



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 30, 2012

PRESS CONTACT: Mary Clark
(302) 674-2331 (ext. 261)

Council Releases Stakeholder Report and Launches Strategic Planning Process

DOVER, DE—The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council has released a final report summarizing the ideas, concerns, and recommendations from more than 1,500 individuals who provided input for the Visioning and Strategic Planning Project.

The [Stakeholder Input Report](#) outlines 55 themes/concerns and 123 recommendations from three of the Council's primary stakeholder groups—the commercial industry, the recreational sector, and the environmental community. Participants commented on topics ranging from decision-making and communication procedures to management strategies for specific fisheries.

Outreach and data gathering for the report occurred over a five month period beginning in September 2011. Online and mail surveys were available to anyone interested in providing input on fisheries management, and council members and staff met with more than 200 individuals in 20 locations throughout the Northeast region in roundtable sessions. Organizations also had the opportunity to submit position letters describing their concerns and priorities for Mid-Atlantic fisheries.

“The Council has a diverse constituency, and we recognize that effective fisheries management must include meaningful stakeholder participation,” said Council Chairman Rick Robins. “We have a history of successful stock rebuilding, but we continue to struggle with maintaining full stakeholder engagement. This report and the forthcoming strategic plan will enable the Council to make decisions that are more accurately informed by stakeholder perspectives.”

Report Highlights

The Stakeholder Input Report, which is available on the Council's website, is organized in to three sections—Themes and Recommendations, Stakeholder Visions, and Fishery-Specific Themes. Themes and Recommendations are further organized in to six categories, including Information and Data, Management Strategies, Economic Challenges, Communication and Participation, Governance and Ecosystems.

Although stakeholder perspectives are often characterized as inherently conflicting, a number of common themes were identified by members of the commercial fishing industry, the recreational fishing sector, environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOS), and the general public. These themes included:

- ❖ There is a lack of confidence in the data that drive fishery management decisions.
- ❖ Stakeholders are not as involved in the Council process as they can and should be.

- ❖ Different jurisdictions and regulations among the many fishery management organizations result in complexity and inconsistency.
- ❖ There is a need for increased transparency and clearer communications in fisheries management.
- ❖ The dynamics of the ecosystem and food web should be considered to a greater extent in fisheries management decisions.
- ❖ Stakeholders are not adequately represented on the Council.
- ❖ Pollution is negatively affecting the health of fish stocks.

In addition to voicing concerns and providing recommendations, stakeholders identified elements of a “Vision” for successful fisheries and fisheries management in the Mid-Atlantic. Five common characteristics of a vision were identified across all stakeholder groups, including:

- ❖ Fish populations are thriving and are harvested at sustainable levels.
- ❖ Management decisions are based on sound data and science.
- ❖ There is equitable consideration of the needs of diverse stakeholder groups; the interest of no one stakeholder group outweighs another.
- ❖ There is little waste in the fisheries, and regulatory discards are minimal.
- ❖ More stakeholders are involved in the management process.

Next Steps

The report will play a critical role in the Council’s strategic planning process, scheduled to begin next month when the newly-established Visioning and Strategic Planning Working Group meets for the first time. The working group, comprising approximately 25 Council members and stakeholders, will draft a Vision, Goal Statement, and 10-year Strategic Plan to guide the Council’s management decisions and priorities.

“This report is the product of the largest outreach and data gathering initiative the Council has ever undertaken. There is a sincere commitment among Council members to integrate stakeholder input in to the strategic plan as much as possible,” said Chairman Robins. “We are grateful to the 1,500 stakeholders who took the time to share their concerns and ideas with us, and the vision and strategic plan will reflect their input.”

The full report and additional information about the project are available at: <http://www.mafmc.org/vision>. To download the report directly, [click here](#).

Additional details about the strategic planning process and opportunities for involvement will be posted in August.

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Conservation and Management Council (MAFMC) is one of eight regional councils established by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976. The Council has primary responsibility for twelve species of fish and shellfish in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) between 3 and 200 miles off the Mid-Atlantic coast. Member states include New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina. For more information, visit our website: www.mafmc.org.