



2019 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

MID-ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Approved 12/13/2018

www.mafmc.org/strategic-plan

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Acronyms

ACT – Annual Catch Target
CV – Coefficient of Variation
EAFM – Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management
EFH – Essential Fish Habitat
eVTR – Electronic Vessel Trip Report
FMP – Fishery Management Plan
GARFO – Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office
HMS – Highly Migratory Species
ITQ – Individual Transferable Quota
MSB – Mackerel, Squid, Butterfish
OFL – Overfishing Limit
RH/S – River Herring and Shad
SSC – Scientific and Statistical Committee

INTRODUCTION

The Council initiated its Visioning and Strategic Planning Project in 2011 in an effort to address current and future challenges and secure a more stable and sustainable future for Mid-Atlantic fisheries. Between September 2011 and February 2012, the Council collected input for the strategic plan from more than 1,500 stakeholders through surveys, roundtable meetings, and position letters. Their input was summarized in the *Stakeholder Input Report*, released by the Council in June 2012.

In August 2012, the Council established a Visioning and Strategic Planning Working Group composed of Council members, stakeholders, and regional leadership. Through a series of meetings from August-December 2012, the working group crafted a vision, mission, goals, and objectives for the strategic plan. The framework developed by the working group was further refined by Council staff and approved by the Council in August 2013. The final 2014 – 2018 Strategic Plan is available at www.mafmc.org/strategic-plan, along with other related documents and background information.

The Council's strategic plan provides the first comprehensive strategic approach for fisheries management in federal waters off the Mid-Atlantic coast. From 2014 through 2018, the strategic plan has guided the Council's efforts to achieve sustainable and productive fisheries, a healthy marine ecosystem, and stable coastal communities. In 2018, the Council decided to extend its existing strategic plan through 2019 to better align the next strategic plan with the Council's 5-year grant cycle. The Council will be working in 2019 to develop a strategic plan for 2020-2024.

Implementation of the strategic plan is 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 designed for use 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.

STRATEGIC PLAN OVERVIEW

Vision

Healthy and productive marine ecosystems supporting thriving, sustainable marine fisheries that provide the greatest overall benefit to stakeholders.

Mission

The Council manages marine 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 effective stewardship of these fisheries and associated habitats by incorporating scientific information and informed public input in transparent processes that produce fishery management plans and programs.

Core Values

- ❖ Stewardship
- ❖ Integrity
- ❖ Effectiveness
- ❖ Fairness
- ❖ Competence
- ❖ Clear Communication

STRATEGIC GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES

Communication

Goal: Engage, Inform, and educate stakeholders to promote public awareness and encourage constructive participation in the Council process.

- Objectives:**
- Develop and implement a strategic communications plan to provide clear and accurate information to a broad range of stakeholders
 - Engage a diverse audience of stakeholders
 - Increase stakeholder trust and facilitate greater stakeholder engagement by making the Council process accessible and transparent
 - Increase awareness and understanding of fishery science and management
 - Increase stakeholder involvement in the development of fishery management actions

Science

Goal: Ensure that the Council's management decisions are based on timely and accurate scientific data that are analyzed and modeled in a manner that improves management performance and builds stakeholder confidence

- Objectives:**
- Promote the collection and analysis of accurate and timely scientific data to support the Council's management plans and programs
 - Improve our understanding of the social and economic dimensions of Mid-Atlantic fishing communities
 - Promote the collection and analysis of data needed to support the Council's transition to an Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management
 - Encourage effective stakeholder participation in data collection and analysis
 - Promote efficient and accurate methods of monitoring and reporting

Management

Goal: Develop fishery management strategies that provide for productive, sustainable fisheries.

- Objectives:**
- Evaluate the Council's fishery management plans
 - Incorporate economic and social analysis of management alternatives into the decision-making process
 - Develop management strategies that enable efficient operation of commercial and recreational fishing businesses
 - Develop innovative management strategies for recreational and commercial fisheries
 - Advance ecosystem approaches to fisheries management in the Mid-Atlantic

Governance

Goal: Ensure that the Council's governance structures and practices fairly represent stakeholder interests, are coordinated with the Council's management partners, and include a clear and well-defined decision-making process.

- Objectives:**
- Establish a formal decision-making process for the development and evaluation of management actions
 - Develop and strengthen partnerships to promote greater efficiency and enhance coordination among management partners and other relevant organizations
 - Ensure that stakeholder interests are accurately understood and meaningfully considered in the Council process

PROPOSED 2019 DELIVERABLES

This section provides an overview of deliverables expected by the end of the implementation plan period. Since many of the proposed implementation activities cannot be measured with traditional metrics, the list of deliverables establishes a mechanism for measuring the Council's progress toward achieving the goals and objectives of the strategic plan.

SUMMER FLOUNDER, SCUP, BLACK SEA BASS

- 2019 specifications for summer flounder (revise)
- 2020-2021 specifications for summer flounder, scup, black sea bass (develop and approve)
- 2020 recreational management measures for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass
- Advisory panel fishery performance reports
- Revisions to recreational management system for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass
- Evaluation of commercial scup discards
- Evaluate mesh size regulations for summer flounder, scup, black sea bass
- Summer flounder commercial/recreational allocation study update (contract)
- Summer flounder commercial issues amendment (final action)

MACKEREL, SQUID, BUTTERFISH

- Chub mackerel amendment
- 2020 specifications for mackerel, squids, and butterfish (review)
- Advisory panel fishery performance reports
- Butterfish cap review
- Illex* permit and MSB goals and objectives amendment (scoping and development)
- HMS chub mackerel diet study (contract; ongoing)
- Establish working group for real time *Illex* management

RIVER HERRING AND SHAD

- RH/S cap for Atlantic mackerel fishery for 2020 (review)
- RH/S progress update

BLUEFISH

- 2020-2021 specifications for bluefish (develop and approve)
- Advisory panel fishery performance report
- Bluefish allocation amendment

GOLDEN AND BLUELINE TILEFISH

- 2020 specifications for golden tilefish (review)
- 2020 specifications for blueline tilefish (review)
- Advisory panel fishery performance reports
- Private recreational permitting and reporting (GARFO lead)

SURFCLAMS AND OCEAN QUAHOGS

- 2020 specifications for ocean quahogs (review)
- 2019 and 2020 specifications for surfclams (review)
- Advisory panel fishery performance reports

2019 MAFMC Implementation Plan

- Excessive shares amendment
- ITQ review project (contract)
- Surfclam genetic study (contract; ongoing)

SPINY DOGFISH

- 2020 spiny dogfish specifications (review)
- Advisory panel fishery performance report

ECOSYSTEM AND OCEAN PLANNING/HABITAT

- EFH redo (ongoing)
- Regional habitat assessment (ongoing)
- EAFM conceptual model development
- EAFM risk assessment
- Offshore development and ocean uses

GENERAL

- 2020-2024 strategic plan development (contract)
- Commercial fisheries eVTR framework
- Allocation review criteria for all FMPs

COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH

- Implementation of council communication and outreach plan (ongoing)
- Council action web pages
- Fact sheets and outreach materials

SCIENCE AND RESEARCH

- Federal fishery dependent data initiative (GARFO lead)
- Risk policy framework
- SSC OFL CV guidelines
- SSC membership review
- Comprehensive five-year (2020-2024) research plan development

POSSIBLE ADDITIONS

- Tilefish survey development
- Aquaculture FMP (initiate)
- Mid-Atlantic regulations and enforcement
- Implement law enforcement/for-hire workshop recommendations
- ACT control rules for monitoring committees
- Evaluate federal trip limits for spiny dogfish
- Summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass allocations (possible amendment)
- Review red crab and lobster fishery exemptions for discrete deep sea coral protected zones
- Review and consider redevelopment of RSA program
- Action to address right whale issues

ACTION DEVELOPMENT CHECKLIST

A significant portion of the strategies included in the Council's strategic plan cannot be "completed" because they relate to tasks that should be considered an intrinsic part of every project or action. This section is the companion to the Proposed Deliverables section—it provides a mechanism for ensuring that the Council is upholding the standards included in its strategic plan. The Action Development Checklist was designed to be used by the Council and Staff as a guide for integrating the Council's strategic goals into the development and evaluation of management alternatives.

COMMUNICATION

- Ensure that communication materials meet the federal plain language guidelines
- Provide conference lines or webinar access to meetings whenever possible
- Ensure that meetings and events are posted on Council website calendar in a timely manner and with relevant information and documents
- Follow Council guidelines for collection and summarization of public comments
- Ensure that background information about the action is included with briefing materials each time the issue is discussed at a Council meeting
- Consider the feasibility and appropriateness of a workshop as part of the action development process
- Ensure that scoping and public hearings are held in locations with high concentrations of interested individuals
- Use targeted communication to inform stakeholders and solicit public input from individuals and groups that are most likely to be interested in or affected by the potential action

SCIENCE

- Fully consider species interactions in the assessment process and in the determination of catch limits
- Effectively communicate stakeholders' concerns or recommendations regarding monitoring/observing to the NEFSC

MANAGEMENT

- Evaluate the cumulative social and economic impacts of proposed and existing management alternatives
- Consider energy efficiency in the development of management measures
- Account for uncertainty in recreational catch estimates
- Support the development of models and analyses that evaluate alternative bag, size, and seasonal limits
- Reduce regulatory discards
- Ensure fair access to recreational fisheries throughout their range
- Incorporate species interactions into fishery management plans and coordinate these considerations across appropriate management plans
- Consider the relationship between essential fish habitat and productivity of marine resources into management decisions
- Minimize adverse ecosystem impacts

GOVERNANCE

- Follow Council guidelines for evaluation of stakeholder input
- Use advisory bodies and stakeholder input to inform the decision-making process and actively monitor changing conditions in the fisheries and ecosystem

SCIENCE AND RESEARCH NEEDS

This section summarizes the specific science and research needs that were identified in the strategic plan. These strategies are handled differently because they require additional planning in coordination with NOAA's Northeast Fisheries Science Center and other research institutions. The Science Center has already played a significant role in the development of the strategic plan, but since the Council has little control over how and when the science-related tasks of the strategic plan will be addressed, the implementation of these strategies requires a unique approach.

DATA NEEDS

- Timeline for completion of acceptable benchmark assessments for all of the Council's managed fisheries
- Oceanographic data related to climate change and ocean acidification
- Regional evaluation of species interactions within the marine ecosystem
- Climate change risk assessment for the Northeast marine ecosystem
- Habitat data—particularly data to link habitat protection with fishery productivity
- Relevant and up-to-date social and economic data about Mid-Atlantic communities
- Real-time commercial fisheries data
- Bioeconomic models

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, FUNDING, AND PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

- Electronic VTRs / log books in the commercial and for-hire sectors
- Innovative technologies (e.g., electronic monitoring, smart phones, etc.) to improve the accuracy and/or efficiency of data collection
- Evaluation of potential uses for volunteer angler data in recreational management decisions
- Additional observer program funding options
- Cooperative and collaborative research program expansion

MANAGEMENT STRATEGY INNOVATION

- Management strategies that account for uncertainty in recreational catch estimates
- Management strategies that reduce regulatory discards
- Management strategies that minimize adverse ecosystem impacts
- Management strategies that ensure fair access to recreational fisheries