

Appendix B: Roundtable Session Summaries

Visioning and Strategic Planning Stakeholder Input Report

July 2012

Appendix B: Roundtable Session Summaries

The roundtable session summaries in this appendix were developed from meeting notes taken during the sessions.

These summaries are not meant to be comprehensive of all points that were discussed at each meeting. Instead, they are meant to provide the reader with a general sense of the subject matter and context of the discussions.

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At the end of Appendix B, the roundtable session guides are attached. These documents were used as handouts to guide the discussions with each stakeholder group.

Commercial Roundtable Sessions

Commercial Meeting 1: Ocean City, Maryland

- Around challenges, the participants noted that regulations are necessary, but when the fish are taken away, it's hard to get them back. *"The regulations are overkill, and there are jobs created for other people instead."*
- The participants remarked on the devastation to the butterfish fleet after the 250 lb. limit was enacted. They also stated that the bait boats are taking all of the butterfish and that the recreational sector is ruling things.
- They believe that many fish are dying from being gut hooked by recreational fishermen.
- The fishermen believed that politics had played an oversized role at the ASMFC in the division of the quota of dogfish, and that Maryland had gotten "demoted". They believe that public comment periods mean nothing and that decisions are really made behind closed doors at the ASMFC.
- The fishermen remarked that they should be more involved in the at-sea surveys. They acknowledged that surveys need to be conducted with some statistical regularity, but pointed out that because conditions, like swell, can vary widely every year on any given day, so can the availability of the fish on that day because of the conditions. *"Fish move on the temperature and conditions, not the calendar."*
- The fishermen remarked that when quotas go down, it is cause and effect in that when there is no fish, the market for the fish disappears and is hard to re-establish. *"Every time you cut something, it makes fewer products. The price goes up, but the user wants a steady price and accessibility. So they go with the foreign imports."*
- *"Fuel prices are killing us. It's the main thing. It's the biggest problem."*
- *"No offense to the dealers, but everyone tries to catch fish at the same time and it drives the price down. It's the way the calendar is set up, everyone is fishing at the same time."*
- The fishermen's main priority would be justice for all groups. For instance, they were concerned that recreational fishermen were not being held accountable to a hard quota, specifically with black sea bass.
- The fishermen expressed interest in reading the report that gets put together from these interviews. They want to make sure it accurately reflects sentiment.
- There was concern that the Council members don't come down to hear directly from the fishermen on the Atlantic coast of Maryland. Most of the attention focuses on the Chesapeake Bay and the Ocean City fishermen felt overlooked. They were also concerned that there was no commercial representation for them on the council.
- One fisherman believed it would put thousands of people back to work if the line between state and federal waters no longer existed for the rockfish fishery
- Fishermen were concerned that there are too many rockfish eating everything and disrupting the ecosystem. *"The biggest predator you have is the rockfish and they are eating like hell. You think we are pulling your chain, I am telling you. We cut into a rockfish and there are 14 little flounder in his stomach."*
- Fishermen were concerned that ecosystems based management meant new, large area restrictions. They were not clear on what it is, or would mean for management. Upon explanation, they were generally in favor of a more multi-species and predator/prey approach to management.
- Fishermen were concerned that beach replenishment is driving fish away.

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Commercial 1 – Ocean City, MD

- Fishermen were concerned with the artificial reefs that are being created with old subway cars. Specifically, the subway cars are junk and are falling apart, creating debris on the ocean floor.
- When asked what they would like the fisheries to look like in the future, the fishermen stated they wanted fisheries to be fair and balanced.
- When asked what success for this effort would be, the fishermen responded that if they still have their jobs in ten years, then that would mean that the Council was successful.
- In speaking about the ITQs in the surfclams fishery, the participants noted that the number of boats in the fishery has gone from 135 to 35, which drove out all the businesses and the welders, and left the fishermen unable to lease their quotas.
- The fishermen were very fearful that there would be no younger fishermen left in the industry in the coming years.
- The fishermen were also fearful that sectors would drive all of the business up to Cape May and that Ocean City would no longer be a viable fishing port.
- One fisherman suggested that the industry could design their own system, but that members would have to operate within it for it to be effective.
- Fishermen suggested that the Council continue to hold meetings similar to this to get their input, and to continue to be honest.

Commercial Meeting 2: Chincoteague, Virginia

- In responding to a question about their biggest challenges, the fishermen cited the cumulative weight of all the regulations.
- They were frustrated with the overabundance of government marine biologists while they are losing their fishing jobs.
- The fishermen were concerned that, because of regulations and bureaucratic red tape, fishermen are backing away from the industry and there will be no new fishermen in a couple years.
- The fishermen remarked that recreational surf fishermen weren't seeing fish this year. The interviewees attributed it to the beach replenishment that is going on. *"They are pumping sand to replenish the beaches and the fish won't be there."*
- The fishermen believed that it is essential to educate the public about the good work that is going in fisheries, and get them to support local fish. *"The restaurants want to buy consistency and lower price; they won't buy a whole fish from me. So you need to get the public to buy the local fish, which is the plus side that will keep us fishing in the long term."*
- The fishermen were very concerned about "special interest regulations". Specifically, they mentioned harbor porpoises, and the fact that, even though there is little or no bycatch of porpoises in the Mid-Atlantic, the Mid-Atlantic fishermen are under the same restrictions as New England where there are hundreds of interactions a year, and it's just because they use the same gear.
- The fishermen were frustrated with NMFS for lack of accountability and the inability to explain their own regulations. They told a story of a fisherman that lost \$40K because he built nets a certain way that NMFS told him to, and another NMFS employee then told him he couldn't use them. *"We could call 4 people there and get 4 different opinions on how the regulations work."*
- Fishermen cited marine mammals and turtles as issues that hurt them most economically. Specifically, they mentioned that the timing of seasonal rolling closures is off. They cannot fish where it is most profitable and when it is safest.
- The fishermen were frustrated because they cannot fish above Cape Henelopen, and because now that New England has sector management, they couldn't get a fair share of the fish. They want to be able to have allocation down near Chincoteague, and don't want to have to go up to New England anyway.
- *"Fuel is a big problem but there isn't much we can do about it."*
- The fishermen believed that NMFS has to do a better job of explaining their scientific decisions, and what benefits might come down the road later. *"Need to do a better job selling it and getting people to understand where they benefit. If you sell people the idea that, if you sacrifice, there will be a real award. But we never get a carrot, we always get a stick." "If you reduced me 25% because it needs to be done, and I know that I will get that back in 6 years plus another 25%, I would go for it. We need that carrot."*
- *"It's like when the science is there to close the fishery they go with it, but when the science is there to open it, they ignore it."*
- The fishermen were concerned that the fisherman driving the NMFS survey trawls are failed fishermen, and don't know how to fish.
- The fishermen remarked that the dogfish are eating the codfish, and the dogfish population is exploding while codfish is diminishing. Inversely, in the UK, they believed that the cod population was coming back because the dogfish population was endangered.
- The fishermen remarked that they never know what is on the agenda at MAFMC meetings and rarely if ever receive mail from the MAFMC.

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Commercial 2 – Chincoteague, VA

- Around monitoring and reporting, the fishermen wanted the ability to use one report for everything, including state and federal data. They were frustrated with the disconnects between fishing history that have been occurring, especially around groundfish.
- When talking about ecosystems based management, the fishermen expressed that their first thought was that it refers to marine sanctuaries/ closed areas.
- The fishermen remarked on the communications gap between the Council and what the help to commercial fishermen needs to be. *“People that are making the decisions don’t understand. It seems there’s a mismatch of the capabilities.”*
- *“Have to secure your markets to secure your future. You can’t catch it if you can’t sell it.”*
- The fishermen were dismayed that they are portrayed poorly in the media and in schools. *“I just hope that people can recognize that we are food producers and not pirates and killers.... You have to better engage the public to understand that what we do is good.”*
- The fishermen were also concerned that large retailers like Wal-Mart and Costco are yielding to the interests of environmentalists and ceasing to carry certain species that are not overfished, specifically monkfish.
- *“The fishermen that are still involved in the industry now, this is it. Those that have hung in this long will try to stay. The people in it now are honest people. It would be a better working relationship if you don’t push any more out. If you want to help this industry, you have to encourage new participants.”*
- The fishermen were very concerned about the barriers to entry of new fishing participants. *“If you have the money to buy the permit, you might as well keep the cash instead.”*
- Around Atlantic Mackerel, the fishermen were concerned that they have never seen any mackerel in quite some time. *“There are no mackerel. I caught two this year. As long as there is a paper population, the regulators aren’t going to do anything.”*
- On bluefish, the fishermen said that there were plenty of bluefish out there, but that the nagging problem is that the price is so low, so they don’t fish them very often.
- *“On spiny dogfish – need to ensure a weight gain or a quota gain and entice industry to process down here. Need to entice them with security of a future catch. They won’t buy equipment if they don’t have the security.”*
- The fishermen believed that more in person meetings would be helpful to the process and their trust in the system.
- The vision of success for the fishermen is if they have their jobs in 10 years.
- *“It seems like things are leaning towards catch shares. Fishing opportunities will have to go to someone for that amount of poundage. Other than a new industry coming in and taking place, bigger boats, I don’t know if you will see all these other people. With catch shares, the permits for monkfish would be a million dollars. Right now if you asked me I would say no to catch shares and be stubborn. But there are EDF people trying to make it a commodity. Costco - they are trying to make it a commodity and make more profit on it.”*
- *“Overall, where is your labor force going to come from? I can’t keep people working for me for over a week. They can’t get out of bed after a week. They aren’t strong enough.”*
- *“Gear manufacturers don’t want to carry inventories because they don’t know if they will be able to sell it because the regulations for the nets can change anytime”*
- Fishermen wanted observer coverage to be uniform for everyone and emphasized that the data must be used if it is collected.

Commercial Meeting 3: Barnegat Light, New Jersey

- When asked about their top challenges, the group responded that the Council should stop treating them like crooks. They cited their commitment to using the scallop dredge to reduce bycatch. They stated that their RSA proposals developed the dredge to nip the problem before it got worse.
- Another challenge is that the Councils are hogtied by the Magnuson-Stevens Act. The group believed that they needed more fishermen on the Council to ensure that things are being done right.
- The fishermen expressed a great deal of frustration that some in their group started the tilefish fishery, and now have no quota, whereas others are holding tremendous amounts of quota.
- The group was fearful that they would lose their quota through catch shares, and cited the fact that Canadians hate IFQs because Clearwater bought up all the permits.
- A fisherman made the point that holding quota is all about who has the money to buy it.
- One participant mentioned that, having sat on many take reduction teams, he has seen a huge disconnect between the managers and the protected resources division. He believed the groups do not work together well, and are dysfunctional.
- The group agreed that small focus group meetings will help a larger share of fishermen participate. One person made the point that the issues have to be laid out in advance of the meetings to get input from fishermen.
- Several participants remarked that it is intimidating to speak at the Council meetings and that environmentalists are professional speakers, thereby giving them an advantage.
- One fisherman was frustrated that he went to Council meeting and waited to talk for quite a while, and when he did talk, the key decision-makers from NMFS were not even listening. *“They are appointed by the governors to serve us. It happens to me all the time that they don’t listen and it makes me furious.”*
- A recommendation was that the Council should have someone at the docks for a couple days to talk to the fishermen and gather input in small group meetings or one on one discussion.
- There was a great deal of frustration about the qualification dates that determined the tilefish quotas.
- One fisherman believed that the APs are skewed by individuals with interests, and suggested that AP members should be elected, not appointed. For instance, a certain % of the permit holders would have to approve them.
- When asked about the where the Council’s priorities should be, the participants expressed the need to get the Council members on par with the things that are going on in the ocean, before things are too late.
- They thought the Council needs to build flexibility into management and cited the rebuilding timelines as one of the key challenges. They suggested that the timelines be spread out so as not to create large swings in the fisheries. When the dogfish timeline took over and the fish came back quickly, the knee jerk reactions did not help – from a huge fishery to a closed fishery and then back open with no market.
- When asked about monitoring and reporting, the requirement to submit duplicate reports from dealers and fishermen was cited as a problem. The fishermen didn’t understand why they couldn’t just use the same report as the dealer and submit it on the same piece of paper.
- One fisherman was annoyed that he was required to pay 50 dollars a month for the VMS system for a directed shark permit, but the fishery hasn’t been open and it’s a waste of resources.

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Commercial 3 – Barnegat Light, NJ

- Several fishermen discussed the recommendation to have observer data verified by a third party to ensure accuracy. Specifically, they didn't think observers should be guessing weights of fish. In addition, they stated that different observer companies perform different measures on each type of tow, and that there is a lack of consistency. *"We had a guy that wouldn't even go outside on the boat; he would look out the window. It was pathetic. We were paying 700 bucks a day for data that is worthless."*
- One fisherman was frustrated that his compliance is dependent on U.S. mail delivery. He described the whole paper reporting system as a frustrating hassle.
- The group agreed that small group meetings with fishermen are very important. The suggestion was to do it before Council meetings so everyone knows what is at stake.
- With regard to ecosystem based management, the fishermen cited dogfish as an issue and stated that the Council will never have all the fisheries built to their peak at one time. *"People said in the 1940s if you caught a bluefish people were freaking out because there were none around. Now it's completely the opposite. It has to do with the ocean itself."*
- The fishermen did not believe that ecosystem based management is a realistic possibility because you would have to manage everything in the ocean. They were concerned that humans would create imbalances in the system.
- The group also spoke about the need to be able to fish flexibly for the fish that are available.
- The fishermen made the point that they had recommended closing the Elephant Trunk when they saw all of the small scallops there, but that it took the Council and NMFS too long to respond. *"We wanted to get our trips in before the hurricanes. We should have been able to start May 1st. Why did it take 8 months to sign off on this? They had to go through protected resources. We were as frustrated. Did they want us to catch more turtles? Is that why they made us wait until later in the season?"*
- One fisherman stressed the importance of cooperative research, and said that he was seeing changes with run-off and salinity. Also, he wondered where all the codfish, mackerel, and weakfish had gone.
- The fishermen were very concerned about the Transportation Board Recommendations for boat safety, specifically that as of July 1st, 2012 all major boat renovations have to be up to ABS standards. They were concerned these costs would make it impossible for people to fix up their boats.
- In addition, the group thought that safety should be a consideration in all management plans. In particular, it is dangerous when there are closures and there is weather before the closures, or if there are people waiting at the demarcation line for their clock to run out so they can go fishing.
- The fishermen were upset that public perception of fishermen is so low.
- *"Before the season opens, why can't they take a lotto system and send 10 boats in to get real data with observers. It's incredibly simple and it would work. There are ten boats in there, get data when you can. When they miss the dates for opening, it's a big deal for us. How would you like it if you didn't get paid? This is where they need to build flexibility in there. Need to be able to access these areas at the right times."* The fishermen believed that in the future, successful fisheries are those where there are real discussions about issues like dogfish.
- One fisherman recommended that each council member have a group of delegates underneath them. *"Maybe each person on the council should have a group of delegates underneath them, and you could get more representation. If every person had delegates and they had to vote together, like a juror pool, it would get more people involved and spread out the interests."*

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Commercial 3 – Barnegat Light, NJ

- The group believed that the southern monkfish area should be split out as a separate management area, and that the south should have their own advisory panel. The reasoning was that the interests are very different in New England.
- The fishermen believed that success in 10 years would be if Viking Village and other key industry businesses are still around and thriving.
- Another indicator of success would be if some of their recommendations start to happen in small ways.

Commercial Meeting 4: Cape May, New Jersey

- In response to a question about their biggest challenges, the fishermen responded that fuel costs have been a huge challenge for the entire industry.
- The participants expressed frustration that if they catch summer flounder off the northern coast of New Jersey, they have to take their boats to North Carolina to land the fish and maintain fishing history. This greatly reduces their profits due to the greater fuel costs.
- One fisherman remarked that the States don't want to lose these landings, because it would reduce their revenue, and that this creates political tension.
- The fishermen noted that "derby-style fisheries" hurt them economically, particularly for summer flounder. When the buyers of fish know when the season opens, it drops the price drastically at that time and gives the buyer inordinate bargaining power.
- One participant expressed fear that he would lose his history if he wanted to fish something more profitable in another state, for example.
- One participant noted that keeping up with changing regulations is another key challenge. The fishermen expressed distrust in the process of allocating quotas, and that it should be driven by proper and adequate science, rather than politics.
- The group agreed that the most confidence that fishermen have gained is from the research that they have funded, but that they shouldn't have to always pay for their confidence in science.
- One participant noted that some species just don't have enough science, particularly those with short life spans like squid, mackerel, and butterfish.
- The fishermen discussed the fact that the science is always lagging behind what is happening on the water, especially with choke species. The example cited was the butterfish cap on the loligo fishery. The fisherman stated that the sea is chock full of butterfish out on the edge, and that other fishermen up and down the coast agree on the radio. But one tow with too many butterfish can shut the whole loligo fishery down due to the meager quota [for butterfish].
- The fishermen believe the council is too conservative with the choke species, and that accurate observer data is key. Specifically, there is concern that miscounts by an observer can result in areas mistakenly being shut down.
- One fisherman noted that sometimes science is driven and funded by places that have agendas and want certain results. The fishermen do not have the money to compete with that.
- A participant stated that there are a huge amount of spiny dogfish in the ocean, as well as striped bass, and that they are preying on everything. He suggested a federal trip limit for striped bass. He said that even though there was just one of the greatest recruitments in years, there won't be change due to politics.
- It was stated that there is little funding for science in the Mid-Atlantic, but that most of the funds go to the New England species.
- One fisherman is frustrated because he took an observer out for loligo and when a tow had butterfish in it, the observer counted the percentage of butterfish and then counted the boats around and extrapolated the same amount of bycatch for those boats as well.
- All the fishermen agreed that the observer data needs to be professionalized and actually used.
- It was noted that SMAST set up a program through BoatTrax that has the closed areas on a grid, and shows where the yellowtail bycatch may be a problem, telling fishermen where they should not go.
- The group discussed that some observers seem to have an agenda and aren't there for the science. Due to this, they called for the observer program to be third-party verified.

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Commercial 4 – Cape May, NJ

- One fisherman was concerned that because environmentalist groups have such better representation at the Council, decisions are made based on their input more than fishermen.
- The group agreed that fuel is one of the biggest economic challenges, and cited that fuel used to cost as much as one crewman's earnings, but now it is 15 times what a crewman earns.
- A fisherman was frustrated by the high cost of the observer coverage and that fishermen invest thousands of dollars in nets but cannot leave the dock until you pay for the observers.
- It was stated that in the past, there were more commercial and recreational fishermen on the Council, but now there are very few.
- One fisherman remarked that it is good that the fisheries are rebuilt, but that in the course of rebuilding, the markets for those species were lost to imports. *"Now we are getting scup back for instance and now the challenge is making money and rebuilding that market. It will be a drawn out process."*
- The fishermen were frustrated by the MSC Certification process because it is expensive and appears to be a moneymaking scheme. They believe the Council should stand behind them in selling fish internationally, and hoped that the Council could help with marketing, particularly for rebuilt species like scup and surfclams.
- A participant said he remembered when there was a time that anecdotal information was accepted at the Council, but isn't anymore. He said he has been told many times *"that's anecdotal and doesn't count"*. He thought it wasn't right that PhDs that aren't out on the water are telling him what's going on in the ocean. *"In 8 to 10 years you are a doctor, but I have 45 years in the Atlantic Ocean. I know what the bottom looks like from Nantucket to Hatteras. I can say if there are a lot of fish. We can do on-the-cuff science and call it almost right on. And to get that be reflected in the rules is TOUGH."*
- Several fishermen spoke about the Gear Restricted Area, and the fact that the loligo are inside it and the scup are outside. They thought that because scup is rebuilt, the GRA should be removed.
- One meeting participant noted that, unlike the FDA whose job it is to help industry and expansion, fisheries management is more about 'how soon can we shut down the ocean so you can't catch fish?'
- *"The customers are convinced that you aren't trying to sustain the industry. You should be trying to save the industry, but there is an assumption that this industry will always be there. It won't always be there. As a consumer, what happens to all these fish they save? They get eaten by other fish. They die. Who are you saving them for? I can see both sides, is it science or is it a means to an end? The gate only swings one way and will never open up again."*
- One fisherman made the point that fishermen are the species that are disappearing the quickest.
- The group agreed that allowing anecdotal information into the Council process would help increase confidence from industry. They recommended WebEx and conference calls to help make it easier for fishermen.
- A participant commended the MAFMC staff for listening to fishermen's perspectives, and expressed frustration that ideas that are generated at the committee level that are good are blown out of the water when they get to the full council.
- One fisherman spoke about how fishermen can be their own worst enemy. He then cited the voluntary switch to 5.5 inch webbing as an example of the fact that fishermen want to be conservationists. *"If fishing and quotas and stocks are down, we won't argue with it. We won't fish what isn't there because the fish will be gone... We don't want to fish ourselves out of a job."*

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Commercial 4 – Cape May, NJ

- A fisherman was unhappy that the recreational catch is based on what recreational fishermen say they caught, anecdotal information, but commercial anecdotal information is not allowed.
- It was expressed that other ocean users (shipping lanes, recreational fishermen) don't get shut down for killing a turtle. Another frustration was that cities and onshore development are polluting the marshes and killing the algae and plankton, but commercial fishermen are still blamed for the decrease in fish. *"When they pump chlorine into the water, it kills the plankton and the algae. There are millions of people and the effluent is killing everything but why are we taking the brunt of it? That water doesn't hold life."*
- The group emphasized that there are a great deal of dogfish in the ocean.
- Fishermen expressed discontent with the need to call in 72 hours in advance for the loligo fishery. His point was that the species specific regulations keep the fishermen from participating in a mixed fishery.
- The fishermen believe that the Council will be successful in 10 years if the fishermen are still around and there is a new generation of fishermen coming up.
- The group suggested that there be one online reporting mechanism for all commercial fishing. *"If I only have to report my fish once, then each agency can get into my account and see what I caught and I don't have to report 10 different ways. All the information is in SAFIS."*
- The group discussed the need to preserve the independent fisherman in Cape May.
- Several participants made the point that catch shares are hurting smaller fishermen and that they are overregulating the decisions that fishermen have to make as businesses.

Commercial Meeting 5: Belford, New Jersey

- In describing his top challenges, one fisherman said that a couple of his sons would become fishermen, like him, and that there is no future for them.
- It was stated that the dogfish and rockfish are eating all the baby lobsters. *“You cut these fish open and there are lobsters in there, and I have never seen it before in my life. You can catch striped bass in 90 feet of water, which is not normal either. You are saving the predators, and that is potential income they are eating. You are changing the eco-chain and you are killing the fish that way.”*
- The fishermen were very upset that the only thing they could catch were 30 boxes of dogfish, and all the money went to fuel. *“There is no future. We aren’t going to make it if fuel comes to 4 dollars a gallon. We are being regulated out of business.”*
- The group agreed that the Coast Guard is “out to get them” and treats them like terrorists.
- The fishermen expressed concern that regulations were causing safety issues, specifically when boats have to hurry up to beat the clock.
- The fishermen were extremely frustrated about the amount of regulatory discards that they had.
- One participant stated that the key to effective regulations is the right mesh sizes.
- The group thought that it is a problem that they are all forced to target the same species at the same time and sell them to the processors for a depressed price, due to excessive supply.
- All the fishermen agreed that they have traditionally been a mixed fishery, but that the managers have forced them to go after one species at a time, and not get paid for it.
- The fishermen were concerned that catch shares would allow the big fishing companies to buy up all of their permits. *“We don’t need catch shares, we need mesh size and trip limits.”*
- The fishermen recommended that if you are a full time fisherman, you should have access to all the different permits.
- One fisherman was concerned because, without his sons, he would not be able to afford employees. He said that if they cut whiting, he would go out of business.
- One fisherman thought that for squid, *“all the 60 and 70 footers will be pushed out because they can’t catch as much as the big boats and don’t have the history.”*
- Around regulatory discards, the fishermen said that the dead fish they have to throw away would be enough to make them profitable.
- Several fishermen remarked that there are a large amount of butterfish in the ocean and that the stock is fine.
- The fishermen said they used to go to Council meetings but that they don’t anymore because the Council will do what they want anyway.
- There is a perception that the Council does not listen to fishermen, but that it is political and members are only out for their own needs. Because of this, they believe it will be tough to build confidence back. The group was asking to see some action based on what they say in this session.
- The group did not want to be managed under the New England FMPs, particularly for winter flounder.
- A fisherman suggested that there be compensation for advisory panel members.
- One fisherman remarked that the pollution is terrible and no one is going fishing in the bays because of it, and that fish cannot spawn. In other cases, natural habitat was developed as real estate. One fisherman stated that the water has warmed up and blamed it on climate change.
- The fishermen said *“If you don’t move on something we said here, why would you want to come back? We don’t need lip service, we need action.”* *“If you do one thing that we have asked here today, we will be dancing”.*

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Commercial 5 – Belford, NJ

- The fishermen were concerned about raising the limit on scup to 50k lbs per trip. They believed the fishery should stay open all year.
- The group was frustrated that they had been pushed out of the whiting fishery, even though they fished in it for decades. *“They are too selective about when we were fishing the whiting. We need a few years focused on one fishery, then another”*
- The fishermen were upset that many of the summer flounder that are landed come from waters off of Northern New Jersey, and are landed in North Carolina, so North Carolina gets the history.
- Several fishermen expressed concern that they cannot make a living because they have to declare 72 hours ahead of time for observers. They recommended 48 hours to help them plan for the weather. They were also upset that the observer data is poor quality and isn’t used. *“If I get a window of two days of good weather, I have to go. I get stuck inshore losing money if not. The observers stop us from making a living. That is a big problem.”*
- One participant said that the Council never gives any regulations enough time to work before they change them.
- *“We won’t be here in 5 years if things don’t change. There is no one behind us. We are the last people. We love what we do. Who is going to buy our boats?”*

Commercial Meeting 6: Hampton, Virginia

- The group discussed the difficulty for fishermen to become involved in the Council process.
- When asked about the top challenges in the fisheries, several issues were mentioned. Initially, inconsistency in the scientific recommendations was cited. The variation in the summer flounder quota was used as an example. The recommendation is to layer the NOAA research with more collaborative research. One participant noted that NMFS needs to better consider juvenile fish in the assessments to make long term recommendations.
- A point was raised that when a market for fish is lost, it does not come back easily. If the resource is going down you have to reduce quotas, but having huge swings makes it impossible to maintain the market.
- Science was cited as the major challenge for the whole process, *“the keystone of the entire problem”*.
- The fishermen said that the Science Center needs to be more receptive to data from other groups, particularly with the trawl surveys. Atlantic mackerel was mentioned as an example of a ‘paper fishery’, where industry was saying there are no fish and the quota was still too high based on NMFS science. The fishery was decimated due to overcapitalization. *“Until the science takes into account the daily observations of the industry, management will be limited. You have to have real time information to support the management.”*
- The group suggested that an industry committee review how the Science Center performs the trawl surveys.
- Another major challenge was the lack of consideration of the multispecies fisheries, and that the regulations don’t align. Fishermen want to catch the species together on the same tow.
- One participant suggested expanding the industry study fleet and using the data more effectively. *“The system needs to allow that information just like they were observers”*. Study fleet data was cited as being more accurate than observer data. It is difficult for fishermen to enroll in the program and become contractors.
- When discussing economic challenges, fuel was cited as a major issue. *“Fishermen are absorbing fuel costs and it isn’t reflected in the price of fish. Boats are reducing the percentage that they give the crew.”*
- The group discussed the loss of the scup market due to lower quotas.
- The fishermen stressed that technology is key to increasing fishermen participation in the council process. The group suggested that there should be recordings of every meeting and that there should be emails that go out with typed minutes from every meeting. They suggested filming the meetings and archiving them so they can be accessed, and having ‘cliff notes’ that can be downloaded for each issue. They suggest developing 5 questions for industry for every meeting. A key to making this work is that the participants need to be accountable, and they need to enter their name and email address.
- The participants cited the lack of institutional knowledge on the Council as a major problem. *“If a Council member performs well, he should be given the opportunity to stay on the Council. By design, those people are falling by the wayside. The Council cannot lose the value of the people with that knowledge.”*
- Consistency in regulations is needed—with more stability in the quota setting, an example being the scup quota being raised too quickly. The challenge is that the science is three to five years behind, so it needs to be supplemented with real-time, collaborative research to make decisions. In addition, one participant made the point that the 10 year rebuilding time-frame for the MSA isn’t right for all species.

Appendix B: Roundtable Session Summaries
Commercial 6 – Hampton, VA

- There was frustration expressed with the requirement to fill out the trip report, with estimated catch weight, before docking the boat. Fishermen want to record the actual weight when they land, and enforcement fined them for it.
- A fisherman stated that real time vessel reporting from at-sea should be a goal of monitoring. He cited yellowtail in the Nantucket Sound as the example of what it should be. He made the point that the choke species data can go to an independent third party without giving away the location of the target species.
- One participant suggested performing a pilot project with illex squid to report on the size of the squid when they are caught, with the end goal to be to catch the squid when they are largest and worth more, later in the season. He discussed the possibility of an ITQ in illex to reduce the ‘derby style’ fishery that hurts the fish population. His reasoning was that, because the illex fleet is so small, it might work.
- The scup GRA was cited as a major cost for the industry, and that it was backed by poor decision making.
- With regard to ecosystem based management, the participants said that no one knows what it is.
- The fishermen support ecosystem based management if it includes considerations for the effect of marine mammals. The point is that the considerations need to be across the board, not just for political reasons.
- When discussing what the fisheries in the future should look like, long term stability was a key goal. *“You can’t have all the species at high levels all the time. You need flexibility in the species that we catch. Fishermen should be able to catch the fish that reemerge in their backyard.”*
- The fishermen stressed that poorly implemented ITQs could drive 50% of the industry out of business, and said that uncertainty at what ITQs would look like, and the effects that they would have, make industry very concerned about them.
- A fisherman mentioned that Alaska had established low ownership caps for ITQs, and that it had been relatively successful, and that one ITQ has an “owner on board” specification which limits consolidation.
- All agreed that effective ITQs would have to be developed with the industry from the bottom up.
- One participant stressed that the Councils need to look at the effect of FMPs on communities.
- A processor in attendance of the meeting expressed concern that, if he didn’t own any boats, he would have to go out of business if ITQs became widespread. *“You need to preserve the historical fishing communities and look at the impact of ITQs on packing houses as well.”*
- When asked how the Council will know if it is successful 10 years from now, the group agreed that the Council should look at the level of fishing industry infrastructure that still remains at that point as a measure of success.
- The participants criticized the inaccuracy of the observer data.
- The participants do not believe that overcapacity is an issue in the fisheries because they believe many latent permits are defunct and there is no infrastructure to support a higher level of effort.
- The group was unhappy that, in certain fisheries, boats must travel to catch fish, for instance summer flounder off New York, and then they must travel back to their origin state to land the fish. This raises fuel costs significantly. The recommendation is that there is consideration of this issue, and one suggestion was that, because the price of fish would go up due to diversified geography of landings, the States may not lose as much revenue as they project.
- Lastly, the participants made the point that there is little collaboration between the State data systems and that piecemeal state to state management is making fishery management more difficult. They stressed that real action would have to be collaborative to be successful.

Commercial Meeting 7: Lynnhaven, Virginia

- In describing the top challenges, the fishermen immediately cited trying to make money and trying to survive only working 6 months of the year as their major challenges.
- Another major challenge for the group is regulatory discards. The fishermen were frustrated that when they set their net and catch more dogfish or striped bass than they are allowed to keep, they have to throw them overboard. Regulations were blamed for causing fishing inefficiency. *“You are forced into wasting fish, the regulations force you to waste.”*
- A fisherman spoke of how he cannot foresee investing in his boat because he was not involved in the entry process for certain fisheries when the quotas were decided. There is no way for him to get the fish he needs.
- Another participant cited overlap in protected species regulations with striped bass and dogfish regulations as a significant challenge. *“You need a legal expert on the boat to figure out what you can and cannot do.”*
- Another mentioned mesh size restrictions and having to tie his nets down as challenging regulations. Specifically, the 7 inch mesh restrictions on striped bass make it difficult to buy nets and tie them down.
- The group agreed that it is hard to attend Council meetings and that most of the people that attend are environmentalists. The fishermen said they are not well represented, are not up with the technology, and cannot understand the proceedings in the meetings.
- Recent enforcement of the harbor porpoise laws were cited as a major challenge, although fishermen said they have not caught any and the data shows that. The fishermen were frustrated that no one wants to publicize that they are not killing harbor porpoises.
- Constantly changing gear regulations were cited as an issue. *“Gear modifications kill us, managers don’t phase them in, and we have 50 nets to change. The rules need to be consistent and it would be easier on us.”*
- The group of fishermen agreed that small group meetings are the best way to hear from the fishermen, but they noted that the Council doesn’t have as much control as NMFS.
- One fisherman spoke of the aging population of fishermen and the inability of young people to get into the fishery as worrisome challenges.
- The point was raised that since the reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Act and the SSC becoming a more prominent part of the process, fishermen are no longer listened to at the meetings. *“I used to go to sea bass meetings, but once they changed the MSA, with the peer review by the SSC, there is no reason to go to those meetings anymore. Before we could discuss how many fish are in the ocean. But that is a done deal now, so there is no reason to go. No matter how much you voice your opinion, the science is still what it is and they won’t listen to you. You can go up there, they have to hear you by law, but they don’t have to listen.”*
- The fishermen agreed that they doubt the science because they see things that are happening differently on the water. *“We saw all these dogfish, and we were telling you, and scientists didn’t think it was possible, and finally they realized. It was flat out denial from the scientists.”*
- A participant stated that the problem with the science is that it is decided on by people who are never out on the water. *“We can’t swallow the science from the Albatross. If they went with our people we would have a better time with the science.”*
- *“When a third generation trawl fisherman tells a young scientist what he has done wrong, and the government still uses that data, that is the hard pill to swallow.”*

Appendix B: Roundtable Session Summaries

Commercial 7 – Lynnhaven, VA

- Fishermen expressed frustration and distrust of the observers, and believe the observer data needs to be more accurate and needs to actually be used. *“I copy the reports when they create them on my boat, but when I requested copies back, there were three different days where I had killed things that I hadn’t killed, and it was something I should have sued for. That paperwork led me to quit believing in the observers.”*
- One fisherman remarked that scientists might set a net for dogfish in one place, and not catch any at all, meanwhile two miles away there are an over-abundance of dogfish. *“We only use one tow to catch our limit on dogfish.”*
- The group of fishermen were frustrated that with bycatch from commercial trawlers and said that they see large amounts of discarded striped bass in their wake.
- A major issue with regulations is that commercial boats fish for dogfish outside the 3 mile line and catch many striped bass, because the fish swim together. The group felt that the 3 mile line restriction on striped bass is arbitrary and is creating more bycatch than there should be.
- In order to increase confidence in the Council process, the fishermen suggested that the Council be more consistent and take politics out of the process. They believe the industry needs better representation. The perception is that the Council holds meetings out of obligation, not because they serve a useful purpose in the process.
- *“Fishermen feel like the endangered species. [Managers] look out for the turtles more than us. If you are seeing increasing turtle stocks as there have been, there are going to be greater interactions with them by fishermen.”*
- The fishermen were concerned that they are no longer respected members of the community and that they are frowned upon and treated like “drug dealers” due to enforcement. *“We had 50 coast guard agents come on our boat when we docked once. They had a swat team! People in the restaurant thought we were criminals.”*
- The group suggested that the Council create more regulations that fishermen can understand. *“Don’t ask us to look in the federal register.”*
- One participant stated that, *“If the intent is to have viable fisheries, the Council needs to look at how the regulations affect the economics of the fisheries.”*
- The fishermen stressed that they need the flexibility to fish for different species when they are available. The issue is that when something is closed down, it puts pressure on other areas and drives down the price. *“It’s like squeezing a balloon.”*
- Participants noted that fishermen get driven out of the fishery because they cannot traverse fisheries.
- *“My son wanted to be a fishermen and I told him don’t even think about it because before you realize it you will be 40 and unemployed.”*
- Fishermen were frustrated that they have to report multiples times for the federal and state data, and recommended consolidating the reporting.
- The group made the point that in current reporting, you are required to estimate the weight of the catch at-sea before you can weigh it, and that is the data that gets reported. If you don’t you get a ticket. *“Wouldn’t they rather know the actual weight? We get fined for getting the data right. So there needs to be another cell in the report for estimated and actual. They said ‘we get it from dealers’, but they are making a nightmare for themselves. You are going to get a 500 dollar ticket for that? ”*
- On the topic of ecosystem based management, the fishermen agreed that the Council needs to look more closely at the cycles of fish and ecosystem interactions.
- The group was frustrated that they would reach their limit for dogfish so quickly, in 20 days, and noted that *“you have to have a consistent supply of whatever market you develop; these continual market*

Appendix B: Roundtable Session Summaries
Commercial 7 – Lynnhaven, VA

disruptions kill us. Dogfish cutting houses are going extinct because it's almost impossible to run them for a 20 day fishery."

- When asked what the fisheries should look like in the future, the fishermen mentioned easy to understand regulations and rewriting the MSA with input from industry.
- Fishermen mentioned Alaska as the only state that is successful with its fisheries, and cited a good marketing arm as part of that success.
- Successful management in the future meant reasonable quotas with the opportunity for new fishermen to enter the fisheries.
- Fishermen said that success would mean that they are still fishing in 10 years.
- Fishermen mentioned regulatory discards again as a huge issue and suggested allowing fishermen to transfer their catch to other boats so it is not wasted.
- The group discussed the challenge that no new fishermen can enter the fishery and that it's too hard to survive for too little reward.
- Opening and closing of seasons was cited as a major challenge, because the price of the fish is killed when the season opens due to a large supply from trawlers.
- Fishermen expressed the need for more cooperation between states up the coast.
- The fishermen described themselves as a group of guys that want to work, and don't want handouts or government assistance, just something to pass on to their kids.

Commercial Meeting 8: Stonington, Connecticut

- The group of fishermen stressed that Connecticut needs representation on the Mid-Atlantic Council, and suggested that allocations of summer flounder are reflecting that lack of representation.
- Several fishermen expressed discontent with the need to land different fish from the same tow in different states due to inconsistent regulations. *“Guys have to sit out there on the water just so they can bring their fish back in.” “So we went to point Judith, and we also had caught some sea bass, and we had to bring them back here to Connecticut just to land them legally. “We caught scup and black sea bass in the same tow, and you have to bring them back to separate states (RI and CT respectively) or you had to throw them overboard to bring in your sea bass. It’s sad because the fish are there. They are there and we won’t get paid.”*
- The fishermen suggested that there should be consistency in regulations across all species to maintain the market. The scup market price fluctuations were mentioned as an example of poor regulatory impacts. *“Need an established amount to go to the market every week to get a stable price.”*
- The group emphasized the point that predators, specifically striped bass and dogfish, are eating everything. They blamed their abundance for depleted stocks, as well as pollution and habitat reduction. *“But to conservationists it is always the fisherman’s fault, not the people who pour chemicals on their lawn. We are the bad guys.”*
- The group was very concerned that shifting of effort would drive them out of business, particularly as it might relate to developing catch shares. They believed that latent effort must be addressed and that the qualifying dates for history were flawed. *“We backed off on groundfish when they told us to. Every time you do the right thing you get screwed.”*
- The fishermen highlighted equal representation of states as a major issue that the Council must address. *“The man down the street shouldn’t have a better shot at making a living than I do. A guy 20 miles away is doing well and another is starving, just because of the state line.”*
- Another issue is the need for fishermen to be able to diversify into different species if need be.
- There was a great deal of frustration that the U.S. imports 80% of its seafood but they are throwing fish overboard as regulatory discards in droves.
- One small dealer expressed the need for a consistent price to maintain the market for scup. *“At our little fish market in New Haven, we used to sell 5000 lbs. a week, now you can’t sell 500 lbs. It’s because price fluctuations and lack of supply. If it stood at a 2 dollar market we would be better off.”*
- The fishermen expressed the need for the Councils to do more to market seafood products. 80% of the consumption comes from a foreign country with no regulations. *“A salesman told me an executive chef wanted his tilapia fresh, that just goes to show how much these guys know.”*
- There was a desire to see less dependence on trawl surveys and more dependence on cooperative research for assessing stocks. There was concern that because of where and when the trawl surveys are done, they do not provide representative data.
- The group recommended that the observer coverage should be submitted in real time in order to supplement the trawl surveys and that fishermen should be able to verify the data collected. *“You need to put more weight on the observer data. If you peer review that, it might come out better than the trawl survey.”*
- One participant believed that it was unreasonable to have a 72 notification requirement for squid.

Appendix B: Roundtable Session Summaries
Commercial 8 – Stonington, CT

- A participant also expressed concern over how overzealous enforcement could be-- the “punishment does not fit the crime”
- The fishermen were frustrated that observers are sometimes unable to identify certain types of fish, that they make more money than fishermen, and that fishermen must account for their safety. *“Why would fishermen go fishing if they can make more as an observer?”*
- The group suggested cleaning up polluted estuaries as a means to recover the stocks.
- With regard to communications, the fishermen suggested that the Council do a better job of communicating what is on the agenda for meetings, and use permit holder letters to communicate. Moreover, one participant suggested that positive stories of collaboration with industry need to be more effectively communicated.
- The group was optimistic that small group meetings could help fishermen get more input into the process.
- One participant gave an overview of how the Federal Government had backed the overcapitalization of the fisheries.
- *“Corporate America can come in and buy up all of the allocation with catch shares if they want to.”*
- The fishermen identified the difficulties of enforcing accumulation limits due to lacking transparency in ownership structures (multiple LLCs, etc.).
- The fishermen stressed that there is too much nitrogen run-off and that it is ruining inshore fisheries and habitat. The suggestion is to tell homeowners that they cannot put chemicals on their lawns.
- When asked what fisheries should look like in the future, the group made several suggestions. The first was equal distribution of the resource with a stable supply of each species. The second point was that there should be more alignment between the States on how they manage the resources. And lastly, fishermen don’t want to discard fish. Scup and summer flounder are cited as the species with the largest discards, particularly in the summer.
- One participant made the point, *“As the fluke stock grows, the biomass to the east on George’s Bank aren’t being incorporated. And because of the trip limits we can’t go out there and get them. But we want those fish out on George’s Bank, they are dying of old age.”*
- Fishermen recommended a weekly catch quota vs. a daily quota, that way fishermen would not have to discard as much fish or go out on as many tows. *“I got lucky in one tow, so I should be able to land my quota for the week.”*
- Fishermen recommended holding more small group meetings.
- When asked how the Council will know it is successful ten years from now, the fishermen responded that they would still be in business or their children will be in business.
- The group recommended an apprenticeship program to get younger people into fishing. *“We want to be a viable industry that attracts younger people to do the same thing.”*
- When asked for any final thoughts, the fishermen asked that observers treat them with more respect, and that that was a factor of leadership of that program. *“They pretend like they control what I do. Their attitude is horrendous. And leadership dictates that. Someone in those companies has to come to task on this. When they do come onboard, they need to treat us with respect. We always find the observers getting worse and worse. Same experience across both companies. And one of the companies is out of Canada. It’s an adversarial relationship. We have invested our money, time, and effort to build a business. To be disrespected on a daily level, to be treated like criminals, it’s wrong.”*

Commercial Meeting 9: Point Judith, Rhode Island

- When asked about their top challenge in the fisheries, the group responded that the lack of representation on the Mid-Atlantic Council was a major concern. They stressed that a large portion of their revenue comes from Mid-Atlantic species.
- Another challenge was for them to make business plans with ever changing FMPs. For example, they are unable to make projections and make plans with banks if they do not know when the seasons will be open.
- The fishermen also cited science as a major challenge. Specifically, they asserted that the existing science is out of date and worthless. The calibration of the Bigelow and Albatross was a major pain point for the group.
- One participant was frustrated that the SSCs are made up of retired scientists that depend on grants to keep them in business. *“They won’t bite the hand that feeds them.”*
- In responding to a question about the top economic challenges, fuel prices were said to be the biggest challenge.
- Annual changes in management plans were cited as another major issue. *“Having big volumes of fish doesn’t help if you cannot plan for it. On the other side, when you reduce the quotas, the market disappears and you cannot get a good price for it.”*
- One participant supported transferable quota between the sectors (recreational/commercial).
- Another fisherman was frustrated because he predicted the collapse of the mackerel fishery due to the overflow of effort.
- The group agreed that the Council needs to listen to industry when it describes what it is seeing on the water.
- Several participants discussed the issue that no one is targeting scup because there is no infrastructure to process them and the price for them is so low. *“It takes a 100k lbs. of scup to be profitable with these prices and the market is saturated at that point. I’d like to see some sort of funding to get into shore side facilities to build up that infrastructure. Our current shore side facilities won’t invest in new species without assurance of their availability. By doing this, you make it so fishermen don’t have to constantly beat at certain stocks, and you spread out the effort among the fleet.”*
- The group was adamant that there is a very large number of dogfish in the ocean currently. Without a larger allocation, the fishermen didn’t believe they could set up infrastructure or process them to get them to market.
- One fisherman had the idea that there should be a RSA pool to assist with shore side development.
- The group was anxious for the butterfish fishery to be reopened and to re-establish that market.
- One participant recommended that the Council consider multi-year quotas for its species to help increase business confidence of the industry.
- The fishermen were supportive of the AP Performance Report method of convening the Advisory Panels with the SSC. *“The AP members know the fishery, SSC knows the science. So having the AP and the Committee meet together, you can move faster and react to the science faster.”*
- One fisherman suggested that the MAFMC begin convening the Advisory Panels with the Committees for more clarity and agreement on industry recommendations.
- A fisherman said that the Science Center should appoint a new Director that is a good manager of people, not just a scientist.
- One participant was frustrated because scientists say they will use “best available science”, but are selective in what they use, citing the omission of State surveys and cooperative research.

Appendix B: Roundtable Session Summaries
Commercial 9 – Point Judith, RI

- Several attendees expressed frustration at the SSC because, despite industry input, they still believe that there are mackerel in the ocean and that there are no butterfish. The attendees believe the opposite is true.
- *“I don’t want to be a naysayer, I try to be realistic by attending SSC meetings, but I don’t go anymore. I beat my head against the wall when I do. All of us have participated in the study fleet, and collaborative science, and with NEAMAP, we never see it integrated into the science. We have these entrenched scientists saying ‘why should we change this now? The reason this room is not full is because nothing comes from our input. There is no transparency. With the RSA, we put all these fish aside, and nothing comes of it, it’s not transparent. What is coming from that? We are continuously filling out reports, landing reports, taking observers, where does that data go? Its less than 1% of it is used in the modeling for stock assessments. This is our frustration.”*
- The fishermen believed that the Science Center should admit that the timeline is lost and broken for their trawl survey, and that by not doing side by side tows, they had made a mistake.
- One fisherman called for private sector businesses to be performing more contract work for NOAA. *“Fisheries are unique in that the government does all the work. Government doesn’t do it with building roads or a million other things that get contracted out. It’s just bad service.”*
- When asked about how to improve communications, the fishermen suggested using Youtube videos and to film a presentation that a fisherman does at the Council. They also suggesting expanding the MREP program.
- Several fishermen are frustrated with the 72 hour notification requirement for the loligo fishery.
- One fisherman was frustrated because he wanted to see the raw data from the spring results of the Bigelow tow, and was unable to obtain it. *“I can’t get any of that data and no information. It’s like I am asking for highly secretive military stuff.”*
- Another fisherman suggested that the MAFMC should emulate fishery management in Alaska.
- There were issues with lack of transparency in RSA funding. *“For all of us that are putting money into the RSA, we have no idea what we are getting back from that.”*
- The fishermen stressed that they want to know how study fleet data and RSA data is integrated into management. They suggested that the MAFMC should get the Science Center to have this kind of presentation fishermen, and post it as a Youtube video to help increase confidence. *“They try to get us to participate and we don’t know where the data goes. It’s that two way conversation that makes the difference. ASMFC does this in their winter meeting; it’s the right way to go.”*
- The fishermen expressed a desire to better understand the current survey work and to expand the spatial and temporal coverage of it. *“The data feeding in, it’s not good enough to get the certainty they need.”*
- When asked what the Mid-Atlantic fisheries should look like in the future, the group expressed that they would like to see diversity in the fleet, not just 180 foot vessels. *“We need to maintain the infrastructure and have healthy communities up the coast.”*
- The fishermen also want to see more informed and engaged fishermen at all levels of the process. *“We are where we are because fishermen withdrew. There are not enough fishermen on the Council. There aren’t enough on the APs, involved and helping direct this process. Fishermen should be involved in every step. MREP helps us hold our ground in the meetings. If we don’t understand MSY, we are out of the discussions right there.”*
- The participants defined success in 10 years by whether they are still in business, and the number of meetings they have to attend.
- *“It would be a great exercise to do this type of meeting on an ongoing basis. People would talk about it and a regular cadence could build momentum and break down the disconnect with fishermen.”*

Commercial Meeting 10: Montauk, New York

- When asked about their top challenges in the fisheries, the fishermen responded that making business decisions about how the next year will go based on regulations is a big challenge.
- Another challenge is the different quota systems between all the different states. *“You go out and catch species, some states are open for them, but others aren’t. So I go to RI for fluke where it’s open, and it’s closed for sea bass, so I have to dump the sea bass. You have to dump perfectly good fish in the water because of the state by state regulations.” “There have been cases where we have caught fish destined for one market, and because of emergency we have to go to another state, and so you have to dump the fish.”*
- The fishermen were concerned that they are not well represented at the Council, while ENGOs have a high degree of representation.
- Several fishermen were frustrated that the requirement is for a 72 hour observer notification requirement for loligo trips, and believed that this regulation was a push from the environmental industry.
- *“Another challenge we face with offshore boats, is how to make the fleet more efficient with fuel. We need to become more efficient to be profitable. If I have to go 200 miles to catch fluke, I should be able to land that fish wherever I can. State by state management is a huge problem right now. Fuel is a major challenge. The fuel and state by state management are tied together. It is ridiculous if you have a North Carolina permit and go to Hudson Canyon off New York, then have to steam two days back to land the fish in NC, it’s ridiculous. And the fish end up in New York at Fulton Fish Market anyway. We need to be able to make money on the fish that we catch. That should be a priority of the Council.” “Right now the regulations are taking all the profit and giving it to the fuel guy.”*
- The fishermen made the point that if the quota is too large, the fish prices drop too much and it is not worthwhile. *“A man has to be able to catch enough to make a day’s pay, otherwise, shut it off.”*
- The fishermen were frustrated because of the lag in management behind what they are seeing on the water. Consequently, they expressed the need for more expedient and accurate science.
- There was frustration among the fishermen that those who played by the rules lost their quota.
- The fishermen discussed the loss of infrastructure on Long Island, particularly in Greenport and Shinnecock.
- The participants discussed the phenomena that, when a certain state’s summer flounder fishery opens, it will lower the price for the fish. *“The price is driven by regulations – the opening and closing of the fisheries.”*
- The group was frustrated that there are multiple layers of precaution in the assessment. They recommended that the Advisory Panels provide context to the fishery earlier in the stock assessment process.
- The group was very frustrated by the level of discards that were deemed acceptable for winter flounder. *“What is the logic that the council system came up with winter flounder, saying it’s ok to discard 6 million pounds a year? They raise the quota to accommodate more discards.”*
- The group was in agreement that the observer data must be used more effectively. *“100 observed days are a hell of a lot more useful data than one tow of the Bigelow.”*
- The fishermen all agreed that they have very little trust for the observer program because the observers are young, there is little oversight of the program and the quality of the data is poor. *“We don’t trust observers and they don’t trust us. How do you know they are putting the right data in? I resent the program. My dog has more sea time than those kids. I have to have an 18 year old kid that is going to inspect my boat?”*

Appendix B: Roundtable Session Summaries
Commercial 10 – Montauk, NY

- One participant told a story of how an observer on his boat was making assumptions on the discard rate for boats surrounding him in a fishing area. He was fishing for yellowtail, while the other boats weren't fishing for yellowtail, but they were receiving the assumed discard rate nonetheless. Another participant said he had seen that happen with loligo and butterfish.
- A fisherman made the point that this meeting is an important step to getting more fishermen involved. He was frustrated that any time he attended the Council meetings, the members ignored him when he spoke.
- The Chairman of the MAFMC, who was in attendance at the meeting, suggested that two good ways to become involved in the Council process are in the advisory panels or during the scoping and committee meetings for each amendment.
- One fisherman was frustrated that the trawl surveys this year measured the summer flounder offshore during a warm period when they are inshore. His concern is that they are missing the fish due to weather, and that going by the calendar reduces the accuracy of the trawl surveys.
- The group said that they have tried to get people appointed to the Council, but that the NMFS never appoints their nominees. "It stops at the Governor's level."
- The group was frustrated that quotas are always going down, but never go back up.
- One fisherman was concerned with single species management. His point was that the sea bass and scup swim together, and sea bass discards are a problem. *"The observer was with us this week. We threw \$3000 dollars' worth of sea bass and blackbacks overboard. It's always been a mixed trawl fishery. They knew this. Single species management isn't conservation because observers and everyone knows you catch the fish together and you have to discard them. It's not right."*
- *Another fisherman spoke out in favor of a cumulative catch limit. "You need something like a cumulative trip limit. Right now scup is 8,000lbs per trip, so if you catch 12,000 in a tow, you have to throw 4,000 over. Then the next day you catch 3,000. It's more conservation minded to not do it day by day, but to do it every week. It's a cycle that these regulations make you throw fish away. This is un-American."*
- A fisherman suggested using the NEAMAP data more widely and that the Science Center needs to supplement its data collection with industry sources.
- An attendee discussed the technical details of why the gear on the Albatross is flawed, including problems with the size of the boat vs. the gear.
- Several in the group discuss the inequality related to state by state quotas for summer flounder. He described the Council meeting where the Council voted for state by state quotas for flounder and a coast-wide quota for scup. He believed the coast-wide quota is much more equitable.
- One fisherman suggested that if a fisherman has a permit for a certain state, he should be able to land his fish in that state. *"I need fish that I can catch nearby. We have permits in many states, the problem now is that fuel is pushing 4 bucks, and it doesn't work anymore to move around so much. And it's safety – they make us steam through storms"*
- An attendee suggested that the Council commission a study to determine the most scientifically valid way to allocate the quota.
- Around communications, the fishermen suggested that the best way to let them know what is going on at the Council is for them to get a call from someone who knows the agenda. Another suggestion was that the Council meetings are recorded and available on Youtube or online at a later date.
- The group was very adamant that all states should be equal, and that summer flounder should be managed on a federal quota.

Appendix B: Roundtable Session Summaries
Commercial 10 – Montauk, NY

- When asked what the fisheries should look like in the future, the fishermen said that smaller boats, not consolidated big boat fisheries, are what the fisheries should be. They expressed fear that catch shares would force a great deal of consolidation.
- *“The management process stops when the SSC determines what the TAC is. There is no more arguing after that point. So in watching that, I realize that the most important ingredient is the data. There hasn’t been enough emphasis in collecting better data and analyzing it. We need more resources to improve the quality and speed of the data.”*
- One fisherman suggested that environmental groups should be spending their money to drastically improve the science.
- *“As far as visions go, there should be a buy back of the boats. Guys that have been doing it for 30 years need to get out. If you get those guys out, it would give me more fish. A lot of guys would like to get out but there is no way to do it. I don’t like to say it should be industry funded but that is a possibility.”*
- One fisherman noted that the big boats in Rhode Island are being bought out by the processors in anticipation of catch shares.
- Another attendee was concerned in a catch share scheme, because other boats with two captains would get more history than him, he would be pushed out of the fishery.
- *“I’d like to see observed data used for science rather than punishment. When they first told us about the logbooks they said it wasn’t for punishment. That was a lie. I want to know what happens to the observer data.”*
- Another fisherman stressed that the dogfish are very abundant and that they are eating everything in sight. *“Dogfish are like locusts. We let them eat our crops. They are the rats in the ocean. There are dogfish 30 miles out. There is no other fish you can catch everywhere.”*
- When asked how the Council will know if it is successful in 10 years, the fishermen responded that if they are still around to have a meeting, that would be success.
- Another attendee said that the Council would be successful if state by state quotas are abolished in the EEZ. *“They do nothing but promote discards.”*
- The fishermen asked if there was a meeting they could attend to help abolish state by state quotas for summer flounder. *“Why is state by state so complex? Why can a Virginia dealer ship to New York, but we cannot ship? You should be able to punch it into Boattrax wherever you caught the fish. When I can take my Virginia fish to land it in New York, this process will have been a success.”*
- Another fisherman said that if young men are able to succeed at becoming fishermen, than the council will have been a success.
- Another attendee defined success as improved flexibility in regulations. *“The key to sustainability is flexibility. And if I don’t catch it, I am scared I will lose the fish, and lose my flexibility to catch different species. That is why I am scared of catch shares.”*
- A participant was frustrated because he had been pushed out of the groundfish fishery because he did not have history during the rebuilding period. *“The other guys who did fish when they weren’t supposed to got the history.”*
- A fisherman asked what must be done to amend the scup gear restricted area. His challenges with it included that it was taking up the canyon lines, and interfering with tilefish fishing as well as illex fishing in the summer. He believed it should be at 90 fathom.

Commercial Meeting 11: New Bedford, Massachusetts

- When asked about their biggest challenges, the fishermen agreed that having to travel to different states to land fish for different state quotas is the biggest problem. *“On summer flounder, I have permits from North Carolina, Virginia and from New Jersey and I cannot land them here in Massachusetts. So I have to travel around to land 10k lbs. in North Carolina, and use all this fuel. If I own a permit for a state, I should be able to land it here in Massachusetts and allocate it to the NC quota. This is not conservation of fuel.”*
- The fishermen were also frustrated that their landings got credited toward the North Carolina history, thereby giving that state more quota.
- One fisherman said that some regulations make him feel like a criminal. *“But the whole idea, we are not supposed to, by law, have Rhode Island fish on the boat when we land the New Jersey fish. That whole idea is ridiculous. Then we feel like criminals when we take the fluke into port.”*
- Another fisherman believed that there are powers that be at the Council that are controlling the allocation of summer flounder. He was frustrated that he could get \$3 per pound of summer flounder in Massachusetts, and only \$1.25 in Virginia. And when he tried to truck it from Virginia to Massachusetts to get the better price, he was charged so much for packing the fish (\$2 per pound) that it wasn't worth it. *“If I could land my fish and have it allocated to a Virginia permit, I could get 3 bucks and save the fuel. It's absurd, the Council needs to understand that. The Council could fix that very easily.”*
- One fisherman talked about a biomass of summer flounder on the cultivator shoal that is not being considered in the surveys. *“We need better science to sample those fish. The survey doesn't go there. The survey stopped going north and east. They insist on towing where the computer says to.”*
- Another serious challenge was the butterfish cap on the loligo fishery. The fishermen didn't understand why a bycatch fishery would shut down loligo and said the science on butterfish is flawed.
- The group believed that there should be a representative from Rhode Island on the Council.
- The fishermen were frustrated about New England Council meetings. They cited the lack of direct discussions with the stakeholders as a big issue. They were upset that public comment was only fifteen minutes before the vote and there were PowerPoint presentations instead of discussions. Additionally, they were unhappy that advisory panel meetings are not always held before groundfish committee meetings.
- One fisherman described attending a scoping meeting for winter flounder, and was frustrated that fishermen were told to stay on one side of the room. He also believed that there should be additional trawl survey tows to model the fish populations more accurately. *“If you look at that survey, it's probably 300 or so 20 minute tows. If you eliminate the Canadian aspect, maybe there are 400 tows from Hatteras to the Bay of Fundy. That isn't extensive research. The stocks are either off the chart or they are gone? And then the managers flooded the market with yellowtail, then the next year they shut it down?”*
- The group discussed an occurrence when the trawl survey boat was towing into the tide at 4 knots, too slowly to catch flounder. This was the root of part of their distrust. They believed more fishermen should be on the science boats.
- *“We have been fishing at 30% of Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for years. I would be ashamed to be in management when we are fishing at that level. We lost more fish on paper that we were able to catch.”*

Appendix B: Roundtable Session Summaries
Commercial 11 – New Bedford, MA

- When asked about the primary factors reducing their yields, the fishermen cited closed areas, particularly the eastern Canadian closed areas.
- The fishermen described the need for another independent survey with merit, and cited the SMAST scallop survey as an example.
- *“Science is saying that if you can’t see and measure it, it doesn’t exist. That is wrong.”*
- The fishermen discussed mistakes made by observers on their boats, such as not correctly identifying the species
- The group believed that the best option for managing and monitoring groundfish would be a full retention fishery with monitoring by cameras.
- The fishermen discussed the problem with regulatory discards. They believe those dead fish shouldn’t be wasted.
- Another fisherman believed that the observer program is driven by private companies trying to make money, not so much to count the fish.
- There was frustration that the cod discard mortality is calculated at 100%. They said that scientists at SMAST had used tagging to prove that it is not 100%.
- The group was very frustrated with the assumed discard rates, particularly the 14% assumed discard rate for yellowtail when skate is caught.
- The fishermen warned the MAFMC participants to not make the same mistakes with catch shares that were made in New England.
- The fishermen were distrustful of sector management; they said that it limits their ability to fish opportunistically.
- In addition, the group didn’t understand why monkfish would be managed under catch shares, because the current management system is successful.
- *“The basic problem with catch shares is that it separates the fish from the fisherman. It means anyone with money can come in and buy up the fish. Its consolidation in its worst form. It takes the fish away from the fishermen. It’s already happened with clams and is happening with squid. By the time the dust settles there will be 15 guys that control the entire squid fishery.”*
- One participant described an encounter with a Coast Guard cutter near Southern Long Island. In that situation, the Coast Guard boarded his boat and went through his personal emails and checked his mesh size. *“The rule about the mesh size, so we can’t take a box of squid with our fluke, that is bugging us.”*
- The group stressed that cooperative research is essential to getting the science right.
- The fishermen believe that the data sets from observers and the study fleet should be used more widely.
- One participant described issues with the trawl survey techniques. Based on fluctuations on the inclinometer, he was concerned that the dredge was jumping off the bottom of the ocean floor, and suggested to the scientists that they use more wire. But they said it had never been done that way so they could not make the adjustment.
- The group proposed that the industry should be able to make decisions on who gets grants from the RSA money. *“A handful of people always get the cooperative research. You need to spread around the money for cooperative research. If you lock it into one or two recipients, it’s biased.”*
- The group discussed the need to develop the market for scup and suggested that NMFS could help develop markets for fish. *“It has to start early on, you have to market to the schools and the military. 50k pounds of scup isn’t doing much good. You have to spread it out throughout the year. Scup are worth more in the summer. You have to get to the states and spread it out.”*

Appendix B: Roundtable Session Summaries

Commercial 11 – New Bedford, MA

- The fishermen were frustrated that they are portrayed as villains in the media, and believed children should be taught at an early age that fishermen are important and not killers.
- The group believed that fishermen should be more involved in the decisions about when seasons should be opened and closed in order to help develop and maintain healthy markets for fish.
- The group did not think that MSC certifications should be necessary, and that they would drive up the cost of the product, and reduce access to markets where MSC certification is required.
- The group agreed that there should be more small meetings with fishermen and that it could help increase confidence in the process. They believed the meetings should be monthly and said that one little change based on fishermen input would go a long way to restoring faith in the process, and would greatly increase participation.
- When asked how the Council will know if it is successful 10 years from now, the fishermen said that if they are still around, that would be success.

Commercial Meeting 12: Chatham, Massachusetts

- When asked about their biggest challenges, the several fishermen said that they simply don't have enough quota of the fish that they catch to make it profitable. The three species mentioned were sea bass, summer flounder, and scup.
- For black sea bass, the group was frustrated about the switch back from coast-wide regulations to state by state regulations. Massachusetts has 13% of the quota, and the fishermen stated that they had tried to conserve, but had lost out because of it. They were frustrated that New Jersey gets preferential treatment.
- One participant described how he had been part of the sea bass fishery since its inception, and watched the industry develop. He said that what bothers him most is that the biomass of the fish is moving north, and New England fishermen should have access to them. *"They are catching them in Maine and Cape Cod Bay now. They have never seen them there. And we are held to our rules. We have an influx of fish. Any given day I can fill my boat with sea bass, but I am only allowed to catch 200lbs commercially, or 10 fish for my recreational customers. It's the temperature of the water has made them move up here. I can't get customers to go out for 10 fish. It is putting me out of business. There is a huge amount of fish here, it's sad. The biomass is expanding this way, so we need a coast-wide quota."*
- *"If the stocks are moving north and enjoying the northern water, it's time to go back to the beginning and make an adjustment on the quotas. We can't get away from these fish, and it is restricting multiple fisheries. You can't fish for anything if you can't catch sea bass and fluke here."*
- One fisherman made a strong recommendation that the stock assessments should be regional in nature, looking at specific bio-mass in certain areas. He believed that the assessments should take into account the availability of the fish to fishermen in certain areas, and then measure how quickly the quota is caught as an indicator.
- The group was frustrated that allocations were supposed to be reviewed after a certain number of years, but they never were. *"These allocations aren't even based historically. You could have used different years to make it look like Massachusetts had more fish. It was a convenient way to do it at the time."*
- *"These guys are getting 50lbs of sea bass in a pot and their quota is 200lbs. We should get an increase up here. It's a good opportunity for us to fish on a recovered species."*
- One fisherman spoke of the summer flounder fishery in the 1980's, and made the point that during that time, North Carolina quota could be landed in New Bedford. He believed this skewed the historical landings and said that it was supposed to be addressed, but never was.
- Another fisherman made the point that, with fuel and dockage costs, it is not economical to only be able to land 300 lbs. of summer flounder. *"So what will happen now? No one will go fishing for fluke? Quota is going to not be caught. Even when they are monkfishing in the canyons, there is fluke everywhere and the restrictions are very difficult. There is incidental catch and you can't land them. There should be a provision there for federal vessels. They have to land in state waters. But you tie the states hands when you don't have enough quota."*
- When asked what could be done to increase confidence in the Council process, one fisherman expressed the frustration that whenever he had gone to meetings in the 1990's, he was not listened to, and it was clear that fishermen and their representatives were not kept in the loop. He believed that Massachusetts representatives were not listened to at the MAFMC.
- The group made the point that the northern stock of black sea bass should be managed separately from the southern stock. *"It seems like our fishery is different than theirs down there. They*

have the large boats out of Cape May. The sea bass are up here now, it seems practical, our boats and businesses are smaller. We have been conservationist here with the trap limits, so maybe we could be trusted with having it broken up as two areas. You have two separate areas, I know the fish go back and forth, and down there they catch the fish in the deep water in the winter. I fully believe that the Massachusetts fishery mortality rate is completely different because we are in shallow waters and they are not being caught so deep. We catch the bulk of them in pots, and they will all live. There is no mortality rate for them. The mortality rate is huge down south. It is never more than 50 or 60 feet of water that we catch them up here.”

- When asked what could be done to improve their confidence in the Council process, the fishermen said that they should be given a fair shake at the fisheries that they lost unfairly. In addition, they believed that their efforts at conservation should be considered in decision making about allocation. *“We also have to look at what we do to bring that stock back, and no one else is doing. We give and give and what do we get back? The quota goes down.”*
- *“It’s going to be a difficult thing to have us back at the table and win back trust. We would love to be part of the process, but we are never allowed to be part of it. You have to listen to us when we say something, you cannot just disregard us. People don’t listen to this anecdotal information from historical participants that really see what is going on. There will have to be a time when you can take this information from fishermen, this historical information, and really use it in decision making.”*
- Several fishermen described the issue that the majority of the income from fishing is going to offshore boats, and that the inshore small boat industry is being decimated because they cannot be profitable. They believed that the inshore fishermen need a greater share of the income.
- The group discussed the commercial squid fishery. Specifically, they made the point that fewer squid should be taken offshore because it reduces the amount of time they have to spawn. In addition, they made the point that if the squid are caught later in the year when they are bigger, it will increase the volume and value of the catch. *“So you have to let them come in to spawn. It will increase the groundfish and the cod and the other species. When they are packed together offshore, you need to let them go. One thousand small boats inshore will never do the damage that one large boat offshore will do. Because the squid don’t have a chance to spawn. This collapses the squid fishery when you take them all offshore. They had the biggest years they ever had offshore, and this is the same with mackerel. They are 2 inch squid they are pickling them in jars when they are very small, and one squid could fill up the whole jar in the next spring. This is the most damaging thing to the stock. The point here is how that volume is managed.... As a dealer I handle 300k pounds of squid out of the Sound from draggers per year. I only handled 2000 lbs. this year. No one went fishing. It was a bust.”*
- The fishermen were frustrated that the trawl survey is not measuring the sea bass that are present in certain areas and on the rocks. *“The sea bass hang out where the trawls can’t go. The survey folks don’t understand the dynamics of the way the fish operate.”*
- The fishermen discussed the need for gear innovations in escape vents for sea bass traps. *“I started lobstering in 1981, we never caught sea bass. I still have a lot of pots there. They are 7 inch vents. Now if I don’t get out there quick enough, there are jumbo sea bass in there with three or four small lobsters in their stomachs. It’s a threat to them that this is happening.”*
- The group discussed the need for more representation for Massachusetts fishermen at the MAFMC. They said that they would attend meetings if they were closer to New England. They were frustrated that they were out of the loop with the MAFMC.
- When asked about ecosystems based management, several fishermen said that they believed the most important consideration is the forage species, including squid. *“When the forage doesn’t show up, the other stuff just isn’t there. Vineyard Sound has been bad fluking and I think that is related to the lack of squid.”*

Appendix B: Roundtable Session Summaries
Commercial 12 – Chatham, MA

- The fishermen also discussed a weed that they have seen coming out of the harbors into the sound. *It's like grass and algae and codium. It's from too many phosphates and lawn companies. They shouldn't be able to use these massive amounts of fertilizer. I can see them having to restrict this. I remember the traps being perfectly clean with no weed, and now it's like there are balls coming up the ropes. Now it's in Cape Cod where the water is colder, it used to only be in the warmer water. It's coming from the fresh water. I think it's a coast wide problem. I just don't think it's been realized yet. There are dead zones off the coast, off the Carolinas; they are dead zones from pollution coming off the rivers."*
- The fishermen were concerned that sea robins had disappeared, and believed it was because the bottom cannot support them.
- The group also believed that seal predation is a fast growing issue with regard to ecosystems based management. *"Seal predation is a huge problem. There is huge population of them and they are everywhere. They are sitting there eating fluke, over and over. They love to eat everything. Not just in Nantucket sound, it's everywhere. 100 miles offshore. It's a fast growing problem."*
- When asked what the fisheries should look like in the future, the fishermen believed that they will have to play a bigger part in management of the species, and cited the dynamic changes in population with fish moving north as an example of what they are seeing. *"In the future, we need to see that the Mid Atlantic council was managing the fisheries like a business and seeing and reacting quickly, yearly, to up the quotas or slack the quotas. You need to make functional quick adjustments."*
- Several fishermen said that they believed that full retention of catch would be an important step toward better management because it would reduce regulatory discards and eliminate problems with choke species. *"You find everything together. You go for one thing and you kill the other. Like I always say, the government gives a license for killing the fish, but not selling them."*
- The fishermen described problems with trawl surveys not taking into account external conditions, which may mean that the fish are not present when the survey is done. *"I have watched the scientists do their trawl surveys here and miss fish by a couple days. Our livelihood is based on the moon phases and the tides. You know when you have to be there. The scientists don't look at this; they just look at the calendar."*
- The group believed that much of the fishing infrastructure had been lost due to consolidation, and believed that this must be taken into account in the Council decisions.
- With regard to the for-hire sector, one participant said that the Council should be more consistent to help business planning. He recommended multi-year specifications. *"We need more consistency in planning; I don't know what the rules will be next year. Everyone doesn't want to overstep the bounds, but it could be much easier if we set multi-year specs and if we need to close, we can."*
- The fishermen made the point that there are a huge amount of dogfish in the ocean that need to be controlled to limit their effect on the value species.
- The fishermen said that more small group meetings would help restore confidence and give them representation at the MAFMC. They also hoped for a seat at the table with the MAFMC.

Commercial Meeting 13: Hatteras, North Carolina

- When asked about the top challenges in the fisheries, one participant said that spiny dogfish are a big issue for both commercial and recreational because they are eating all the other species out there.
- The fishermen said that one of their challenges is that there isn't much left for them to fish other than bluefish, butterfish, and spiny dogfish. They said black sea bass had been taken from them.
- One participant was frustrated that fisheries managers are making decisions without the on the water knowledge. *"Someone who has never been out on the water and is unwilling to take our recommendations, it's not right. We see what's going on and know the managers aren't right. That is where the aggravation comes from. With the dogfish, they shut the door on catching them, and the explosion of dogs is what killed the fish, they ate the grey trout. We were catching grey trout, and the year they shut down the dogfish was the last year the trout were around."*
- One participant was frustrated because he did not believe that fishermen are listened to at the Council and ASMFC meetings. *"If you don't have a briefcase, you are not listened to."*
- The group discussed the trawl survey that is done by the Bigelow. The fishermen were distrustful of the survey because it is not dynamic and doesn't adjust to changes on the water. *"When it started out, the researchers went out to find the fish. So they found where the fish hung out. Now they go to the same spot where you don't catch anything. They pull one net and assume they are fishing the whole water column."*
- One fishermen said that the Council and its committees are overly conservative and do not accurately record the layers of precaution that are applied by the different groups, meaning too much precaution is built into the process.
- One participant suggested that the science should be looking at how dogfish school by sex, the males together and the females together. *"There should be a directed fishery to the male dogfish, and avoid the females."*
- The point was made that if there were no closed seasons, the demand for certain fish in domestic fisheries would always be there, and the fish houses would not have as hard a time marketing the fish.
- Another participant said that regulatory discards are a huge issue for the entire industry, and recommended full retention of fish as a way to address the issue. *"If you couldn't catch a certain species, you would go to another. If you had an abundance of one species, you would catch that. That was ecosystem based management."*
- When asked how to effectively implement full retention, the participant believed that, based on history, a dollar value of fish would be assigned to every boat. Then the managers should incentivize fishermen by giving them a greater catch value if they adhere to the guidance on which fish should and should not be caught. *"If you target scarce fish, which are more expensive, you will use up your money sooner. Or the system could be used to helping certain species flourish. For example, if you retain things like starfish, you will help scallops to blossom because starfish eat so many scallops."*
- When asked what has made things economically hard, the fishermen responded that they cannot plan out fishing years because NMFS can close a season anytime. They wanted to be able to maximize the efficiency of the fuel they are burning, but cannot with closed seasons. The problem is that closed seasons can drive down the price for the fish because all the effort is not spread throughout the year. In addition, the group said that the ability to land fish in multiple states, not just those where they have permits, would help them survive and maximize efficiency of fuel.

Appendix B: Roundtable Session Summaries
Commercial 13 – Hatteras, NC

- The fishermen were frustrated that they have a bad image in the public. *“You have to get this idea out of people’s minds that we are alcoholics and killers. Tourists hate us. If the regulators took us for our word, it would make a difference. When you go to a meeting and tell them the facts, they don’t believe you.”*
- Another participant described the challenge that over-abundant predators are posing to the ecosystems. He mentioned dogfish, cownose rays, and cormorants. His point was that the fishermen aren’t having as big an effect of fish populations as some of the predators are.
- Another fisherman said that the people that attend Council meetings should be better identified, perhaps through colored nametags that identify the groups they belong to.
- One attendee said that the Council should discuss how regulations will increase fishermen’s income or will be better/cheaper to the consumer. He believed the goal should be to get fish out of the water as cheaply as possible and get them to the consumer as fresh and as cheap as possible.
- There was a suggestion that the SAW/SARC meeting notes should be made publically available to avoid the chance that there would be overlap in the layers of precaution.
- A recommendation was made that regulations should be in place for more than one year before they are changed so that their effects on fish populations can be more accurately assessed.
- One fisherman discussed the issue that once the quota is taken away, it is not given back, and it destroys the market for the fish. *“You have to help rebuild the market once you shut it down, or people will go straight to imports.”*
- The point was raised that the cumulative effects of all of the fishing regulations are never assessed, even though it is required in NEPA.
- The group discussed the way that the fishery had developed, in that most fishermen became specialists in certain fish, but that that method of fishing isn’t conducive to survival anymore. *“We learned, the more types of fish we went after, the less we got in each other’s ways. You would get a better price etc. So this fleet has developed that way, to have the least effect on the resource. If we had a little of everything, we wouldn’t all pile into one species and put pressure on it.”*
- The commercial fishermen suggested that there should be better voluntary reporting for recreational fishermen. They believed that the recreational guys would report if they were asked to.
- A participant brought up the fact that the Council doesn’t look at annual variations of the abundance of certain species year over year. His point was that not all species can be managed to be at peak abundance at all times.
- *“You need to get the scientists out there and collaborate in front of the Council. You need to have participation. They don’t even sample in these shoals on the Bigelow, it’s too shallow for that boat.”*
- *“It’s got to be shown that what the fishermen are saying is being considered at the Council. The same people that propose the rules reject the public comment. That is the reason I quit after I got on the Council.”*
- One participant expressed frustration with the observer program, saying that most observers have an agenda and are only there to see marine mammals. He believed that catch shares are being pushed on fishermen, and that for young people to enter the fishery, the fish will have to be available.
- When asked about ecosystem considerations, the fishermen agreed that the Council should look at upstream chemicals and their effects. In addition, the fishermen thought that managers should be better utilizing new technologies to study fish populations, including what they eat and where they have been.
- When asked about what the Mid-Atlantic fisheries should look like in the future, the group agreed that more participation from fishermen in management is a key element to success.

Appendix B: Roundtable Session Summaries
Commercial 13 – Hatteras, NC

- *“Stop micromanaging, find out what works and doesn’t work. We never do anything long enough to figure out if it works.”*
- *“The Council needs to throw some positive advertisement for us out there so the public doesn’t see us as criminals.”*
- One fisherman was frustrated because he believed the dogfish fishery had a greater potential than was being exercised. *“It’s hard to believe in the science when we can’t fish more than three yards of net because we don’t want 150 boxes of dogfish. It’s sad to see the potential we could have had in dogfish. It’s an option for us right now. We could make a decent living. A little quota more would help, but fish houses and processors can’t get enough product to make the investments, the infrastructure on the dogfish is crushed right now.”*
- The fishermen believed that the grey trout were eliminated by the dogfish population.
- One fisherman said *“we need to increase the landings enough so a young man can see a chance of being a boat owner and make a decent living.”*
- Another fisherman believed that RSA money should only be given as a reward to those who can go out and solve a problem that the Council proposes. *“With the RSA, rather than a grant going to a select few, take \$250K or \$500K – and us this as a reward system that will go to anyone who can solve a problem that the Council sees.”*
- The point was made that it is hard to sell domestic wild seafood to supermarkets because of the supply disruptions.
- The group said that the Council will continue to get the best input from small groups of fishermen, in discussions where they are comfortable. *“You need to put a process where fishermen in certain areas can give input at the right point in the process. You hold these types of meetings and present information in conjunction with the science information before you make a recommendation.”*
- One fisherman was frustrated that observer data isn’t utilized more effectively and was worried about double counting. *“Observer information should be used. Because I have a bluefish permit, I am required to report in the Southeast for bluefish and Spanish mackerel. But I have to send it to the Northeast Regional Office first. So I have to fill out two reports for one fish, so it’s probably double counting.”*
- One fisherman believed that the Council should have a statement like “the Council will increase summer flounder landings by 10% in the next 10 years” so that fishermen and the public have something to look forward to.

Commercial Meeting 14: Atlantic City, New Jersey

- When asked about the greatest challenges in the fisheries, one participant brought up the National Ocean Policy and said that a major challenge would be gathering and maintaining enough data to manage via ecosystem based management with too great a level of precaution. *“From industry’s point of view, the horror story is the notion that you always must be precautionary especially when there are unknowns, as there will be with ecosystem based management.”*
- The participant was also concerned with the cost of ecosystem based management because each ecosystem would have to be studied individually. He had heard it would cost hundreds of millions of dollars per year.
- One clam operator said he believed that the top challenge is the danger of excessive shares and monopoly with the clam quota.
- One fisherman said that, from a fleet manager’s perspective, fuel is the biggest challenge. *“This year, on all the species that MAFMC manages, we had 7 boats to fish them, but they couldn’t fish them and stayed on the dock because we couldn’t make the economics work. It was a warm winter, none of the species bunched up, and guys couldn’t fill the quotas because of the fuel price. The CPUE effort is down, and if the fuel price goes up, we are screwed. Unless there is more volume, we are working for the fuel man.”*
- *“The scup quota went up, but guys can’t chase them around because they burn up the fuel and they can’t find them and its only 25 cents a lb. Then, because we have less landings, scientists will think we can’t catch them because they aren’t around. But they are out there, fuel is just too expensive! We can’t control the price of fuel, but from a management perspective, you have to take into account the price of fuel into your decisions.”*
- Another participant talked about the need for fishing companies to be vertically integrated in order for them to survive, which is killing the independent fisherman. *“Before you had a guy that was a captain that could save up and buy a boat, that is how most of us got here, but it can’t happen anymore for anyone.”*
- One participant believed that consolidation is necessary for economies of scale.
- An attendee described the problem that fishermen have with passing on their costs to larger retailers. *“It’s a global buyer’s market, and we cannot pass costs on. Wal-Mart and Costco, they don’t care about you or your product, they just care about price. The fuel goes up, we try to pass the price on, and it doesn’t happen. Fuel is the backbreaker. And when the price gets to a certain level, the foreigners come in and cut their price.”*
- The group discussed how the domestic surfclam industry can no longer be a player in the low end clam market due to foreign imports and misrepresentation of products.
- When asked about the most challenging regulations, the group agreed that there needs to be a paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP) protocol on Georges Bank, so that clams can be sustainably fished there.
- One participant spoke of how his company received an experimental fishing permit (EFP) to test for PSP on Georges Bank, and that the FDA was requiring his company to monitor for PSP.
- When asked what the Council could do differently, one respondent said that he would like to see more interviews of fishermen to understand better what is going on in the water. As an example, he cited the situation with the Delmarva area, and that the industry believed it should be closed because the clams there are too small and immature. *“A lot of times the regulations are based off old data, but we will say what is happening now on the water at the Council, and sometimes it’s realized at the Council and sometimes it’s not. It’s like we are not allowed to react. As a whole, we need to be able to react quicker to what is happening in the ocean.”*

Appendix B: Roundtable Session Summaries
Recreational 1 – Riverhead, NY

- A participant made the point that the FMPs cannot be so stringent as to not allow fishermen to run their business how they want to. He cited the clam FMP as a good model for all other fisheries. *“FMPs are thousands of pages long, and they are so complex that people cannot understand them. Thank god ours is simple and you can understand it, and what it is supposed to do. We can make our own business decisions.”*
- The group discussed the need for the Council to be able to respond to cyclical changes in the ocean. As an example, one participant described the data for loligo being older than the lifespan of the species itself, 9 months.
- When asked what the Council could do better, the fishermen said that the Council should hold more small group meetings. In addition, the group recommended that the Council send a questionnaire out to fishermen ahead of meetings with the main issues so that they can think about their responses in advance. Additionally, they recommended two way webinars or conference calls.
- Another attendee believed that if members of the advisory panel don't come to meetings, they should be removed from the advisory panel.
- Industry members at the meeting said that, even if there were no Council funding to pay for travel to additional AP meetings (outside the regular two or three meetings per year), they would attend those meetings if they were necessary.
- When asked about ecosystem based management, one participant responded that *“whatever we do to ecosystems, we don't get the result we want... We don't know what the results would be. This will be a can of worms, so you need to take baby steps.”*
- Another participant addressed ecosystem based management: *“I think we are going to lose variability if we are managing them all together. It will compound the precautionary approach. You aren't going to act on one if it affects others.”*
- The fishermen were asked if they were seeing changes on the water that are affecting fish populations. They responded that they are seeing a general trend of the fish moving north as the climate becomes warmer. *“The clam industry is a classic example of how the warmer climates have forced surfclams to move further to the north, which the classic model is that they are moving toward the poles, and if they function in shallow water, they are going to deeper water. Clams used to have a huge fishery around the mouth of the Chesapeake, but they have gone away.”* *“I agree with this for other species too, you used to be able to go to Currituck to get fluke, but every year it went further north.”*
- The group was asked what the fisheries of the future should look like. One believed that it should look similar to how it does now. Another fisherman believed that there should be more turnover in the Advisory Panels, perhaps with term limits.
- Lastly, one participant believed that the Council may have to change the way it assesses overfishing to focus more on regions rather than one biomass as a whole. *“I think our definition of overfishing will have to change. We need to be looking at overfishing in smaller areas off of Ocean City, MD or Cape May NJ, so that you are not hurting those communities and forcing those guys to pick up and move. The way that we treat our fishery as one unit, we watch our fleets wipe out the biomass from the south to the north in specific areas.”*
- The fishermen believed that they should have access to the Georges Bank biomass of clams because the population in the Mid-Atlantic is has been heavily fished over the years, and Georges Bank has regenerated.
- When asked how the Council will know it has been successful in 10 years, the fishermen responded that success would be if they are still around in 10 years.

Appendix B: Roundtable Session Summaries
Recreational 1 – Riverhead, NY

- One participant believed that for fisheries to be successful, fishermen and managers will have to be better at promoting the fisheries.
- Another participant believed that if the Council is in ‘crisis mode’, that will be an indicator that it wasn’t successful. The need for perpetual frameworks to make even minimal changes was described as a reason that the Councils are not successful.
- One participant was very distressed that the BOEMRE process would create large swaths of no-take areas for fishing.
- Another fisherman believed that the Council needs to do more to protect recruitment of certain species. *“I would like to see the council protect recruitment in the future. We are always late on watching the recruitment. Do we really know what we have to protect, what is out there, and what it will take to protect it? Will it be too late to gather it once we do?”*
- Specifically around recruitment, the fisherman said that the Council should be able to collect the data that shows that 60% of clams in a certain area are below 4 and $\frac{3}{4}$ inches, so that an area can be closed if needed.
- *“I hope the whole industry shifts a large portion of its effort to Georges Bank to take the pressure off of Northern New Jersey. We have been managing the fishery and setting the quota when we couldn’t get to half of the biomass. We were still fishing as if they were part of the equation. Whether they will open Georges Bank or not, we hope they will, but I just think its two separate entities. We need to be managed as two separate entries, and that way we don’t get to situation where it’s do or die.”*

Recreational Roundtable Sessions

Recreational Meeting 1: Riverhead, New York

- When asked about their top challenges and concerns in the fisheries, the recreational fishermen responded that the New York allocation of fish is their biggest issue. They wanted to know where the data for allocation was generated and who to speak to with get the allocation changed. *“Our tackle shops are hanging by a thread because of our allocation. I go to fishing shows and people laugh at us because they know we got the shaft here in New York.”*
- Another challenge was that the Council needs to look at restoring more than one species at a time, because restoring one species degrades the others.
- The group discussed the need to improve the MRFSS program. *“You need accurate data collection. Without that you will never see a change. We all know the MRFSS data is garbage. I have never been asked what I am catching and I know no one that has been asked that. I do this full time for a living and they never ask me.”*
- A fisherman was frustrated because the new MRIP program had been promised three years prior, but it wasn’t delivered. He made the point that fishermen are asked to adapt to regulations in short timeframes that affect their livelihood, but NMFS can be late on updating data collection efforts, which harms the community.
- A participant made the point that recreational management has to take pounds of fish and convert them to numbers. When average size of fish goes up, they would hit their quota faster. *“Theoretically the conversion factor is killing us. We are bound by the conversion from pounds to numbers.”*
- One fisherman was afraid that if they went over their quota they wouldn’t have a season in 2013. *“We feel doomed no matter what we do.”*
- Another fisherman believed that there needs to be more data collection efforts throughout New York. *“I have never been asked what I caught and I am in a high end obvious place. There needs to be more boots on the ground.”*
- One fisherman suggested that there should be trip reports for recreational fishermen that are administered through a smartphone. He noted that without confidence that they will not be punished for their data, recreational fishermen will not want to submit it.
- Another angler recommended that the Council be more adept at communicating with anglers through email. He recommended using the State license data. He also recommended posting information at tackle shops.
- There was frustration from the group of anglers that they were not well represented on the Council. They cited when their recreational representative cast the deciding vote against increasing the scup quota. Their frustration was with NMFS and their Governor in lack of transparency in the selection process.
- The group said that recreational fishermen need something to look forward to in order to increase trust.
- One for-hire operator was frustrated that his data reports from summer 2010 were not recorded or used.
- *“Fishermen can’t get anything done at Council meetings and council members don’t listen to you. The Council has to come out and talk to the community, and put a face on the organization.”*
- Another fisherman suggested that the Council stream the meetings online and record and archive them for later. He also believed there should be a roll call every vote and that Council member votes should be taken account of historically.

Appendix B: Roundtable Session Summaries
Recreational 1 – Riverhead, NY

- Another angler suggested that there is opportunity to publish in sport fishing magazines.
- *“We have to be able to say we won’t get screwed if we are honest with our data.” “You also have to convince the people who set the allocations to be more lenient if we are honest.”*
- An angler said that he hoped that slot limits would become an option for summer flounder to reduce discards and allow fishermen to spend less on fuel. *“Guys don’t have to spend more gas, that’s why the slot limit would be more helpful, guys would go home earlier. The discard rate is too high right now. It undermines the quality of the angling experience... I don’t want to plow through 24 fluke to catch 2 keepers. I want to catch 4 or 5 smaller ones for dinner.”*
- The group believed that summer flounder would have to be managed coast-wide to have slot limits.
- When asked what the fisheries should look like in the future, one fisherman responded that more accurate collection of data is a key vision for the future.
- The group wanted a bigger part of the allocation in the future, greater than the 60/40 split with commercial.
- The group believed that coast-wide regulations should be implemented across the board.
- A party boat operator made the point that limits in seasons can mean longer seasons. *“Guys can’t go out in the winter for the sea bass. Our party boats should be able to run in January and February. We will slam cod this year because we can’t go after sea bass. I’d like to see reasonable seasons again, seasons used to be longer.”*
- The fishermen were frustrated with the Research Set-Aside program. *“RSA is the last twist of the knife in the trust factor. If you can buy licenses to fish at will, people give up. If someone can pay enough they can go out, it’s the inequity of it that gets on people’s nerves.”*
- The fishermen were very much against catch shares for the recreational sector.
- *“To be completely shut out of fluke or sea bass really affects the economy, and that is where you lose trust.”*
- One fisherman was frustrated that the recreational fishermen have all the on the water knowledge but their input gets dismissed from the final calculations of biomass.
- A party boat operator said *“there should be a list of questions sent out to the for-hire sector in October or November to ask what we thought about the season, and mail one to the tackle shops. At the end of the season, you could have substantial anecdotal information.”*
- When asked how the Council will know if it is successful in 10 years, the group responded that if they are in business it would be success.
- The group made the point that fishermen need to be familiar with the regulations year after year, both so they can make business plans and anglers can purchase the right gear.
- *“We catch tons of spiny dogfish but we hate them. They eat everything in the ocean.”*
- *“I haven’t seen mackerel in 10 years. That fishery must be annihilated. That has an effect on our fisheries because we have no bait.”*

Recreational Meeting 2: Ocean Pines, Maryland

- When asked about their top challenges, one fisherman responded that they had lost the majority of natural habitat in the 1970's and had since been fishing on shipwrecks and other types of habitat. Loss of habitat was his concern and he made the point that man-made habitat can assist with the problem.
- Data was identified as another key challenge. *“The problem with the recreational data collection is that it is not set up to succeed in its current form. It is stretched at the state level to do things that it isn't supposed to do.”*
- The group of fishermen expressed interest that MAFMC might ask MRIP to set up a recreational data collection test area in Ocean City because it is “a microcosm for the rest of the east coast”.
- One angler made the point that because of the large variations in the year to year MRFSS data, and its seeming inaccuracy, recreational anglers have completely lost faith in that method and management in general. *“When management quits lying via MRFSS, we'll start talking.”*
- Several anglers were frustrated with the number of discards they had for summer flounder as related to the number of fish they could keep. They believed the size limit was too high. *“The most flounder I ever caught was 11 keepers in one day. I have had days where we catch 200 fish and have no keepers. We go weeks without keepers.”*
- One fisherman made the point that there isn't consideration of the economic impact of decisions, especially on tackle shops and recreational industry.
- The group believed that the Council should focus on creating more fish through physiology, biology and ecology. *“Restoration is not just about catch restriction.”*
- With regards to flawed data, a for hire operator made the point that only four boats go out of Ocean City per day, and there are only 12 boats in the fishery. He was in disbelief that the MRFSS data showed that their fleet had caught 20K pounds of sea bass, especially since Hurricane Irene made them unable to fish for a week in the busiest time of the year. *“Someone from the ASMFC told me I have no scientific basis for my input and it really pissed me off. They can't validate that their numbers are right either. They assume they are right.”*
- The fishermen believed that the Council should help with building fish habitat. *“Offshore habitat is a challenge. If you build it, they will come. We build reefs and create populations of fish and still share the quota. Habitat restoration is big deal. You can restore fisheries that we never knew we had. We are trying to restore a fishery, but we haven't even begun to restore the habitat that built the fishery up.”*
- The anglers believed that commercial harvesting of summer flounder should only be allowed outside 3 miles from the coastline.
- The group believed that sea bass should be managed regionally due to regional habitat differences. They were also frustrated that the methods for determining sea bass populations did not measure the fish on the reefs.
- One fisherman was very adamant that there should be coast-wide measures across the board. *“Coast-wide management of fish is important. Certain fish go in and out, east and west inshore and offshore, not up and down the coast. We get penalized here for things that happen up north. Why attack us on tautog when it isn't a problem for us here? Why is it that certain states have reefs in their waters but others don't have reefs and we all get the same amount of fish?”*
- One fisherman believed that violations for certain types of poaching should be made higher and enforced in order to discourage them. He mentioned additional enforcement for tautog

poaching on the Route 50 Bridge and on striped bass fishing outside three miles in the Isle of White shoals. He also suggested that the fishermen that are fined for these infractions should be named in the newspaper and their fine should be publicized. *“Make it known and painful.”*

- The fishermen believed that too much recreational effort is being exerted in the blue line and golden tilefish as a result of the lack of other fish to target. *“When you close other fisheries, you shift the pressure. Tilefish are slow growing, and people are bringing in a boatful when they get into them. You are allowed 7 tilefish right now, and it should be lower, and you should break out blue against golden.”*
- The fishermen wanted the Council to help them create more habitat, and therefore more fish. They also believed that older fish should be able to breed as many times as possible.
- The anglers suggested that the Council widely produce and distribute brochures with best practices for handling different types of fish.
- The group made the point that recreational fishermen really want the fisheries to recover, so more often than not they will be cooperative.
- The anglers believed that the Council should require circle hooks, excluding lures and jigs, for all recreational flounder fishing to reduce mortality.
- The group also believed that air bladder relief needles and de-hookers be required for all boats fishing for deep water species like black sea bass.
- Broadly, the group agreed that instead of setting minimum size limits for the various species, it should set slot sizes that exclude breeding fish by species.
- From a species perspective, the group made a strong argument for slot limits for both flounder and striped bass. The issue is that they feel they are forced to take home all the breeding fish.
- When asked what the Council should do to increase recreational participation in the process, the anglers also recommended having a contact hotline where fishermen can call if they have a concern. They also recommended leveraging boat shows to distribute information.
- The group also recommended that the MAFMC coordinate its outreach and education strategy with the other management partners, including ASMFC, NEFMC, and NMFS.
- With regard to recreational data collection, the fishermen were concerned that random digit dialing was reaching people that do not fish, and skewing the data. They believed that only the licensed fishermen should be called. In addition, they believed that ALL people fishing should be required to register.
- The anglers were very frustrated that recreational data collection procedures do not accurately reflect their catch. Part of the concern is that the data shouldn't be split up, state by state. *“In May and June of 2010, the data said that for Ocean City black sea bass, the party and charter boat sector caught no fish. But we all turned in data for that month! How does this happen?”*
- *“The surveyors for MRFS data were being paid by the number of surveys they came back with. And they always fell back on their same survey site, where everyone was. They didn't want to be at the less trafficked areas because of the way they are paid. They always come back to the public ramp, and it skews the data.”* The group recommended that the CPUE of the party boat sector be used as a bell weather for recreational effort as a whole.
- When discussing ecosystems management, the group believed that the Council should partner with coastal bay and estuary restoration groups. They also believed that commercial trawlers should be restricted from towing the same area within a 3 year timeframe, and that reef areas should be off limits to dredging
- *“The forage species and the predators are not being controlled well. Menhaden has had a domino effect on the species. There aren't any sea trout left anymore. You used to be able to fill up a cooler every day. I*

Appendix B: Roundtable Session Summaries
Recreational 2 – Ocean Pines, MD

think this is because of the predation. The lack of sea trout is directly related to natural predation. The bluefish and stripers are eating them. No food, no fish.”

- *“In my lifetime we had bluefish 5 miles off. And king mackerel. I think water quality is the problem, maybe not forage. Bluefish are 30 miles out now. You rarely see any of these fish inshore now. Sharks are inshore if the croakers are stacked up thick. Water quality doesn’t matter for them. So I think the sight feeders are moving out decade by decade. We lost oysters completely in the 70s. There was a rapid movement of gamefish offshore. This was in response to them wanting to be able to see their prey.”*
- *The fishermen emphasized the point that water quality is a huge problem. “I remember going 3 miles offshore and catching 3 white marlin and things were crystal clear. The water is now dirty until you get 65 miles offshore. It is coming out of the Delaware, and Chesapeake, and NY. Until that water gets back in here, we won’t have pelagic fish.”*
- *Another fisherman spoke of the need for habitat fidelity. “If you overpressure certain fish in winter in their most dense concentrations, which is when you can really rock the stocks. This needs to be addressed by management. Quota needs to be assigned to certain regions. New Jersey sea bass will never go to Massachusetts, and our fish will never go to New Jersey.”*
- *The group believed that MAFMC should have responsibility for all fish that migrate from east to west and the ASMFC should have responsibility for all fish that migrate up and down the Atlantic coast.*
- *The fishermen were asked if they wanted to share additional on the water knowledge with the Council, and they had several points. They believed that sea bass age at maturity had increase from 1 to 3 between 1998 and 2004. They believed weakfish populations rose steadily until unrestricted trawl fishing for croakers picked up. They thought that a reef allowed to rest for a decade will flourish with life yet have no life whatsoever after trawling has removed growth. They cited that they had begged for size and creel limits on spadefish, but that now it is too late. Lastly, they made the point that they had asked for a 16 inch size limit on tautog since 1992, and had only recently gotten one.*
- *When asked what the fisheries of the future should look like, the group responded that beyond ‘restored’ fisheries, there should be ‘engineered’ fisheries, and that is where they want to go.*
- *The group also believed that the Council should have better representation of recreational fishermen in an advisory capacity.*
- *When asked how the Council will know if it has been successful in ten years, the group responded that fishing would be a lot better, and there would be consistency in regulations and fish populations from year to year. The FMPs would reflect information and data that is accepted by fishermen.*

Recreational Meeting 3: Little Egg Harbor, New Jersey

- When asked about their biggest challenges and concerns, the group responded that with rebuilt fisheries, they are still getting less access to the fish. Specifically, they were very concerned that under current summer flounder regulations, they are taking mostly large female fish, and *“leaving one fish dead for every fish we take. Discard mortality is definitely a problem in that fishery.”* They believed that better management measures, including slot limits, could alleviate the problem.
- The group believed that the layers of uncertainty from the SSC and the Council make the catch level too low.
- The group cited a difference between what they are seeing on the water and the regulations that are being passed by the Council.
- With regard to the allocation, there was discontent that the 60/40 split favored the commercial sector, when historically the recreational fishermen received more fish.
- Several for hire operators made the point that participation in fishing is going down. They cited the fact that people can go out all day for flounder and not come home with any keepers. *“People don’t want to spend money on that.”*
- The group said that this affects the party/charter businesses the most. *“In the fall there are holes in the season. Sometimes there is nothing open except porgies. And the weather may not cooperate. That needs to be managed better so people can fish for something at any time, so there aren’t any holes in the seasons.”*
- The group said that they would like to see the Council stick with a certain plan for several years, then do an assessment. *“It’s difficult to invest if you don’t know that you will be in business...Seasonal closures are very difficult.”*
- It was stated that many of the subsistence fishermen, who are fishing for dinner, don’t catch any keepers, and *“everyone knows we are all killing females now. How smart is that?”*
- The anglers discussed the dynamics of the recreational fishing fleet. They made the point that historically, they didn’t go out for the same fish all at the same time, but with current regulations, that has changed. *“Everyone goes to one species at the same time, and beats down on the fish.”*
- One land based recreational fisherman was frustrated because he felt that the regulations had excluded him from the flounder fishery. *“As the bag limits go down and size goes up, if you are not out in a boat in the ocean fishing, it’s hard to get an 18 inch flounder. There are a lot of land based anglers that can go to Long Beach Island and spend a couple hours on a jetty and catch 15 to 20 flounder, and not take anything home, but kill a lot of fish.”*
- The anglers agreed that a top challenge for the recreational fisheries is that the data and science is flawed and that MRIP was supposed to be launched in 2010, but still has not been launched.
- When asked about what the Council can do to increase their confidence in the process, the group responded that fear of exceeding harvest limits drives lack of confidence. They are scared of the repercussions of possible overfishing. *“Those harvest misses have taken New York off the map. So there is a fear factor. In a three year plan, you don’t have that fear.”*
- The anglers made the point that lack of confidence comes directly from poor recreational data. *“No one in my 100 person fishing club has ever been contacted by MRFSS. If catch is based on that, and no one is calling us, that survey CANNOT be working. If a half dozen people at this table had been contacted, it would make our confidence go up because we are having input.”*

Appendix B: Roundtable Session Summaries
Recreational 3 – Little Egg Harbor, NJ

- The anglers believed that the sample size for recreational data collection needed to rise significantly.
- The group made the point that a size limit for black sea bass that are caught in deep water is pointless because they almost always die.
- The point was made that fishing is a multi-billion dollar industry, but that the businesses have no idea how the regulations will change every six months, much less every six years. *“How do you operate a multi-billion dollar industry with such large fluctuations?”*
- The group believed that a large part of the problem is that they are constrained by the MSA, which is out of the Council’s hands. They believed that fishermen should be better educated about that. *“People blame local mayors, the governor, anyone. There has to be some type of outreach effort about the Council. One of the things I see at the Council website is that it is all in council speak. They need to translate that information through fishermen that can help them change it throughout all the outreach materials so it is understandable.”*
- With regard to communications, the group recommended that the Council invite groups from the fishing clubs to the Council, and to make people more aware that you can listen to the Council online and call in to listening sessions. They also believed that when the Council has a meeting scheduled in a certain area, there needs to be additional outreach to let people know that the meeting will be there. *“The council should look at local publications and publicize the meetings in the local area.”*
- A for hire operator believed that the Council should take his sector into account when making decisions. Specifically, he wanted the Council to acknowledge that they can only fish for certain species at any given time, and that there should be at least two year regulations. In particular, inability to fish for sea bass in the winter was a major concern.
- The group believed that for multi-year specifications, the Council should consider economic factors more prominently. Particularly, they thought that the keeping the seasons open are the most important to the economics of the fisheries.
- Another fisherman said that the casual shore angler really cares most about the size limit, because he wants to take some fish home. *“To the size limits, is there any way the Mid-Atlantic could carve out the shore angler from the boat angler? You have eliminated the shore angler from the management considerations. I like to eat smaller fish, so I want a slot limit, and lower the size limit. And stop killing the larger females.”*
- An angler was adamant that the Council must address the process of comparing one year’s landings to one year’s quota. *“You need multi-year data averaging to come up with the specifications. Right now we only have MRFSS, and we have to stop using it on a year to year basis. We need a five year average, and this is where the council can actually do something.”*
- The group discussed the problem that they follow the Council’s rules and find out at the end of the year, they have overfished and get penalized by losing fish the following year.
- Several for hire operators made the point that they fill out paper VTRs, but it is never officially used as data. They believed that there should be a real time website to complete the VTR information immediately. *“If you had a website that was only accessible with a captain’s password, where a captain can go in and punch in what he caught, it would limit your legwork, and you can start creating your graphs. Use all the data that is available from every source that is available. You would have more data than you know what to do with. If we knew the data was being used, the participation would be higher.”*
- The fishermen believed that the Science Center’s data and science is not the ‘best available’. *“A multi-year spec would allow you to have more time to digest the information and have more inputs.”*

Appendix B: Roundtable Session Summaries
Recreational 3 – Little Egg Harbor, NJ

- One fisherman said that there are no more menhaden left in the bay north of Egg Harbor. He believed that not all species can be completely recovered at all times.
- The Council needs to put as much flexibility into the process as possible, including multi-year specifications and taking into account as much data as possible, including water temperature, oil spills, rainfall, etc.
- When asked what Mid-Atlantic fisheries should look like in the future, the fishermen responded that the process needs to be streamlined and is too long and cumbersome.
- They believed that the future should be defined by better access to the fish. *“A fishing season that I can fish as much as possible and a size fish that I can bring home as often as possible. We want to see you guys looking to make the best economic impact you can, and trying to make sure that we stay employed.”*
- Regulations should be reasonable and reflect the reality of the stock status.
- *“Flexibility is getting where you need to go and still enjoying the ride. If the fisheries are rebuilt and we aren’t going out of business, you will be successful.” “I just hope I will be able to take my kids fishing in 10 years, because right now I don’t see it.”*
- *“If things don’t change, fishermen will become outlaws. What we find is that fishermen don’t care about the regulations anymore. That is not doing us any good. You need to keep them on board.”*
The fishermen hoped that the MAFMC could push back against NMFS if it restricts the Council’s attempts to create flexibility for fishermen. *“When it boils down to it, you are advisory, how much power do you really have?”*

Recreational Meeting 4: Virginia Beach, Virginia

- When asked about their top challenges in the fisheries, the anglers responded that overharvesting and waste by commercial fishermen is a big problem. *“I heard last year that the North Carolina trawlers caught huge hauls of stripers and picked through them for the big fish and dumped the rest. There were miles of dead stripers everywhere after that, with pictures on the internet.”*
- The group also cited the closure of sea bass as a huge problem for them, because the winter season is too important. They were frustrated that Massachusetts caught all the fish. *“What is good in Massachusetts isn’t good for us, we were paying the price for them catching all the fish. It should be state by state.”*
- Another challenge that was cited is data collection and MRFSS. *“With regard to the sea bass numbers for Virginia, July was our best month and we didn’t catch them then according to MRFSS. So it shows how skewed the numbers are.”*
- One for hire fisherman believed that an open season with lower bag limits would be acceptable for black sea bass. *“If you are deep dropping for anything, you need to be able to keep some of them. They will take your bait anytime, and none will live because of the air bladder.”*
- The anglers believed that menhaden should be managed in federal waters.
- The group did not understand the difference between MAFMC and the agencies that it works with. *“They need to move forward with something to simplify licensing. If you are a hunter, you check off what you want to hunt when you get your license, it’s that simple... There needs to be cohesion between the states and the federal government. It is too fragmented right now.”... “They need centralized licensing and ticketing to go along with their programs.”*
- The fishermen were frustrated that it’s too complex to know all the regulations, and people just give up. One angler was frustrated that even the Coast Guard doesn’t seem to know the regulations.
- When asked what the Council could do differently to increase participation, the group responded that they should be contacted more often on the internet. *“Require an email address when I get a fishing license. Ask the states to let me check a box to allow the Council to contact me. That communication tool would be tremendous.”*
- *“If you show us positive response, show us that you are doing something we are recommending, that positive will go a long way.”*
- *“It looks like our state is going to liberalize on flounder, go to 17 or 16.5 inches, but the problem is that when we liberalize, we are so worried that we would go over the quota, then our catch numbers still came up half what we were allotted.”*
- One fisherman made the point that people don’t realize how much the recreational industry contributes to the economy. *“I didn’t hook a fish this year that I could keep, and that isn’t good. But we want people to fish, with the economy where it is, we are driving people away.”*
- Another angler believed that the recreational sector needs an integrated licensing, permitting, and reporting system.
- The group believed that the MAFMC should take a cue from Fish and Game Departments and call anglers once a year and use that data to manage the fishery. They believed anyone that fishes outside the 3 mile line should have an identification number.
- The group was upset about the RFI system and believed there is a statistical way to make those calculations without the RFI.

Appendix B: Roundtable Session Summaries
Recreational 4 – Virginia Beach, VA

- *“With our limits, we can catch 50 flounder and have none that are legal to keep, but we have a commercial rod and reel guy doing the same and keeping them all. Why can he keep them but I can’t? Either the fishery should be open to everyone, with equal share, or it should be shut down until it is rebuilt.”*
- One for-hire operator expressed his lack of confidence in the data collection process due to conflicting reporting systems that he believe double count the catch. *“I have three federal sea bass permits on each boat. Every time those boats go out I have to fill out a trip report, and have to send in a “did not fish” report. And I get a call every week from [the reporting company] about ONE of my head boats. So are my trip reports and what they are asking me being counted twice? There needs to be some way that people can report themselves, rather than an agency trying to report information. The numbers I am seeing on sea bass are ridiculous and aren’t happening, and we are getting penalized on those numbers.”*
- The for-hire operators in the room agreed that the data collection mechanism needs to be at their fingertips so they can more accurately and quickly report. A smartphone application or online portals were mentioned as potential tools. *“All the data is so flawed would not believe it. No one wants the fish to go away. We would rather report accurate data... You have to convince the fishermen that, if they report data, they need to know that it will be used.”*
- When asked about ecosystem based management, the group responded *“The clarity of the water is terrible; you have dead areas that are tremendous. The condition of the habitat has a lot more to do with the numbers of fish than anything else.*
- The group believed that habitat needs to be restored for clearer water. They mentioned eel grass, oysters, and menhaden clearing the water. *“Old guys used to say you could see bottom 20 feet deep in the bay. I haven’t seen clean water in years, so habitat is key.”*
- Several fishermen were very frustrated that the forage fish are being caught in large numbers by industrial operations.
- One fisherman made the point that with recent advances in technology, fishermen are figuring out how and where to catch species of fish that they never used to catch in big numbers. He believed the Council needs to consider this more proactively. *“People figure out how to catch fish quicker and word spreads quicker. 7 years ago I didn’t know people that fished for sheepshead on the bridge tunnel, and there were big ones caught in short span. Now people fish for cobia, and the amount caught recently is really high. Boats don’t need 350 lbs. of cobia. We need to keep an eye on when fishermen figure out species... we know where the bites are more quickly, so the Council needs to react quicker.”*
- The fishermen believed that the lack of forage was starving many larger fish in the bay. *“We are catching a lot of species up inside the bay in the spring and fall that have big heads and little bodies. They are starving due to the lack of menhaden. With the proper amount of bait fish, all these other problems disappear. The menhaden is the key to the whole thing. If it isn’t protected, everything else is suffering.”*
- The group believed that there needs to be a comprehensive way of managing all species, inside and outside the 3 mile line.
- One angler said that he had been trying to help get artificial reefs built, but that people were holding those efforts up. *“Trying to do the right thing can be hard.”*
- When asked what Mid-Atlantic fisheries should look like in the future, the fishermen responded that there needs to be more comprehensive management, bringing all the entities together to manage collectively, not separately.
- In addition, they believed that the fishermen’s on the water experience should be utilized more effectively in management. *“You rely too much on the numbers and not the voice and experience of the fishermen.”*

Appendix B: Roundtable Session Summaries
Recreational 4 – Virginia Beach, VA

- The group suggested that the Council should get to know the presidents of the recreational fishing organizations. He also said that the Council should leverage fishing club newsletters to get outreach articles to the right people.
- When asked how the Council will know it is successful 10 years from now, one fisherman responded that avoiding closed seasons would be success. *“They are the most detrimental to the industry. If things can be caught year round, it is the best. So access is the top priority... limits are 25 on black sea bass; change that out for the open season.”*
“In 10 years, Virginia should be managed by one entity, not all these different ones. Virginia is on so many different lines. I’d like to see that go by the wayside. One licensing agency with a clearing house and everyone can understand it.”

Recreational Meeting 5: Raleigh, North Carolina

- When asked what their top challenges in the fisheries are, the group responded that the inconsistency in the regulations of the fishery from year to year are a big issue.
- One fisherman responded that he is worried about bluefish because as other fisheries are more restricted, effort shifts towards bluefish. “It is a fish that we always go for and we take it for granted. I am worried about them as other fisheries collapse.”
- Another angler reiterated the concern about bluefish, and was specifically concerned that the recreational quota is being shifted to the commercial fishermen in the wintertime, when the large mature fish are offshore. *“Whatever fish that are in the water at the end of the year are good, it may increase the size of the fish the next year. We aren’t trying to catch our quota, and it bothers me that I cannot choose to leave fish in the water to make the stock better. Our conservation hurts us.”*
- One participant cited another challenge that *“because we are one the border, the South Atlantic Council has a plan for sea bass, and they never match up with you. And so we never know what we can catch or where we can catch them. It would be good if the MAFMC, ASMFC, and SAMFC managed the sea bass across the whole state. The same thing happens with summer flounder. I think only 3 of the last 15 years we had consistent regulations on them. They spawn here and move north, which makes management of the flounder more difficult.”*
- Another fisherman believed that the management entities need to focus on rebuilding the forage species. *“I’d like to see more focus on species that are forage being overfished. The menhaden decision was overdue; we need to continue rebuilding the bottom of the ecosystem base. It will help further up in the food chain.”*
- One fisherman said that there are too many dogfish in the ocean and that they are affecting the other populations of fish. He believed there should be a larger quota for spiny dogfish to help other fish, including weakfish, recover. *“In the winter with striped bass fishing, I caught three hundred spiny dogs... there is a lot of thought the weakfish are down because of the dogfish. They also eat a lot of other stuff. A more balanced version of them would help weakfish and others.”*
- A fisherman reiterated that there should be consistent regulations between states on black sea bass.
- He also believed that black sea bass are the most important to the for-hire sector in the winter, and that that is when they should be allowed to catch them.
- One fisherman spoke of how his rental property in the past was always rented by fishermen, but recently in the last 5 to 10 years, has not been rented to them. “I don’t think fishermen are encountering fish, I think its lack of abundance.”
- Another angler made the point that sometimes, changes in regulations may not have the intended effect. He was referring to conservation equivalency. His example was that one option was to reduce the bag limit of a certain fish from 8 to 6 fish, but there was a chart that showed that the average angler only catches 1.3 fish.
- The anglers were frustrated that commercial fishermen are allowed to catch 14 inch fish and recreational only 15.
- When asked what the Council could do to increase participation in the process, one fisherman replied *“the Councils and the State Fisheries division need to communicate with the recreational community and say, this is what we heard you say, this is what we are doing, and this is why. You see all these people providing this input, and they don’t see any actions. Actions resulting from our input are precious.”*

Appendix B: Roundtable Session Summaries
Recreational 5 – Raleigh, NC

- The fisherman suggested that the Council leverage fishing club email lists. He also recommended that the press releases be less technical.
- Another angler made the point that people need to be educated about which management partners manage which fish. *“You are talking to the 1% in this room, 99% will not know who you are, so you have to educate them.”*
- One fisherman believed that there needs to be more comparable economic analysis between the commercial and recreational sectors. *“Under MSA we are supposed to be managing to the greatest benefit of the nation. Economics is the best way to measure that. We need to maximize the economic benefit. Until we get the economic valuations that are comparable, we will never be able to use that parameter to measure performance in the fisheries.”*
- When asked how they recommend improving the data collection process, the fishermen responded that there should be more funding. He suggested voluntary electronic reporting and increasing the number of intercepts with anglers.
- When asked about the most effective outreach methods, the fishermen responded that press releases sent directly to the heads of the clubs would be a good start.
- In regards to ecosystem based management, the group believed that the Council needs to focus on habitat protection, but didn’t fully understand what ecosystem based management is.
- The fisherman said that there are many more cormorants than there were in the past, and that they will eat many of the bait fish.
- Another fisherman said that he saw large algae blooms several miles offshore, a couple miles wide. *“I have never seen those in the ocean, ever.”*
- Another fisherman made the point that there were no king mackerel or mahi mahi near shore this year.
- When asked what the fisheries should look like in the future, one participant responded that there should be a much greater extent of economic data to drive better decisions.
- Another fisherman said that the 10 year rebuilding constraint should only be important for the long lived species.
- *“I would love to see the Council look at the different species, and say which are more important to recreational and commercial, and manage them different so that those species are worth the most, and managed for abundance and big fish.” “You need to cap the harvest of the big bluefish.”*
- *“The secret will lie in an ability to do rather sophisticated economic analysis. Certain fish have a lot of economic value added. But some fish don’t matter at all. One million pounds of fish that weigh 10 lbs. fish are a big deal in terms of recreational economic value, because the bigger fish draw the most recreational fishermen.”*
- When asked how the Council will know if it is successful ten years from now, one fisherman made the point that if the Council can look at the list of fish that it manages, and say all of them are viable, it will be success.
- Another made the point that, the ability to choose what type of fish he wants to go out for would define success. *“Right now, there is no weakfish, I can’t catch speckled trout, and only one red drum, so the more choices we have, the better. 10 years from now, if my sons go with me and decide what they want for the grill, that is success.”*
- Lastly, another angler said he was happy that the Council is doing this outreach project and hopes that other Councils do it too.

Environmental Non-Governmental Organization (ENGO) Roundtable Session

ENGO Meeting: Washington, District of Columbia

- One participant congratulated the MAFMC for rebuilding the stocks that it manages. *“In the dark days of summer flounder, the Council has responded with the cuts necessary to rebuild.”*
- Another attendee made the point that from a communications perspective, those improvements in the stock need to be described as something that will also be good for the fishermen. *“Don’t use the legal obligation as a basis for tough decisions, but instead demonstrate the value that comes from it.”*
- The point was made that the Council has improved in that it has move from strictly considering statutes to understanding the big picture and looking forward. Specifically, the ecosystem committee and the Council’s willingness to look at ecosystem considerations were cited.
- When asked about challenges, an attendee said that the Council should look more closely at the other species that are incidentally caught by commercial fishermen, that there should be an appropriate monitoring system in place. *“There is no process for considering those other species, I am looking for a process by which the SSC would regularly review that data and assess whether those species need to be managed.”* As an example, the attendee cited west coast groundfish where there are 90 species and only 20 have stock assessments, but they are still managed.
- Another attendee said that, looking down the eastern seaboard, all of the major forage species are under stress and that that is a major concern. *“The quality of the NEPA analysis has been one of my pet peeves. NMFS has not been one of the better agencies at doing NEPA. Whether it is programmatic EIS or other ways, that is a good way to get a foothold in looking at how these species interact.”*
- One representative of Chesapeake Bay interests asked that the Council become more involved in their goal setting process.
- The point was made that the MAFMC should be a leader in bringing the management partners together to make good decisions. One particular issue of concern was the overlapping trawl fisheries also managed with the ASMFC
- Another participant believed that a big problem was the lack of good observer coverage and monitoring. *“Moving forward, I think we will be stymied without better data. It seems like the MAFMC gets short changed with the resources for data from the feds. I think you need to look at alternative sources of funding, including industry funding, or an ex-vessel fee that could be put into a fund to support deployment of a system like the one in Alaska.”*
- The group was concerned with the high variability of catch of summer flounder and that the Council’s reactions to that data.
- The point was made that the MAFMC needs to be more proactive with habitat, improving the monitoring programs, and engaging the spatial planning body MARCO. *“There are coral patches in the Mid-Atlantic that are important for all the species and they are unprotected from dragging right now. There is new information on coral protection.”*
- Another participant was concerned that there are not reference points for key forage species, including short fin squid, butterfish, and mackerel. *“I am concerned that we aren’t adequately protecting those stocks with a clear process... We have been using the performance report, and I am concerned that the anecdotal information justified an increase in quota. I think it’s an important tool, but when it’s used to justify an increase in a data poor stock, that concerns me. Anecdotal information should be used as context and verified where it can be... Precaution should rule the day. We shouldn’t increase ABC when we don’t know what we are doing.”*

Appendix B: Roundtable Session Summaries

ENGO – Washington, Dc

- One attendee made the point that multi-year specifications could get the Council in trouble if they are not set at the correct precautionary level.
- One participant believed that the Council needs to do a better job communicating and building partnerships with other agencies.
- When asked what the Council can do to improve the science and data it uses to make decisions, the group responded that the Council must work to consider new data streams that are the most valuable in light of data poor stocks. *“Being on the cutting edge of incorporating these new approaches and creating that buy-in with the Science Center is crucial to moving the ball forward.”*
- Another point was made that the Council should call for more funding for cooperative research because it is a good way to get fishermen involved and bought into the idea that good data is in their best interest.
- One participant believed that better data needs to be collected on the species of skates that are being caught, because the quota has gone up dramatically.
- The group agreed that the Council needs to do a better job of defining ‘sustainable management’. The point was that endless fights between ENGOs, fishermen, and managers are not sustainable from an economic point of view. The suggestion was that the Council performs a cost benefit analysis on its actions and prioritizes funding. *“Looking at the economic side, a lot of our fisheries will become more costly than the benefits that they will provide society... I define sustainable management as balancing our vision for what the fisheries will look like, but also a vision for the costs of management, how complex it will be, and the our management goals. We need to recognize realities that we need to shape our goals based on our resources. More resources don’t necessarily make the problem go away.”*
- Another participant believed that the Council must cut back on the take of all stocks in the forage base until the whole forage base starts to recover.
- One attendee made the point that the Council needs to envision success in 5, 10 and 20 years and set benchmarks to measure its success. *“This is how you demonstrate measurable changes over time. You need to set clear and realistic goals.”*
- A point was made that in the longer term, the Council needs to consider the ecosystem impacts of fishing and the predator species through quantitative means, which will require more and better data.
- Understanding recreational catch mortality was cited as a major concern. Reliance on MRIP and MRFSS data was said to be fraught with problems. The group suggested greater cooperation with the For Hire sector around data collection. *“You should utilize charter fishermen to collect data and collect biological samples or have a tagging program for research into the mortality... The fishermen need to own the data and have more confidence in the data that flows from that. If you are going to have a cooperative research program that uses recreational fishermen, you are going to have to use the data. In the past it has never seen the light of day. You need to use it and show them how you are using it.”*
- Another participant suggested that there needs to be a systematic effort across the Councils to better assess, collect, and incorporate socioeconomic data into the process.
- The point was made that monitoring needs to be more effective and accurate and that it would help the Council increase and decrease quota more effectively. *“Also ensure that the data is entered correctly, and show the fishery participants how their data goes through the process and transitions to an actual outcome.”*
- One participant was concerned that the observer data collection protocols need to be reviewed and updated because they are missing data.
- Another attendee made the point that *“we should look to innovate how we collect some of the recreational data, with smartphones and things like that. Those ideas will be well received.”*

Appendix B: Roundtable Session Summaries

ENGO – Washington, Dc

- The group discussed the need to update webpages to better convey the information that is out there to stakeholders. *“Update your species webpages, historic catch, biomass estimates, regulations, management decisions, so people that want to understand how it all fits together can understand and have it in a coherent fashion. Also describe all the data sources, and how they are used. Last, describe all of the historic and relevant cooperative research projects, and how people can get involved. In redoing the website, you need to really get at how to communicate the information that exists.”*
- The group agreed that there have been good innovations in monitoring of electronic by-catch on the West Coast, including monitoring cameras with GPS built in, and a program called E-Catch which helps fishermen securely document and share the location of by-catch species in real time on iPads to help with avoidance efforts.
- A participant reiterated the concern that MRFSS data is not dependable and that supplementary data will be necessary to better manage recreational fishing. *“We need to bring the recreational folks into the fold. It will require an investment up front, and the level of trust that comes from it will really be worthwhile.”*
- When asked where the Council should focus its efforts if it is to implement ecosystem based management, one respondent said that the key is that it is done incrementally and that there is a misperception that ecosystem based management needs to be implemented all at once.
- The group believed that an integrated ecosystem assessment would be important for the Council to make informed decisions around ecosystem management, but another participant believed that there isn’t funding available for that.
- An independent FMP for the ecosystem was suggested, and at a minimum, the participants believed that the Council should have in-house Geographic Information Systems (GIS) capabilities. *“You can’t manage habitats if you don’t know where they are, so having in-house capabilities to do GIS is important. That in-house GIS capacity, if every FMP had maps in it showing critical habitats that would be moving forward.”*
- In addition, with regard to an ecosystem FMP, the group suggested that *“it should also establish a metric and indicators to ensure that your management decisions under each FMP are achieving the ecosystem goals. Incrementally, we are pushing forage because it’s an easy place to start.”*
- The group discussed the means by which the North Pacific has used a safe document to incorporate all the ecosystem information, and create a 30 page appendix on ecosystem considerations to the safe document. *“The challenge they struggle with is how to apply that in the calculation of optimum yield. That is the challenge to the whole fishing world. That is where we need to go to achieve sustainability and meet MSA.”*
- *“The Council has made some great steps so far with the SSC ecosystem subcommittee terms of reference, but I think the Council should formalize that in each FMP that it pertains to. It should be a formal part and the SSC should be more involved in reviewing those important places where they can contribute terms of reference in the FMPs. I realize that may be part of the ecosystems guidance document, but I don’t think we need to wait until the end of this two year process... I think it’s right to focus on forage fish, but also incorporate as much information as we have about predator and prey relationships. Taking that into account as much as the information allows in multi-species assessments and management approaches.”*
- One participant believed that sustainable management really is based on trust building. *“You are starting to do that and you need to constantly have an understanding of who you are working with and bringing them together is important and targeting communications more, and making it endemic to the system. Elevate its importance. Being responsive, adaptive, and trustworthy is how you succeed...If you have trust, you are responsive to their needs, and willing to be adaptive, and communicating that well, if it*

all comes together, people will see you as the broker. So the brokering of the communications between the groups will be crucial to achieving the vision successfully.”

- An attendee made the point that success in managing rebuilt species is about managing expectations. *“As we begin to transition to preventing overfishing, catches will not always go up. You need to create an idea that there will be ups and downs, but this process is not over.”*
- Another participant made the point that there needs to be a long term plan for fishing capacity that the fishing industry agrees to. *“We need to talk about how many fishermen we can really sustain.”*
- *“Goal setting needs to be reflective of ecosystem agenda.”*
- When the asked what the Mid-Atlantic fisheries should look like in the future, one participant said that he wanted to see wild fisheries where humans figure out how to fit in, rather than creating the ocean that we want.
- The point was also made that in the future, the management entities need to work more closely together.
- The group discussed the idea that the Council should move towards a single comprehensive management plan that looks at the relationships between all the species, including humans. *“You need a base idea for how to set up a comprehensive plan to measure interactions between species.”*
- When asked about process specific recommendations, the group said that there should be no standing microphone at the Council.
- In addition, the group believed that the process for setting optimum yield for FMPs is ambiguous. *“The stakeholders need to get involved to understand that.”*
- The group suggested other ways to make the Council meetings more user-friendly. There was concern that it is hard to see who is speaking at the Council, that you have to look for the red light to have any idea. And there was concern that the seating area for the public is very small in comparison to the open area in the U-shape. Lastly, they believed that the plaques showing the Council members names are currently too small and should be more visible to the public.
- The group believed that the Council should get rid of its timer.
- The meeting attendees believed that the MAFMC needs better representation of NGO members on its advisory panels. *“We need more than one NGO representative to ten industry representatives.”*
- Another participant recommended that the Councils better adhere to the conflict of interest provisions in the MSA. *“There is already a lower threshold for Council members and the regulations interpreting the statute are too relaxed. So you need to keep an eye on these potential conflicts of interest and make sure the rules are announced regarding recusals.”*
- When asked how the Council will know if it is successful 10 years from now, the group believed that ongoing and increasing stakeholder engagement in the Council meetings, and especially the meetings leading up to the Council decisional meetings would be a key to success. *“You need to get people to come to the meetings that lead up to the decisional meetings, those are the important ones.”*
- *“To measure success, you have to sustain healthy fisheries. There will be key performance measures to achieving that goal... Given climate change and habitat damage and threats to fisheries, you may not be able to reach your goals without more significant substantive coordination and collaboration with other federal state organizations. That increased level of the right kinds of coordination to address the threats that are beyond your jurisdiction is a key measure of your success.”*
- The group was encouraged by the small group meeting format and promoted stakeholder equality. *“A balance of power among stakeholders is key. You get credit for going out and meeting people where they are. It’s better to change slowly over time with equal stakeholder power rather than a hard abrupt shift.”*

Roundtable Session Guides

There are three interview guides that were prepared and distributed to roundtable session participants prior to the start of the session. These documents were also customized and used as flyers and invitations to distribute within networks of fishermen at local fish houses and recreational fishing clubs to help increase attendance at the sessions.

There is an interview guide for each stakeholder group, including commercial industry, the recreational sector, and environmental non-governmental organizations.

Purpose:

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council is working to build partnerships with the fishing industry to determine the future direction for Mid-Atlantic fisheries and get more ‘on the water’ knowledge into the management process.

This work will inform both strategic planning and fishery management plans at the Council, and should help create greater stability in the management system going forward. It is an effort that will be driven by the Council’s constituents, and input from you and members of industry will make a real difference.

The Mid-Atlantic Council is responsible for managing fisheries in federal waters (3-200 miles from shore) generally between New York and North Carolina. These fisheries include the following species:

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| – Summer Flounder | – <i>Illex</i> (shortfin) Squid | – Spiny Dogfish |
| – Black Sea Bass | – Surfclams | – Golden Tilefish |
| – Scup | – Ocean Quahog | – Atlantic Mackerel |
| – <i>Loligo</i> (longfin) Squid | – Bluefish | – Butterfish |

Questions:

1. What is your top challenge in the fisheries today?
2. We know that economic times are tough right now, what’s made things the hardest?
3. What regulatory processes have had the biggest impact on your economic viability?
4. If you could have the Council do something differently, what would it be?
 - Are there certain things that are working that they should not change?
5. What could the Council do better or differently to increase your participation in the Council process?
6. What can the council do to increase you confidence in the council process?
7. How can we bridge the gap between industry knowledge and the science used to make decisions?
8. We know you have to do a lot of monitoring and reporting of fishing activity—what’s the biggest hassle? What can be improved?
9. If the Council moves toward ecosystem based management, where should it focus its efforts?
10. The Council is looking for more “on the water knowledge.” Have you seen other changes out there that are impacting the fish populations?
11. If the Council were truly listening to fishermen, what would the Mid-Atlantic fisheries look like in the future?
12. How will we know if we are successful 10 years from now?
13. Any other thoughts that you want to share with the Council?

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Questions:

1. What is your top challenge in the fisheries today?
2. How can the council better manage recreational fishing to improve your experience?
3. What could the council do better or differently to increase your participation in the Council process?
4. What can the council do to increase your confidence in the council process?
5. Do you have recommendations about how the council can improve its science and recreational data collection processes?
6. If the council moves toward ecosystem based management, where should it focus its efforts?
7. The council is looking for more “on the water knowledge”. Have you seen other changes out there that are impacting the fish populations?
8. If the council were truly listening to fishermen, what would the Mid-Atlantic fisheries look like in the future?
9. How will we know if we are successful 10 years from now?
10. Any other thoughts that you want to share with the Council?

Agenda:

1. Welcome and Background
2. Introductions
3. Facilitated Discussion
4. Closing and Next Steps

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Questions:

14. What is currently working well in Mid-Atlantic fisheries?
15. What are your biggest concerns with Mid-Atlantic fisheries today?
16. What are your priorities and values for Mid-Atlantic fisheries?
17. If you could have the Council do something differently, what would it be?
18. What can be done to improve the science and data that the Council uses to make its decisions?
19. What is your advice to the Council as it considers ecosystem based management? Where should it focus its efforts?
20. In your view, how can the council better integrate social and economic considerations into its decision-making process?
21. Ideally, what would you like the Mid-Atlantic fisheries to look like in the future?
22. How will we know if we are successful 10 years from now?
23. Do you have suggestions on how the Council may continue to develop productive partnerships with its NGO stakeholders.