steps beyond what could be considered at that meeting. In some cases, the core team has taken the list of potential actions from the Summit and consolidated those with similar themes and would have similar next steps. Thus, the list of potential actions in this document does not always align completely with those in the Summit report. Each potential action includes multiple next steps items.

The Northeast Region Coordinating Council plus the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council leadership reviewed all the potential actions and prioritized them into three levels (high priority, medium priority, and parking lot). Details for parking lot actions are provided in Appendix 1. A full list of potential actions by priority level can be found in Appendix 2.

High priority potential actions are those that could be quick wins and/or that the NRCC working with SAFMC leadership viewed as important issues to address in the near term. Some of these actions


ECSP Potential Action Menu - 1

NRCC + SAFMC Review of Action Menu - May 2023

- **Provided input on**

- Action descriptions and content
- Whether each action is a high, medium, or low priority
 - **High priority:** address near term or already occurring
 - **Medium priority:** “watch list”
 - **Parking lot:** lower priority; not feasible or prioritized for near term but retained for possible future consideration
- Revisions to specific next steps
- Where additional groundwork is needed before considering certain issues

East Coast Climate Change Scenario Planning Potential Action Menu June 2023



INTRODUCTION

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ECSP Potential Action Menu - 1

- **Formed two groups to continue this work:**

East Coast Climate Coordination Group (leadership level)	Climate Innovation Group (staff level)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Oversee the implementation of actions■ Ensure actions are prioritized, jointly or by individual management organizations, estimate resources needed, and executed in a coordinated fashion■ Meet at least once per year	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Identify ideas worthy of consideration by the Climate Coordination Group■ Review changes to the factors shaping East Coast fishery management■ Highlight potential actions from the broader list of Summit suggestions■ Generate any new potential actions■ Present an update of changes and revised potential actions to the Climate Coordination Group

Scenario Planning Toolkit

- Designed to be used by any East Coast fishery stakeholder
- Summarizes the ECSP scenario work and offers suggestions for how other groups can use the material to have valuable conversations about the challenges of climate change
- Includes presentations, draft agendas, scenario creation worksheets, and guidelines for use



The cover image for the Scenario Planning Toolkit features a blue background with a stylized fish silhouette. The title "Scenario Planning Toolkit" is prominently displayed in white, with the subtitle "Preparing East Coast Fishing Communities for an Era of Climate Change" below it.

Scenario planning is a tool used by organizations to prepare for a future of uncertainty. From 2021 to 2023, several East Coast fishery management organizations collaborated in a scenario planning process involving several hundred stakeholders. The objective was to explore how fisheries and governance would have to change to prepare for an era of climate change. The results of that exercise are highlighted on the [East Coast Climate Change Scenario Planning \(ECSP\) webpage](#).

The process was valuable for fishery managers – and it can be replicated by and for other stakeholder groups who want to explore how climate change (and other factors) might affect their future. This toolkit is designed to be used by any East Coast fishery stakeholder. It briefly summarizes the ECSP scenario work and offers suggestions for how other groups can use the material to have valuable conversations about the challenges of climate change.

- [Scenario Planning Toolkit Presentation \(PowerPoint\) / \(PDF\)](#)
- [Download Scenario Planning Toolkit + Additional Resources \(zip file\)](#)

Additional Toolkit Resources:

1. [Scenario Planning Worksheets \(PowerPoint\) / \(PDF\)](#)
2. [Suggested Agendas for Scenario Discussions \(PDF\) / \(Word\)](#)
3. [Guidelines for Scenario Small Group Facilitators \(PDF\)](#)
4. [Language for Scenario Ground Rules and Session Expectations \(PDF\) / \(Word\)](#)
5. [Description of Alternative Scenario Creation Approaches \(PDF\)](#)
6. [Suggestions for Ongoing 'Monitoring' Conversations \(PDF\)](#)

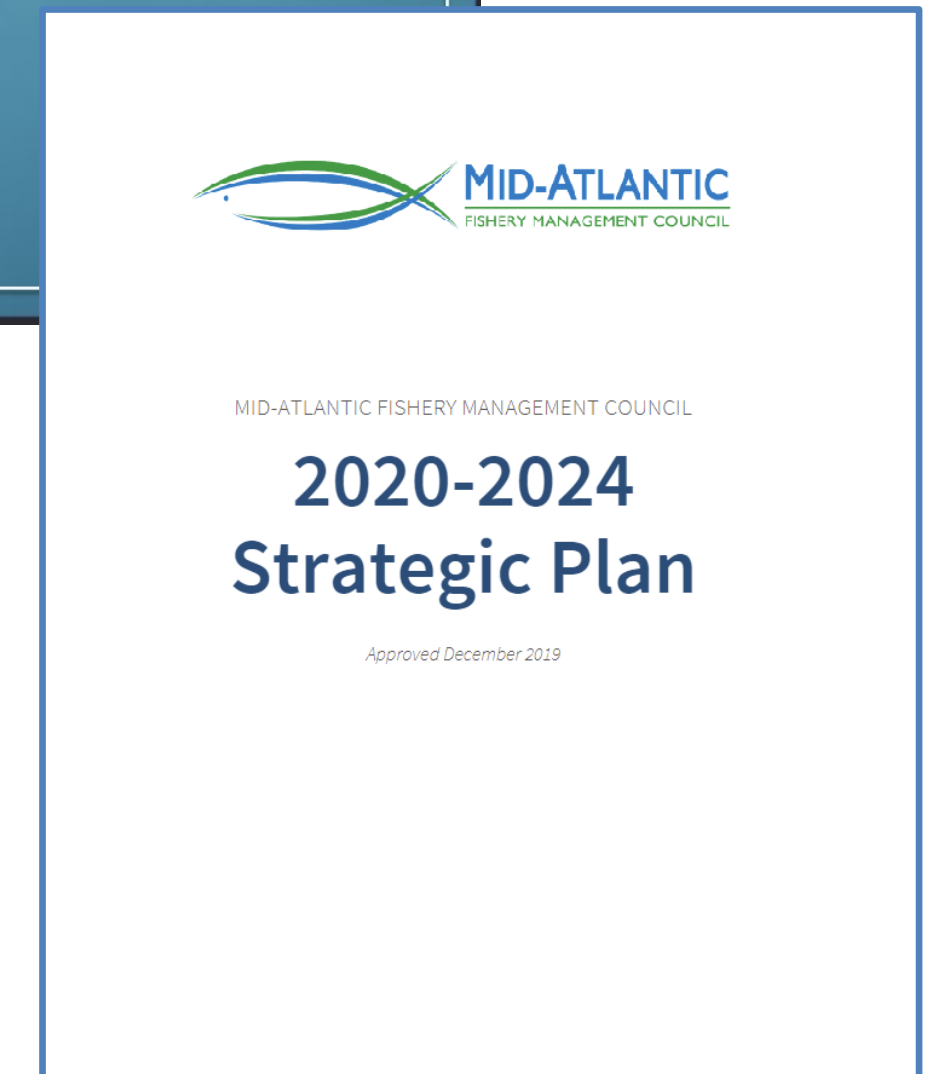
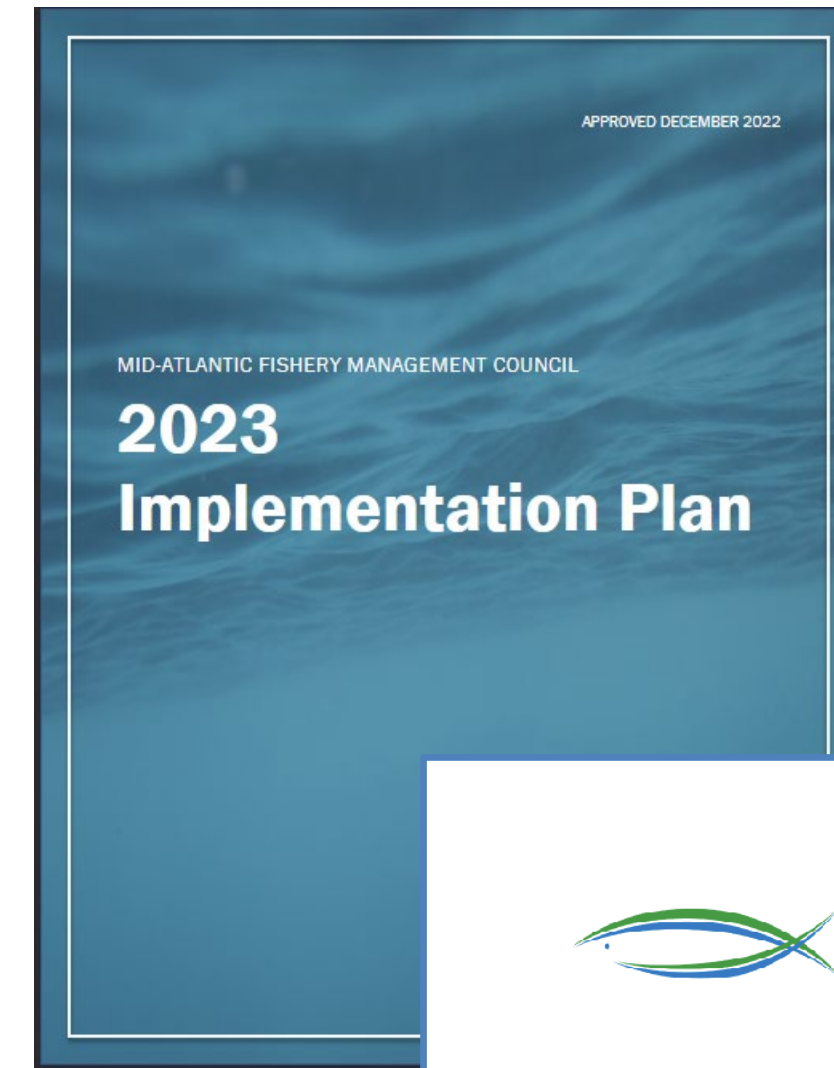
<https://www.mafmc.org/scenario-planning-toolkit>

General Next Steps

- **Other Council/Commission Discussions**
 - June NEFMC
 - August ASMFC
 - August MAFMC
 - September SAFMC
- **Each group considers their preferred near-term priorities during annual priorities setting for participating organizations**
- **Initial East Coast Climate Coordination Group and Climate Innovation Group meetings**
 - Coordination Group expected to meet in conjunction with Nov. NRCC
 - Core Team will continue to coordinate pending establishment of Climate Innovation Group, after Coordination Group defines its role & membership

Today's Council Discussion

- General feedback on scenario planning process and outcomes
- Where should the MAFMC go from here, for our own actions and in collaboration with other orgs?
- What should be incorporated into the 2024 implementation plan? Longer term priorities?



Staff Recommendations: Summary

2024 implementation plan possibilities:

- **G1:** Reevaluate Council committee structure, use, and decision making.
- **G2:** Reevaluate and potentially revise Advisory Panel representation.
- Hire a contractor to **conduct a program review** of the management process. (**M2:** Streamlining FMP documentation and rulemaking)
- Integrate potential actions into the Council's **2025-2029 Strategic Plan and Research Priorities documents**
- **EAFM risk assessment revisions:** consider **M1:** Identify ecosystem-level contextual information to incorporate climate information into management decisions

Longer term:

- **G3:** Develop joint management agreements with ASMFC addressing roles and efficiency
- **D3:** Identify benefits/logistics of recreational study fleet
- Consider approaches to integrating scenario planning outcomes into **EAFM** framework/initiatives
- **Guidance document** to consider climate resilience/adaptability in FMP actions

High Priority Potential Action G1: Reevaluate Council committee structure, use, and decision making

- **Description:** Address representation concerns by re-evaluating committee representation and use for species with distribution changes and governance challenges. Consider enhancing the role of committees in decision making and moving toward greater alignment in committee use across Councils.
- **Potential next step:** Participate in a leadership planning exercise (planned by Climate Coordination Group?) to explore options for committee-based decision-making, committee structure, and committee use, building on ideas discussed at the Summit
- **Barriers and Considerations:**
 - Possibilities for committee membership/voting need to be within what is permitted by MSA
 - Multiple interrelated aspects of committee use to consider may add complexity
 - Need to ensure changes don't make process less nimble

G1. Reevaluate Council committee structure, use, and decision making

Description: Several potential actions were identified at the Summit related to committee structure, use, and decision making. These actions have been grouped together here as they are interrelated and should be addressed simultaneously for them to have meaningful impact.

As discussed in the Summit Report, these actions primarily address representation concerns related to changing species distributions; specifically, stakeholders who may have increased access to shifting species but may not have "official" representation in the Council process.

Further discussion will be needed regarding whether the potential actions below should occur for all Council-managed species, or whether modifications are only needed for certain species or FMPs that may be experiencing or are projected to experience notable distribution changes.

1. The Councils should **re-evaluate committee representation**, with a focus on FMPs where managed species have shifted or are highly vulnerable to climate change.
2. Councils could **enhance the role of committees in decision making**.
 - The goal of this change is to give more weight to the opinions of committee members who are not members of the Council managing the species.
 - One approach would be to modify Council SOPPs or other procedures to allow increased decision-making authority at the committee level. For example, committee motions that do not pass the full Council could be sent back to the committee to be reworked. Under such a scenario, the Council could not simply override the committee and make a different decision; the measure would need to be sent back to the committee.
 - Other approaches to enhance committee roles in decision making that are not currently possible under MSA are noted in the parking lot section.
3. The Councils should **evaluate how to move toward more alignment in the use of committees across Councils**.
 - Again, the goal of these changes is to give more weight to the opinions of Committee members that are not from the Council with responsibility for managing the species.
 - Currently, each Council and FMP uses committees differently in the decision-making process. Some Councils rely heavily on their committees to craft and guide analysis of management actions, while other Councils rely more on staff, other technical teams, and discussions at the full Council level. Addressing regional/stakeholder group representation concerns by modifying committee structures may be more effective if Councils use committees in a more similar manner. This would not mean that every committee must be used in exactly the same way or that each Council would have exactly the same rules for its committees; but the Councils would aim for some degree of increased consistency.

High Priority Potential Action G2: Reevaluate and potentially revise Advisory Panel representation

- **Description:** Address representation concerns driven by changing distributions and other climate-driven changes in fisheries by ensuring advisory panel representation remains appropriate.
- **MAFMC potential next step:** Council will conduct AP appointment cycle in 2024 (current term runs through June 2024). As part of this, consider possible changes in representation needs based on changing biological and socioeconomic circumstances.
- **Barriers and Considerations:**
 - Struggles with AP participation/engagement
 - Challenge of reaching/engaging potential new AP members not currently engaged in process

G2. Re-evaluate and potentially revise Advisory Panel representation

Description: Climate-driven changes in species distributions are leading to increased concern about appropriate representation by geographic area in various parts of the management process. In addition to considering committee and other governance structures, the Councils and Commission should ensure that advisory panel (AP) representation remains appropriate and effective, including that it reflects the geographical distribution of the resource. A review of AP membership should also consider how other ecological and socioeconomic changes may drive changing needs for AP representation (e.g., changes in participation in a particular sector; trends in the use of certain fishing techniques or gears, etc.).

Practical Next Steps:

Potential Action	Group
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Individual management bodies conduct evaluation of AP representation and appointment process, including how AP members are recruited and identified, with consideration of underrepresented and underserved groups. This could be conducted for selected or all FMPs and should consider how representation needs (by geographic area, stakeholder group, or other factors) may be evolving with changing conditions. 	Individual AP management bodies with staff level coordination between bodies

Potential Barriers and Considerations:

- Some management bodies have experienced recent struggles to recruit potential AP members, particularly when seeking broader representation. In addition, AP engagement can be challenging for some FMPs, which could limit the effectiveness of revised AP membership.
- The Councils and Commission should examine how AP input is currently used, and how it can better serve the process.
- Modifying AP representation does not necessarily mean expanding membership, but at a minimum considering whether representation is adequate given changing circumstances.
- If APs are expanded in terms of total members, increased costs may be incurred for meetings.
- AP members new to the management process will likely require training on fishery management and science concepts, e.g., through MREP or like programs.
- There could be other barriers to full AP participation, such as limited internet availability or access to a computer, for web-based meetings, limited English language skills, or inability to take time away from work uncompensated. Such issues would need to be addressed to ensure equity of access to the process.

Contract a program review of Council's management action processes (related to High Priority Potential Action M2: Streamlining FMP documentation and rulemaking)

- Council, in cooperation with GARFO, should review processes for development and documentation of fishery management actions to identify opportunities for improvement in the areas of efficiency and adaptability.
- Hire contractor to conduct program review and provide recommendations for streamlining process and increasing adaptability and nimbleness.

M2. Streamlining FMP documentation and rulemaking

Description: Councils spend substantial staff time writing NEPA and other federal compliance documents, so processes that introduce efficiency should allow Councils to reduce administrative work, resulting in time savings that could be used to address new climate-oriented initiatives. Streamlining the FMP and regulatory processes is also a key way to make management more nimble and efficient, so that management responses to changing conditions can be completed in a more timely manner.

Practical Next Steps:

Potential Action	Group
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the use of programmatic Environmental Impact Statements (EISs) for Council actions and encourage their use where appropriate 	MAFMC considering this near-term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify areas where NEPA documents can be streamlined, including when incorporation by reference to recent related documents would be appropriate 	GARFO, SERO, NMFS HQ, Councils
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop more clear and consistent guidelines for use of Categorical Exclusions (CEs) under NEPA, including MSA document templates; identifying NMFS vs. Council responsibilities 	GARFO, SERO, NMFS HQ, Councils
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with NOAA General Counsel (GC) to establish consistent GC guidance with regards to the use of CEs and Supplemental Information Reports (SIRs), rulemaking, public comment etc. 	GARFO, SERO, NMFS HQ
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify process steps Council and NFMS staff can take to use MSA documents to satisfy NEPA requirements 	GARFO, SERO, NMFS HQ, Councils
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider alternative rulemaking approaches or action development approaches 	GARFO, SERO, NMFS HQ

Potential Barriers and Considerations:

- Programmatic EISs involve a large investment of time and resources up front; should consider whether the efficiency gained on the back end is worth it.
- Might inadvertently limit opportunities for public participation in the process, in certain cases

Long-Term Objectives:

- Identify options for reducing burdens associated with NEPA and other documentation, without sacrificing the public process and opportunities for meaningful input.

Integrate scenario planning themes/actions into the development of the Council's 2025-2029 Strategic Plan and Research Priorities

- During development of Council's 2025-2029 strategic plan and research priorities, integrate scenario planning outcomes (themes and potential actions) where applicable.
- Specific research priority for consideration: develop process/methodology to characterize and track distribution changes for our managed species in a more comprehensive manner.



EAFM Risk Assessment: Consider High Priority Potential Action M1 to Identify ecosystem-level contextual information for management decisions

- Development of the Council’s updated risk assessment in 2024 could consider scenario planning outcomes and alternative ways to integrate the risk assessment into management.
- The scenario planning potential actions, together with the risk assessment, could also inform the Council’s next priority project(s) under the EAFM initiatives.

M1. Identify ecosystem-level contextual information that can be considered within the management process to help incorporate climate information into decisions

Description: Changing climate and ocean conditions can impact fish stocks, fish habitats, and interactions between species and fisheries, sometimes in surprising ways. It is important to proactively consider ecosystem level impacts when making management decisions. This can be via quantitative or qualitative information, including the use of ecological risk assessments¹, such as the risk assessment MAFMC uses as part of its ecosystem approach to fisheries management framework, which results in a more holistic consideration of issues. NMFS has written a [technical memo](#) that provides examples of how ecosystem risk assessments have been used in fisheries management.

Practical Next Steps:

Potential Action	Group
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● NMFS offers to present findings of newly released Tech Memo looking at example ecosystem risk assessments to Councils and Commission 	NMFS staff coordinating with Councils/Commission
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consider adding major state-only-managed fisheries to these ecosystem risk assessments for a more complete perspective 	NMFS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify opportunities to use specific types of quantitative and qualitative ecosystem information to identify and avoid risks 	Climate Innovations Group, individual Councils and Commission
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Share lessons learned 	NRCC or other

Potential Barriers and Considerations:

- No forcing mechanism
- Need here is likely to be Council/Commission and FMP [specific](#)

Long-Term Objectives:

- Create a fishery management system aware of and able to respond to significant ecosystem changes.

Staff Recommendations: Longer Term

High Priority Potential Action G3: Develop joint management agreements with aim of clarifying roles and increasing efficiency.

- Potential action menu next step: “Review joint FMPs and agreements between the MAFMC and Commission (summer flounder/scup/black sea bass/bluefish) to identify areas for improved efficacy and efficiency.”

Evaluate potential for a recreational study fleet, to address High Priority Action D3: Expand study fleet, include recreational fisheries, and ensure data are used.

- Pilot program in progress for New England groundfish for-hire study fleet; could be expanded in the future to other areas and fisheries
- Mid-Atlantic Council could also consider separate program if feasible
- Additional evaluation needed to determine goals, costs, benefits, logistics

Staff Recommendations: Longer Term

Consider approaches to integrating scenario planning outcomes and actions into the existing, or a revised, **EAFM framework and future initiatives**

Consider **developing a guiding document or policy** to consider climate resilience in its fishery management plans and other work

- e.g., climate resilience framework for developing and evaluating management actions
- Could integrate considerations across several of the scenario planning actions and themes
- Purpose/objectives could be sharpened during a future discussion as appropriate

Staff Recommendations: Summary

2024 implementation plan:

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- **G2:** Reevaluate and potentially revise Advisory Panel representation.
- Hire a contractor to **conduct a program review** of the management process. (**M2:** Streamlining FMP documentation and rulemaking)
- Integrate potential actions into the Council's **2025-2029 Strategic Plan and Research Priorities documents**
- **EAFM risk assessment revisions:** consider **M1:** Identify ecosystem-level contextual information to incorporate climate information into management decisions

Longer term:

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