

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council 2020-2024 Strategic Plan

Stakeholder Input Report
June 2019

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Executive Summary

Introduction

In August 2013, the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council adopted its first-ever strategic plan to guide its activities from 2014 through 2018. The plan includes a series of goals and objectives that were informed by an extensive stakeholder outreach process, including an online survey, position letters, and roundtable meetings to gather public input. The 2014-2018 Strategic Plan¹ is organized around four goal areas: Communication, Science, Management, and Governance. Each area includes several objectives and associated strategies to advance progress toward a particular goal.

In October 2018, the Council began the process to develop a strategic plan for the years 2020 through 2024. The new strategic plan will be informed by progress on the 2014-2018 Strategic Plan, stakeholder feedback, and management partner outreach.

Data-Gathering Approach

Stakeholder input was instrumental in building the existing strategic plan framework that will serve as the foundation for the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan. Obtaining stakeholder feedback regarding how the Council has performed, as well as identifying new priorities for the next five years, is a critical piece of the process. The Council has a diverse constituency with a wide range of interests, priorities, and needs.

The Council used the following data-gathering tools to solicit feedback on past performance and future priorities:

- An online stakeholder survey
- Advisory Panel and Scientific and Statistical Committee meetings
- Public input sessions
- Management partner outreach

The timeframe for collection of stakeholder feedback using these tools spanned a four-month period, from January 23, 2019 through May 21, 2019. All of these approaches asked stakeholders to broadly consider the following questions:

- How well has the Council performed under the 2014-2018 Strategic Plan, and what changes or improvements could the Council make?
- Looking ahead to the next five years, what priorities should the Council focus on?

The feedback received from each approach is detailed in separate sections of the report. These responses represent a range of perspectives that is reflective of such factors as geography, stakeholder needs and interests, and length of involvement in the Council process.

Overview of Survey Results

The online stakeholder survey was conducted from January 23, 2019 through March 8, 2019. A total of 803 individuals responded to the survey, providing over 3,800 comments on the Council's current Vision, Mission and goal areas. The survey asked stakeholders to rate how well the Council has performed relative to the current plan, and to suggest opportunities and challenges for the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan.

¹ Available at <http://www.mafmc.org/strategic-plan>

Respondents were asked to select the roles they play in Mid-Atlantic fisheries, based on the descriptions listed in Table 1. Individuals were allowed to select any roles that applied (see “All Roles” column), as well as asked to select a single primary role.

Table 1. Respondent role descriptions

Descriptions	All Roles	Primary Role
Commercial – captain, vessel owner, crew	78	43
Commercial – shoreside operations	32	16
Commercial – organization representative	28	14
Recreational – private angler	298	217
Recreational – bait and tackle	58	13
Recreational – organization representative	40	17
Recreational – for-hire (party/charter) captain or crew	79	56
Recreational – other use (boating, diving, etc.)	87	18
Government Employee (federal, regional, state, local)	31	15
Science/Research	53	22
General Public	171	109
Other	16	8
Non-Governmental Organization Representative (including ENGOs)	21	17
TOTAL	992	565

Responses were grouped by primary role into the following five stakeholder categories:

- Commercial: Captain, vessel owner or crew; shoreside operations; organization representative.
- Recreational: Private angler; bait and tackle; organization representative
- For-Hire: Party/charter captain or crew
- Interested Public: Other use (boating, diving, etc.); government employee; science/research; general public; other
- Non-Governmental Organization (NGO): NGO representative, including ENGOs

These categories were used to sort the data for purposes of determining differences in priorities and performance ratings among user groups.

Vision Statement

Respondents were asked for feedback on the Council’s current Vision statement:

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

The majority of survey respondents believe that the Council’s Vision statement is still appropriate (Figure 1).

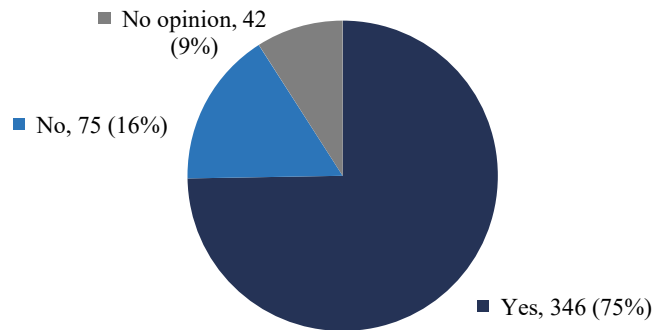


Figure 1: Appropriateness of Council's Vision, All Respondents

Suggested Modifications to Council's Vision

Survey respondents provided the following broad suggestions and feedback across all stakeholder categories regarding the Council's Vision:

- Maintain a strong focus on healthy ecosystems.
- Define the term "stakeholders" – are stakeholders commercial and recreational fishermen, all ocean users, the fish, all species in the ocean?
- Clarify "benefits" – are these long-term, short-term, social or economic benefits?
- The statement should include and support healthy fishing communities.
- The statement should reflect a balance of stakeholder needs and consideration of stakeholder input
- Other ocean uses, such as wind energy, could significantly impact the Council's ability to achieve its vision.
- Improvements in the accuracy of data and science are necessary to achieve the Council's Vision.
- The Vision statement does not need any changes; it just needs effective implementation.

Stakeholder Visions

Survey respondents were asked to provide feedback regarding what successful implementation of the Council's Vision would look like. The following are general vision themes across all stakeholder categories:

- Healthy ecosystems that are free from pollution (marine debris, water quality, oil and gas, etc.)
- Abundant, productive fish populations that support thriving fisheries.
- Sustainable coastal communities that are economically viable.
- A balance of ecosystem and human needs that satisfies all.
- Agreement among the Council's various constituencies: scientists, public interest groups, and stakeholders of all categories.
- Respect for on-the-water observations of commercial and recreational fisherman that are incorporated into decision-making.
- Accurate data and improvements in the methods to collect those data so that better decisions can be made.
- Fair and equitable access to the resource for all users with minimal allocation conflicts.
- A lack of politics or undue external influence impacting the Council's decisions.

Goal Area Performance Ratings

Stakeholders were asked to rate the Council's general performance across all four strategic goal areas of Communication, Science, Management and Governance. The following charts (Figures 2 through 7) display the results of the performance ratings for all survey respondents, as well as each of the five stakeholder categories.

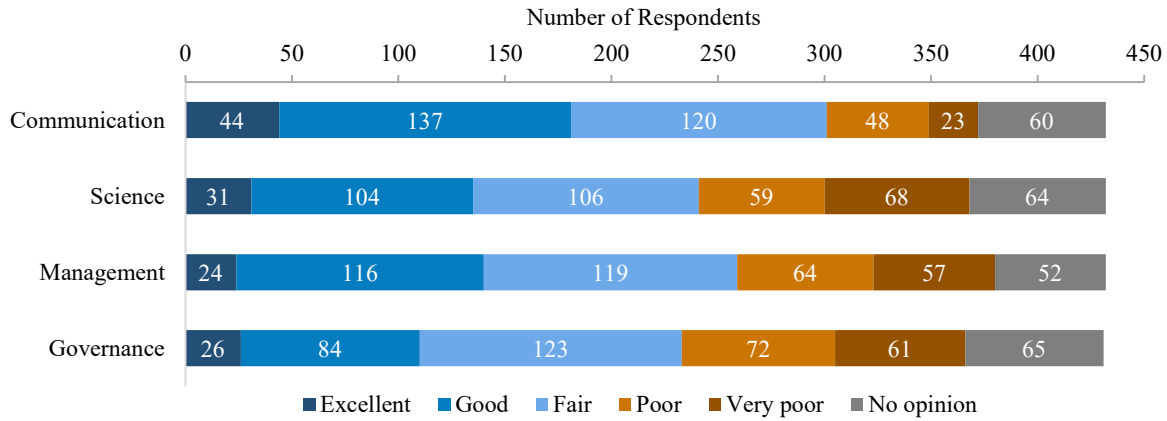


Figure 2: Goal Area Performance Ratings, All Respondents

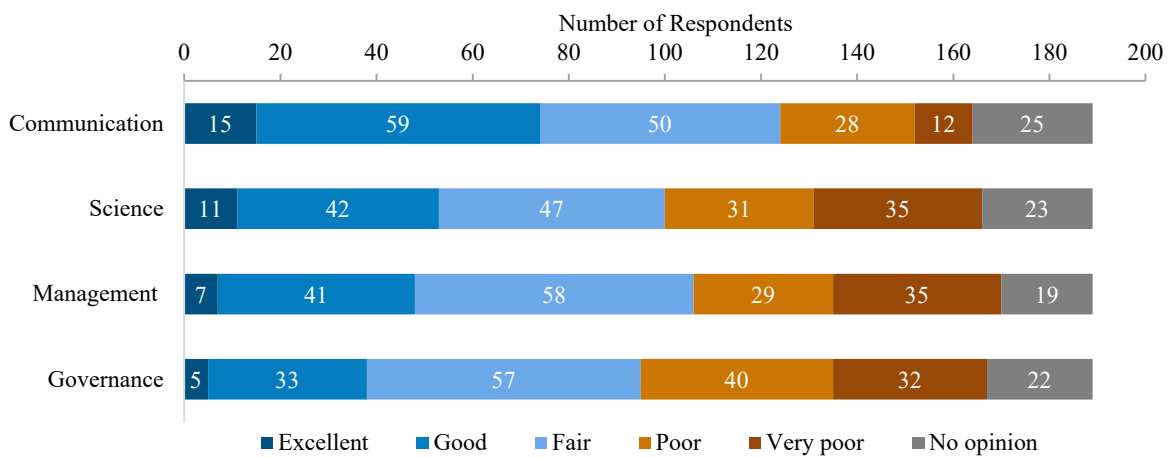


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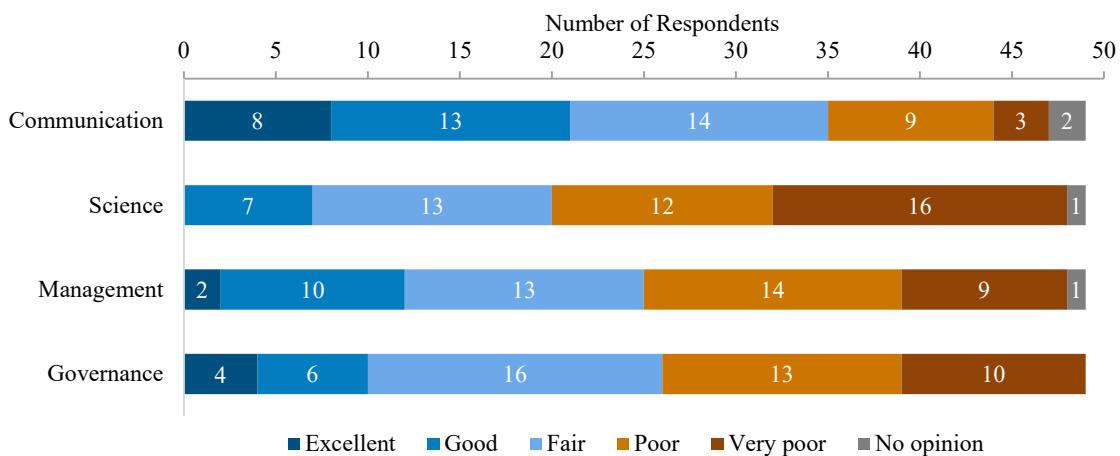


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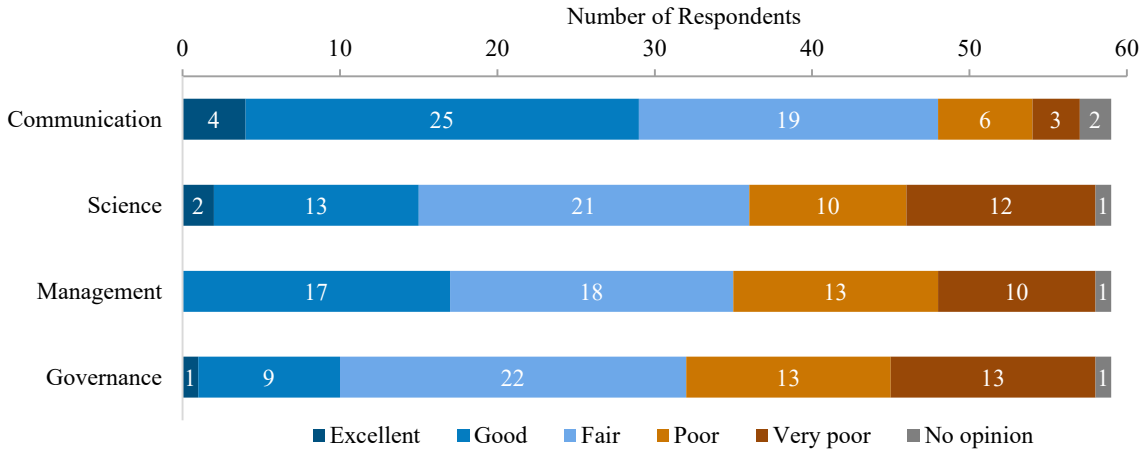


Figure 5: Goal Area Performance Ratings, Commercial Respondents

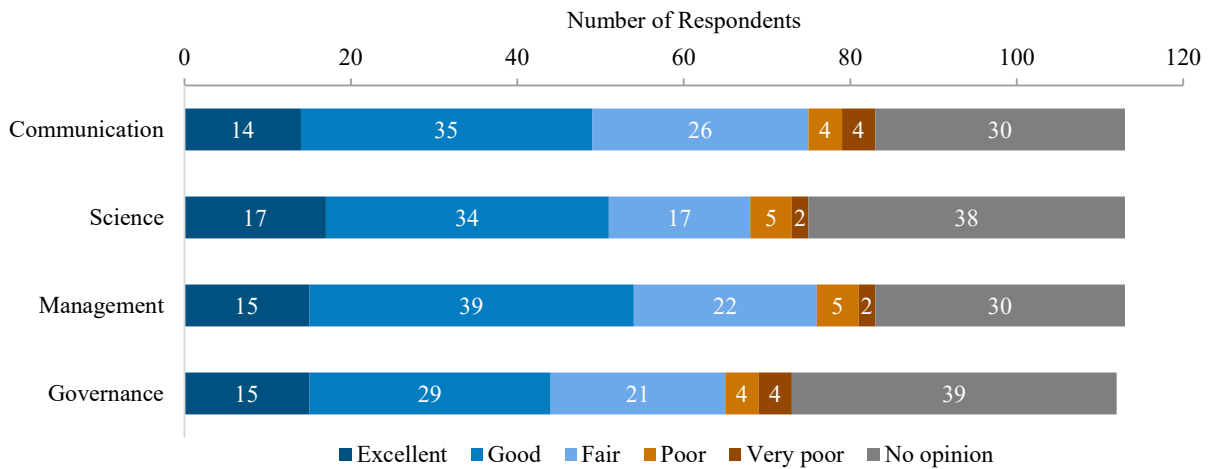


Figure 6: Goal Area Performance Ratings, Interested Public Respondents

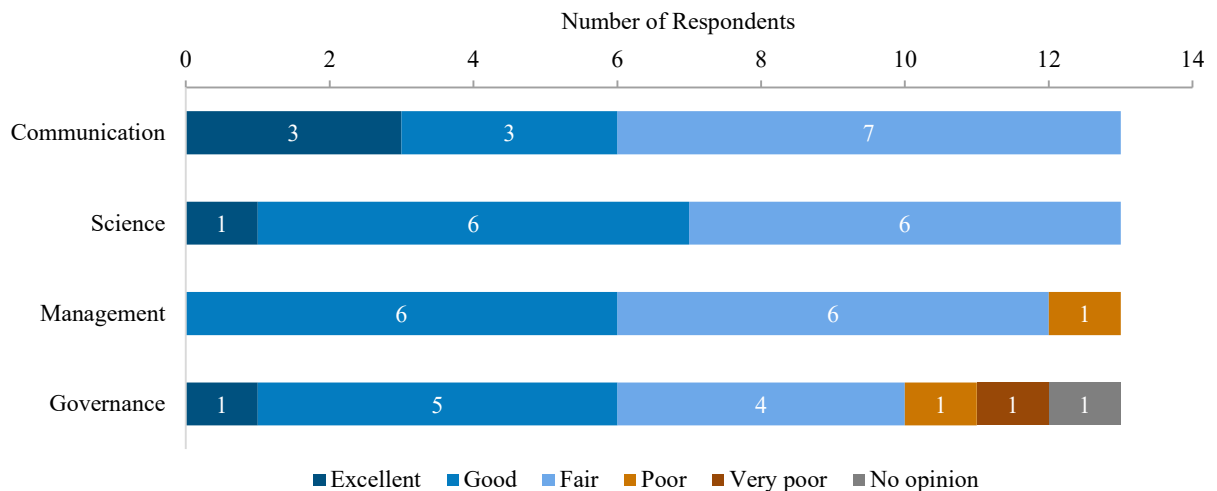


Figure 7: Goal Area Performance Ratings, NGO Respondents

Communication Goal

The Council’s current Communication goal is:

“Engage, inform, and educate stakeholders to promote public awareness and encourage constructive participation in the Council process”

Respondents were asked to rate the Council’s performance on the five existing Communication objectives designed to assist the Council in achieving its goal, shown in Figure 8 below.

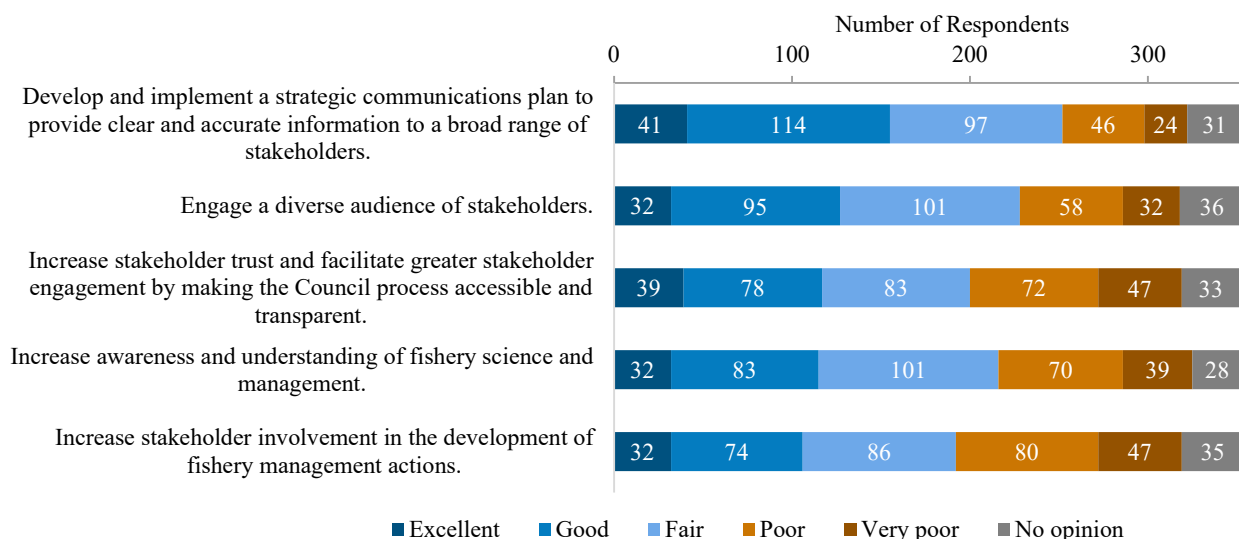


Figure 8: Communication Objectives Performance Ratings, All Respondents

Communication Themes

Survey respondents were asked to provide feedback on and modifications to the existing Communication goal and objectives, as well as suggestions for new objectives and activities. Broad themes across all stakeholder categories are as follows:

- The current goal and objectives do not need modification, they simply need to be effectively executed.
- Stakeholders have concerns regarding the frequency, simplicity and clarity of the Council’s communications. Some already involved in the process would prefer to see fewer, more targeted communications. Others would like to see an increase in the frequency of the Council’s communications but are frustrated by the complexity of the language.
- Extend outreach to a broader constituency, such as high schools, universities, tourism groups, etc. to encourage participation.
- Listen to and engage in dialogue with its stakeholders. Communication is a two-way street, and many stakeholders feel that the Council hears them, but does not listen.
- Meetings are not accessible to the general, working public as they are held at times and in locations that prevent attendance.
- Communication and outreach tools should include greater use of social media (e.g. Facebook and YouTube) as well as outlets that fishermen themselves use – discussion forums, fishing clubs, fishhouses, tackle shops, etc. The Council should also make more effort to get out to meet fishermen where they are.

- The Council should make more of an effort to respond to stakeholder input and explain how suggestions are considered. Lack of response contributes to lack of participation.

Science Goal

The Council’s current Science goal is:

“Ensure that the Councils management decisions are based on timely and accurate scientific data that are analyzed and modeled in a manner that improves management performance and builds stakeholder confidence.”

Respondents rated the Council’s performance on the five Science objectives meant to assist the Council in achieving this goal (Figure 9).

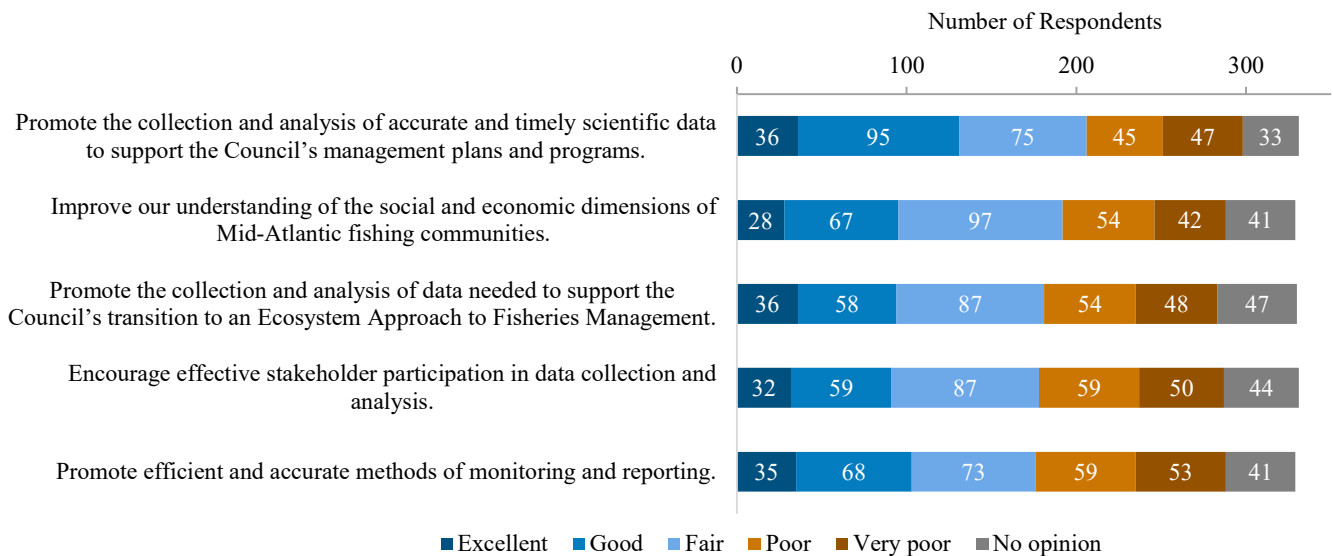


Figure 9: Science Objectives Performance Ratings, All Respondents

Science Themes

Survey respondents provided feedback on the Council’s Science goal and objectives, including suggestions for priorities and projects. Across all stakeholder categories, the general themes emerging from this input are:

- The accuracy of data and science used in decisions is still a significant cause for frustration and mistrust. This ranges from fishery-independent surveys to recreational harvest estimates.
- Integration of on-the-water observations from fishermen into decision-making, as well as collaborative research between fishermen and scientists should be higher priorities.
- Ecosystem, habitat, and climate science and modelling are needed to address management issues related to shifting species distributions and ecological catch limits for forage species.
- Improvements in both fishery-independent and fishery-dependent monitoring and reporting are needed.
- Focus on alternative methods and new technologies to collect data (e.g. smartphone apps).
- Better social and economic data and science are needed to inform decisions.
- The goal and objectives do not require change, they just require effective execution.

Management Goal

The Council’s current Management goal is:

“Develop fishery management strategies that provide for productive, sustainable fisheries.”

Performance ratings for the Council’s Management objectives are shown below (Figure 10).

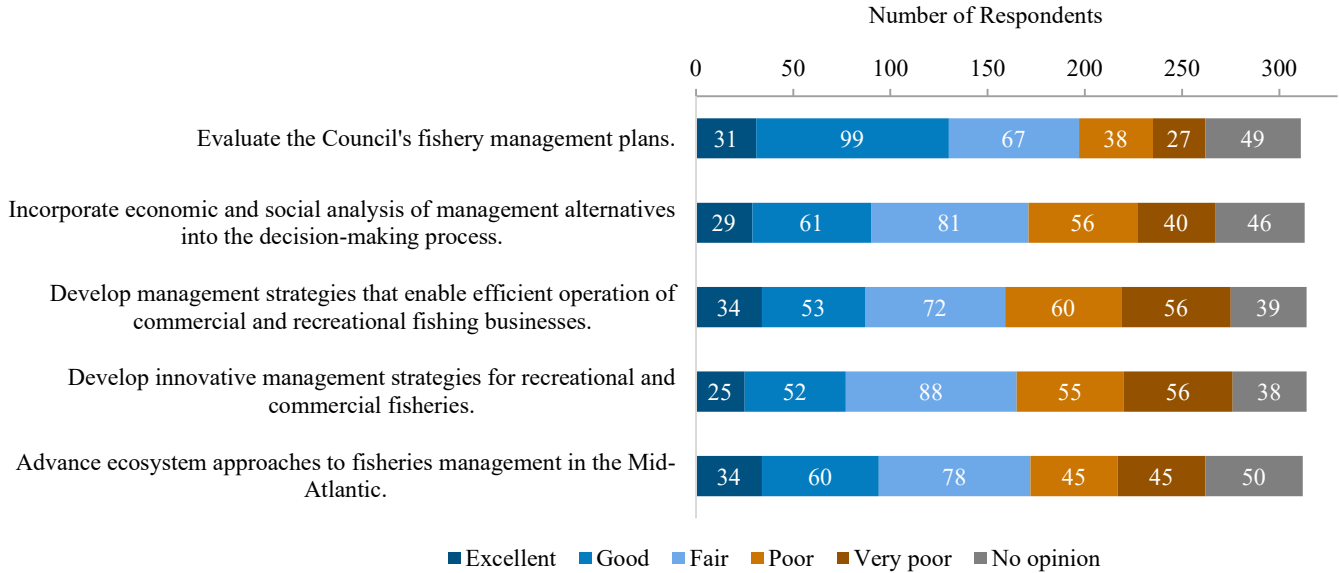


Figure 10: Management Objectives Performance Ratings, All Respondents

Management Themes

Suggestions and comments across all stakeholder categories on the Council’s Management goal and objectives resulted in the following broad themes:

- Open ocean aquaculture has been ignored too long and needs to be included as a priority in the new strategic plan.
- The Council’s management approaches need to consider the sustainability of fishing businesses and communities.
- Management measures should result in a better balance of stakeholder interests.
- The Council needs to implement ecosystem-based management strategies that can also address forage fish protection.
- Greater consideration of the economic impact of all fishing sectors when developing management measures.
- The Council should try a different approach and manage fisheries for abundance rather than maximum yield.
- More emphasis on habitat assessment and protection is needed, with a focus on determining how habitat contributes to the productivity of various fish species.

Governance Goal

The Council’s current Governance goal is:

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

Stakeholder performance ratings of the Council’s three governance objectives are shown in Figure 11.

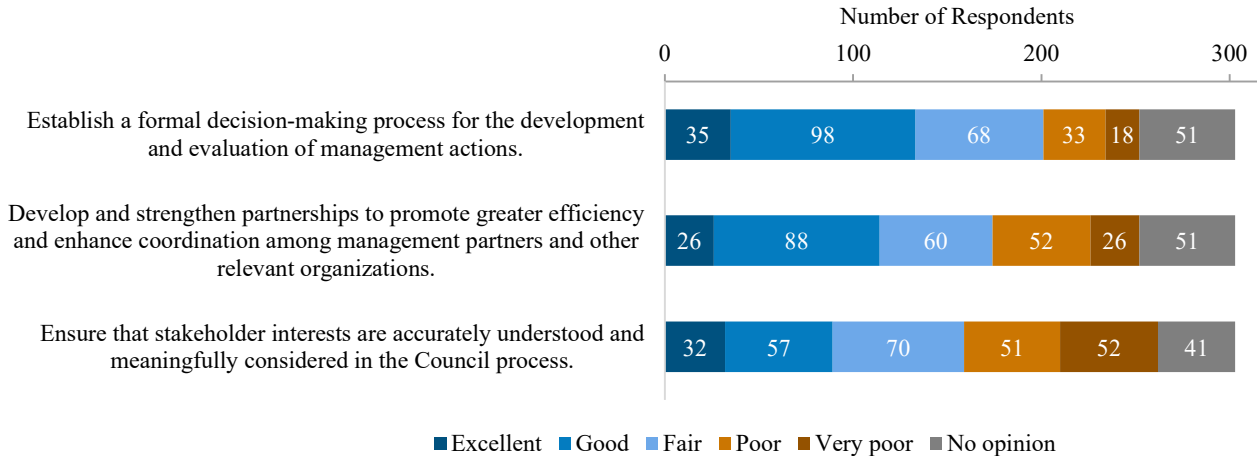


Figure 11: Governance Objectives Performance Ratings, All Respondents

Governance Themes

Recommendations across all stakeholder categories regarding the Council’s current Governance goals and objectives are as follows:

- A well-constructed goal that needs better execution and accountability
- The Council needs to make a greater effort to balance and consider stakeholder input and interests.
- Additional/alternative methods for stakeholders to participate in the process should be considered (e.g. participation on Fishery Management Action Teams), particularly for stakeholders who cannot attend meetings.
- More extensive coordination with management partners on climate change impacts to managed species is necessary.
- The Council needs to become more actively involved in the permitting of alternative ocean uses to ensure the interests of fishing communities and stakeholders are addressed.
- There is still a perceived lack of transparency and accountability in the Council’s decision-making process.
- Many stakeholders believe there is still an undue level of political and external influence on Council members’ decisions.

Future Priorities

Survey respondents were asked to provide feedback on priority issues they thought the Council should focus on in its 2020-2024 Strategic Plan. The broad themes below reflect input across all stakeholder categories, and most are reflective of many of the previous suggestions and feedback received on the four goal areas.

- Much greater involvement in offshore ocean uses (wind, seismic exploration, aquaculture) to ensure that impacts to fisheries resources are heard and addressed.
- Climate change, shifting species distributions and resultant impacts on allocations and access across fisheries and jurisdictions.
- Greater focus on implementation of ecosystem approaches that include protection of important fish habitats and forage species protections.
- An increase in collaborative efforts between scientists and fishermen to address data inaccuracies/deficiencies, catch estimates and reporting.
- A focus on incorporation of social and economic impacts of regulations into decisions.
- Regulatory stability to allow for fishing businesses to plan, but flexibility in management approaches and ability to incorporate new information.
- Minimize discards through improvements in fishing practices.
- Increased and improved coordination with management partners on species, fisheries and habitats that overlap jurisdictions, but are solely managed by one entity.
- More public education and outreach to improve participation in the Council process.
- Transparency in decision-making and elimination of political influence.

Introduction and Methodology

In October 2018, the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council began the process to develop a strategic plan for the years 2020 through 2024. The new strategic plan will be informed by progress on the 2014-2018 Strategic Plan, stakeholder feedback, and management partner outreach.

To solicit stakeholder feedback on the Council’s performance relative to the 2014-2018 Strategic Plan and obtain suggestions regarding future priorities, the following tools were used:

- An online stakeholder survey designed to evaluate the Council’s performance and collect feedback;
- Advisory panel and Scientific and Statistical Committee meetings to present preliminary survey results and solicit recommendations from the Council’s advisors;
- Public input sessions; and
- Management partner outreach.

Stakeholders were asked to provide feedback on the following general questions:

- How well did the Council perform under the 2014-2018 Strategic Plan?
- What recommendations do you have for the Council regarding priorities for the next five years?

The following sections summarize stakeholder input and recommendations for the Council’s 2020-2024 Strategic Plan.

Section 1: Survey Results

An online survey was conducted from January 23, 2019 through March 8, 2019. The survey was open to the public and communicated to stakeholders via email, press release, management partner communication and social media. The pool of participants was voluntary and self-selected. A total of 803 individuals responded to the survey. This section summarizes the results of each question.

Responses were analyzed by stakeholder group when appropriate. Survey respondents identified the primary role played in Mid-Atlantic fisheries in Question 3 of the survey. The thirteen primary respondent role types were grouped into five stakeholder categories as shown in the table below (Table 1). These categories based on primary role selections are used when results are presented by stakeholder group.

Table 1. Respondent roles corresponding to each stakeholder category

Stakeholder Categories	Respondent Roles
Recreational	Recreational – private angler Recreational – bait and tackle Recreational – organization representative
For-Hire	Recreational – for-hire (party/charter) captain or crew
Commercial	Commercial – captain, vessel owner, crew Commercial – shoreside operations Commercial – organization representative
Interested Public	Recreational – other use (boating, diving, etc.) Government Employee (federal, regional, state, local) Science/Research General Public Other
Non-Governmental Organization (NGO)	Non-Governmental Organization Representative (including ENGOS)

The survey also included a number of open-ended questions. Results of these questions were reviewed to identify commonly occurring patterns and issues. Categories and subcategories were developed for these patterns and assigned to each response. Some responses covered multiple categories, resulting in up to three categories or subcategories assigned to a single response.

General Information

Question 1. Where do you live?

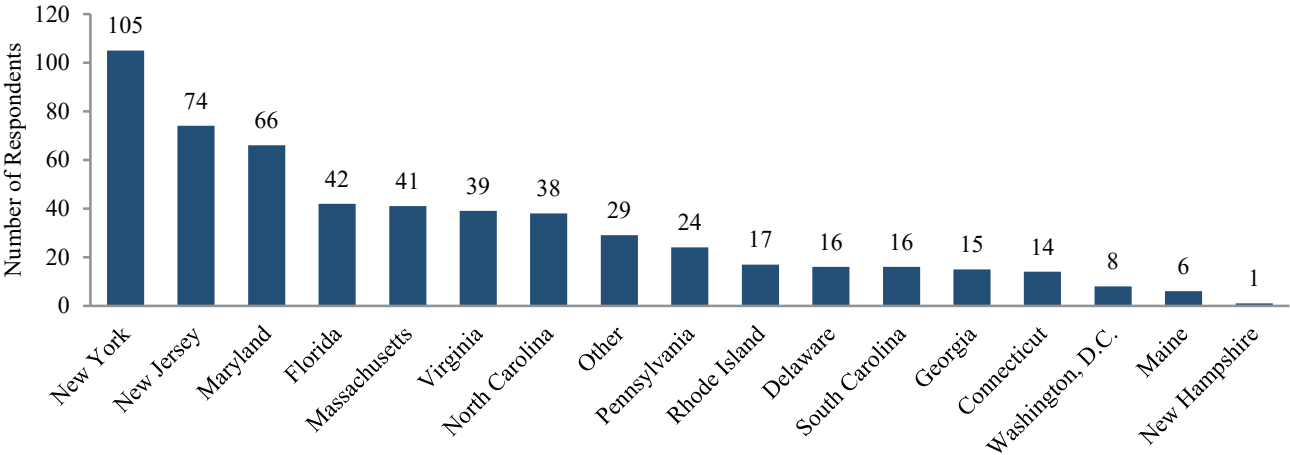


Figure 1: State of Residence, All Respondents (Q1)

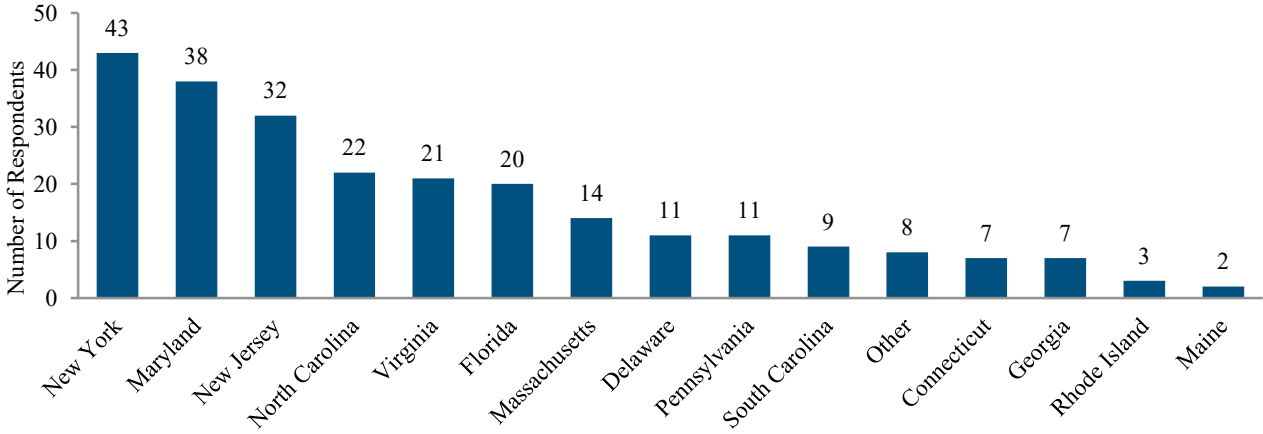


Figure 2: State of Residence, Recreational Respondents (Q1)

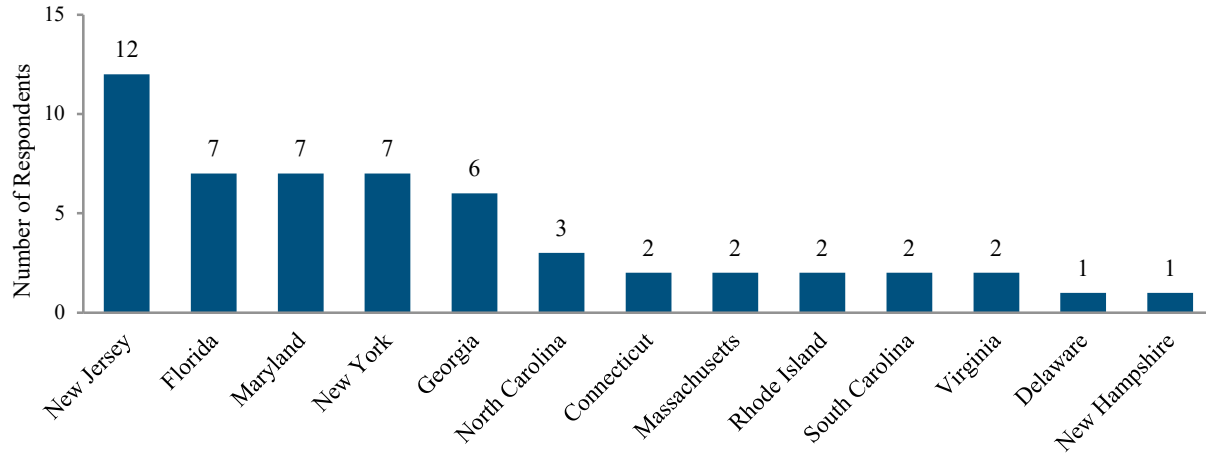


Figure 3: State of Residence, For-Hire Respondents (Q1)

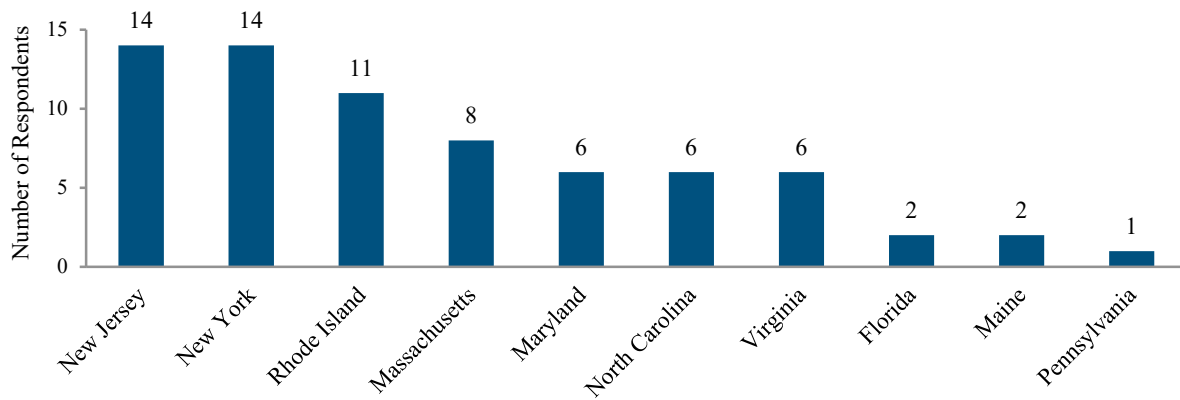


Figure 4: State of Residence, Commercial Respondents (Q1)

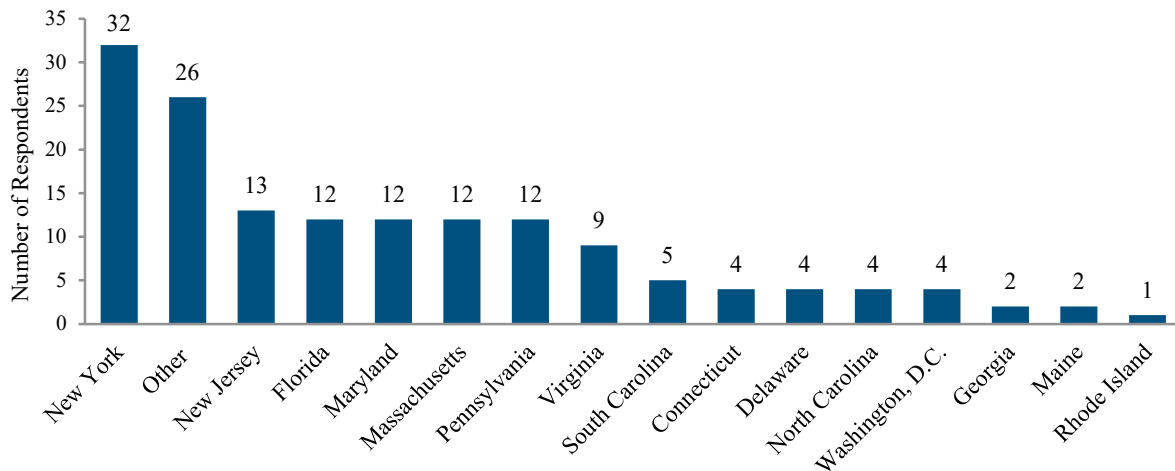


Figure 5: State of Residence, Interested Public Respondents (Q1)

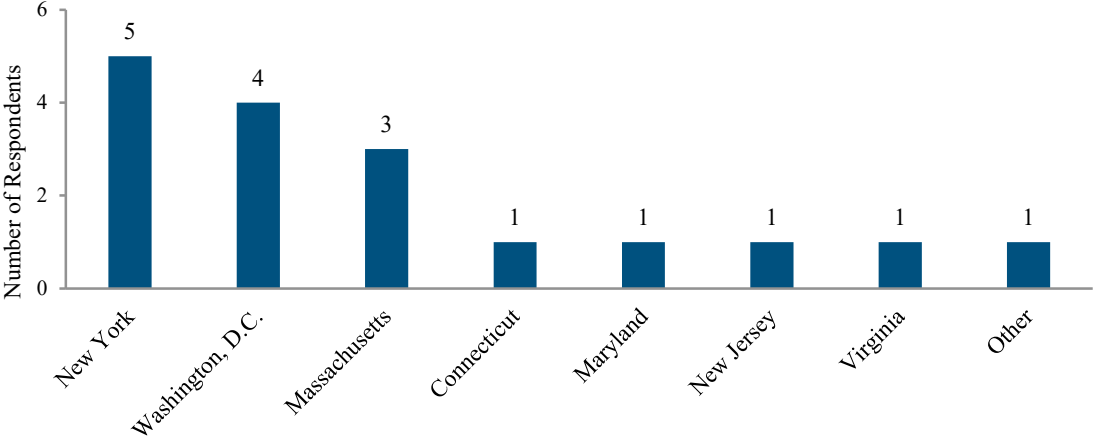


Figure 6: State of Residence, NGO Respondents (Q1)

Questions 2 and 3. Which of the following role(s) do you play in Mid-Atlantic fisheries? (Check any that apply) and Which of the following would best describe your PRIMARY role in Mid-Atlantic fisheries (check one)

Table 2. All roles and primary roles played by respondents in Mid-Atlantic fisheries.

Descriptions	All Roles	Primary Role
Commercial – captain, vessel owner, crew	78	43
Commercial – shoreside operations	32	16
Commercial – organization representative	28	14
Recreational – private angler	298	217
Recreational – bait and tackle	58	13
Recreational – organization representative	40	17
Recreational – for-hire (party/charter) captain or crew	79	56
Recreational – other use (boating, diving, etc.)	87	18
Government Employee (federal, regional, state, local)	31	15
Science/Research	53	22
General Public	171	109
Other	16	8
Non-Governmental Organization Representative (including ENGOs)	21	17
TOTAL	992	565

Question 4. Are you a member of any of the organizations listed below? (Check any that apply)

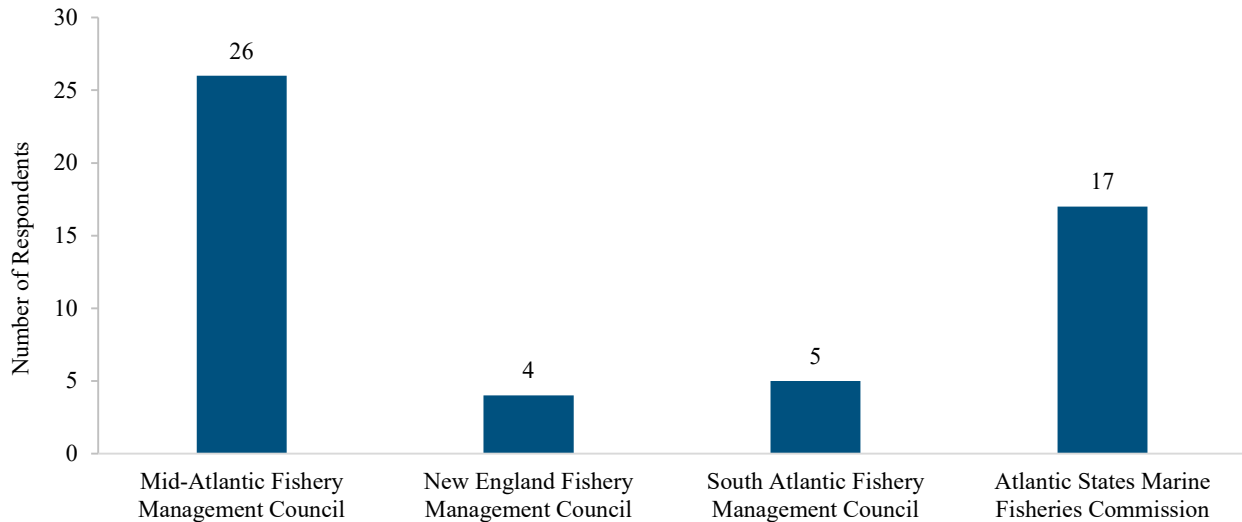


Figure 7: Membership in Fishery Management Organizations, All Respondents (Q4)

Question 5. If you selected “Recreational – private angler” as one of your roles in Mid-Atlantic Fisheries, out of which state(s) do you fish? (Check any that apply)

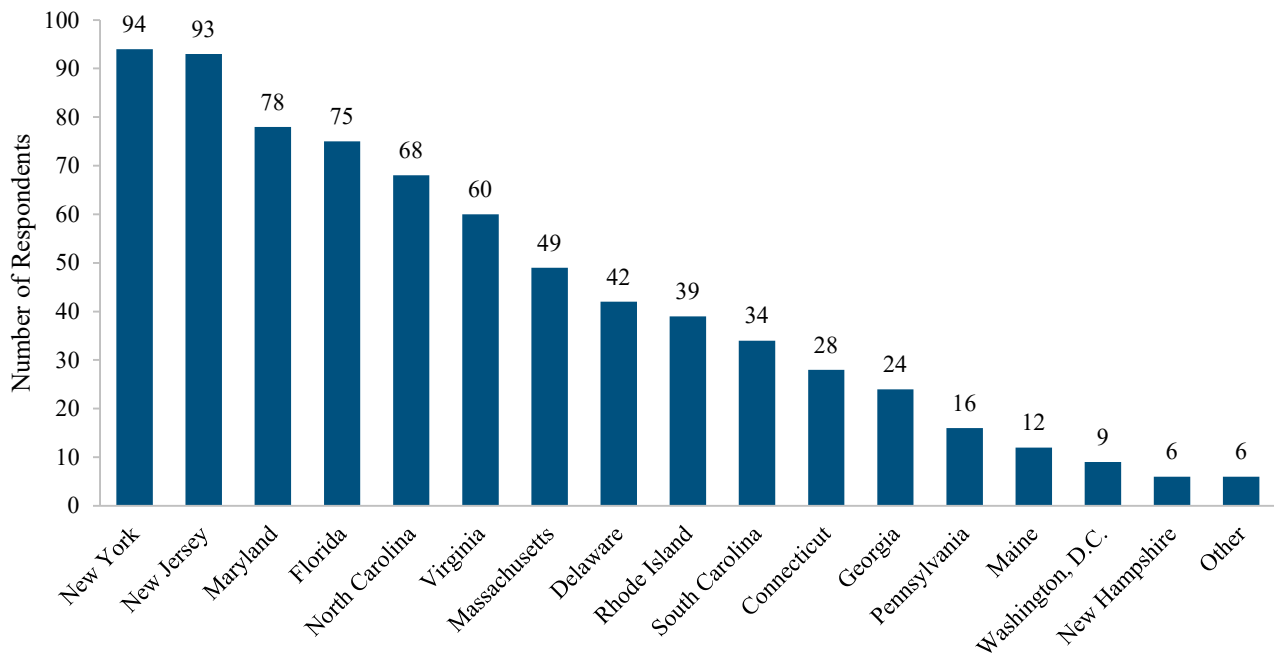


Figure 8: States Fished Out of by Private Anglers, All Respondents (Q5)

Question 6. If you selected “Recreational – for-hire (party/charter) captain or crew” as one of your roles in Mid-Atlantic fisheries, out of which state(s) do you operate? (Check any that apply)

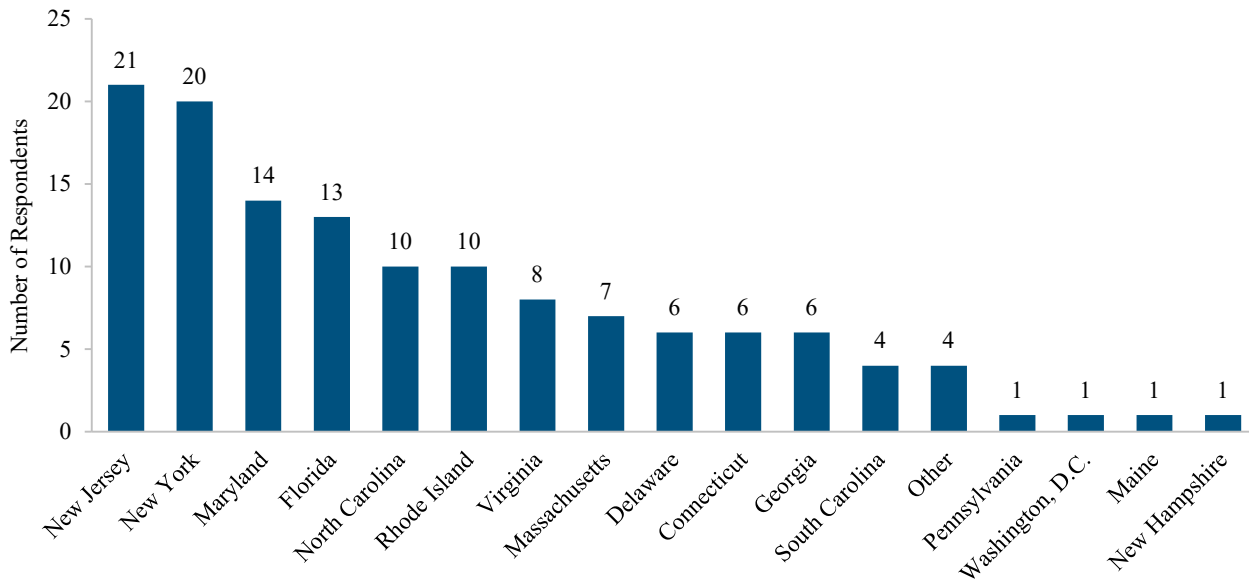


Figure 9: States Operated Out of by For-Hire Captain/Crew, All Respondents (Q6)

Question 7. If you selected “Commercial – captain, vessel owner, crew” as one of your roles in Mid-Atlantic fisheries, in which state(s) do you land your fish? (Check any that apply)

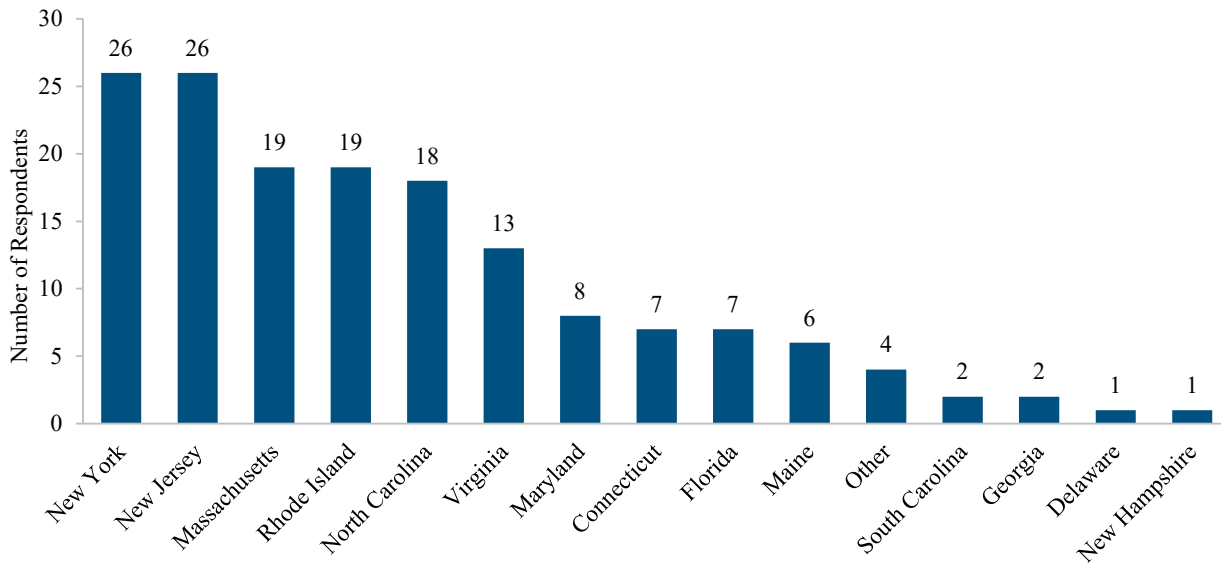


Figure 10: States of Landing for Commercial Vessel Owners/Captains/Crew, All Respondents (Q7)

Question 8. Are you a representative for a commercial or recreational fishing organization?

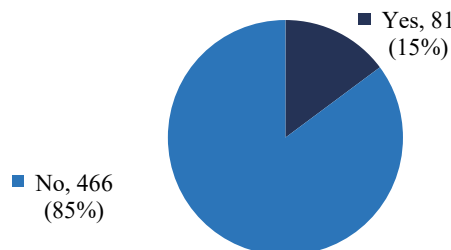


Figure 11: Commercial or Recreational Fishing Organization Representative, All Respondents

Question 9. If you answered “yes” to the above question, which fishing organization(s) do you represent?

Table 3. List of commercial and recreational fishing organizations (Q9)²

American Scallop Association	New York Fishing Tackle Trade Association
American Sportfishing Association	New York Sportfishing Federation
Anglers Conservation Network	NJ Council of Diving Clubs
Anglers for Offshore Wind Power (NWF)	NJ State Federation of Sportsmens Clubs
Atlantic Capes Fisheries, Inc.	Norfolk Anglers Club
Atlantic Coast Sportfishing Association	Northeast Fishery Sectors 10 & 13
Belford Seafood Coop	NY Coalition for Recreational Fishing
Cape Fear Bluewater Fishing Club	NY Recreational For-Hire Fisherman’s Association
Cape May County Party & Charter Boat Association	Ocean City Marlin Club
Cape May Marlin & Tuna Club	Ocean Pine Anglers
Center for Sustainable Fisheries	Ocean Stewards Institute
Chesapeake Bay Charter Boat Association	Ottens Harbor Gillnetter Association
Coastal Conservation Association	Outer Banks Anglers Club
Coastal Conservation Association-MD	Partnership for Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Science (PMAFS)
Coastal Conservation Association-NC	Peninsula Salt Water Sport Fisherman's Association
CT Charter and Party Boat Association	Point Pleasant Fishing Club
Ducks Unlimited	Recreational Fishing Alliance (RFA)
East Hampton Town Baymen’s Association	RI Fishermen’s Alliance
Eastern Carolina Saltwater Fishing Club	RI Saltwater Anglers Association (RISAA)
Freeport Boatmens Association	Save the Summer Flounder Fishery Fund
Garden State Seafood Association (GSSA)	Saving Seafood
Global Aquaculture Alliance	Sea Watch International
International Game Fish Association	Sierra Club
J&N Fish	South Atlantic Fishing Environmentalists
Long Island Commercial Fishing Association	Strathmere Fishing and Environmental Club (SFEC)
Long Island Sound Lobsterman’s Association	Surfside Foods
Maine Certified Sustainable Lobster Association	Sustainable Fisheries Association
Manasquan River Marlin and Tuna Club (MRMTC)	Sustainable Groundfish Association
Marine Resources Advisory Council of NY	Trout Unlimited
MD Sport Fisheries Advisory Commission	United Boatmen of NJ
Menhaden Defenders	United National Fisherman's Association
Montauk Surfcasters Association	US Aquaculture Society
Narragansett Surfcasters	Virginia Beach Anglers Club
Network of Aquaculture Centers in Asia-Pacific	World Aquaculture Society
New Smyrna Beach Anglers Club	World Ocean Council

² This listing does not include fishery management advisory bodies

Question 10. The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council participates in the management of the following species. Which are you most interested in? (Check any that apply)

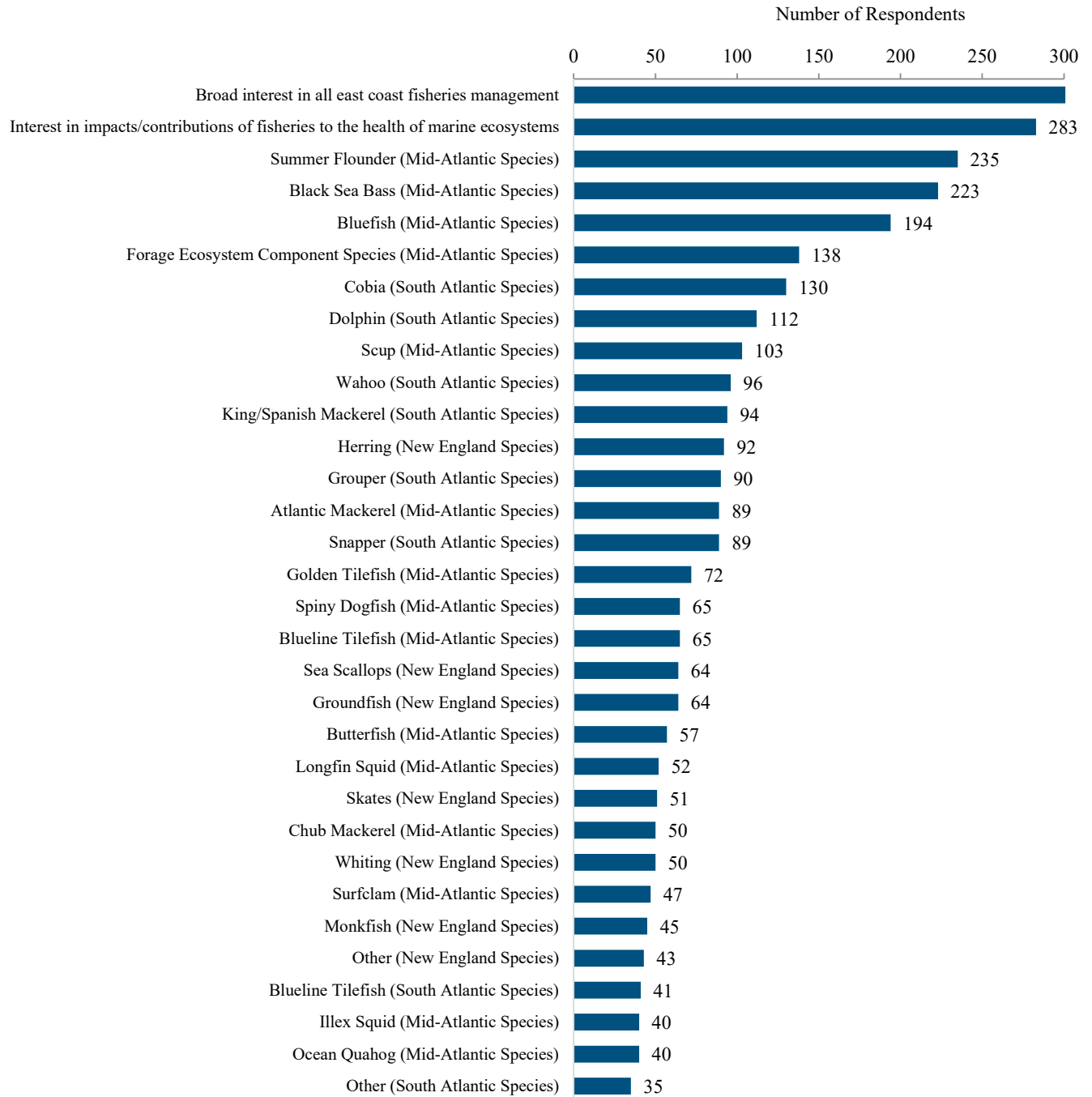


Figure 12: Species of Interest, All Respondents (Q10)

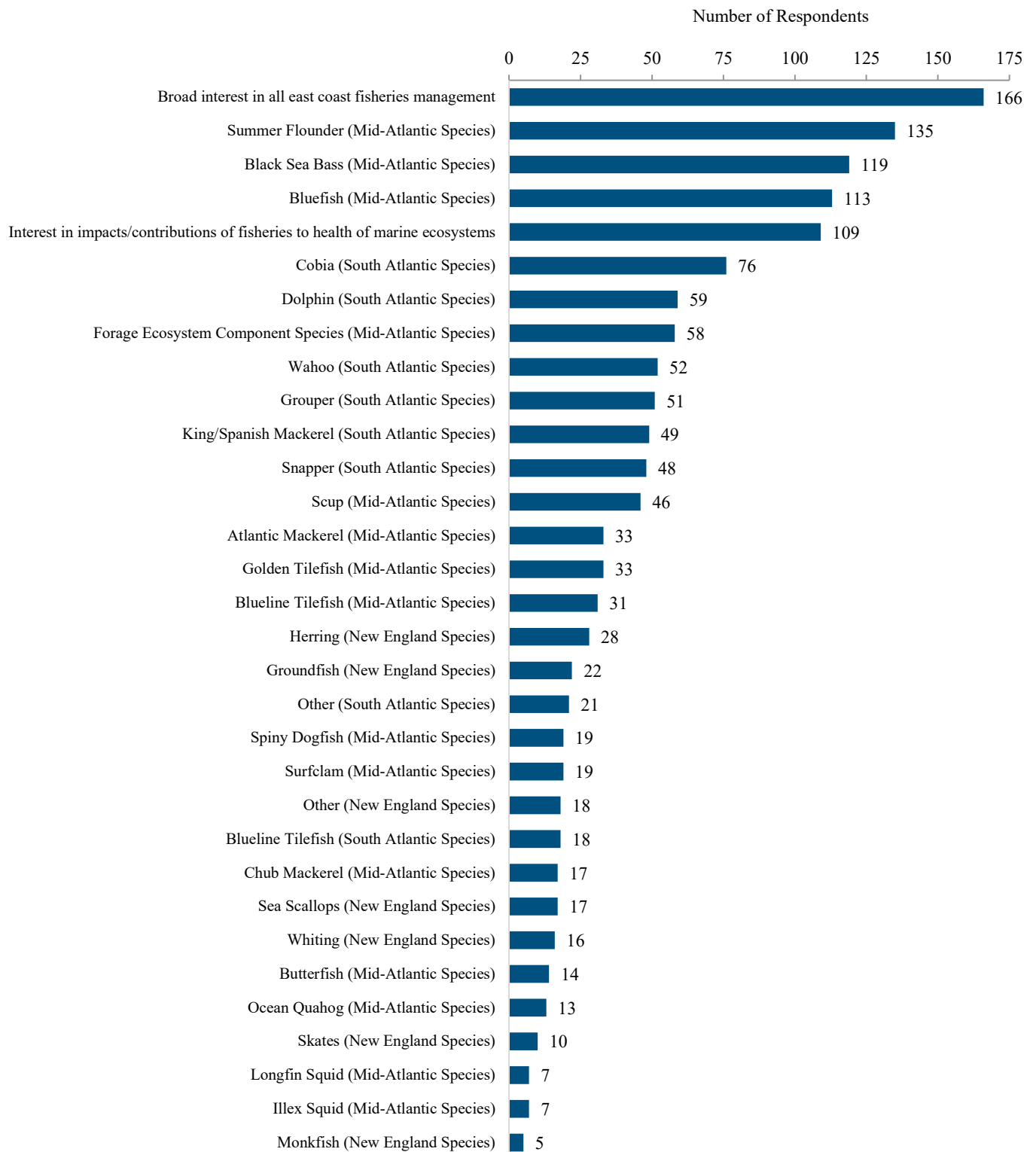


Figure 13: Species of Interest, Recreational Respondents (Q10)

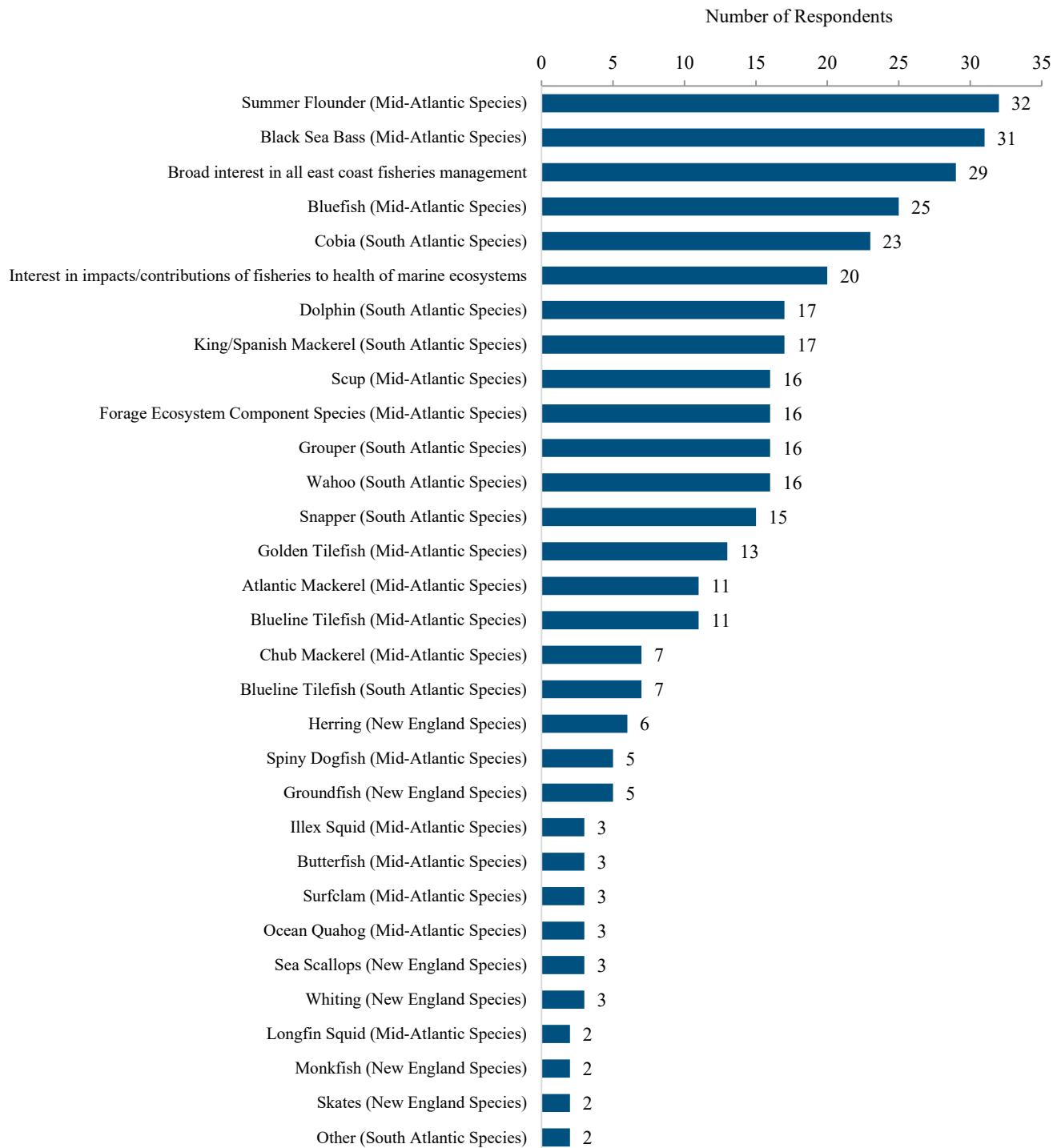


Figure 14: Species of Interest, For-Hire Respondents (Q10)

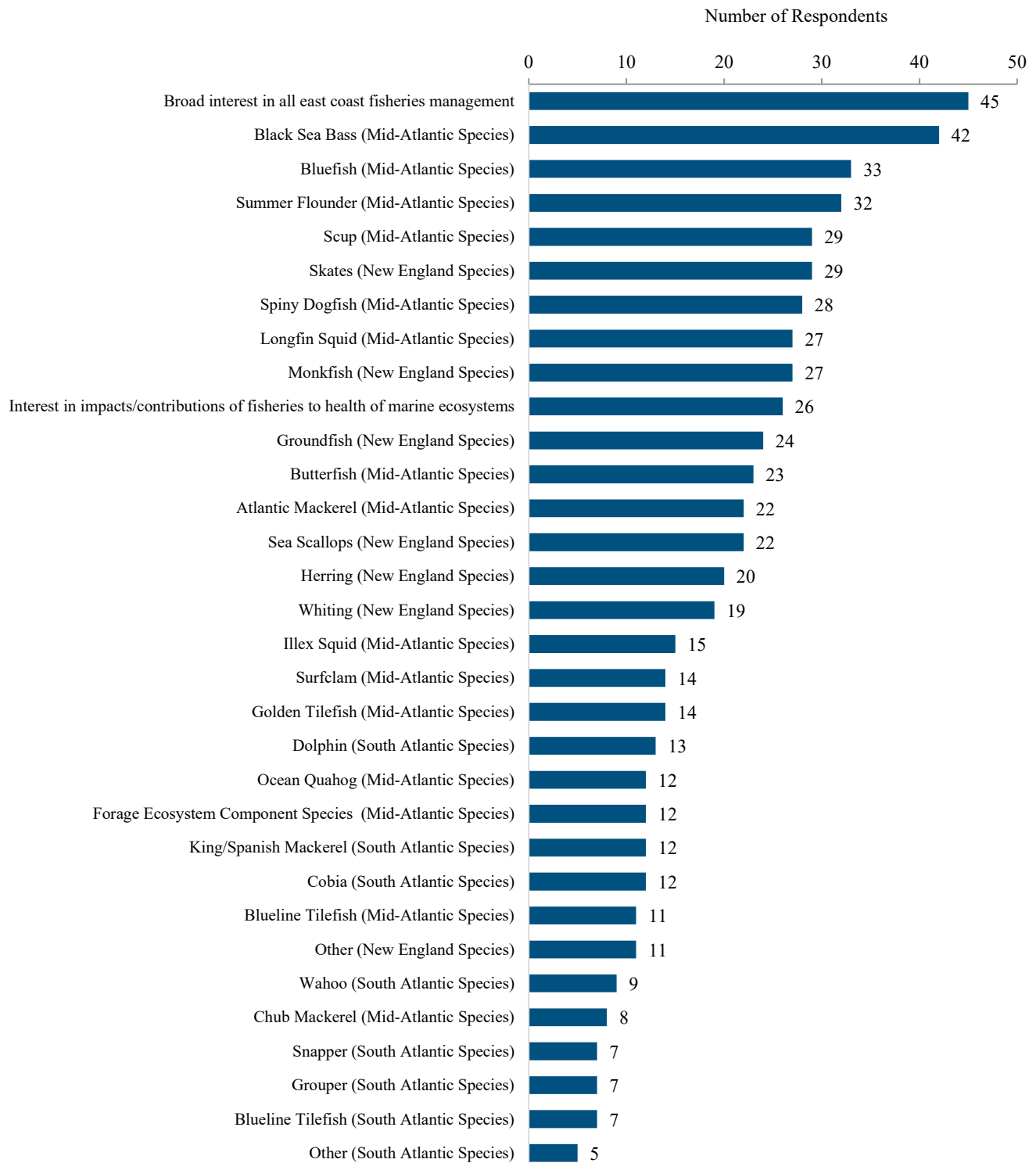


Figure 15: Species of Interest, Commercial Respondents (Q10)

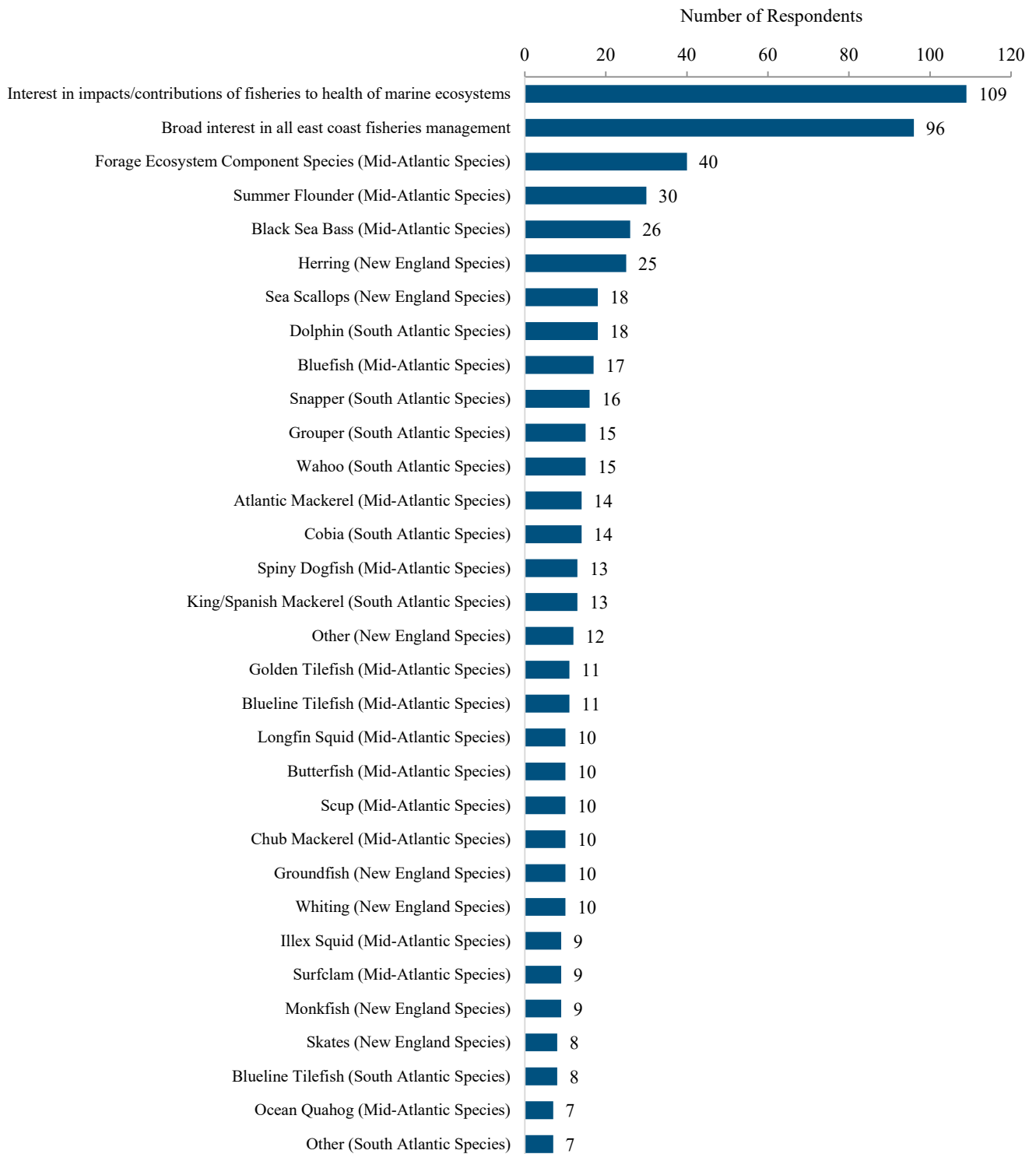


Figure 16: Species of Interest, Interested Public (Q10)

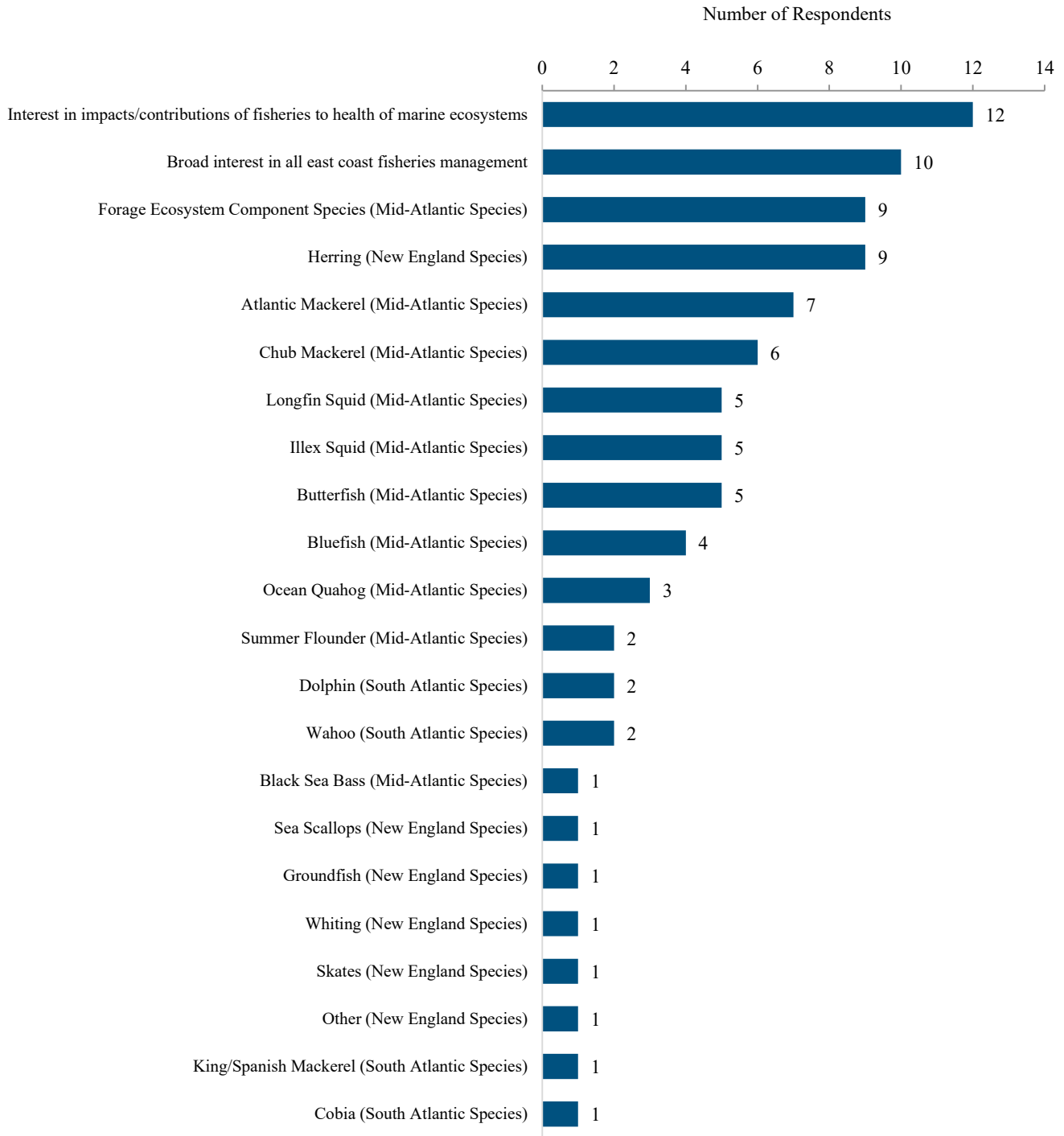


Figure 17: Species of Interest, NGO Respondents (Q10)

Question 11. How often do you participate in the Council process? (Attend a meeting, provide written or oral public comments, call/email with Council staff, etc.)

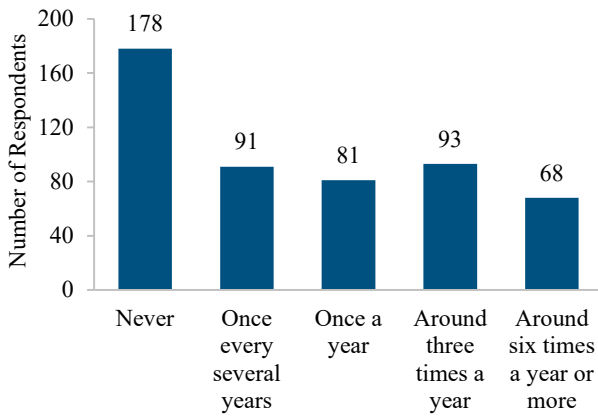


Figure 18: Frequency of Participation in the Council Process, All Respondents (Q11)

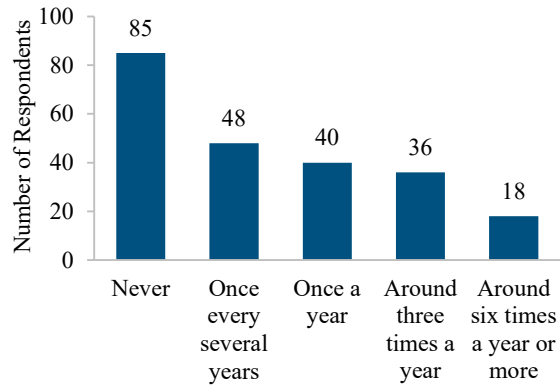


Figure 19: Frequency of Participation in the Council Process, Recreational Respondents (Q11)

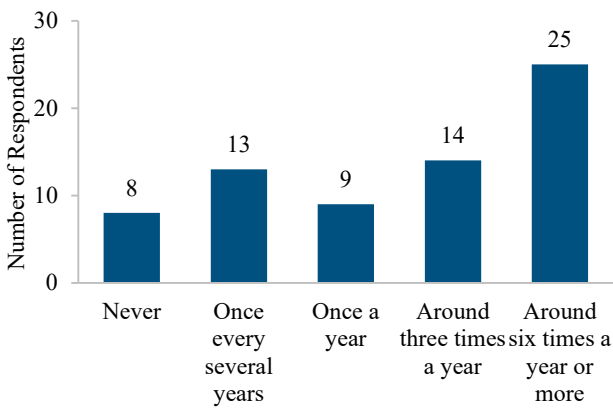


Figure 20: Frequency of Participation in the Council Process, Commercial Respondents (Q11)

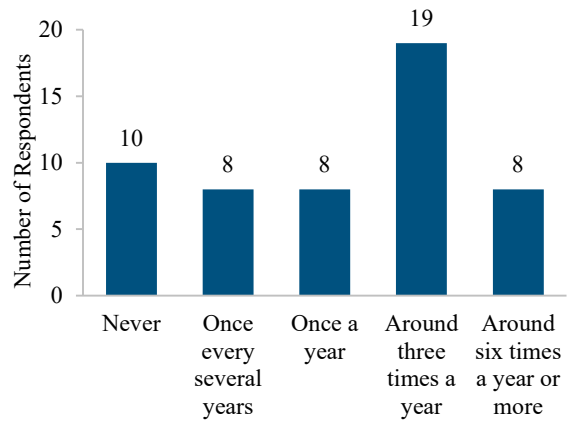


Figure 21: Frequency of Participation in the Council Process, For-Hire Respondents (Q11)

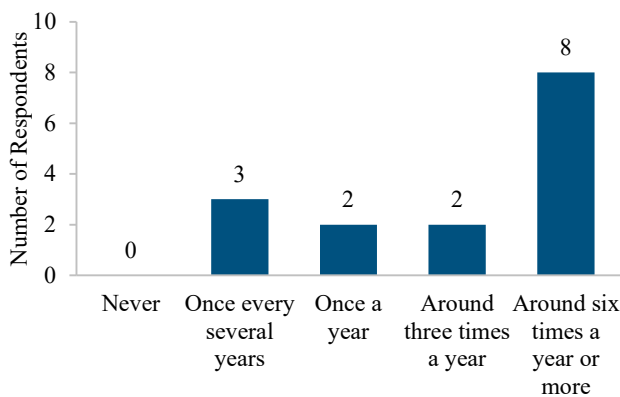


Figure 22: Frequency of Participation in the Council Process, NGO Respondents (Q11)

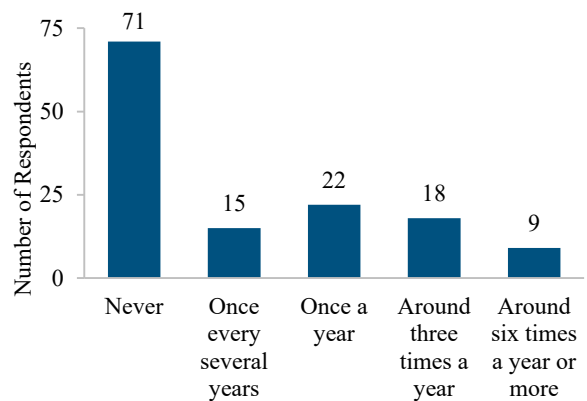


Figure 23: Frequency of Participation in the Council Process, Interested Public Respondents (Q11)

Question 12. Are any of the following issues preventing you from participating more frequently? (Check any that apply)

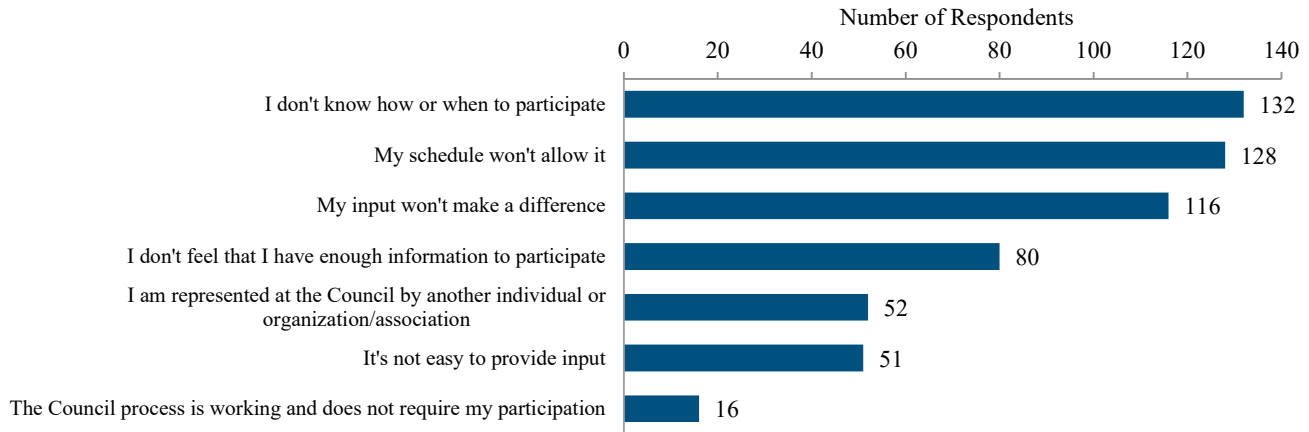


Figure 24: Issues Preventing Participation in the Council Process, All Respondents (Q12)

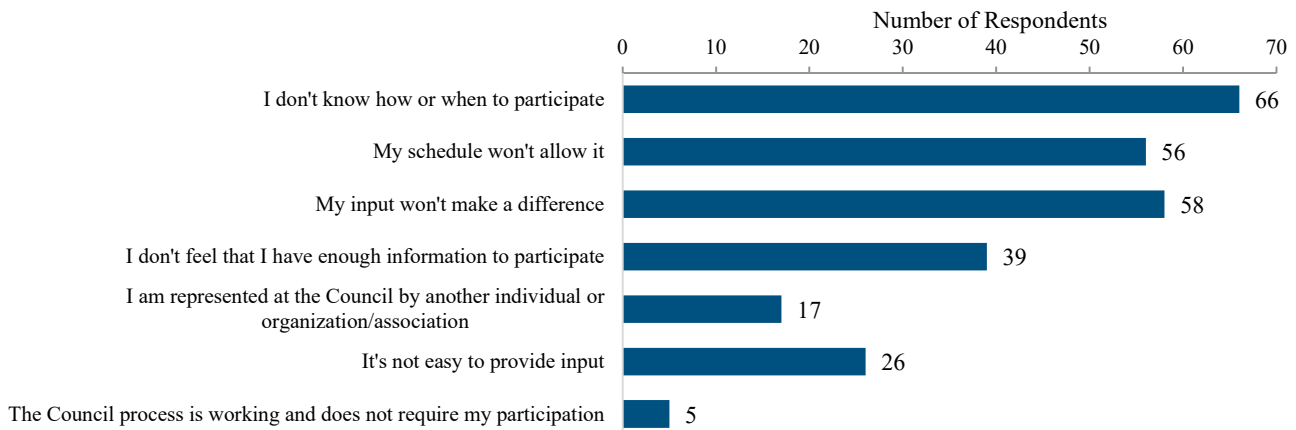


Figure 25: Issues Preventing Participation in the Council Process, Recreational Respondents (Q12)

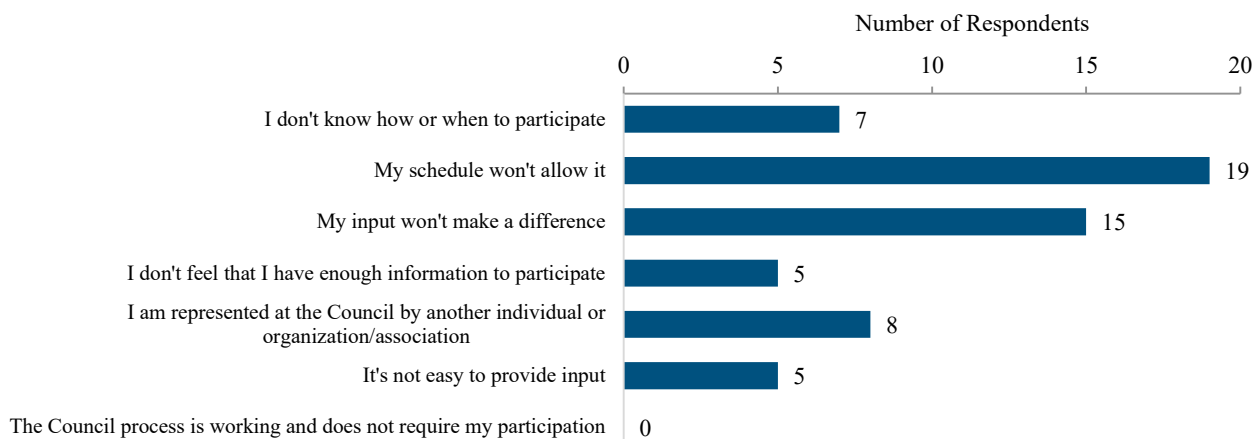


Figure 26: Issues Preventing Participation in the Council Process, For-Hire Respondents (Q12)

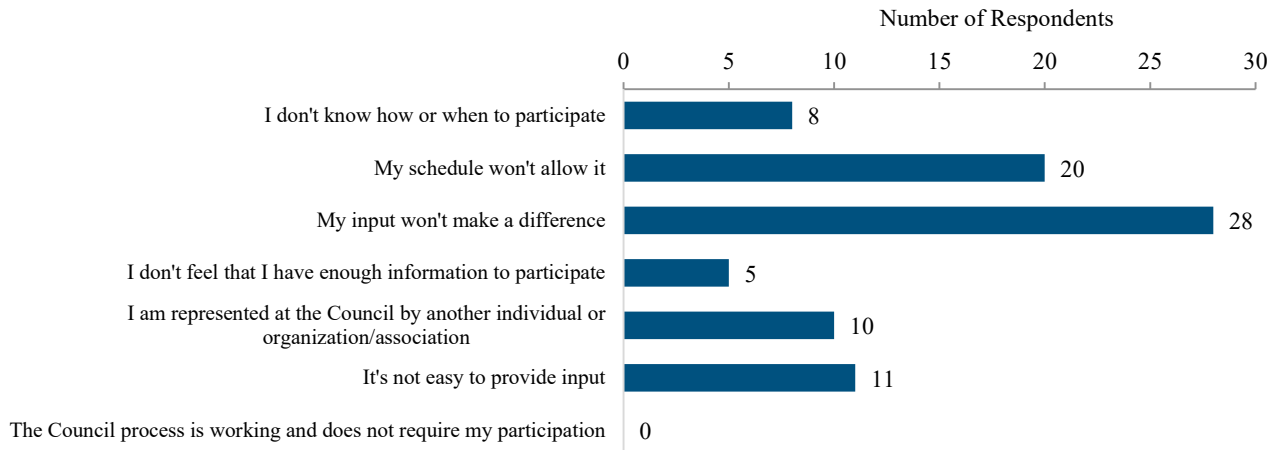


Figure 27: Issues Preventing Participation in the Council Process, Commercial Respondents (Q12)

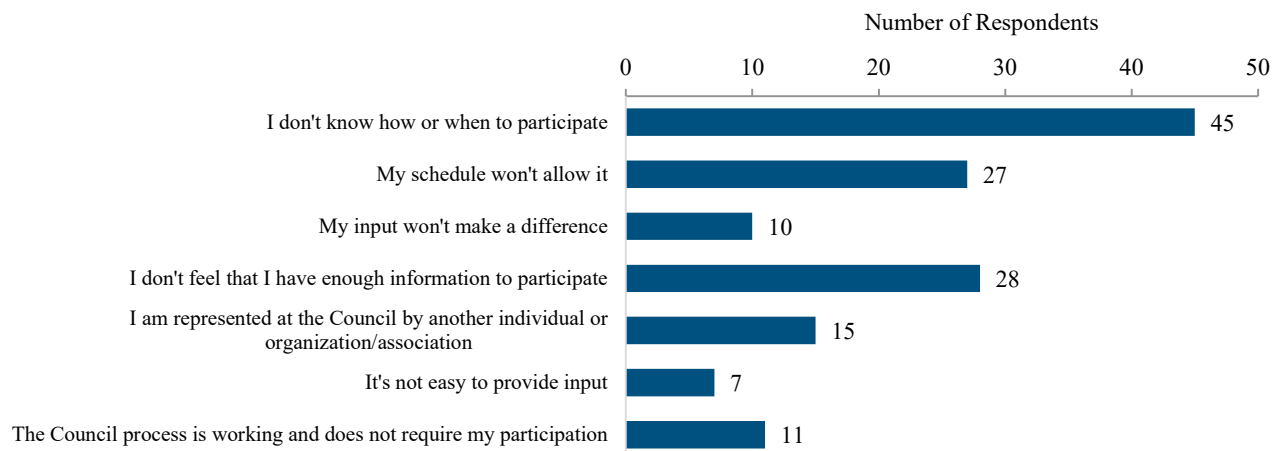


Figure 28: Issues Preventing Participation in the Council Process, Interested Public Respondents (Q12)

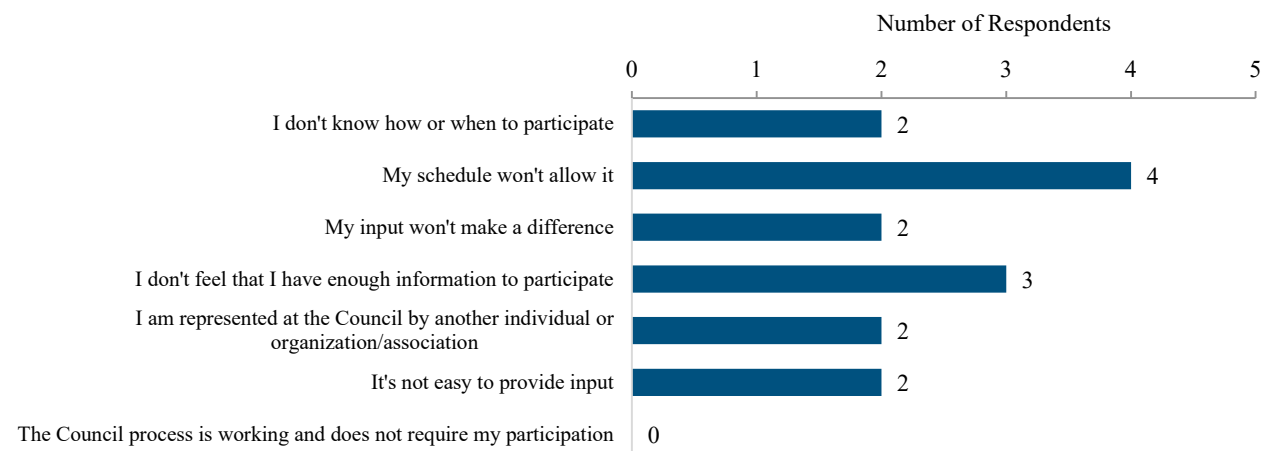


Figure 29: Issues Preventing Participation in the Council Process, NGO Participants (Q12)

2014-2018 Strategic Plan Review

Question 13. Are you aware the Council has a Strategic Plan?

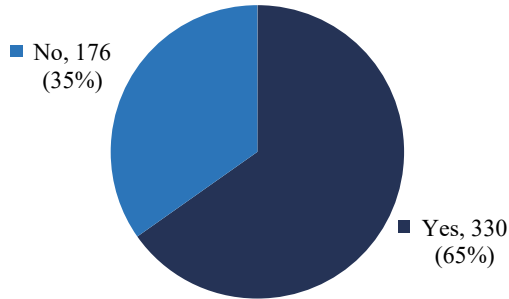


Figure 30: Awareness of Council's Strategic Plan, All Respondents (Q13)

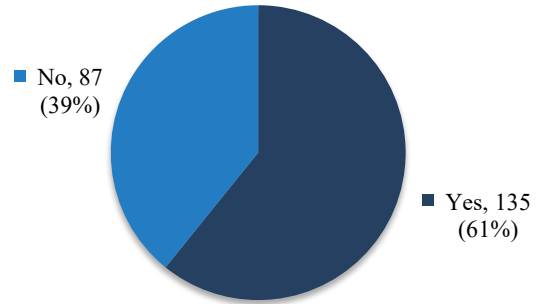


Figure 31: Awareness of Council's Strategic Plan, Recreational Respondents (Q13)

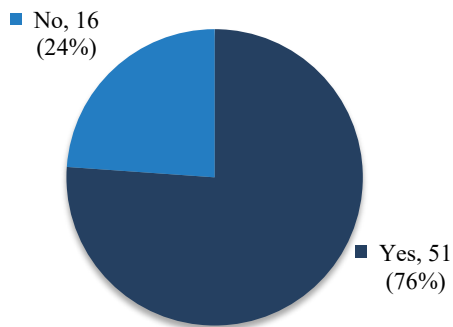


Figure 32: Awareness of Council's Strategic Plan, Commercial Respondents (Q13)

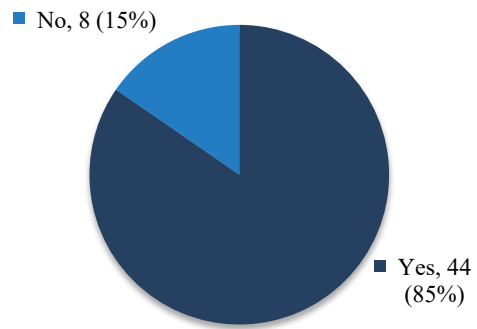


Figure 33: Awareness of Council's Strategic Plan, For-Hire Respondents (Q13)

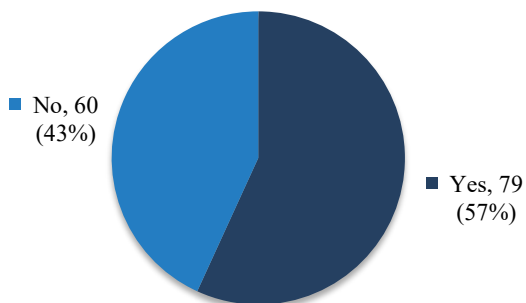


Figure 34: Awareness of Council's Strategic Plan, Interested Public Respondents (Q13)

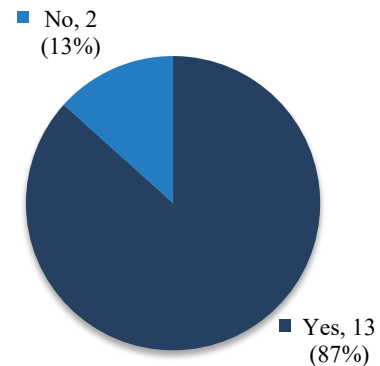


Figure 35: Awareness of Council's Strategic Plan, NGO Respondents (Q13)

Question 14. How important do you think it is for the Council to have a Strategic Plan?

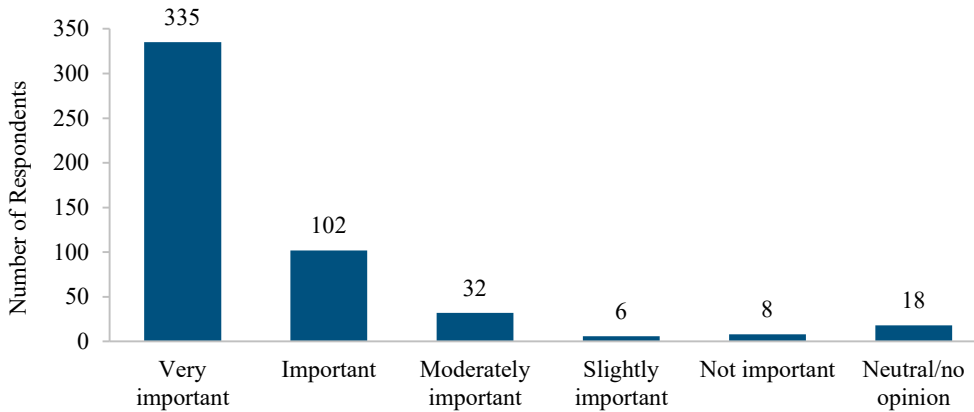


Figure 36: Importance of Council's Strategic Plan, All Respondents (Q14)

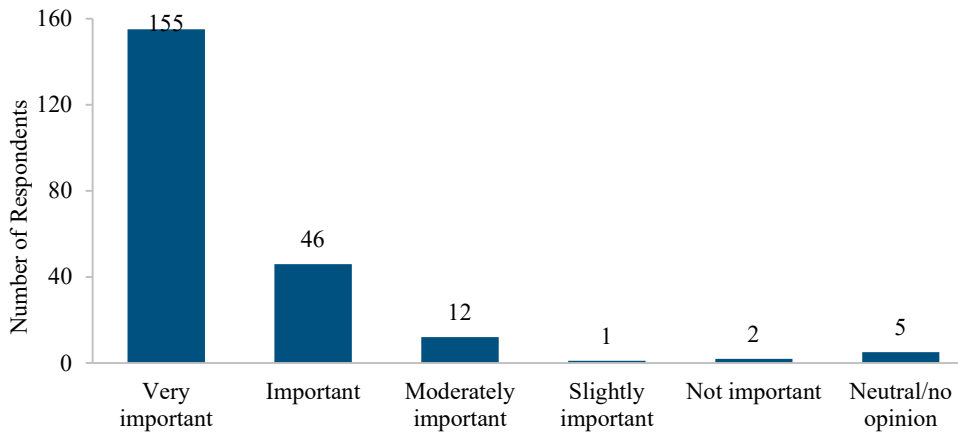


Figure 37: Importance of Council's Strategic Plan, Recreational Respondents (Q14)

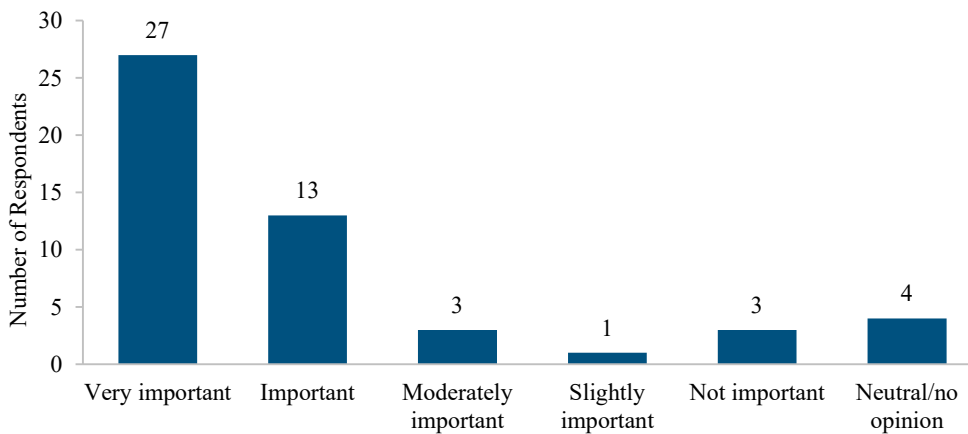


Figure 38: Importance of Council's Strategic Plan, For-Hire Respondents (Q14)

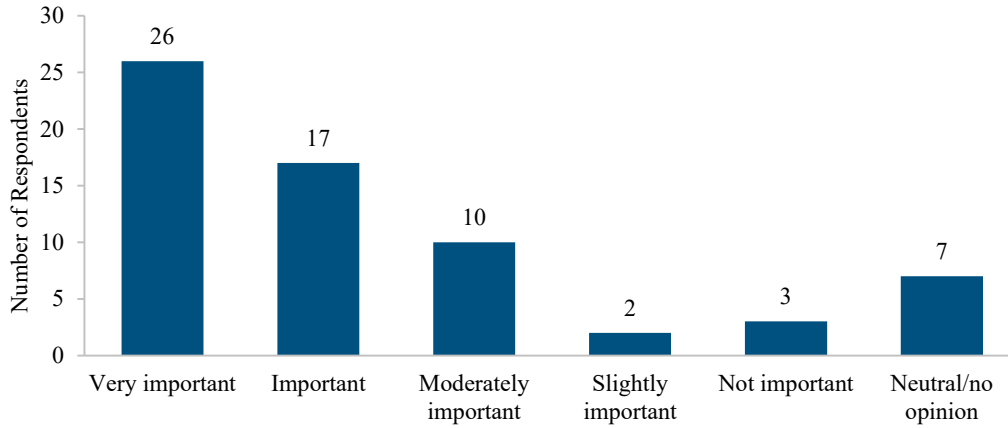


Figure 39: Importance of Council's Strategic Plan, Commercial Respondents (Q14)

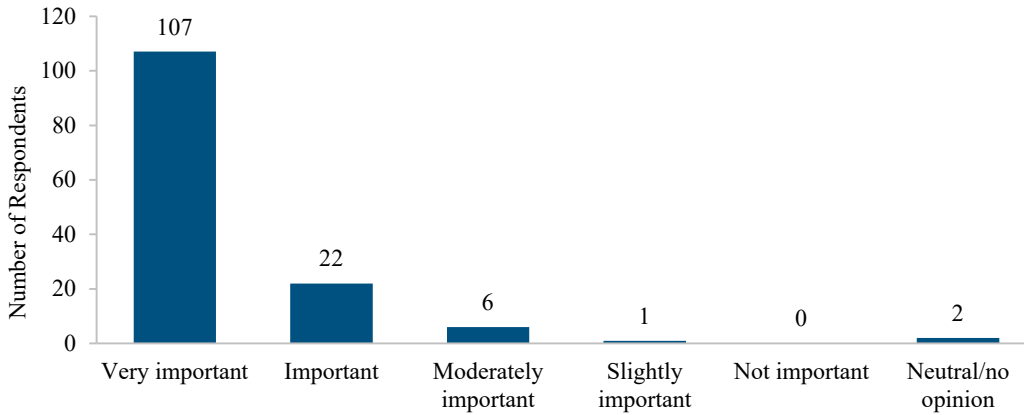


Figure 40: Importance of Council's Strategic Plan, Interested Public Respondents(Q14)

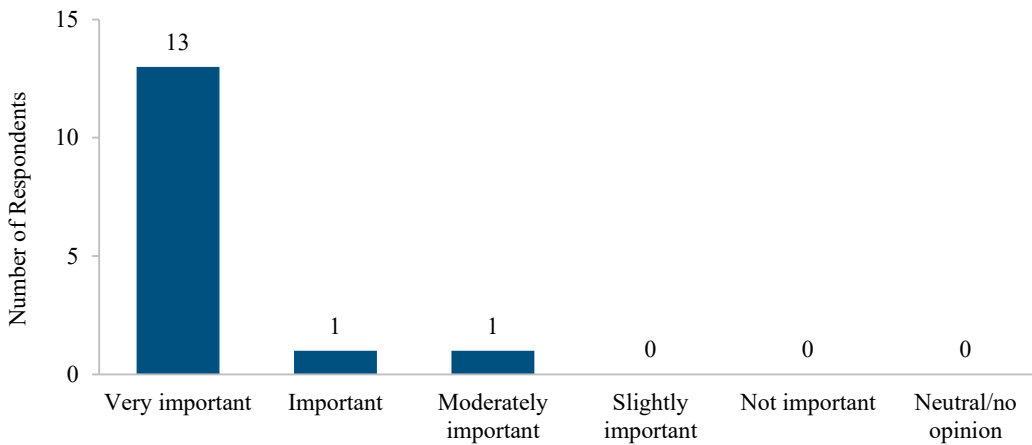


Figure 41: Importance of Council's Strategic Plan, NGO Respondents (Q14)

Question 15. Did you provide input to the Council during the Visioning Project, either by attending a port meeting, taking a survey, submitting written or oral comments, or providing input or comments on the 2014-2018 Strategic Plan?

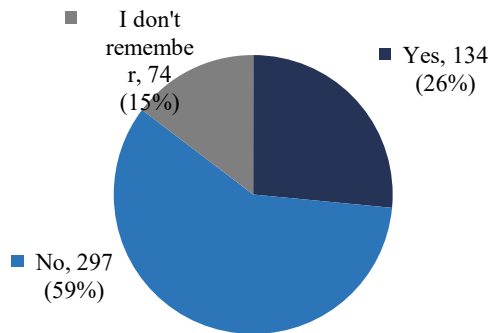


Figure 42: Input Provided on Strategic Plan, All Respondents (Q15)

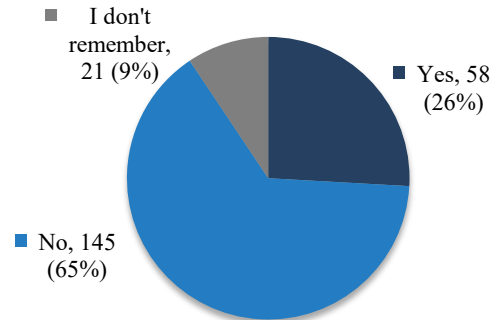


Figure 43: Input Provided on Strategic Plan, Recreational Respondents (Q15)

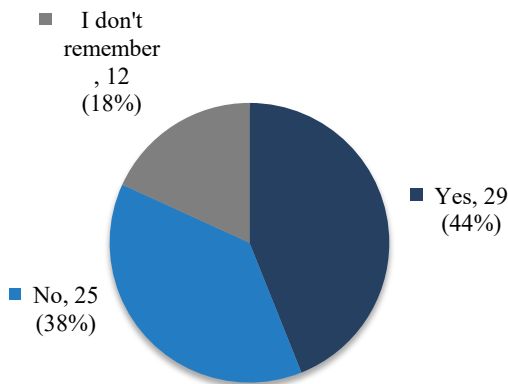


Figure 44: Input Provided on Strategic Plan, Commercial Respondents (Q15)

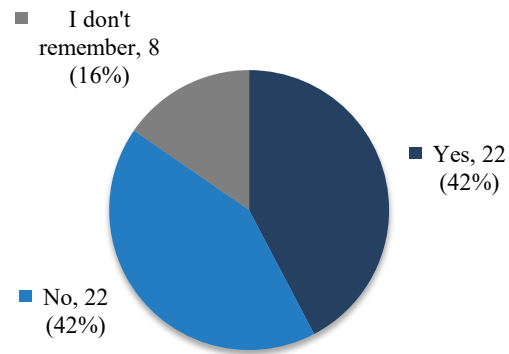


Figure 45: Input Provided on Strategic Plan, For-Hire Respondents (Q15)

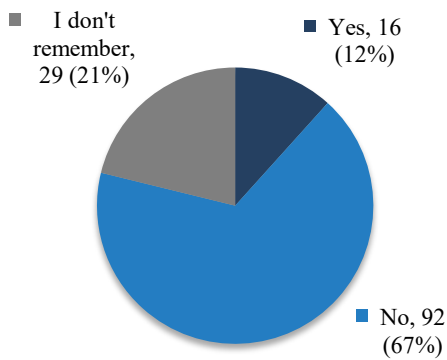


Figure 46: Input Provided on Council's Strategic Plan, Interested Public Respondents (Q15)

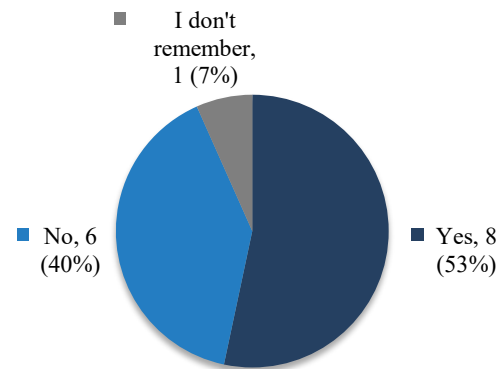


Figure 47: Input Provided on Strategic Plan, NGO Respondents (Q15)

Question 16. How satisfied are you that your input or comments during the Visioning and Strategic Planning Project were adequately incorporated into the 2014-2018 Strategic Plan?

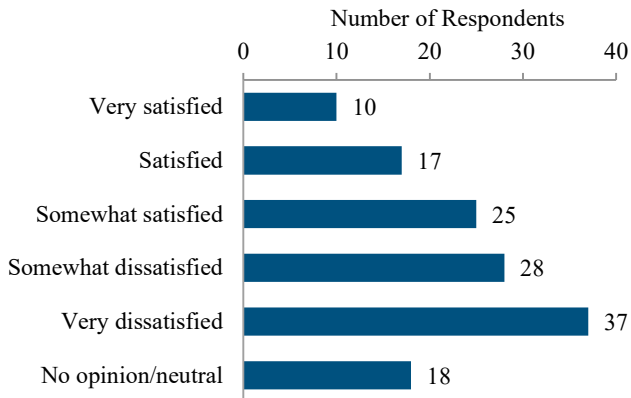


Figure 48: Satisfaction with Incorporation of Strategic Plan Input, All Respondents (Q16)

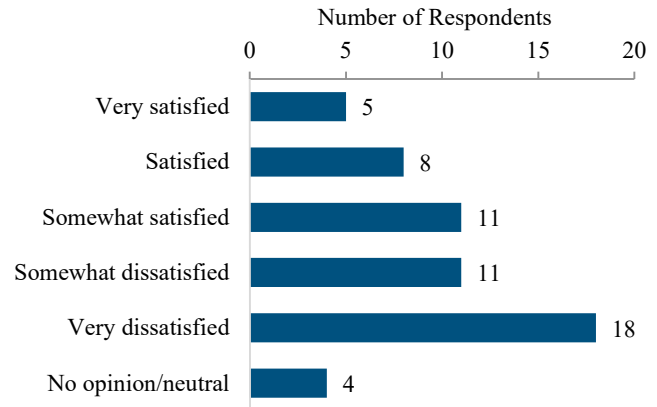


Figure 49: Satisfaction with Incorporation of Input, Recreational Respondents (Q16)

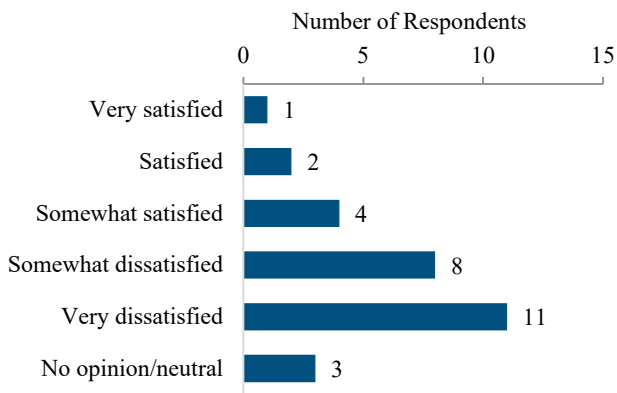


Figure 50: Satisfaction with Incorporation of Strategic Plan Input, Commercial Respondents (Q16)

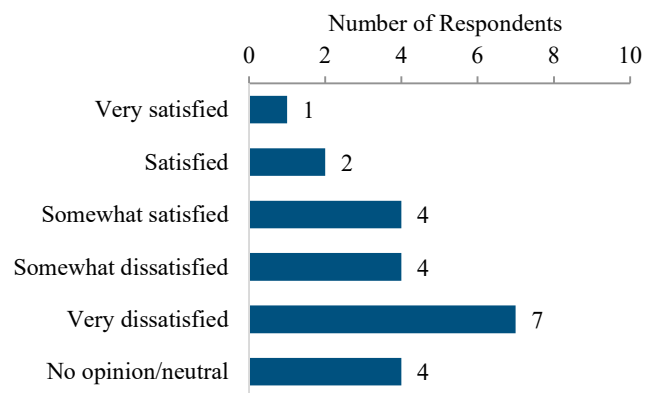


Figure 51: Satisfaction with Incorporation of Strategic Plan Input, For-Hire Respondents (Q16)

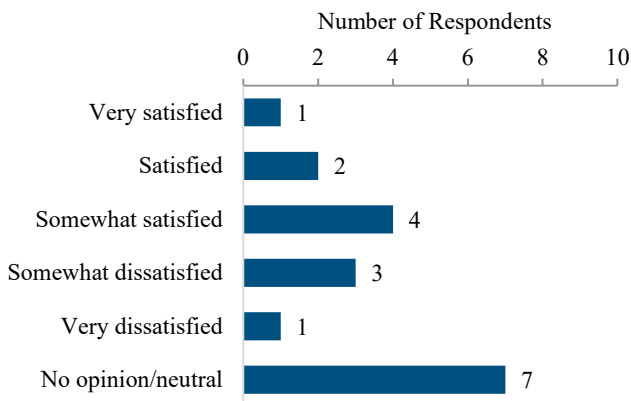


Figure 52: Satisfaction with Incorporation of Input, Interested Public Respondents (Q16)

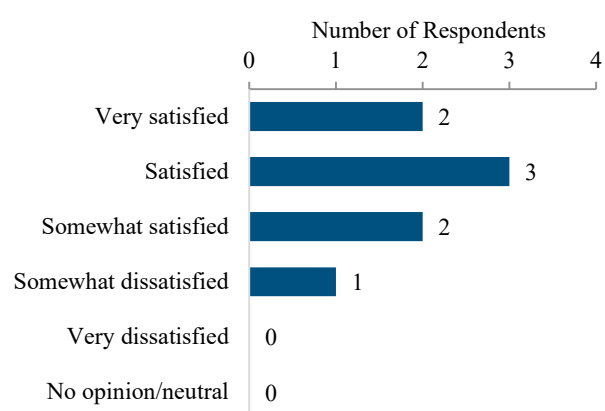


Figure 53: Satisfaction with Incorporation of Input, NGO Respondents (Q16)

2014-2018 Strategic Plan Review – Vision and Mission

Question 17. The Council’s current Vision Statement is: “Healthy and productive marine ecosystems supporting thriving, sustainable marine fisheries that provide the greatest overall benefit to stakeholders.” (Vision describes a desired future state an organization would like to achieve) Do you believe this is still an appropriate Vision for the Council?

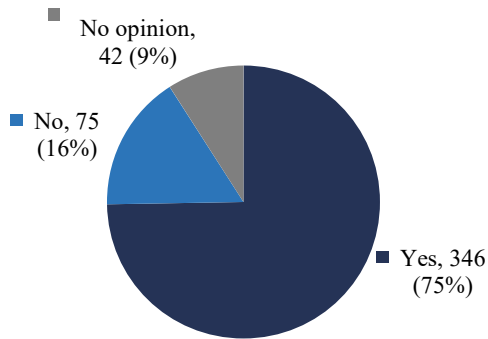


Figure 54: Appropriateness of Council's Vision, All Respondents (Q17)

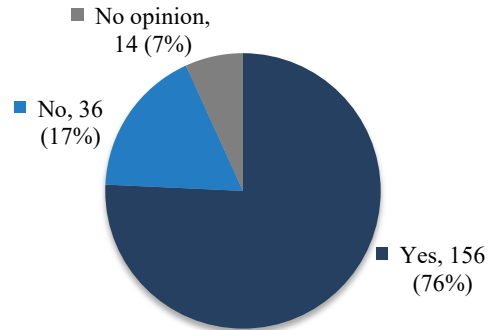


Figure 55: Appropriateness of Council's Vision, Recreational Respondents (Q17)

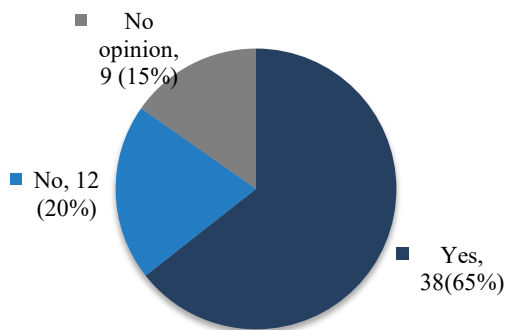


Figure 56: Appropriateness of Council's Vision, Commercial Respondents (Q17)

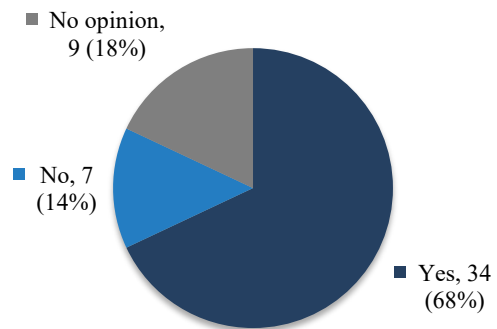


Figure 57: Appropriateness of Council's Vision, For-Hire Respondents (Q17)

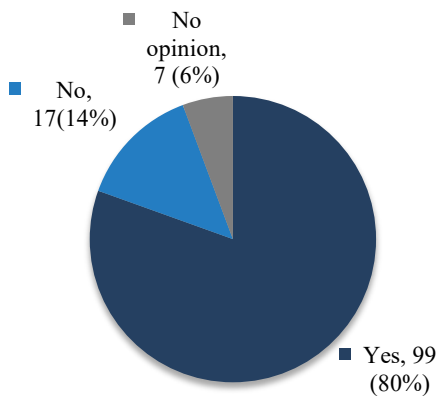


Figure 58: Appropriateness of Council's Vision, Interested Public Respondents (Q17)

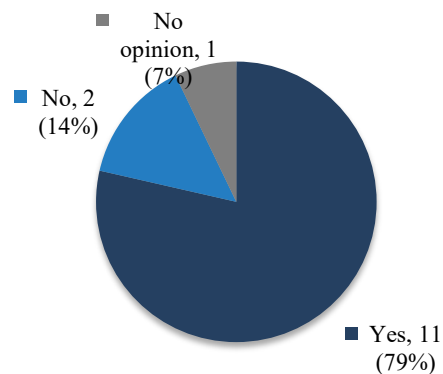


Figure 59: Appropriateness of Council's Vision, NGO Respondents (Q17)

Question 18. If you have any suggested changes to, or comments on, the Council’s Vision, please provide them in the space below.

Most Common Themes: Recreational Respondents	Percentage of Recreational Respondents
Define "stakeholders"	11%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Stakeholders’ should include all the sentient components of the ecosystem such as the fishes, marine mammals, marine invertebrates, etc.”</i> • <i>“The term stakeholders is vague. Commercial and recreational need to be identified.”</i> • <i>“You need to define stakeholders to the public and to users of the resource. They are not just fishermen, but the public themselves.”</i> 	
Clarify "benefits"	10%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“To benefit ‘all’ stakeholders ‘equally.’”</i> • <i>“That provide the greatest overall benefit to stakeholders balanced by responsible conservation.”</i> 	
Stronger focus on ecosystems	10%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Ecosystem-based management along with the protection of forage fish is essential. Slot limits to protect large breeders would also have a huge impact.”</i> • <i>“A real concern for overall fish populations and habitat. Not just driven by money, take all you can now and worry later mentality. Forage fish need protection too.”</i> 	
Manage for sustainability and abundance	10%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Sustainable is key. ‘Make changes to ensure fisheries are sustainable.’”</i> • <i>“I suggest they change their vision from being the most fish you can kill to managing it for abundance. The more fish that are around, the more everyone benefits.”</i> 	
Incorporate economic impact of recreational fishing	10%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Replace ‘greatest overall benefit’ with ‘most economic benefit from recreational anglers’.”</i> • <i>“The impact on the fisheries by recreational fishermen is minimal but their absence to local economies is great.”</i> 	
Balance stakeholder needs/interests	8%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“It is important that the council keep in mind the sometimes conflicting desires of different stakeholders and non-consumptive constituents.”</i> • <i>“The recreational stakeholder seems to take a second-tier status to fisheries management in regards to commercial ‘sustainable’ fisheries benefit...”</i> 	
Data accuracy and fisherman input	8%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Use valid data and include observations from more fisherman.”</i> • <i>“Better use of recreational angler data as to number of fish landed and survey these anglers all over the coast to report more accurate data of fish stocks.”</i> 	

Most Common Themes: For-Hire Respondents	Percentage of For-Hire Respondents
<p>Accuracy and credibility of data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Start collecting actual data. 150 days a year on the water for the past 16 years. Never once questioned. Many times hassled.”</i> • <i>“Fisheries must either get recreational catch estimates right - or unbuckle from them wholly. MRIP has grown incredibly worse while claiming to get better.”</i> 	27%
<p>Stakeholder input/influence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“The ‘vision’ seems dead. Undermined by commercial interests.”</i> • <i>“Doesn’t really matter what fishermen think. The young know it alls really know nothing but have all the answers.”</i> 	18%
<p>Governance/management partner outreach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Plans for one small section of a council territory are often at odds with the well-being of another area. Councils need to be able to subdivide districts to not unfairly discriminate against one area for the benefit of another.”</i> • <i>“Informal meeting in NE North Carolina. Removing the area North of Hatteras from the SAFMC to the Mid Atlantic where everyone knows it should be.”</i> 	14%
<p>Business impacts of management measures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“I believe some stocks are rebuilt and we still get no benefits from these fisheries (sea bass).”</i> • <i>“When a fish stock has recovered, or is recovering reasonably, fishermen should be able to enjoy the sacrifices that they have made. Too many businesses have gone under or are on the brink of it. My business in in trouble. I have good people laid-off for months due to regulations imposed on fisheries that have fully recovered.”</i> 	14%
<p>Manage for abundance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“There should be something to the effect of managing for abundance.”</i> • <i>“Grow fish to abundance so there are more in the water for all to catch and eat, the fish come first not stakeholders. Also, the fish below to the people of the United States of America, not the stakeholders so this should be reflected.”</i> 	9%

Most Common Themes: Commercial Respondents	Percentage of Commercial Respondents
<p>More science and data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Healthy and productive are broad terms. Need more science on what protected/heavily managed species such as spiny dogfish and cormorants consume. Actual weight and estimated tons if the consumed fish were allowed to mature to a harvestable size.”</i> • <i>“We need more data to help make better choices”</i> 	19%
<p>Include fishing communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Add ‘fishing communities after ‘marine fisheries.’”</i> • <i>“Should also promote healthy fishing communities.”</i> 	15%

Offshore energy	15%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“All of that strategic planning sounds just wonderful; but the fact is that unless you're willing to do something about the corporate encroachment on the fishing grounds by the oil, gas and wind industries---none of it really means anything, does it?”</i> • <i>“These ‘green energy’ sites could reduce the above current vision statement. I fear that BOEM has higher ranking above the MSA.”</i> 	
Governance and politics	15%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Based on scientific conclusions without personal or political bias.”</i> • <i>“Should read management based on selfish gains by council members on the backs of the unheard often ignored stakeholders”.</i> 	
Economic impacts	15%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Economic input on smaller ports and vessels should be protected too many little boats put out so other big guys get more”</i> • <i>“Small close to shore owner-operated draggers are the first to feel rule changes with little say in the matter. There are no other options left.”</i> 	
Stakeholder definition and balance	11%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“The recent use of the word 'stakeholders' has moved the Councils away from their fundamental purpose of managing federal fisheries...we should emphasize fisheries and fisheries communities more...the thousands of ginned up electronic form letters from 'stakeholders' in Iowa, etc. points out my concern.”</i> • <i>“The Vision statement is appropriate, unfortunately I believe commercial fishermen and businesses get left behind a lot in the council process...I have seen the fisherman’s voice silenced and the ENGO's voice echoed louder and louder at the detriment of all commercial fleets.”</i> 	
Stakeholder input in decision-making	11%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“With more of the stakeholder’s comments and suggestions used to make decisions.”</i> • <i>“Start listening more to the people with the eyes on the water and less to the number crunchers who only see what is presented to them.”</i> 	

Most Common Themes: Interested Public Respondents

Percent of Interested Public Respondents

Primary emphasis on ecosystem/habitat protection	42%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“The idea of protecting all ecosystems through sustainable and cautionary principles should be added.”</i> • <i>“It's important that healthy and productive marine ecosystems comes first, before fisheries. Fisheries are just one part of the ecosystem and decisions shouldn't be about maximizing them at the expense of other parts of the ecosystem.”</i> 	
Clarify "benefits"	23%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Benefits to stakeholders makes it sound like it's only profit driven and profitable is not always what is best or even should (or not) be done.”</i> • <i>“‘Greatest overall benefit to stakeholders’ is very nebulous. Is it really actionable in a practical sense?”</i> 	

Balance/representation of stakeholder needs	19%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Less about commercial fishing and more about representation of all the stakeholders and their concerns for the marine ecosystems”</i> • <i>Greatest overall benefit to stakeholders may not always align with greatest overall benefit to entire ecosystem without science-based information.</i> 	
Define "stakeholders"	16%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“The stakeholders are the fish not the fishing industry.”</i> • <i>“Need to define ‘stakeholders’”</i> 	
Address harmful fishing practices	10%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Rod and reel single hook caught fish only. No nets, long lines or traps. It will raise the price of fish and allow the average angler to support, preserve and understand the importance of not overfishing and protecting all aquatic species.”</i> • <i>“I believe strongly that we must not only protect and make our marine fisheries sustainable, but that we must make sure that marine mammals and sea turtles are protected from harm from poor fishing practices such as bottom trawls and gillnets.”</i> 	

Most Common Themes: NGO Respondents

Percent of NGO Respondents

Stakeholder definition, input	57%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Additional stakeholders would be the marine wildlife that also need a healthy and diverse ecosystem for their survival (including an abundance of prey items, depending on the species of marine wildlife).”</i> • <i>Define stakeholders</i> 	

The total number of responses prevented additional themes from being generated. However, comments addressed data and benefits.

Question 19. What would successful achievement of the Council's Vision look like to you?

Most Common Themes: Recreational Respondents	Percent of Recreational Respondents
<p>Abundant, sustainable fisheries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Abundant fisheries for all sectors of the fishing community.”</i> • <i>“A healthy stock for which the population remains largely consistent from year to year, barring any significant natural events.”</i> 	35%
<p>Healthy ecosystems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Return and maintain our once healthy marine ecosystem to a level equivalent to an unfished for status.”</i> • <i>“More and better management of the ecosystem to give the fisheries the greatest opportunity to breed and reproduce.”</i> 	15%
<p>Accurate science that incorporates fisherman input</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Just follow the statement and get some better data utilizing input from those of us on the water instead of relying on Ph.D.'s who rarely are on the water and design computer programs to support their goals rather than evaluating actual results from those of us on the water.”</i> • <i>“Work more closely with the recreational fishing community to establish a modern means for reporting catches.”</i> 	9%
<p>Less emphasis on commercial interests</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“More restrictions on the commercial industry. More fish to catch for the recreational angler.”</i> • <i>“Not catering to commercial interests but to all who share the resources.”</i> 	8%
<p>Balance among stakeholder and ecosystem needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“A vision that incorporates and respects the critical priorities of marine life with the needs of local and regional economies. Commercial and recreational fisherman are subsets of the economies I speak of.”</i> • <i>“Where the fisherman, public interest groups, and the scientists are for once all agreeing with what is going on..It would be nice to see everyone getting along to make our fisheries better rather than all the contradictory talk that has been going on for years.”</i> 	8%
<p>Lack of politics, special interests</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“For once, not allowing special interests and money to be the driving influences behind regulations.”</i> • <i>“To see a thriving fishery once again, one that is then managed by science and not politics and is protected for our children.”</i> 	6%
<p>Fair allocations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Strictly separated and honored allocations for the different users with no transfers between them.”</i> • <i>“An honest, accurate assessment of fish stocks and a fair and balanced allotment for recreational versus commercial fishermen.”</i> 	5%

Management of forage species	5%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“An overabundance of bait fish, and a restoration of the many popular species of catchable fish.”</i> • <i>“For all fish stocks, B at or near B-target, F at or below F-target; with forage fish managed with ecosystem-based reference points and habitat quality maintained.”</i> 	

Most Common Themes: For-Hire Respondents

Percent of For-Hire Respondents

Open, healthy fisheries	22%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Healthy fisheries in all jurisdictions of the councils.”</i> • <i>“Majority of species open during peak season for recreational anglers. Total failure occurs if black bass or another predominate inshore species is shut down during peak season.”</i> 	
Governance, execution	17%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Less talk and more action.”</i> • <i>“More real-world solutions and more experienced decision makers. Decisions must be approved by people with real world experience in the industry.”</i> 	
Accurate, reliable data and science	17%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Get meaningful and accurate data on stocks, etc. as opposed to the present system that seems to use smoke and mirrors for decisions.”</i> • <i>“More accurate stock assessments and data collection.”</i> 	
Healthy fishing communities/economies	13%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Magnuson-Stevens original intent was to rebuild stocks and help our commercial and recreational communities simultaneously. The vision now seems to be, how many fish can we have in the ocean? The vision should be what Magnuson-Stevens had originally intended: Rebuild stocks, maintain a viable fishing community.”</i> • <i>“A definition of “greatest overall benefit to stakeholders” to define the priorities of the stakeholders versus the priorities of the fish to include economic impacts to the stakeholders.”</i> 	
Sustainable fishing practices	13%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Ban gill nets. Ban trawling sounds rivers inside waters.”</i> • <i>“A viable healthy fishery with less reduction fishing, and far less commercial fishing. Both are destroying the natural resources the ocean provides.”</i> 	
Stakeholder balance	9%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“I believe a successful vision is focused on the most stakeholders. I believe the commercial entities are too heavily weighted when the recreational anglers voices should be more as they represent a bigger contingency.”</i> • <i>“Consider the recreational fisherpeople as much as the commercial fisheries.”</i> 	

Most Common Responses: Commercial Respondents	Percent of Commercial Respondents
Use of accurate science and data in decision-making	14%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“It would look like co-governance! That is to say, management based on accurate and timely surveys, without any agenda bias, involving active reporting and participation with the fishing industry. Scientists on fishing vessels is the only way to get a sense of how many fish are out there.”</i> • <i>“When the regulations are keeping up with the true stock status. Not the hypothetical numbers derived from unreliable trawl surveys.”</i> 	
Abundant, sustainable stocks/fisheries	14%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“More fish for all resource users.”</i> • <i>“Healthy stocks and a profitable future for all.”</i> • <i>“Sustainable fisheries with no overfishing occurring on a consistent basis.”</i> 	
Social, economic and regulatory stability	14%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Stable, growing quotas and allowing the industry to work around the higher limits of confidence intervals, not always at the lower limits.”</i> • <i>“We don’t lose any more fishing vessels or fishing infrastructure.”</i> • <i>“A 5-year plan rather than yearly so that we can make business decisions.”</i> 	
Collaborative science and research	11%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Collaborative research with the stakeholders involved, without political agendas.”</i> • <i>“Open fisheries with more realistic quotas. Quotas based on collaborative science with fishermen.”</i> 	
Stakeholder input is listened to and used	11%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Really listening and addressing fishermen concerns.”</i> • <i>“The stakeholders have to be relied upon more by MAFMC and NMFS when they are forming protocol for industry.”</i> 	
Fair allocations and access	11%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Abolition of all IFQ’s. Coastwide quotas rather than individual state quotas.”</i> • <i>“A fair system of equal access to all fisheries, not the system like scallops where some guys got giant quotas and some of us got a puny 40 lb per day and it never goes up even though the overall quota has gone up every year.”</i> 	

Most Common Themes: Interested Public Respondents	Percent of Interested Public Respondents
Healthy ecosystems	37%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Continuously improving the health of the marine ecosystem in a way that is measurable.”</i> • <i>“A healthy marine ecosystem with sustainable fishing practices which would include protection of marine mammals, sea turtles and other marine animals not necessarily included in the current vision statement but which are part of our marine ecosystem.”</i> 	

Abundant, sustainable fish populations	27%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Increasing populations of all species and a revitalization of their habitat.”</i> • <i>“Sustainable production of stocks with reasonable quotas based on reference points that account for habitat changes (improvements and declines).”</i> 	
Habitats free from pollution	20%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“No oil, gas, and plastic in the ocean!!!!!!!!!!!!!!”</i> • <i>“Council actions such as the deep-sea coral amendment.”</i> • <i>“Cleaner Water Everywhere!”</i> 	
Balance of ecosystem and stakeholder needs	14%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“It would involve greater consideration for the ecosystem while remaining cognizant of the livelihoods attached to fishing and American's desire for healthy, fresh fish.”</i> • <i>“Sustainable quotas for most species that reflect balance of commercial, recreational and ecosystem benefits.”</i> 	

Most Common Themes: NGO Respondents

Percent of NGO Respondents

Healthy ecosystems that support sustainable fisheries	73%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Managers acting as stewards of our shared marine resources by maintaining all regional and migratory fisheries in the Mid-Atlantic at abundant and healthy levels to provide for ecosystem and human needs, while also continuing to protect and restore ocean habitat from the coast to the deep sea.”</i> • <i>“A broader focus on what is trying to be protected, not just the marine fisheries. Further interest in helping to support all kinds of marine wildlife; birds, fish, and marine mammals.”</i> 	
Balance of human and ecosystem needs	27%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“A successful achievement would be the balance the needs of the ecosystems with providing sustenance to the users.”</i> • <i>“Higher abundance of all fisheries with productivity making more thriving coastal environments and economies.”</i> 	
Protection of forage species	18%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Fishery managers should ensure that mid-Atlantic fisheries are able to provide for not only human needs, but also adequately support the marine ecosystem through responsible management of forage fish. Achieving this goal would result in a healthy ecosystem, with robust populations of birds, marine mammals, and larger fish.”</i> • <i>“Self-sustaining fisheries where most are in good shape and the ones that need attention are getting attention - fish, particularly forage species are managed at high abundance to accommodate marine food web and catch opportunities for recreational sector.”</i> 	

Question 20. The Council’s current Mission Statement is: “The Council manages marine fisheries in federal waters of the Mid-Atlantic region for their long-term sustainability and productivity consistent with the National Standards of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. The Council is committed to the effective stewardship of these fisheries and associated habitats by incorporating scientific information and informed public input in transparent processes that produce fishery management plans and programs.” (“Mission” describes the core purpose of focus of an organization and its approach to achieve its vision) Do you believe this is still an appropriate Mission for the Council?

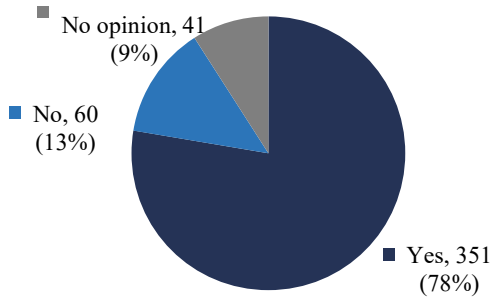


Figure 60: Appropriateness of Council's Mission, All Respondents (Q20)

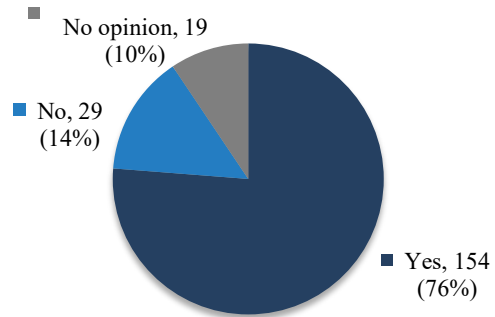


Figure 61: Appropriateness of Council's Mission, Recreational Respondents (Q20)

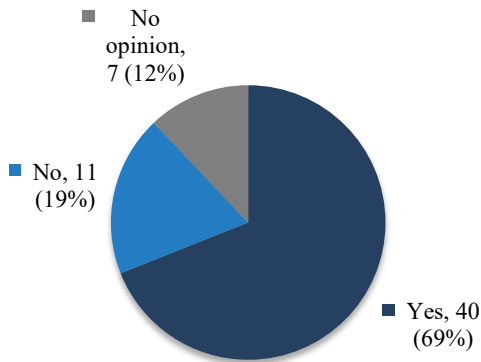


Figure 62: Appropriateness of Council's Mission, Commercial Respondents (Q20)

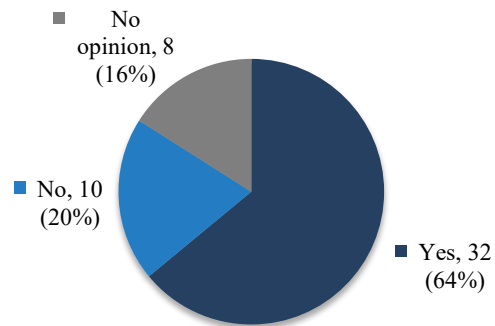


Figure 63: Appropriateness of Council's Mission, For-Hire Respondents (Q20)

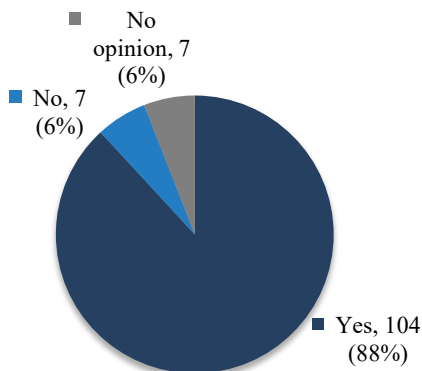


Figure 64: Appropriateness of Council's Mission, Interested Public Respondents (Q20)

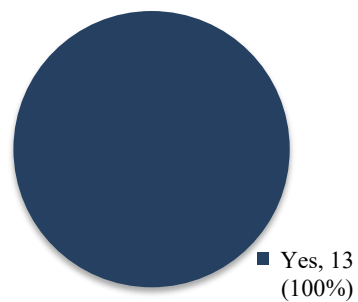


Figure 65: Appropriateness of Council's Mission, NGO Respondents (Q20)

Question 21. If you have any suggested changes to, or comments on, the Council’s Mission, please provide them in the space below.

Most Common Themes: Recreational Respondents	Percent of Recreational Respondents
<p>Accurate data and on-the-water observations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Too much emphasis on ‘scientific data’ and not enough real-world data by those of us on the water.”</i> • <i>“For recreational fishermen, until you get rid of the way MRIP goes about its estimates, we have little faith in what comes from both SSC and the Council itself.”</i> 	20%
<p>Process transparency and political influence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Transparency is the issue. Decisions are often made behind closed doors with little regard to the informed public’s opinion. “</i> • <i>“‘Time to make our fisheries great again.’ Make changes that will be effective versus political!”</i> 	18%
<p>Incorporate management approaches that address recreational priorities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Cut backs on striped bass and bluefish recreational and commercial harvest. A region-wide size and bag limit for these species.”</i> • <i>“Remove the words sustainability and productivity from the mission statement. Stated goal should be to return fisheries to their historic highs and then to manage the resource so as to maintain the highs.”</i> 	11%
<p>Execution of mission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“These motherhood and apple pie statements have little effect on operational fishery management decisions.”</i> • <i>“The mission needs to be incorporated into the real management of various species.”</i> 	7%
<p>Include social/economic considerations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Focus on eco-based management. Quantify the value of recreational fisheries and factor this value into the assigned responsibilities of the Council.”</i> • <i>“Conspicuously absent is an emphasis on maintaining the strength and culture of the fishing communities, which appears to be an incidental benefit, rather than a primary goal.”</i> 	7%

Most Common Themes: For-Hire Respondents	Percent of For-Hire Respondents
<p>Science and information for decisions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Need to define the science as NOT the only available which by default makes it the ‘best science’ especially when that science is really poor science.”</i> • <i>“Listen and act on the knowledge of older fishermen who have spent thousands of hours on the water.”</i> 	38%

Management approaches 31%

- *“No more Magnuson-Stevens Act. More localized management.”*
- *“I feel that through the years the council has not implemented changes strong enough to make for major improvements... I know it is a complex job and believe declining ecosystem health plays a big role in the declines.”*

Allocation and access 23%

- *“Separate recreational and commercial quotas. They should be totally separate.”*
- *“I find that council does not fulfill its role of providing fair access to fisheries. It does this by allowing regional deletions of a stock which unfairly penalizes fishing entities in that area.”*

Most Common Responses: Commercial Respondents

**Percent of
Commercial
Respondents**

Management impacts/ approaches 25%

- *“Let the fisheries manage themselves when possible.”*
- *“Should add the following clause: ‘but without any further or additional management/regulatory controls except to the extent absolutely necessary to ensure a sustainable resource and optimum yield.’”*

Include aquaculture 20%

- *“Outdated and excludes aquaculture.”*
- *“Embrace aquaculture in federal waters.”*

Address health/stability of fishing communities 20%

- *“After ‘long-term sustainability and productivity’, should add ‘and the long-term sustainability and productivity of fishing communities consistent with the National Standards.’”*
- *“Again, should recognize the importance of maintaining healthy fishing communities.”*

Transparency and bias 10%

- *“Transparent is the best way. It’s often said it’s already done. We go say our say and bang, it goes to an outside group because they have suing lawyers ready to go.”*
- *“Without personal or political bias.”*

Balance of stakeholder interests 10%

- *“Public input should be weighted less than the science and what fishermen are actually seeing on the water. I don’t believe this is the case anymore.”*
- *“Being fairer to commercial fishing.”*

Most Common Themes: Interested Public Respondents	Percent of Interested Public Respondents
<p>Science/ecosystem-based management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“All decisions should be based on science, for science supports the healthy marine ecosystems on which fisheries, and our planet, relies for life.”</i> • <i>“Continues to develop ecosystem-based fishery management for all species. Prioritizes data collection and evidence-based approaches. Uses predictive modeling to prepare for environmental changes”</i> 	39%
<p>Influence of politics and special interests</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“It seems that political issues are overriding the Council's Mission more and more often.”</i> • <i>“Ignoring a declining population of large bluefish and forage species for the benefit of commercial and for hire fishermen means you directly counteract your mission statement. This undermines your credibility with your stakeholders. You need to address your credibility by representing all stakeholders not just the ones with powerful special interest groups.”</i> 	22%
<p>Forage species protection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Rebuilds and protects river herring and shad populations. Increases protections for forage fish as well as for essential fish habitat.”</i> • <i>“Please make sure that you use a science-based data that protects anchovies and their predators.”</i> 	13%
<p>Marine pollution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“I think it should address pollution and endangered species.”</i> • <i>“Except how sustainable are those trolling nets and all the debris dumped into the seas? How about we start doing some real marine environmental protections, even if that's not going to make anybody rich?!”</i> 	9%

Most Common Themes: NGO Respondents	Percent of NGO Respondents
<p>Healthy ecosystems that support sustainable fisheries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Managers acting as stewards of our shared marine resources by maintaining all regional and migratory fisheries in the Mid-Atlantic at abundant and healthy levels to provide for ecosystem and human needs, while also continuing to protect and restore ocean habitat from the coast to the deep sea.”</i> • <i>“A broader focus on what is trying to be protected, not just the marine fisheries. Further interest in helping to support all kinds of marine wildlife; birds, fish, and marine mammals.”</i> 	73%
<p>Balance of human and ecosystem needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“A successful achievement would be the balance the needs of the ecosystems with providing sustenance to the users.”</i> • <i>“Higher abundance of all fisheries with productivity making more thriving coastal environments and economies.”</i> 	27%

Protection of forage species	18%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Fishery managers should ensure that Mid-Atlantic fisheries are able to provide for not only human needs, but also adequately support the marine ecosystem through responsible management of forage fish.”</i> • <i>“Self-sustaining fisheries where most are in good shape and the ones that need attention are getting attention. Fish, particularly forage species, are managed at high abundance to accommodate marine food web and catch opportunities for the recreational sector....”</i> 	

Question 22. Please list up to three issues or challenges you would like to see the Council focus on in its 2020-2024 Strategic Plan.

Most Common Themes: Recreational Respondents	Percent of Recreational Respondents
Striped bass management	12%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Take over management of the striped bass fishery.”</i> • <i>“Striped bass management - slot limit, reduced harvest.”</i> 	
Protection and management of forage species	11%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Managing forage fish with ecosystem-based reference points.”</i> • <i>“Baitfish (including squid) drive healthy fish stocks. Please make every effort to reduce the harvest of these critical parts of the ecosystem. At a minimum continue to push baitfish harvest further offshore.”</i> 	
Habitat protection and pollution	8%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Habitat protection from dragnets.”</i> • <i>“Plastic pollution needs to be high priority.”</i> 	
Accuracy/credibility of science	7%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Developing a way to devalue or not use ‘bad data.’”</i> • <i>“The efforts of most of the scientists associated with the process is selfless and competent. Standing up to poor science when it does arise is one of the challenges the council, as a whole, should address.”</i> 	
Snapper grouper management	6%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Rebuilding/protecting the grouper.”</i> • <i>“Increase the limit on beeliner and silver snapper.”</i> 	
Allocation and access	5%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Fair allocation to recreational anglers.”</i> • <i>“Equal black sea bass distribution for all Atlantic states north of the Outer Banks for both commercial and recreational fisherman.”</i> 	
Governance and process	4%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“More transparency.”</i> • <i>“Acknowledgement that the current process is not working”</i> 	

Manage for abundant, sustainable fish populations	4%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Take action to bring species to sustainable levels.”</i> • <i>“Science and management to inform recovery of species whose lack of abundance has been difficult to understand or where management has not had the intended effect.”</i> 	
Recreational retention limits	4%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Increase black sea bass limit.”</i> • <i>“Use of a slot type regulation system for keeper fish. Recognize the fact that almost all large fish are female breeders and protect these fish. The argument that a slot system is not enforceable is disingenuous at best.”</i> 	
Ecosystem approach to management	4%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Manage all species on an integrated ecosystem basis.”</i> • <i>“Transition to ecosystems-based management.”</i> 	
Improve recreational harvest data	4%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Full recreational reporting implemented....period.”</i> • <i>“MRIP is flawed - it has no input from the fishers as to what they see versus what the calculations are.”</i> 	
Commercial fishing gear/practices	3%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Find a way for commercial fishermen to adapt their methods to specifically target a species.”</i> • <i>“Require removal of commercial nets/traps after use.”</i> 	
Listen to and work with fishermen	3%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Pay attention to the comments from participants.”</i> • <i>“Working more with fisherman to figure out fairer regulations.”</i> 	

Most Common Themes: For-Hire Respondents

Percent of For-Hire Respondents

Forage species management	9%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Protection of bait fish in relation to health of ground fish.”</i> • <i>“I would like the council to focus on key forage species.”</i> 	
Habitat assessment and protection	9%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Seafloor habitat isn’t even a thought. Discovery of the seafloor habitat footprint of 1955 would unleash a fresh understanding of our task ahead.”</i> • <i>“I would like the council to protect reproductive areas.”</i> 	
Governance and communication	9%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Aggressively seek input from the charter/headboat sector. Many do not have any input because they think the system is broken.”</i> • <i>“I would like the council to focus on the fishery and less on politics.”</i> 	

Regulatory impact	7%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“No more loss of businesses due to overly strict regulations on fish stocks that are being rebuilt or that have been rebuilt.”</i> • <i>“Fragile black sea bass regulations need to end. They are managed as if they are an endangered species, when in fact they are the most abundant fish out here.”</i> 	
Recreational catch data/reporting	5%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“MRIP is garbage - making a stench similar to a bucket of bunker left open on a dock in August.”</i> • <i>“Use the reports from for-hire boats as part of the data.”</i> 	
Fishing methods/practices	5%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Removal of destructive gear that negatively affect marine ecosystems”</i> • <i>“Eliminate all gill netting.”</i> 	
Climate change	4%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Changes in species migration due to global warming.”</i> • <i>“Water quality and warming water temperatures.”</i> 	

Most Common Themes: Commercial Respondents

**Percent of
Commercial
Respondents**

Offshore wind/ocean energy	14%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Glut of proposed wind farms in historic fishing grounds”</i> • <i>“Take a stand on the decimation of the fishing and spawning grounds by the energy industry: oil, gas, wind.”</i> 	
Fair allocations and access	13%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Equitable quotas for each state and increased quotas on black seabass”</i> • <i>“Eliminating any talk of limited access in any of your FMP's”</i> • <i>“Don't take permits away based on greed science is something else”</i> 	
Improved science and accurate data	10%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Scientists on fishing vessels. Accurate, timely surveys and unbiased intelligent assessments.”</i> • <i>“Get the Bigelow to do complete and accurate surveys every year.”</i> 	
Support for aquaculture	6%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Support for open ocean aquaculture.”</i> • <i>“Promote ocean ranching and breeding larger faster growing fish to reverse the council actions that destroyed the commercial fishing & recreational fishing industries.”</i> 	
Climate change and species distribution	6%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Shifting biomass and the management response.”</i> • <i>“Be prepare to change boundaries when the species move due to global warming.”</i> 	

Habitat protection 5%

- *“How about land-based destruction of fisheries, such as pesticides and fertilizers.”*
- *“Prioritize increased habitat for all fish species. HMA”*

Collaborative monitoring and research 4%

- *“Minimizing scientific uncertainty through maximizing the potential of collaborative research between NEFSC and fishing vessels.”*
- *“Continuing to advance NTAP and cooperative research.”*

Most Common Themes: Interested Public Respondents

Percent of
Interested Public
Respondents

Management and protection of forage species 12%

- *“Manage forage fish as well as commercial fish levels that support a healthy recovery for all ocean life, and fishing at sustainable levels.”*
- *“Ensure the success of forage fish populations.”*

Pollution and habitat protection 11%

- *“Ocean debris affecting the health of marine animals and plants”*
- *“Preservation of east coast corals.”*

Impacts of climate change 8%

- *“Climate change and management of species on the move.”*
- *“Concrete measures to adapt to impacts of climate change in order to maintain sustainable fisheries”*

Ecosystem approaches to management 6%

- *“Continue to develop eco-based fishery management for all species.”*
- *“Protecting the integrity of the ecosystem”*

Acquire/improve data and science necessary for management 6%

- *“Research to improve stock assessments and fisheries management plans”*
- *“Keep species census figures as current as possible”*

Other ocean uses 6%

- *“Spatial planning, particularly as it relates to offshore wind power, with active engagement between the two industries”*
- *“Reduce or ban drilling or seismic blast testing that harms marine life or endangers the health of the oceans.”*

Bycatch and fishing practices 5%

- *“More effectively document and account for bycatch in all fisheries”*
- *“Bycatch- reduction through improved fishing practices and or gear”*

Rebuild stocks, address/prevent overfishing 4%

- *“Rebuild fish populations”*
- *“Protection of stock from overfishing”*

Catch limits	3%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Strict enforcement of catch limits; returning bycatch alive.”</i> • <i>“Establish clear authority over catch limits”</i> 	
Allocation of all types	3%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Commerical/recreational allocation”</i> • <i>“Returning privatized public resources to the public”</i> • <i>“Quota allocation redistribution due to shifting stocks”</i> 	
Governance	3%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Reduce council ‘delay tactics’ that stall process and hoard staff time”</i> • <i>“Increased/improved workings with geographically adjacent Councils.”</i> 	
Social and economic issues	3%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Economics of recreational fishing vs commercial”</i> • <i>“Sustainability of seafood industries”</i> 	

Most Common Themes: NGO Respondents

Percent of NGO Respondents

Management/protection of forage species	33%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“River herring and shad rebuilding and conservation.”</i> • <i>“Develop a concrete plan (with specific actions and a timeline) for collecting data and developing analyses to support evaluating ecosystem-level tradeoffs necessary for establishing an optimal forage fish harvest policy.”</i> 	
Essential Fish Habitat	27%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Modernization of EFH descriptions and management updates designed to reduce localized impacts and account for climate shifts and old state-by-state quota allocation decisions.”</i> • <i>“Update and refine essential fish habitat definitions for all managed species based on new science products, including updated prey species information. This effort should include identifying multi-species Habitat Areas of Particular Concern.”</i> 	
Ecosystem-based management	18%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Broaden the mission to include support for healthy and diverse ecosystems.”</i> • <i>“Incorporate Ecosystem Based Management.”</i> 	

2014-2018 Strategic Plan Review – Goal Areas

Question 23. The Council’s 2014-2018 Strategic Plan is organized around four major goal areas – Communication, Science, Management and Governance – each with an associated goal statement. Please indicate how you would rate the Council’s performance in each of the four goal areas. (“Goal” describes a broad outcome that helps an organization achieve its vision).

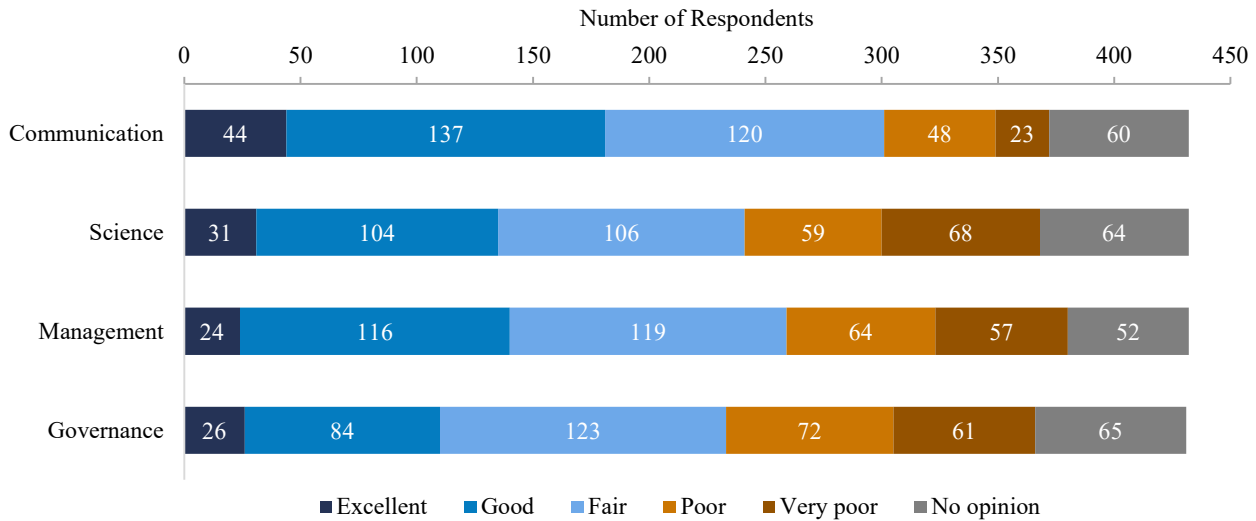


Figure 66: Goal Area Performance Ratings, All Respondents (Q23)

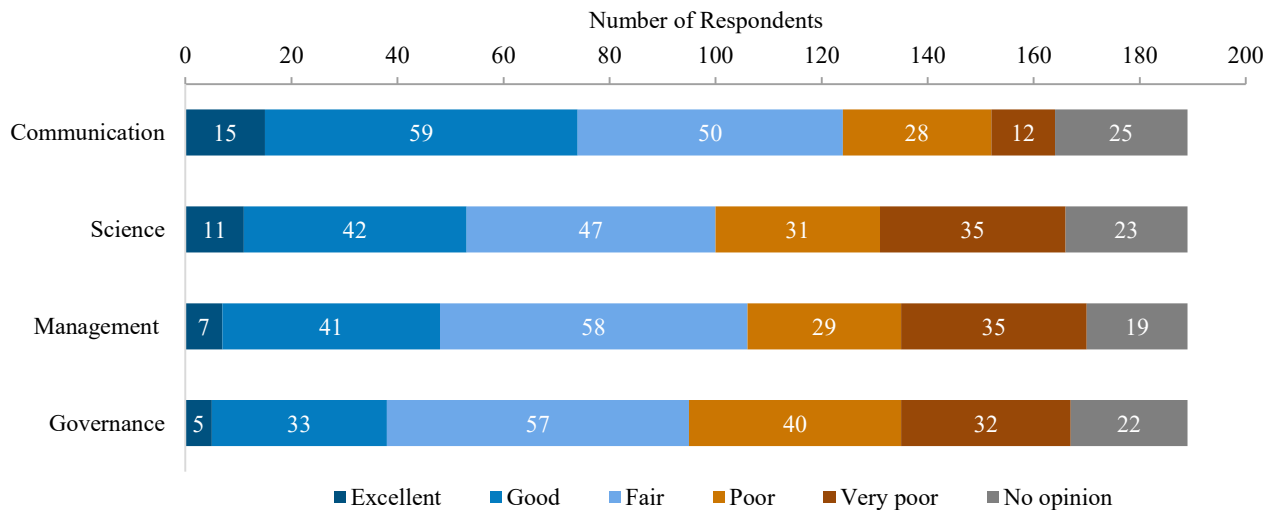


Figure 67: Goal Area Performance Ratings, Recreational Respondents (Q23)

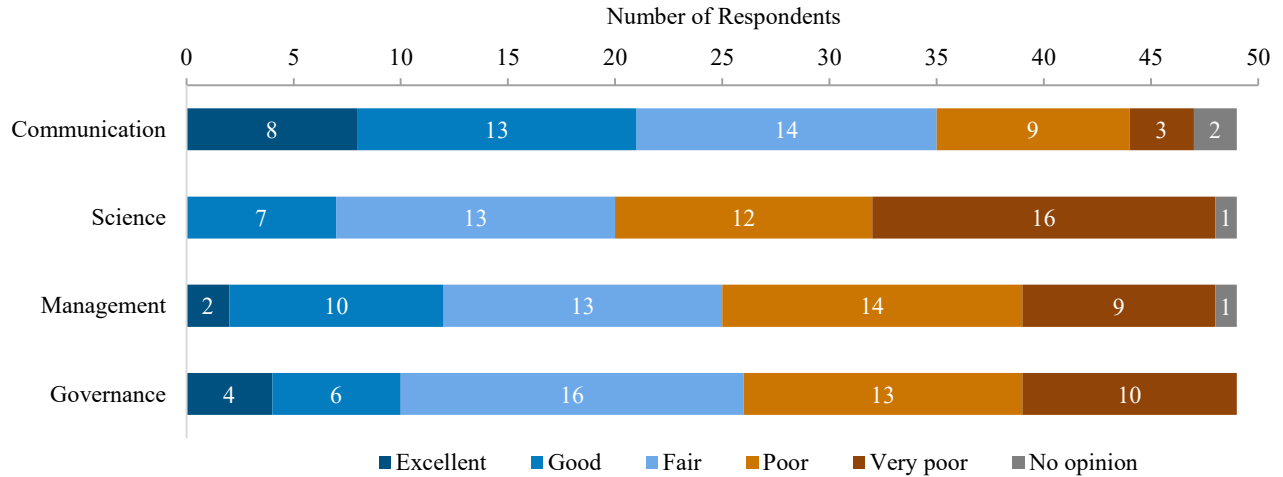


Figure 68: Goal Area Performance Ratings, For-Hire Respondents (Q23)

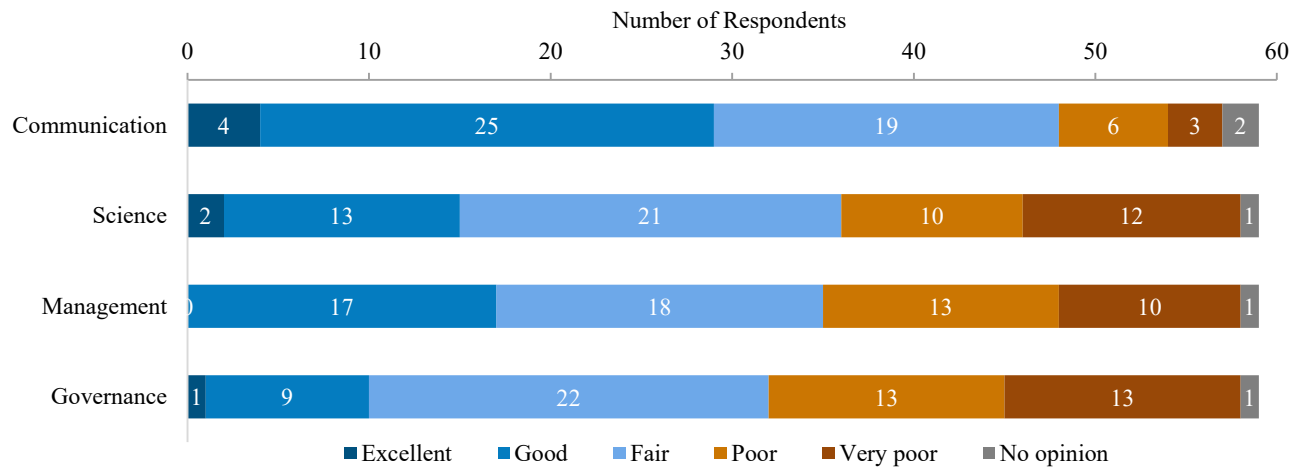


Figure 69: Goal Area Performance Ratings, Commercial Respondents (Q23)

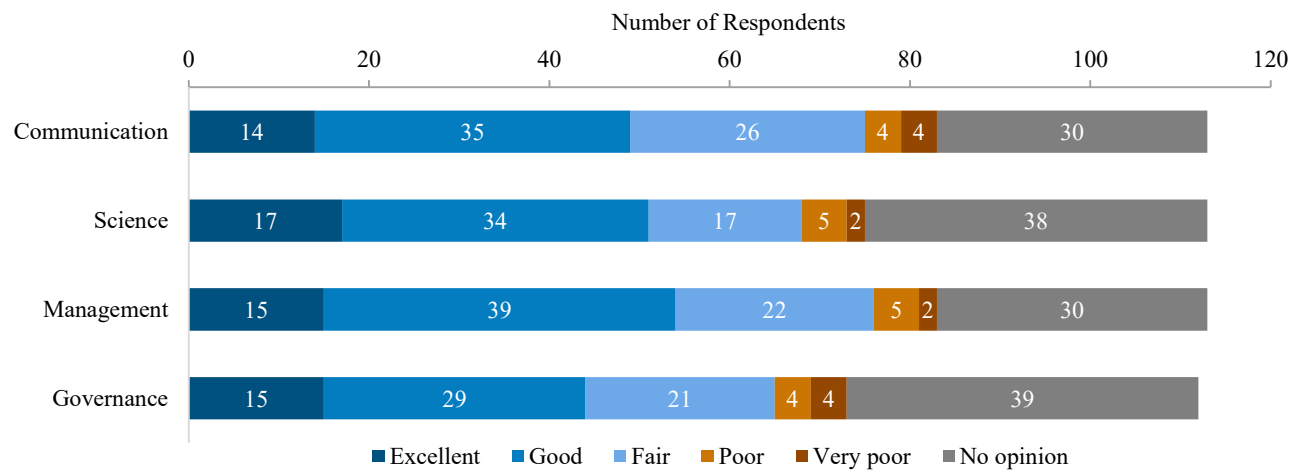


Figure 70: Goal Area Performance Ratings, Interested Public Respondents (Q23)

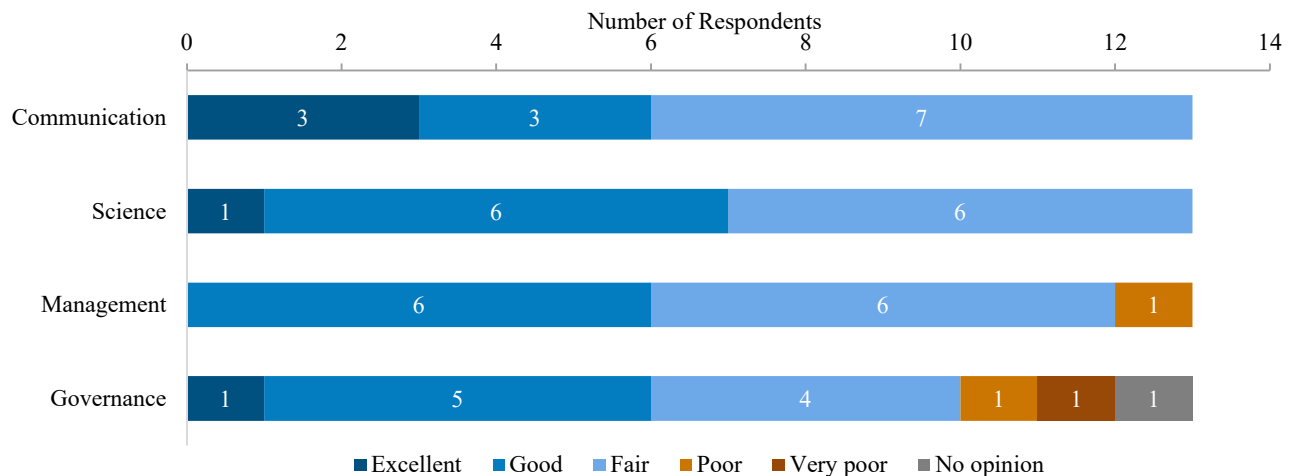


Figure 71: Goal Area Performance Ratings, NGO Respondents (Q23)

Question 24. If you have any suggestions for new goal areas that the Council should consider for the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan, please provide them in the space below.

Most Common Themes: Recreational Respondents

Percent of Recreational Respondents

- Incorporate fishermen's knowledge into scientific process 18%
 - *“Much better use of data provided by those who are on the water.”*
 - *“Relying only on science and loosely on the wisdom of seasoned waterman and anglers has produced very negative outcomes for our water ways and fisheries.”*
- Process transparency and political influence 12%
 - *“Time and again the Council process has failed, and the more intricate you make the process, the less stakeholders and fishing public has trust in fishery management.”*
 - *“It’s unfortunate that many or most council appointments are strictly political. Managing our natural resources should not be political and should be bi-partisan.”*
- Allocation between commercial and recreational interests 10%
 - *“Commercial and recreational sectors split 50/50.”*
 - *“Give the public a better share of the fishery.”*
- Implementation/execution of current goals 10%
 - *“I think the goals are good, they just have not been implemented well.”*
 - *“The goals are good. The efforts to meet them are poor.”*
- Current management approaches 10%
 - *“The council should be more dynamic and responsive to changing conditions in its management schemes.”*
 - *“I’m not sure of what species you manage that is thriving but maybe consider changing your management strategies. When you have more species in decline than you have growing in numbers you may want to reevaluate your methods.”*

Stakeholder balance	8%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Don't be so commercial oriented. Every regulation out there is by far in favor of the commercial fishing industry. There is a strong need to be a lot more recreational angler friendly.”</i> • <i>“Again, better recognition of recreational opportunities and success rate goals for species sought by recreational anglers.”</i> 	

Most Common Themes: For-Hire Respondents

Percent of For-Hire Respondents

Improve science	25%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Real data! No computer extrapolated information from models developed 30 years ago.”</i> • <i>“Much better science, enforcement, accountability, much better communications with fisheries industry.”</i> 	

Increase communication	25%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Develop a greater list of stakeholders who are active in the fisheries to provide more up to date input on management actions.”</i> • <i>“Communicate through social media. Recognize that science is ineffective with respect to analyzing species populations and be conservative on all estimates.”</i> 	

Evaluate and modify management approaches	25%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“I believe regulation has done about all it's able. Our test today is in discovery-- to both bolster successful spawning of many species by habitat restoration, & by looking for forcing agents that drive spawning in the early years of a newly regulated species.”</i> • <i>“Whenever there is a declining fishery you wait too long to start regulations and try to change it slowly ever a long period of time when quicker stronger regulations are needed. You are so worried about not affecting the user groups that you do not set up regulations to make changes in a timely manner.”</i> 	

Most Common Themes: Commercial Respondents

Percent of Commercial Respondents

Stakeholder definition and balance	20%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>““Stakeholders” has to be a term more honestly defined. Environmental Defense Fund, Oceana and Pew Charitable Trusts are not ‘stakeholders’.”</i> • <i>“I question whether there is fair representation of stakeholders when Rhode Island has no say in the council process short of a liaison seat on MAFMC.”</i> 	

Better science and more collaboration with fishermen	20%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Regaining the trust of stakeholders and using their knowledge along with science to pave the path for a sustainable future.”</i> • <i>“I would like to see better science on the fluke fishery. I don't believe the surveys are done at appropriate times and in enough areas.”</i> 	

Alternative management approaches 20%

- *“Maximum Sustainable Yield is a failed approach for structuring fishery management. It's very convenient for bookkeeping and for useless statistical analyses, but it has absolutely nothing to do with the health of the fish.”*
- *“Full utilization of all seafood caught.”*

Communication and outreach 15%

- *“Send out more surveys. Simple, one topic, easy answer.”*
- *“I just feel like the fishermen are not informed with reason. Fishermen only are told rules and laws. There is no education to make these fishermen better.”*

Community stability and resilience 10%

- *“Healthy Fishing Communities”*
- *“Again, stop trying to put guys out; encourage new entrants into fisheries as they are the future.”*

Most Common Themes: Interested Public Respondents

Percent of Interested Public Respondents

Stakeholder balance and governance 23%

- *“Governance does not include enough conservation perspectives. Commercial fishing has too loud a voice.”*
- *“Please ensure stakeholders include the general public and most importantly marine biologists.”*

Overall management approach 19%

- *“Sound science and fair management should be by far the two cornerstones.”*
- *“Management must clearly support a publicly transparent, science-based agenda.”*

Ocean health 15%

- *“If we are to protect fisheries, we need to protect the ocean as a whole. That means going after polluters, noise makers and shipping traffic as well as addressing the larger issue of climate change. It would help if the organization could lobby for a New Green Deal.”*
- *“The major goal should be to stop pollution from commercial sources and to keep the ocean healthy for all. Also, to try to counteract the forces of climate change.”*

Implementation and execution 15%

- *“A plan of action to support these goals and an evaluation process. Political involvement to support Goal 2 and 3.”*
- *“You should consider the future and future challenges in making current decisions to prevent issues and not just react to them.”*

Most Common Themes: NGO Respondents

Percent of NGO Respondents

Stakeholder inclusion/needs

40%

- *“Better job of including all stakeholders, not just fisheries but those who are dependent on healthy forage species (ecotourism).”*
- *“Developing a federally funded apprenticeship program for commercial fishers.”*

Ecosystem/conservation goals

40%

- *“EBFM and data/information modernization”*
- *“Conservation, there should be a goal that measures the productivity of the species that are managed. The Council is doing well in this regard, except Atlantic mackerel, right now. But the “not overfishing, not overfished” determinations don't account for significant declines in some species, and big risks being taken in some cases that should be tracked in population trends in the coming years, especially with climate change happening.”*

Communication Goal Area

Question 25. The Communication goal is: “Engage, inform, and educate stakeholders to promote public awareness and encourage participation in the Council process.” Do you believe this is an appropriate goal for the Council? (A “goal” describes a broad outcome that helps an organization achieve its vision)

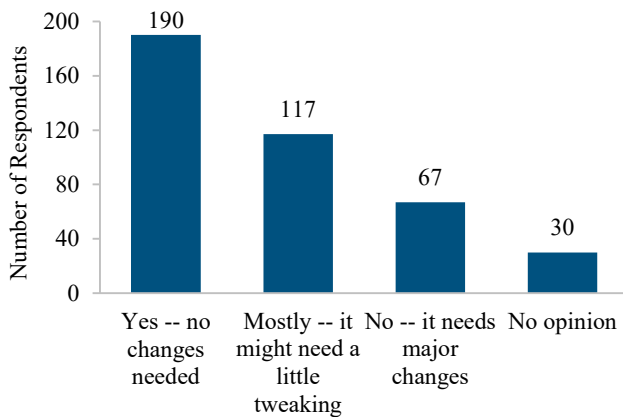


Figure 72: Appropriateness of Communication Goal, All Respondents (Q25)

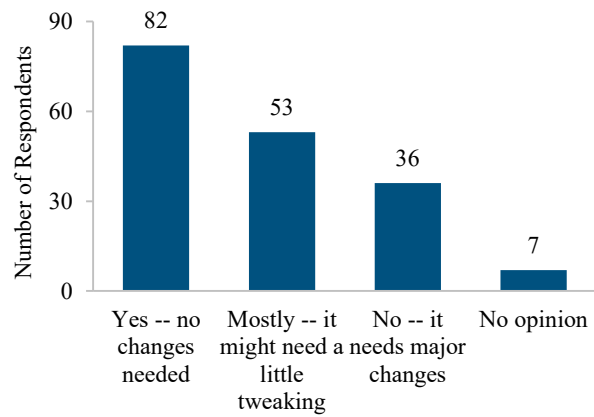


Figure 73: Appropriateness of Communication Goal, Recreational Respondents (Q25)

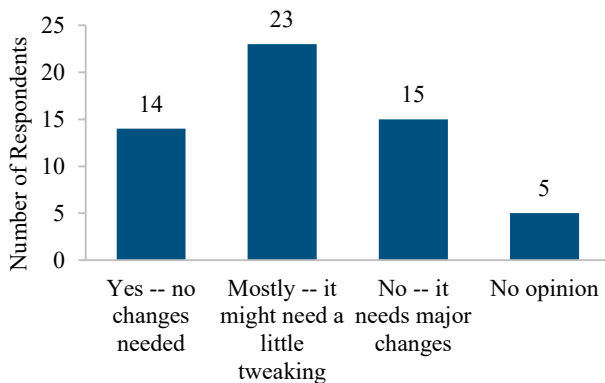


Figure 74: Appropriateness of Communication Goal, Commercial Respondents (Q25)

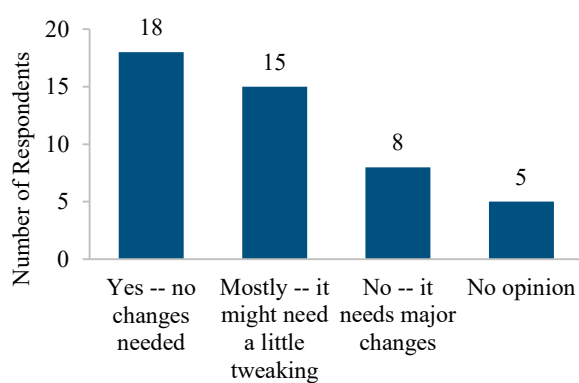


Figure 75: Appropriateness of Communication Goal, For-Hire Respondents (Q25)

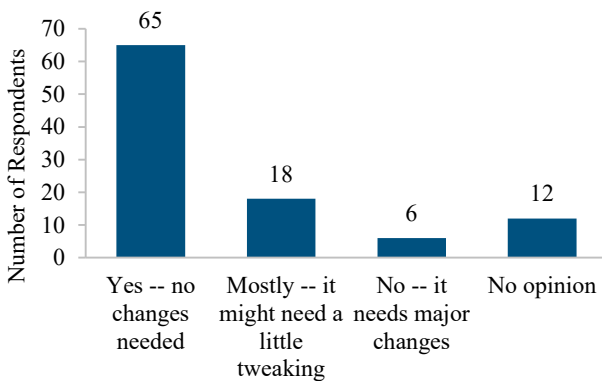


Figure 76: Appropriateness of Communication Goal, Interested Public Respondents (Q25)

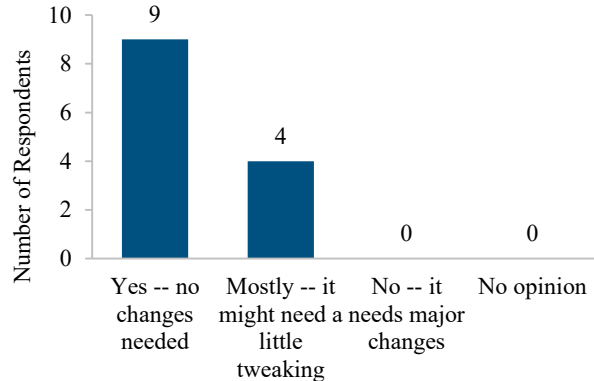


Figure 77: Appropriateness of Communication Goal, NGO Respondents (Q25)

Question 26. If you have any suggested changes to the Communication goal, please provide them in the space below.

Most Common Themes: Recreational Respondents	Percent of Recreational Respondents
<p>Listen to stakeholder input</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“‘Inform and educate’ is one-way communication. There has to be information ‘in’ as well as ‘out’”</i> • <i>“Pay more attention to individuals who participate and try to aggregate their opinions and wishes. Stop giving so much clout to NGOs like CCA, Pew, EDF, Recreational Fishing Alliance etc. They often represent the fishing public poorly and have their own agenda's and power struggles - often much worse than within the Councils or NMFS.”</i> 	15%
<p>Meeting accessibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Make meetings on weekends instead of weeknights or afternoons”</i> • <i>“Have meetings at local fishing club locations, not some far off place”</i> 	15%
<p>Increased outreach to general public</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Go to the public. Don't wait for them to come to you.”</i> • <i>“Why only go to the stakeholders? Go to the high schools and get involved with the Environmental Science teachers on a simpler level to enlighten our younger next generations of conservationists/scientists and commercial/recreational people in our Fisheries”</i> 	15%
<p>Frequency and simplicity of communications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“The greater use of “plain English” will help”</i> • <i>“More communication to members and public”</i> 	13%
<p>Better execution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“The challenge for the council is not in the goal but the execution of this goal”</i> • <i>“It's a great goal which is not being met”</i> 	8%
<p>Stakeholder balance, definition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“The change needed is not wordsmithing but attitudinal. The ocean and its resources/species belong to everyone equally and should be managed accordingly not just for those that financially benefit personally from its exploitation. “Stakeholders” needs to be redefined to include all parties of interest and not just those with a commercial concern.”</i> • <i>“Changes to how council members are chosen. Too political. A lot of money involved and seems to be lopsided towards commercial interests making money and not the overall interest in health of the fisheries.”</i> 	8%

Most Common Themes: For-Hire Respondents	Percent of For-Hire Respondents
Goal execution	27%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“This is a great goal. It just needs to be implemented”</i> • <i>“It’s a great goal- the key is to follow through.”</i> • <i>“When you communicatelisten.”</i> 	13%
Public input tools	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Fishermen are not the type to give speeches in front of crowds. Being allowed to speak in a relaxed environment as group would get you a lot further”</i> • <i>“Definitely need for more avenues for ‘stakeholders’ to be informed and respond --and those responses to be read at meetings. If our fishing communities are ‘stakeholders then we should be provided with an easy access form, emailed (or mailed) to us so that we may provide a ‘stakeholders’ opinion.”</i> 	
Information access	13%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“I receive notices of meetings and schedule but no information on proposals”</i> • <i>“The goal is great, but they keep everything a secret. I have to actively seek out when/ where meetings are held to join via webinar. You need to advertise them.”</i> 	

Most Common Themes: Commercial Respondents	Percent of Commercial Respondents
Respond to stakeholder input	18%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Provide stakeholders clearly defined answers when their suggestions are not acted upon by the MAFMC.”</i> • <i>“Involve and use fisherman more and more in the process and show us our input and findings are not being tossed for junk science from researchers who do not know the species like harvesters who regularly engage with them on a daily basis.”</i> 	
Listen to industry	18%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Most of those present don't need to be informed and educated... they know what's happening. Communication needs to be a two-way street!”</i> • <i>“Fishermen voices should be heard and not dismissed when they don't agree with scientific findings.”</i> 	
Encourage participation	18%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“The focus should be on the industry participating in the process not on every ‘stakeholder’ under the sun...the APA already provides for that opportunity, which is built into the process without bending over backwards to facilitate groups not interested in cooperating with industry to create long-term solutions.”</i> • <i>“Inform and educate stakeholders and the public at large so they can be well informed and actively participate in the Council regulatory process.”</i> 	
Streamline communication	12%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“There are so many issues facing the industry and too many emails, workshops, meetings, etc. We need a more streamlined process.”</i> • <i>“This survey is already long.”</i> 	

Most Common Themes: Interested Public Respondents

Percent of Interested Public Respondents

Increase communication and outreach to broader audience	28%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“More people who are not fishermen need to be aware of the issues so they make informed purchasing decisions.”</i> • <i>“Better communication and outreach to the public”</i> 	17%
Encourage participation in the council process	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Participation is a broad term that encompasses many things from merely an opportunity to comment, to back-and-forth dialogue, to a real ability to shape outcomes to joint decision-making. At a minimum the word ‘participation’ should be replaced with a focus on dialogue.”</i> • <i>“Engage more than direct stakeholders (fishers), broader public participation should be encouraged.”</i> 	
Communication tools	17%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“More public engagement can be using news organizations (newspapers and TV news) not just social media (which many of us do not use at all now it's so risky).”</i> • <i>“Unfortunately, communication must gravitate to smart phone apps.”</i> 	
Frequency of communication	11%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“There is way too much time and money spent on "communication". It is the responsibility of those managed to get informed about decisions that affect their livelihood.”</i> • <i>“As an AP member the emails we get are pretty long and there is a lot of research that shows folks simply don't digest long emails. I would suggest moving away from email updates and or taking care to ensure they are getting the necessary information across. Targeting emails in a better manner would help on this.”</i> 	

Most Common Themes: NGO Respondents

Percent of NGO Respondents

Execution/implementation	60%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“A major part of communication is listening so ensuring that you make it clear that you're open to interaction, conversations, suggestions, and transparency.”</i> • <i>“Need to demonstrate accomplishments and any/all positive results of the Councils actions”</i> 	

Note: The low number of responses prevented addition themes from being generated.

Question 27. The 2014-2018 Strategic Plan included five objectives designed to help the Council achieve its Communication goal. Please rate how well you think the Council has addressed these objectives. (“Objectives” are specific, measurable targets that help an organization achieve its goals)

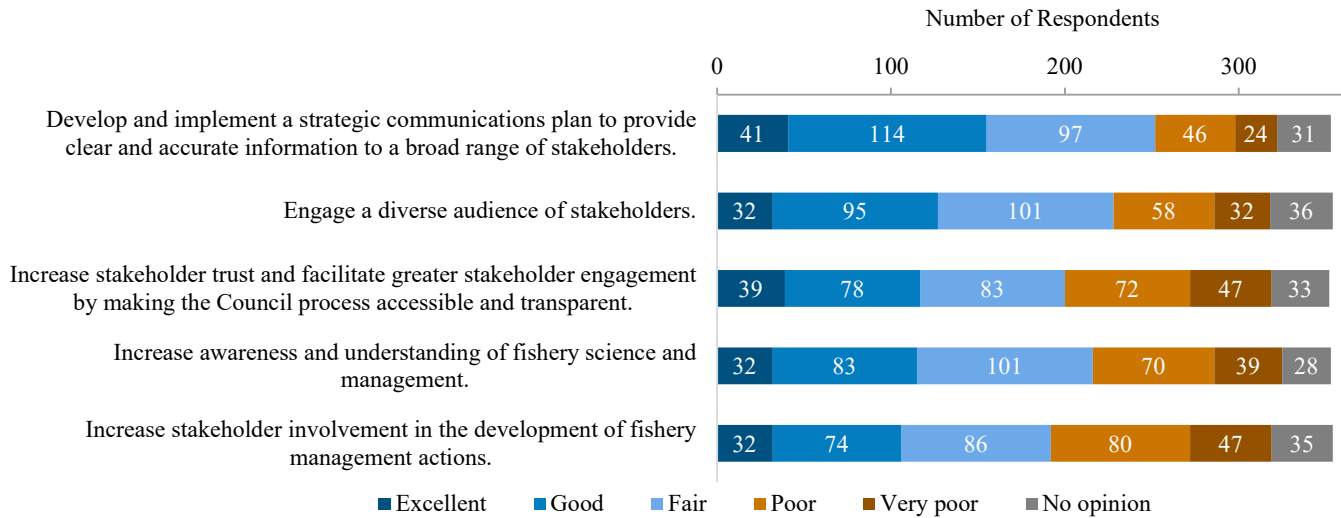


Figure 78: Communication Objectives Performance Ratings, All Respondents (Q27)

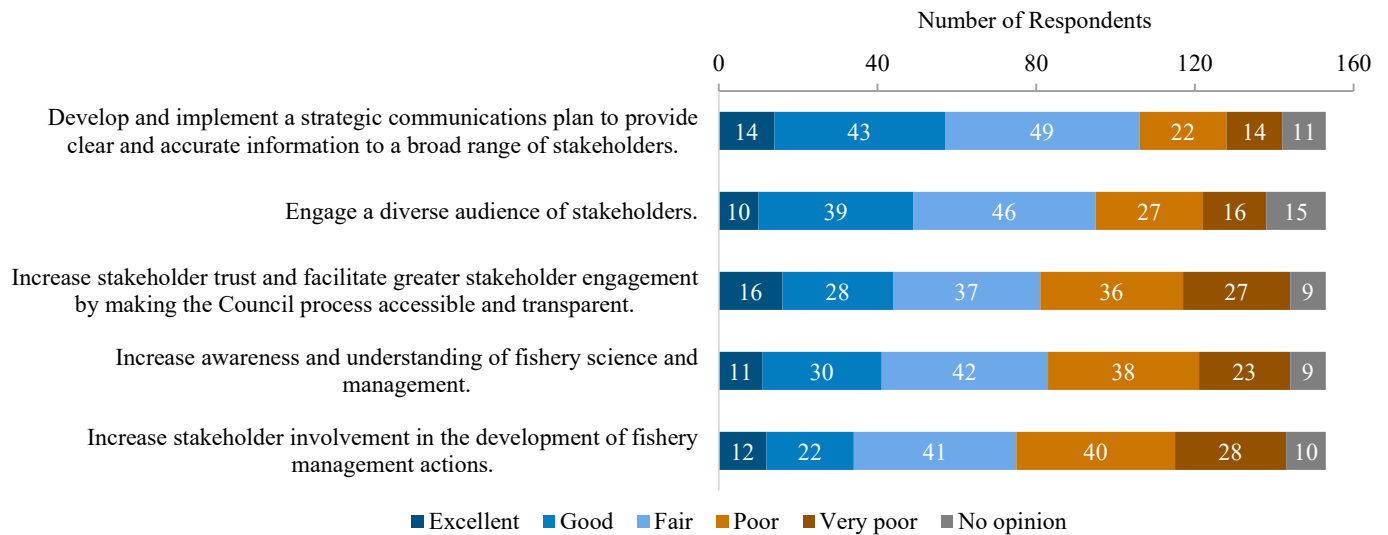


Figure 79: Communication Objectives Performance Ratings, Recreational Respondents (Q27)

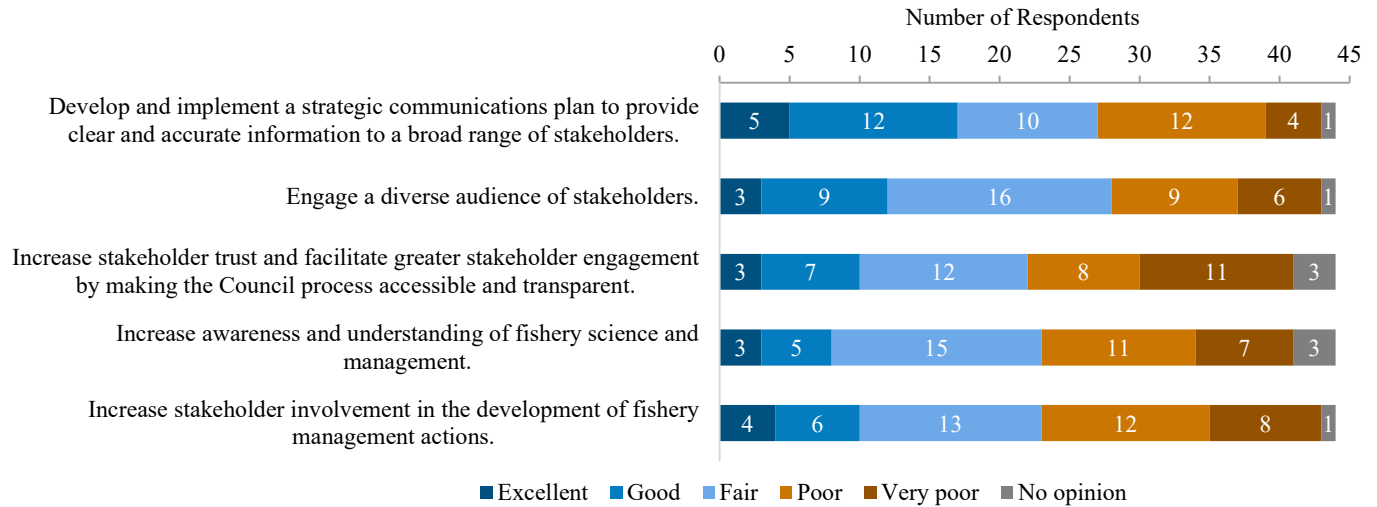


Figure 80: Communication Objectives Performance Ratings, For-Hire Respondents (Q27)

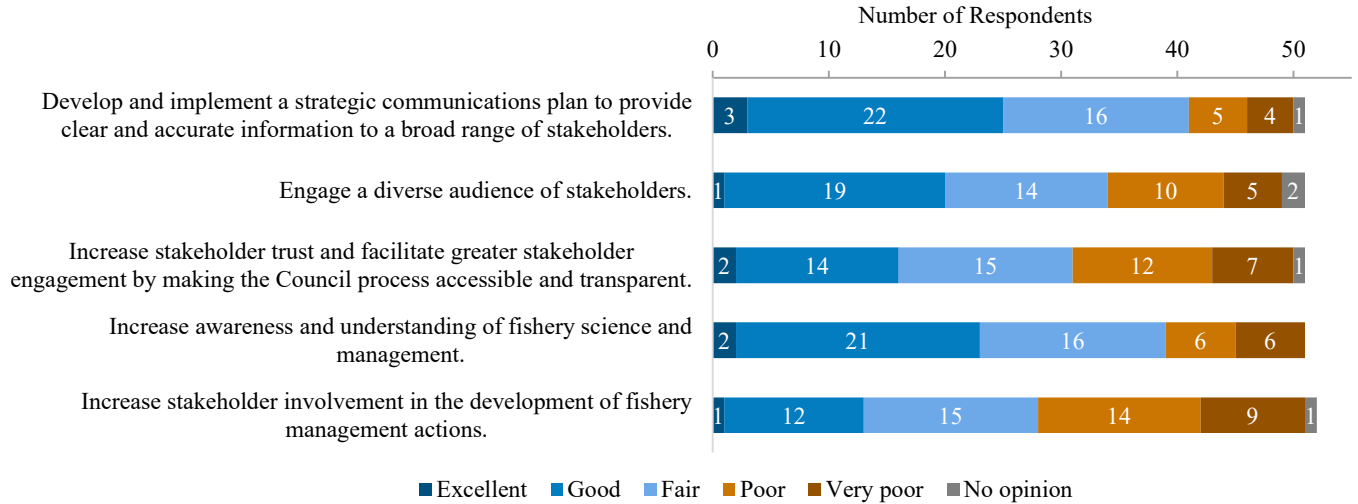


Figure 81: Communication Objectives Performance Ratings, Commercial Respondents (Q27)

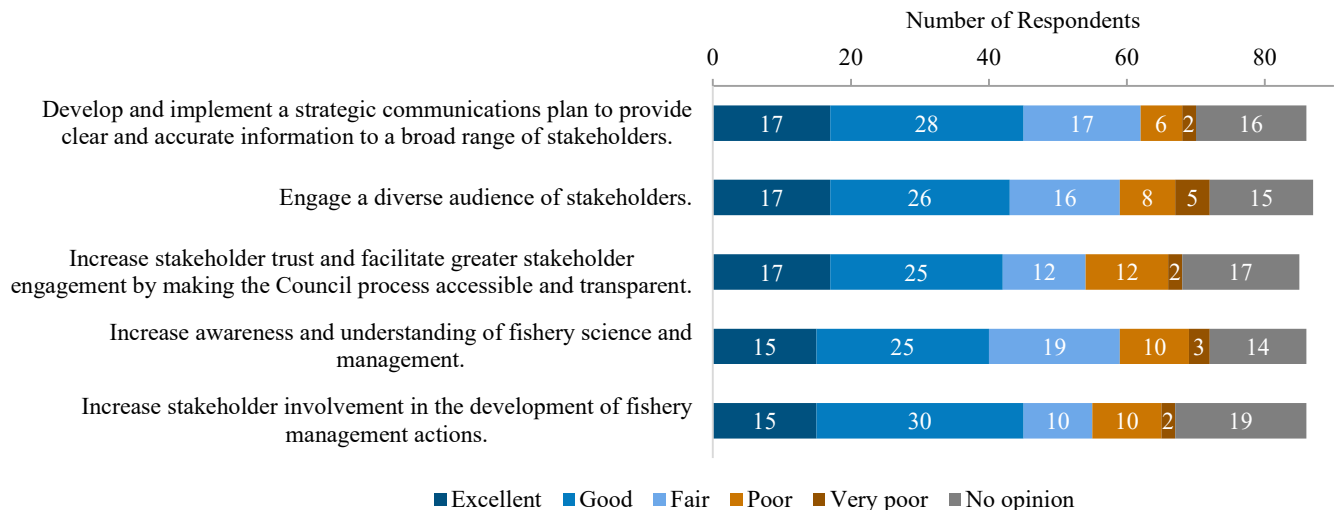


Figure 82: Communication Objectives Performance Ratings, Interested Public Respondents (Q27)

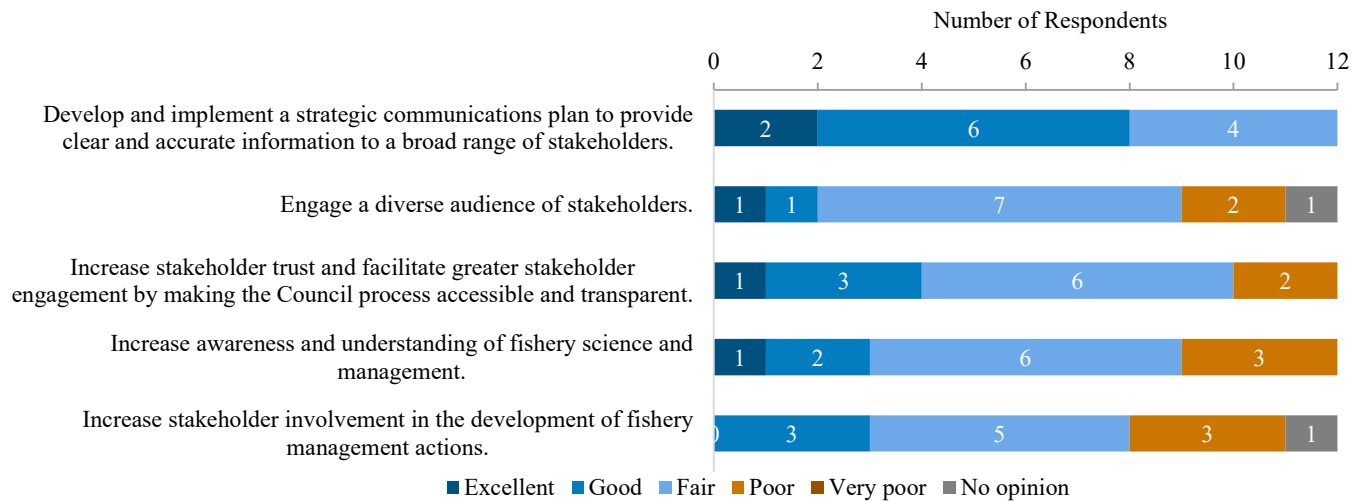


Figure 83: Communication Objectives Goal Ratings, NGO Respondents (Q27)

Question 28. If you have suggestions for new Communication objectives or changes to existing Communication objectives you think the Council should consider for the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan, please provide them in the space below.

Most Common Themes: Recreational Respondents

Percent of Recreational Respondents

Increased frequency and variety of communication methods

24%

- *“Fishermen don't go to meetings. You need to get your people out into the field where the fishermen are. Go to clubs, docks, set up informal meetings to get the word out. And for God's sake, teach your people how to speak to the public!”*
- *“Regularly post meetings, opportunities to participate, surveys like this, etc. to a common forum or social media.”*

More outreach to increase participation

24%

- *“I put down fair on #5 because of angler and public apathy. Somehow Council(s) need to stimulate the public to become and stay engaged. Not just when cuts to harvest occur.”*
- *“I listed mostly poor above, because the stakeholders that are addressed seem to be mainly commercial based. You really need to do a better job involving recreational anglers”*

Listen and respond to stakeholder input

15%

- *“It does little good if recommendations are made and no one listens!”*
- *“It would be refreshing to hear someone on your council say once, ‘that's an interesting point, we will look into that.’”*

Simple, understandable language

12%

- *“More involvement from a more diverse group. Better scientific data or real-world data. More understandable wording.”*
- *“Fishery science needs to be simplified for the public.”*

Process transparency	12%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Be more aggressive about getting the science and basis for decisions out to the angling public, to forestall the spread of misinformation by anti-regulatory members of the angling press/angling community.”</i> • <i>“You continually have a large number of stakeholders seemingly involved in the decision-making process. Then in the end you arbitrarily hand down several options for them to choose from in a take it or leave it process. The honest, transparent system you claim to use needs to become truly honest and transparent to the average person affected by your actions until then the distrust of your system will continue.”</i> 	

Most Common Themes: For-Hire Respondents

Percent of For-Hire Respondents

Public input and outreach methods/efforts	50%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“There are very few large charter headboat operators left. Phone calls could be placed to the largest and most active to solicit input and keep them aware of important issues that directly affects their operation.”</i> • <i>“Obtain a list of stake holders in each state that can provide up to date and timely information.”</i> 	

Stakeholder trust	25%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“There is communication but after meeting they go and do what their plan was set out to do. Basically, they just appease us at the meetings.”</i> • <i>“Stakeholder trust cannot be had while the primary driver of recreational regulation, MRIP, holds the helm. Estimates no one believes drive regulation. Who to trust?”</i> 	

Most Common Themes: Commercial Respondents

Percent of Commercial Respondents

Council credibility	22%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“I just can't trust a Council that doesn't follow the law but makes recommendations based on majority (mob) rule. Communicate the applicable laws to the Council members and remind them that they need to follow them.”</i> • <i>“Tired of being lied to.”</i> 	

Listen to industry	22%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“As I have said before. Start listening to responsible fishermen”</i> • <i>“The Council needs to begin taking the comments of industry stakeholders more seriously, and not subordinate such commentary to desires/recommendations of the staff.”</i> 	

Engage in issue-specific communication	22%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Explain to the public why the council allows 90% plus of imported seafood into the U.S. market. Explain why 60% to 70% of all fish caught are discarded due to council regulations.”</i> • <i>“Include aquaculture in the conversation -- now”</i> 	

Most Common Themes: Interested Public Respondents

Percent of Interested Public Respondents

Communication outlets and methods

25%

- *“Go to universities.”*
- *“I would consider running national advertising campaigns to support a vibrant and healthy marine ecosystem, to include engagement on the removal of plastics and other debris in the oceans.”*

Simplicity and clarity of communication

19%

- *“Administrative staff can't keep it simple!!!”*
- *“More transparency and clarity for better public understanding”*

Most Common Themes: NGO Respondents

Percent of NGO Respondents

Communication/outreach with diverse audiences

75%

- *“New: Provide the general public, who are stakeholders in every decision because these are the Nation's fisheries managed now and for future generations, guidance on how to most effectively participate in shaping management decisions.”*
- *“Put more of a focus on communicating with more ecotourism industries and companies that also rely on healthy and diverse ecosystems.”*

Question 29. If you have suggestions for specific Communication-related activities or projects you believe the Council should include in the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan, please provide them in the space below.

Most Common Themes: Recreational Respondents

Percent of Recreational Respondents

Focus on communication methods/outlets used by anglers

30%

- *“Possibly making an effort to create an electronic mailing list of fishing clubs in the region, so that they can get information directly from the Council, rather than receiving distorted accounts from various media outlets.”*
- *“When you have meetings that are open to the public make some general announcements on the various fishing boards...Some sites where you can post publicly are Stripers Online, the Hull Truth, the Bass Barn, Stripersurf, etc.”*

Provide additional opportunities for angler input/participation

25%

- *“The meetings are all during the week at morning hours. No one can attend because of work. I'm sure all the commercial interests are at the meetings fighting for their share. It's tough for the recreational angler to get involved. Meetings should be on weekends at reasonable hours.”*
- *“Formulate ways that employed recreational anglers can better participate.”*

Improve angler outreach	20%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“The first project is to make the recreational sector outreach "dog and pony show" mean something.”</i> • <i>“More open forums...educational on management decisions and input before the decisions.”</i> 	

Most Common Themes: For-Hire Respondents

Percent of For-Hire Respondents

Communication methods and outlets	67%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Advertise on social media, and fishing periodicals. Contact Full Time professional Captains and ask them of their observations/opinions.”</i> • <i>“Disseminate the information through emails, social media, or even mailing directing people to the places where the information can be read. Make the information clear and transparent so that it is easy to understand what is at stake and who will be affected and how.”</i> 	

Most Common Themes: Commercial Respondents

Percent of Commercial Respondents

Alternative approaches for public input and participation	38%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Expand the memberships of FMATs to include more members, particularly those from the fishing industry.”</i> • <i>“Fisheries roundtable with stakeholders involved. No more closed sessions with personal agendas from people who have no stake in the fishery.”</i> 	

Increased outreach and dialogue	23%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“There needs to be more interaction with everyone. Data, stories, ideas all need to be discussed at workshops”</i> • <i>“Try sitting across the table from a handful of fishermen, and actually listening and exchanging ideas. That would be some communication boon!”</i> 	

Modify use of existing communication methods/outlets	15%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Sometimes there are meetings that get scheduled, particularly FMAT meetings that stakeholders may want to listen in on, which aren't noticed very well. And most stakeholders aren't checking the Council calendar on a daily basis. It would be helpful to have either interested parties lists with fishery-related information that are sent weekly, or something similar to the New England Council's system where each fishery has a notice system and every time a new meeting is scheduled for, for example, scallops a "scallop" email is sent to those on the Council email list with dates/times/call in or webinar info. Also, all SSC meetings should be broadcast via webinar and recorded.”</i> • <i>“Advertise Twitter account and get fishermen to follow.”</i> 	

Most Common Themes: Interested Public Respondents

Percent of Interested Public Respondents

Increase stakeholder outreach	43%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Reach the consumers of seafood.”</i> • <i>“Keep the public in the loop of actions and information.”</i> 	
Communication outlets and methods	21%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Would a Council app for smartphones help people to stay better informed? Just a thought - I use apps for a large number of companies-much more convenient than constantly visiting a website.”</i> • <i>“Publish more information in commonly read sources used by recreational boaters and fisherman such as Chesapeake Bay Magazine, boating clubs, US Sail & Power Squadron (America's Boating Club). Have info available at West Marine. Have booths at UD's Coast Day and at various events in Rock Hall, Annapolis, and other Bay locations.”</i> 	
Improve clarity of communication	14%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Quit being wordy!”</i> • <i>“Clear information about how the Council operates and manages the fishery on the website for the public.”</i> 	

Most Common Themes: NGO Respondents

Percent of NGO Respondents

Public outreach/input tools	67%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Increase the use of social media. Create a Council Facebook page and YouTube channel. Broadcast meetings at all levels to foster engagement. Develop a listening tour for the states/communities the Council represents--go to the public that depends on these resources.”</i> • <i>“Managers repeatedly dismiss thousands of form letter comments from the general public. But these are real people who care and partly own the resources and deserve to have a voice and a simple way to participate.”</i> 	

Science Goal Area

Question 30. The Science goal is: “Ensure that the Council’s management decisions are based on timely and accurate scientific data that are analyzed and modeled in a manner that improves management performance and builds stakeholder confidence.” Do you believe this is an appropriate goal for the Council?

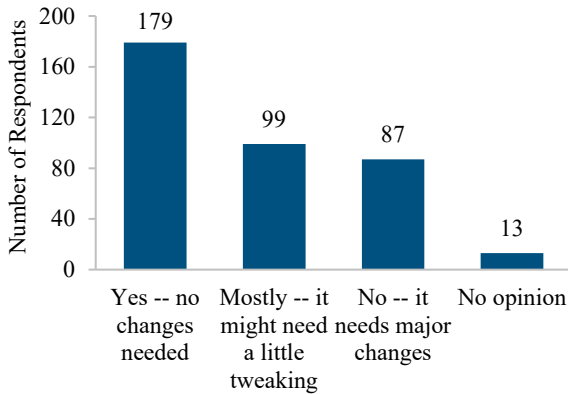


Figure 84: Appropriateness of Science Goal, All Respondents (Q30)

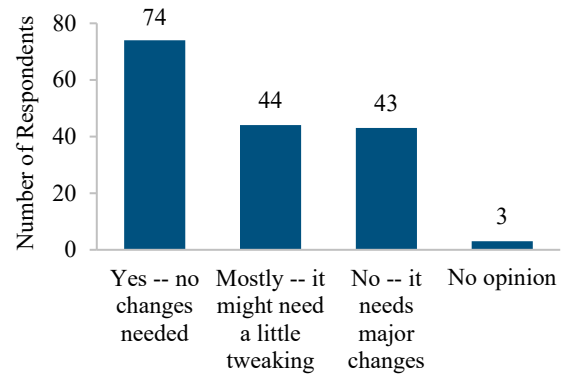


Figure 85: Appropriateness of Science Goal, Recreational Respondents (Q30)

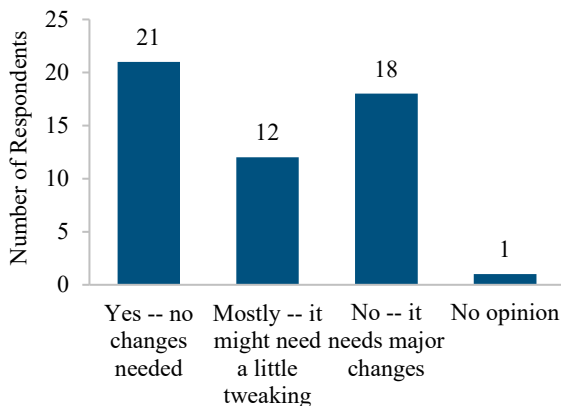


Figure 86: Appropriateness of Science Goal, Commercial Respondents (Q30)

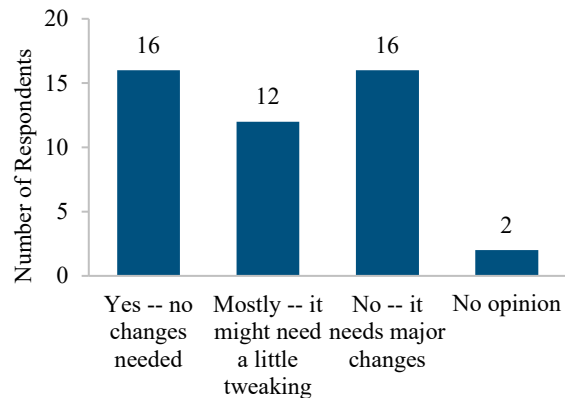


Figure 87: Appropriateness of Science Goal, For-Hire Respondents (Q30)

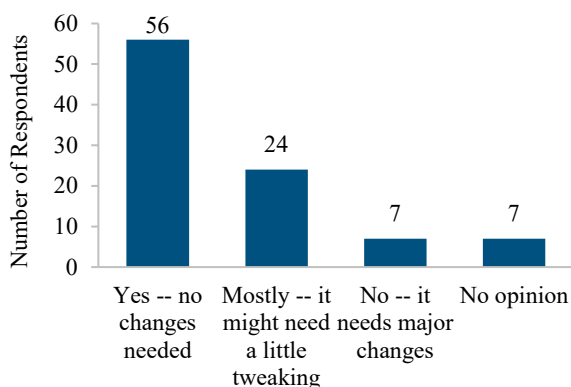


Figure 88: Appropriateness of Science Goal, Interested Public Respondents (Q30)

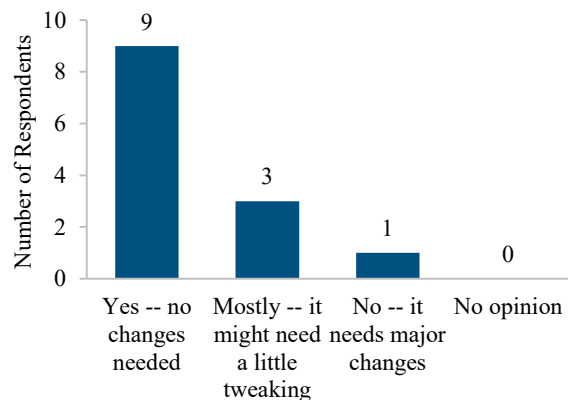


Figure 89: Appropriateness of Science Goal, NGO Respondents (Q30)

Question 31. If you have any suggested changes to the Science goal, please provide them in the space below.

Most Common Themes: Recreational Respondents	Percent of Recreational Respondents
<p>Science is inaccurate and does not reflect on-the-water observations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Scientific data is clearly flawed and influenced by ineffective computer programs vs. what is really going on.”</i> • <i>“We need better scientific data. Real world data from the people that are out there.”</i> 	37%
<p>Incorporate angler knowledge and input</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Must include wisdom and experience from seasoned anglers and watermen.”</i> • <i>“Get more input from the recreational sector...they are out there all the time.”</i> 	14%
<p>Political influence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Take action when needed verse political agenda.”</i> • <i>“Add ‘free from political interference.’”</i> 	10%
<p>Address credibility of recreational harvest data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Congress deemed MRFSS inaccurate and mandated changes more than 10 years ago. The new MRIP is going to be a disaster and is even more inaccurate. Please focus on getting the demand side of this equation correct.”</i> • <i>“In all my years of fishing I have never been asked about any day on the water as it pertains to what I caught, how many, where I caught the fish etc. I am 63 years old have been fishing since being a kid... I don't know how you get your numbers?”</i> 	8%
<p>Timeliness of response to scientific information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Identify ways to make the decision making more responsive.”</i> • <i>“The process for making management changes based on science should be more rapid, so as to not cause further damage on struggling stocks.”</i> 	8%
<p>Execution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Admirable goal. I question the roadmap.”</i> • <i>“Goal is good - execution needs some work.”</i> 	4%
Most Common Themes: For-Hire Respondents	Percent of For-Hire Respondents
<p>Scientific accuracy and confidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Where science is questionable include mechanisms to reflect that confidence level in decisions.”</i> • <i>“Make important scientific inputs accurate! Fisheries management theory is fine - you just cannot plug garbage in and expect good outcomes.”</i> 	50%
<p>Alignment of science with fisherman observations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“The conclusions reached from the science are seem almost completely at odds with local/regional experience and findings.”</i> 	25%

- *“Don't depend so much on science but more on actual fishermen.”*

Credibility of recreational harvest estimates 19%

- *“MRIP land-based and recreational vessel landings particularly black sea bass are not based in reality in any way whatsoever.”*
- *“SSC uses MRIP data which is so inaccurate that it causes poor management output.”*

Disconnect between management measures and science 13%

- *“The goal is fine, but the regulations are never timely, nor based on realistic science and data, e.g. the summer flounder fishery is very poor, yet we are being liberalized. Black sea bass are the most abundant fish in the ocean, and we are always fighting to even have the season open. It's nuts.....”*
- *“Could do a better job of explaining the science and why you make the changes. Many times, the science doesn't, and your decisions do not match up with what seems appropriate.”*

Most Common Themes: Commercial Respondents

Percent of Commercial Respondents

Accuracy and credibility of data 33%

- *“The repeated failure (3 of last 4 years) by the Bigelow to completely and accurately conduct surveys is a major impediment to timely and accurate scientific data. The data is flawed and the credibility of the entire process is diminished as a direct consequence.”*
- *“The survey science which decisions are based on is a joke.”*

Collaboration, use of industry input 22%

- *“Listen more to the fishermen.”*
- *“After ‘improves management performance’ add ‘utilizes collaborative research’.”*

Stakeholder roles 17%

- *“Deemphasize 'stakeholders' and don't be afraid to promote the sustainability of the fisheries for the people involved in them.”*
- *“Manage quotas to the benefit of the fishery not the demand of ENGO groups.”*

Goal implementation 11%

- *“Goal OK implementation not good.”*
- *“Why at the eleventh hour now you care too little too late?”*

Most Common Themes: Interested Public Respondents

Percent of Interested Public Respondents

Accuracy and credibility of data and science 26%

- *“Imperative that the data is the best possible as to being current and accurate.”*
- *“Science utilized should be at the minimum adequate to the job it is to perform. For example, there should not be any "data poor" species under management. Also, the science that management decisions are based on should be made available with an accompanying indication of its reliability/accuracy (i.e. confidence intervals, etc.).”*

Emphasize ecosystem approaches	22%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Should include ‘protects the ecosystem.’”</i> • <i>“The organization as a whole needs to be clearly & visibly supportive of science-based strategies, climate change realities, & the cause & effect nature of human roles in fisheries management issues.”</i> 	
Methods and use of science and data	13%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“I think you need to do more and should also be conducting best practice analyses and modeling.”</i> • <i>“You need to predict and prevent with data rather than react.”</i> 	
Less emphasis on economics	11%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“The fish are worth more than you're giving them. Their survival is worth more than the money the fishing industry makes. They are not a commodity.”</i> • <i>“Less about money, more about sustainability and environmental health.”</i> 	

Most Common Themes: NGO Respondents

Percent of NGO Respondents

Broaden the types of data considered	75%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Change in bold: ‘accurate scientific data ON STOCKS, HABITAT, SPECIES INTERACTIONS, and CLIMATE that are analyzed.’”</i> • <i>“Ensure that the Council’s management decisions are based on timely and accurate scientific data on stocks, habitat, species interactions, and climate that are analyzed and modeled in a manner that improves management performance and builds stakeholder confidence.”</i> 	

Note: The Council received 188 identical responses to this question from survey participants who did not select a primary role. These can be viewed in the “Other Survey Responses” section.

Question 32. The 2014-2018 Strategic Plan includes five objectives designed to meet the Council's Science goal. Please rate how well you think the Council has addressed these objectives. ("Objectives" are specific, measurable targets that help an organization achieve its goals)

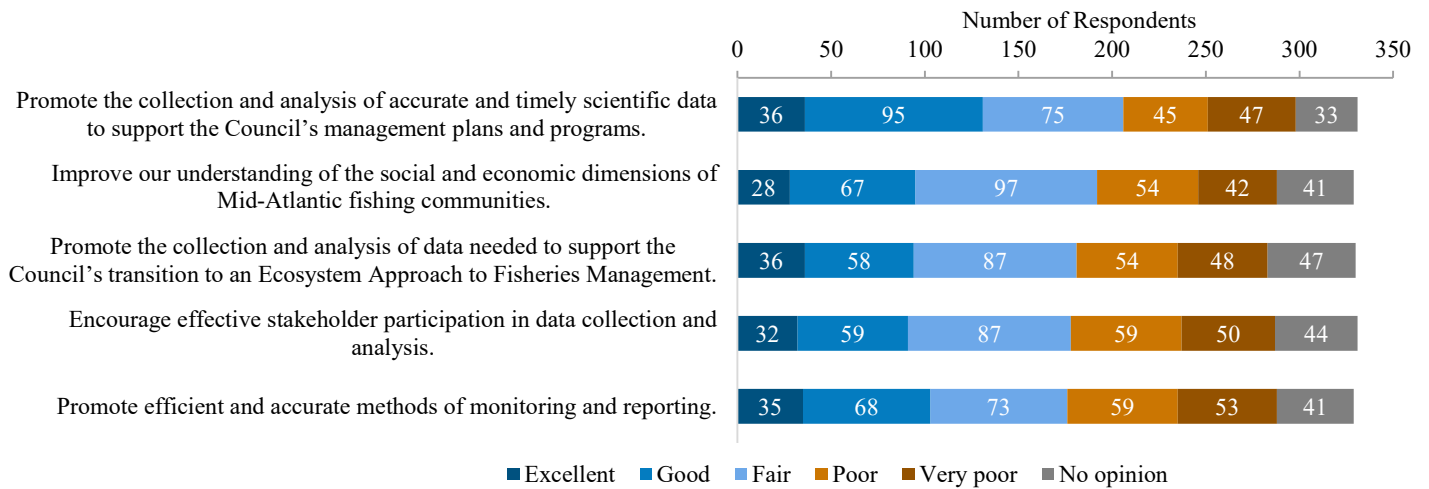


Figure 90: Science Objectives Performance Ratings, All Respondents (Q32)

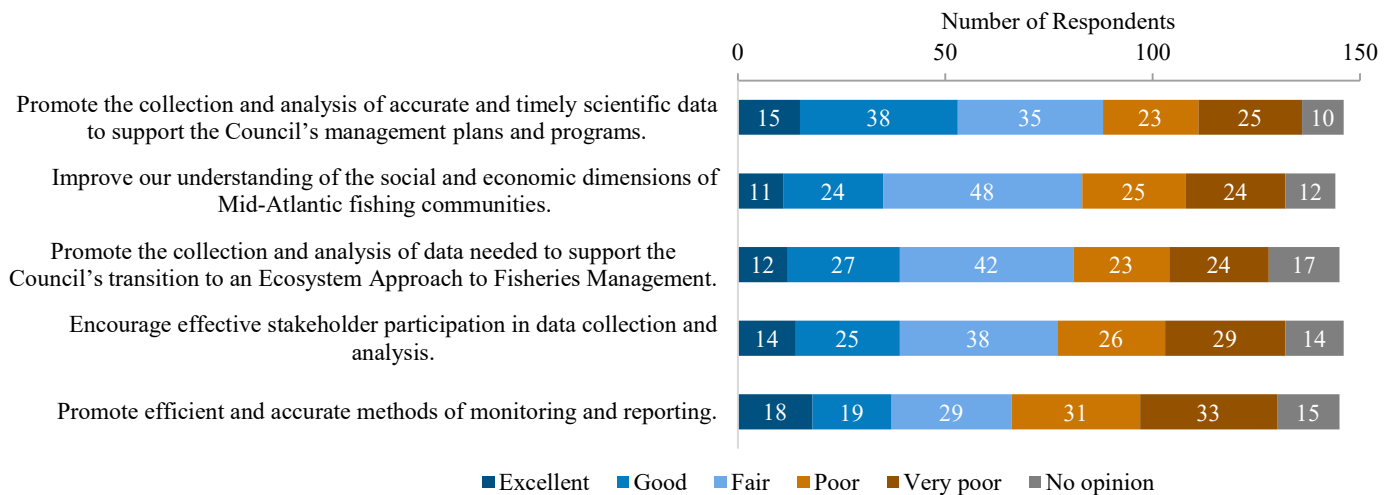


Figure 91: Science Objectives Goal Ratings, Recreational Respondents (Q32)

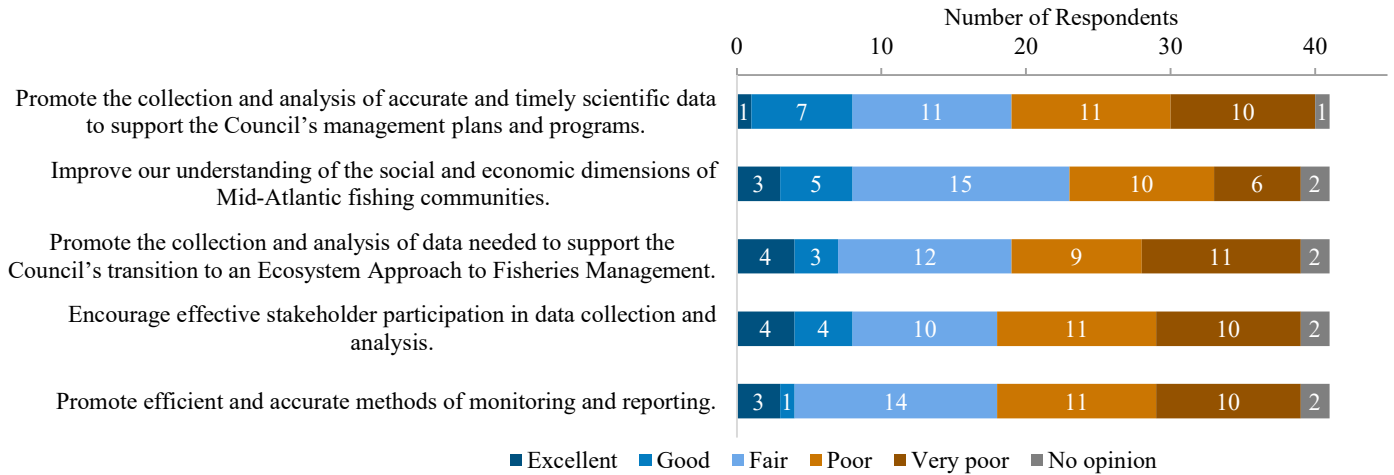


Figure 92: Science Objectives Performance Ratings, For-Hire Respondents (Q32)

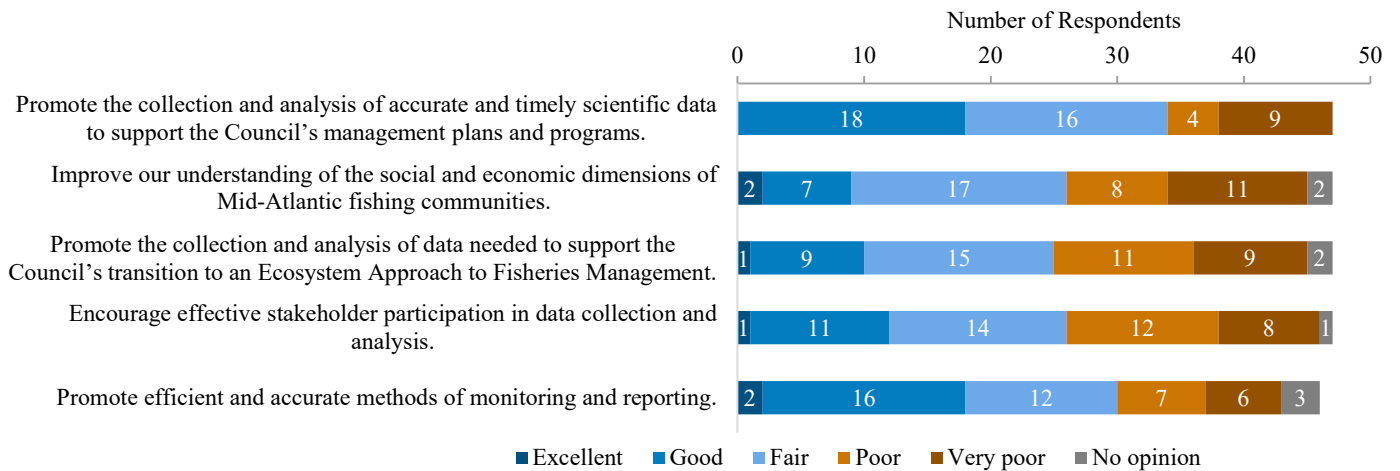


Figure 93: Science Objectives Performance Ratings, Commercial Respondents (Q32)

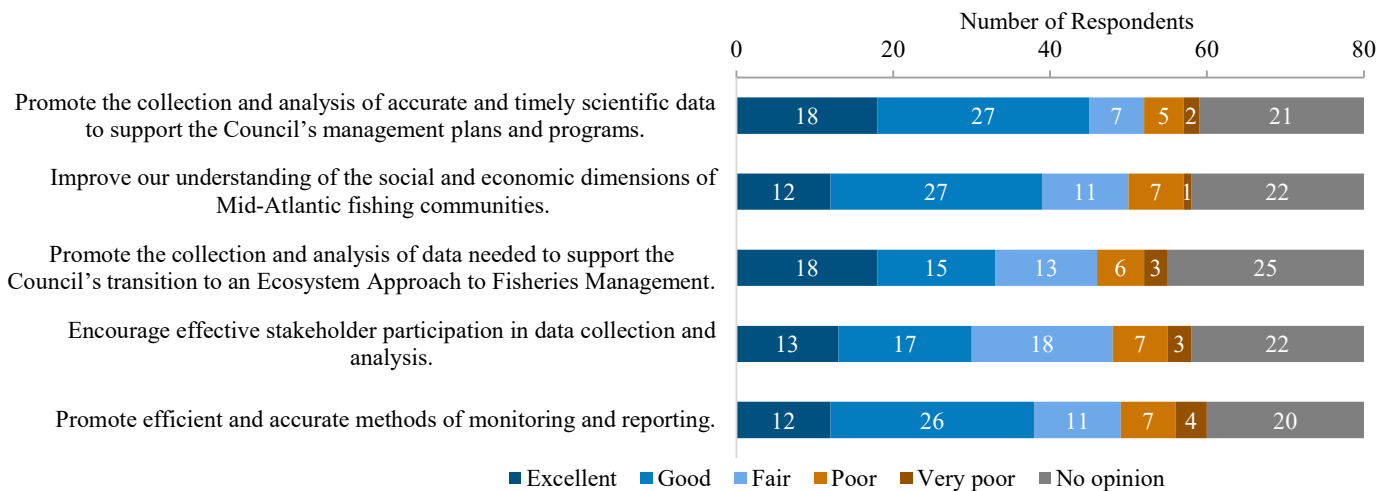


Figure 94: Science Objectives Performance Ratings, Interested Public Respondents (Q32)

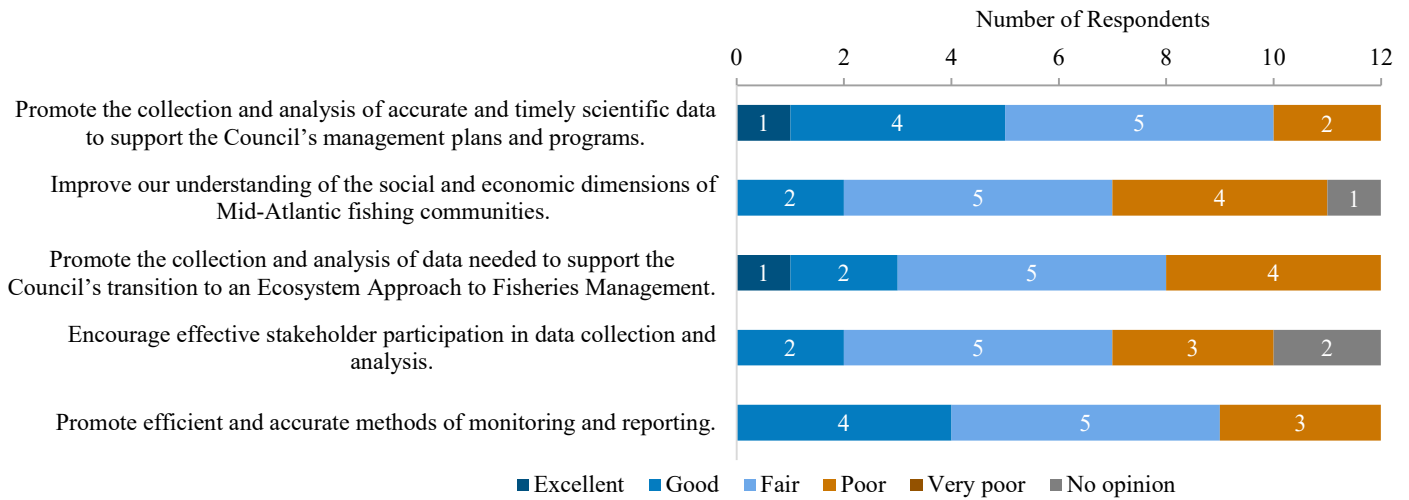


Figure 95: Science Objectives Performance Ratings, NGO Respondents (Q32)

Question 33. If you have suggestions for new Science objectives or changes to existing Science objectives you think the Council should consider for the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan, please provide them in the space below.

Most Common Themes: Recreational Respondents

Percent of Recreational Respondents

Data quality

35%

- “The data collected for commercial is relatively good, but the collection and accuracy of data collected for recreational fishermen is very poor.”
- “Recreational data is a joke; economics of recreational fisheries are all but ignored.”

Reporting and recreational catch estimates

32%

- “Not just for the council but the MRIP data needs a lot of work. We can't be using MRIP data with a PSE of over 50% for anything!”
- “Electronic reporting is a must! Weekly.”
- “You need to have a place where recreational fisherman can report their catch reports. We’re interested in the science and care about our fisheries...develop a 10-question survey that can be taken once a day and provide so much useful data.”

Collaborative research and angler observations

16%

- “Collaborative research...increase the use of, and most so, tagging programs, both standard tagging and acoustic.”
- “Actually collect data from fishermen.”
- “I question the wisdom of Objective 4. Stakeholder collection of data is an iffy proposition; aside from outright fraud that emerged in the RSA program, data collected from stakeholders is likely to be biased and collected in an unsystematic, statistically questionable manner.”

Execution of goal and objectives 10%

- *“Effectively following the goals would be a good start.”*
- *“As long as they are implemented and are not taken to mean that the council simply rubber stamps that which it knows is wrong or suspect.”*

Eliminate politics from the process 10%

- *“Seek outside science input rather than ‘employee scientists’ that are instructed to find information that backs whatever the political winds dictate.”*
- *“The science provides info, however it is often overridden by influential lobbyists from the waterman’s associations.”*

Most Common Themes: For-Hire Respondents

Percent of For-Hire Respondents

Improve/modify dockside methods 38%

- *“Change the data collection at the dock process. Coordinate interviews with boat arrival times for recreational party boats.”*
- *“I do for hire charters and usually someone does a survey when I return, which is good, but I never see them do surveys on private boats.”*

Electronic reporting 31%

- *“Electronic reporting is great, but it takes too long for the user and should include a ‘caught and released’ field by species. Not just fished harvested. You will get a much better picture of the ecosystem.”*
- *“Use more VTR for data from for-hire sector to get better data.”*
- *“Don't require electronic reporting at ANY cost to us fishermen.”*

Better execution 15%

- *“The objectives are not stated in terms that are specific, measurable, actionable, reasonable and time-bound; so it is difficult to determine how well you are meeting any or all objectives.”*
- *“I like the ones you have, just do them better.”*

Most Common Responses: Commercial Respondents

Percent of Commercial Respondents

Incorporate fishermen's knowledge 33%

- *“I fully believe that fishermen should be a part of all stock assessments and that fishing platforms should be a major part of the data collection.”*
- *“Fishermen hold valuable info they should be rewarded for sharing it.”*

Data types and methods 25%

- *“Cell phone app to report all recreational activity in EEZ.”*
- *“Stop wasting time with so much observer coverage. Their information is too redundant.”*
- *“There has to be a full effort to find and create a substantial socio-economic report of the coastal fishing communities and their value to the year-round economies of their states and regions.”*

17%

Execution/implementation

- *“Clear direction. Too many people trying to get consensus but not having common sense.”*
- *“More funding opportunities.”*

Most Common Responses: Interested Public Respondents

Percent of Interested Public Respondents

Stakeholder participation in science

31%

- *“Item 4 leaves the door open for the participation of all stakeholders in data collection and analysis. I think you want stakeholders who have expertise in a dimension of a problem involved, not any type of stakeholder.”*
- *“Effective stakeholder participation in data collection, absolutely not. This needs to be transparent; the last people that should be assessing anything are those that gain benefit.”*

Improve data collection

23%

- *“Use real time data...”*
- *“Get much better at collecting recreational data.”*

Species protection

15%

- *“Fish must be protected simply because we have no right to harm them. “More funding opportunities.”*
- *“Pollution, anti-fracking & all species protection”*

Most Common Responses: NGO Respondents

Percent of NGO Respondents

Incorporate impacts of climate change

60%

- *“New: Ensure the Council uses the best available scientific information on the impacts of climate change on managed fish stocks, prey, habitat, species distribution, and shifting ocean dynamics in management decisions.”*

Data collection methods, sources

40%

- *“Develop a process to gather data via sources other than published data (the time lag is critical) Standardize or set up a system for observations collected by Citizen Scientist organizations validation process and Quality Assurance Program Plans are needed, but the information is timely and valuable.”*
- *“Focus on the importance of utilizing new technologies correctly and efficiently to support more accurate scientific results based on a broader perspective, i.e. ecosystems.”*

Question 34. If you have suggestions for specific Science-related activities or projects you believe the Council should include in the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan, please provide them in the space below.

Most Common Responses: Recreational Respondents	Percent of Recreational Respondents
Diversify/increase data collection efforts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Walk the docks. Do phone survey. Have tackle shops have a 4x5 card for customers to fill out about their day on the water fishing, etc.”</i> • <i>“Identify specific classes of recreational fishermen to provide specific data on species. This should be a fairly large number of participants per species.”</i> 	19%
Habitat and climate science <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Develop a calculator/model to address north and seaward movement of Mid-Atlantic species and impact on ‘fixed’ state regulations.”</i> • <i>“Underwater video reconnaissance of hard bottom, ledges & artificial reef fishes -- population & species.”</i> 	19%
Recreational catch data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Require all harvest to be logged on an app prior to docking for accurate harvest data, then make the data available to the public.”</i> • <i>“Continue work to develop a model that accurately depicts catch information.”</i> 	15%
Stock assessments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Measures to insure more timely and accurate stock assessments”</i> • <i>“Increase assessments frequency to every 2-3 years for better, more granular understanding. Mandate across-the-board adoption of ecosystem-based assessments & management.”</i> 	12%
Most Common Responses: For-Hire Respondents	Percent of For-Hire Respondents
Improvements/alternatives to determine recreational harvest <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Get better ways of determining the actual availability of fish out there. Make all recreational and charter fishermen report their catches. Real numbers provide real data for more fact-based decisions on the management of the species involved.”</i> • <i>“Daily fisherman’s cell phone app, or mail-in cards to report days catch or no catch. Current methods of intercept are a major fail. Change it from an accounting exercise to real time data.”</i> 	60%
Better use of fisherman observations/data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Contact full time professional fishermen directly by phone or email, not surveys like this. You will build a realistic picture of the fishery. Not just false MRIP numbers and trawl surveys done with boats with inexperienced captains, incorrect nets and improperly sized doors not matching the horsepower of the vessel.”</i> • <i>“Use the data provided by stakeholders, i.e. FVTR’s by charter and partyboats.”</i> 	20%

Most Common Responses: Commercial RespondentsPercent of
Commercial
Respondents

Engage industry in cooperative science

43%

- *“In order to ‘encourage stakeholder participation in data collection and analysis’, the SSC meetings must be more iterative with the fishing industry, more accessible, and be actively collecting collaborative science and information. Promoting industry-based platforms for surveys as backups to the NEFSC survey is also necessary, particularly with the survey vessel troubles in recent years...”*
- *“The Council should get more engaged and make more specific recommendations about which of the areas of scientific uncertainty, as listed by the SSC, should be prioritized and addressed by industry science projects, in order to answer questions about uncertainty that Council members believe are important when the stock assessments are under consideration.”*

Scientific rationale for management practice

29%

- *“Summer flounder rebuilding -- by changing management practice of control of size, creel and time. No success after 25 years, when do you realize that it is not working? When do you evaluate other options?”*
- *“Explain why science has targeted females; explain why science encourages the waste of fish through discards when a total retained length would prevent discards.”*

Ecosystem and climate science

29%

- *“Continue to support investment in science to document offshore (HMS) food web in the region.”*
- *“Track the focus of species distribution as it relates to climate change.”*

Most Common Responses: Interested Public RespondentsPercent of
Interested
Public
Respondents

Monitoring and reporting

29%

- *“‘Timely’ is the hard part. The Council's move toward promoting the electronic collection of data is a good start but 1) must be expanded and 2) you must show that the data are being used and are better than the old collection methods.”*
- *“While there is a lot of merit in funding unique scientific research that addresses specific management questions, most stock assessments are based on long term monitoring data. New projects need to be brought online with new technologies for stock assessments to move into the future.”*

Fishing methods/practices

14%

- *“Better ways to keep trawlers away.”*
- *“Educate fisherman regarding the horrendous death rate from catch and release.”*

Ecosystem science

14%

- *“I was concerned about item 3. Transition from? ecosystem approach to fisheries approach. This read to me that data collection would monitor fisheries management more and maybe not monitor the ecosystems as much. Maybe I'm wrong on this. Both preferred.”*
- *“Use of science-based strategies for management of anchovies and their predators.”*

Most Common Responses: NGO Respondents

Percent of NGO Respondents

Focus on habitat and ecosystem data/modeling

57%

- *“Improve information about Essential Fish Habitat ASAP, use predictive modeling to get out in front of environmental changes that are coming. Determine the true status of river herring and shad populations and a biologically-based cap as part of adding them to full conservation and management under the MSA. Establish the science to set an ecologically-based catch limit for Atlantic and chub mackerel. Establish a science-based spawning protection for squid.”*
- *“The Council's initiatives under the science goal should be aligned with the Northeast Regional Implementation Plan of NOAA Fisheries Ecosystem-Based Fisheries Management Roadmap and with the Northeast Climate Science Strategy Action Plan.”*

Expand data types and collection methods

43%

- *Work with Citizen Science organizations to develop a process to submit data that can be used within the management process. The current method of relying on only peer reviewed materials or sponsored surveys, is always ~ 5yrs behind the curve.”*
- *“Council meetings need to include presentations by social scientists, anthropologists and folklorists working on fisheries issues.”*

Management Goal Area

Question 35. The Council’s Management goal is: “Develop fishery management strategies that provide for productive sustainable fisheries.” Do you think this is an appropriate goal for the Council? (A "goal" describes a broad outcome that helps an organization achieve its vision)

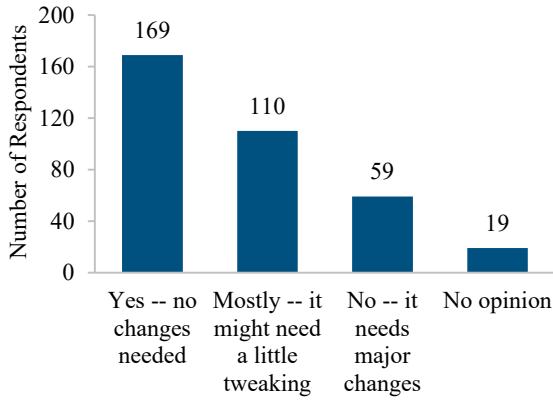


Figure 96: Appropriateness of Management Goal, All Respondents (Q35)

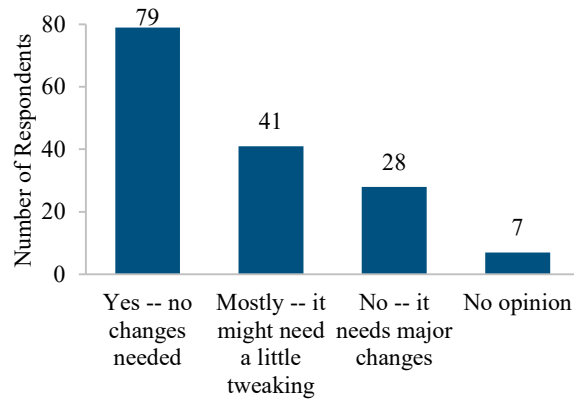


Figure 97: Appropriateness of Management Goal, Recreational Respondents (Q35)

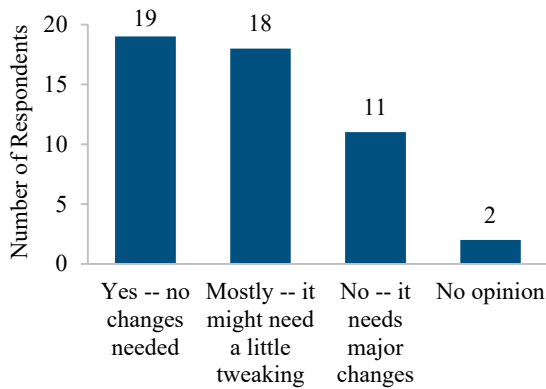


Figure 98: Appropriateness of Management Goal, Commercial Respondents (Q35)

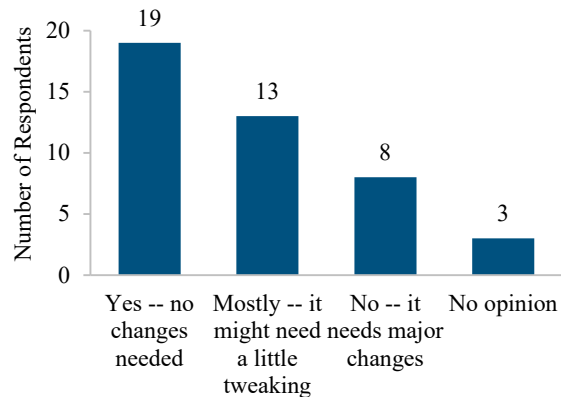


Figure 99: Appropriateness of Management Goal, For-Hire Respondents (Q35)

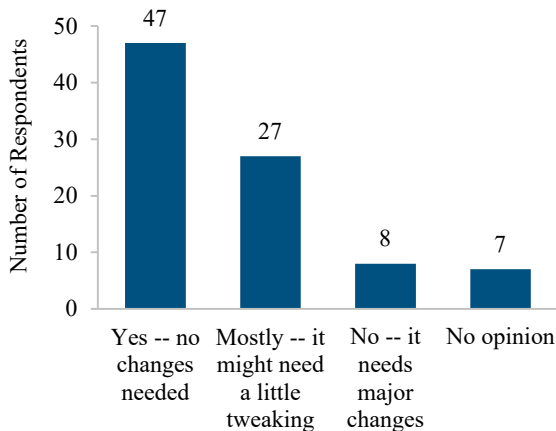


Figure 100: Appropriateness of Management Goal, Interested Public Respondents (Q35)

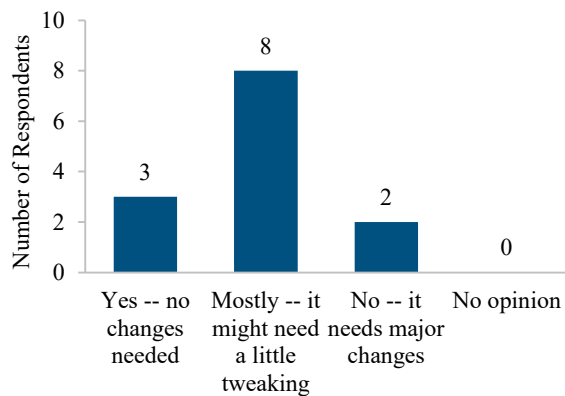


Figure 101: Appropriateness of Management Goal, NGO Respondents (Q35)

Question 36: If you have any suggested changes to the Management goal, please provide them in the space below.

Most Common Themes: Recreational Respondents	Percent of Recreational Respondents
Evaluate effectiveness of management strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“What strategy for sustainable fisheries would promote harvesting breeding sized females?”</i> • <i>“Define productive? Please name one species of fish where the council has started regulation and the fishery has improved. Every single case the fishery goes into decline.”</i> 	20%
Ecosystem and habitat management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Develop management strategies that provide for abundant, sustainable marine ecosystems that support carefully managed fisheries.”</i> • <i>“Management must include references to maintain quality habitat for marine life.”</i> 	17%
Manage for abundance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“‘Productive’ by what standard? ‘Sustainable’ for who? Under this goal, commercial net fisherman may profit while recreational fishing is banned altogether—that scenario could be both sustainable and productive, but wholly unacceptable.”</i> • <i>“Should be managed for abundance and not just sustainability.”</i> 	17%
Stakeholder balance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Again, recreational fishery development and sustainability is essentially ignored.”</i> • <i>“...For all user groups.”</i> 	10%
Incorporate fishing communities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Regardless of being included in another section, reference to fishing communities in this section isn't surplusage.”</i> • <i>“Add a sentence to ensure that fishing dependent communities are considered.”</i> 	7%
Include protection of forage species <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Better management of forage fish and predator fish.”</i> • <i>“Everything depends on plenty to have plenty; lack of protecting the feeder stocks, too many bunker boats.”</i> 	7%

Most Common Themes: For-Hire Respondents	Percent of For-Hire Respondents
Manage for abundance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Reflect growing fish to abundance, climate change and ecosystem-based management.”</i> • <i>“I do not like the idea of taking the maximum yield from the ocean...For example, when recreational fishers do not catch their allotted quota it is given to the commercial sector instead of letting it not be caught and let it be used to rebuild the stocks faster.”</i> 	75%

Note: The number of responses prevented additional themes from being generated. However, responses referenced habitat use.

Most Common Themes: Commercial Respondents

Percent of Commercial Respondents

Incorporate efficiency and economic growth	29%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Fisheries....that create and sustain economic growth.”</i> • <i>“Add ‘without unnecessarily impacting the normal and efficient business practices of the industry.’”</i> 	
Community sustainability	18%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Add ‘and fishing communities.’”</i> • <i>“Any time you move to a limited access, ITQ, or sector program it decreases the sustainability of fishing communities.”</i> 	
Ecosystem approaches	12%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Develop fisheries management strategies for a productive ecosystem that will sustain fisheries.”</i> • <i>“I would remove the word “fisheries” and replace it with ‘ecosystems.’”</i> 	
Address aquaculture	12%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Accept and encourage sustainable aquaculture in the EEZ.”</i> • <i>“If you're going to manage for productive fisheries...then don't be a passive manager just telling what we can't harvest...PLANT SOMETHING that we want to harvest and control the predators.”</i> 	

Most Common Themes: Interested Public Respondents

Percent of Interested Public Respondents

Include ecosystem protection/sustainability	50%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Not just for productive sustainable fisheries but for a sustainable ocean environment that's beneficial to all species.”</i> • <i>“Goal should be to provide for productive ecosystems that support sustainable fisheries, or to manage fisheries sustainably so that they are not taking away from productivity of larger ecosystem.”</i> 	
Incorporate stakeholder needs	%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“I would add ‘... and meets the needs of Americans in the Mid-Atlantic region.’ It's not only fisheries that matter.”</i> • <i>“Assure fair balance of recreational and commercial interests.”</i> 	

Most Common Themes: NGO Respondents

Percent of NGO Respondents

Broaden goal to include ecosystem, climate, forage

100%

- “Should be thinking a bit beyond just the fisheries that the councils manage to include impacts of fishery operations on the whole marine ecosystem in light of changes occurring with climate, etc.”
- “New: ‘Develop fishery management strategies that provide for productive sustainable fisheries, ensure abundant forage, protect ecosystem interactions, and address climate change.’”

Note: The Council received 199 identical responses to this question from survey participants who did not select a primary role. These can be viewed in the “Other Survey Responses” section.

Question 37. The 2014-2018 Strategic Plan includes five objectives designed to meet the Council's Management goal. Please rate how well you think the Council has addressed these objectives. ("Objectives" are specific, measurable targets that help an organization achieve its goals)

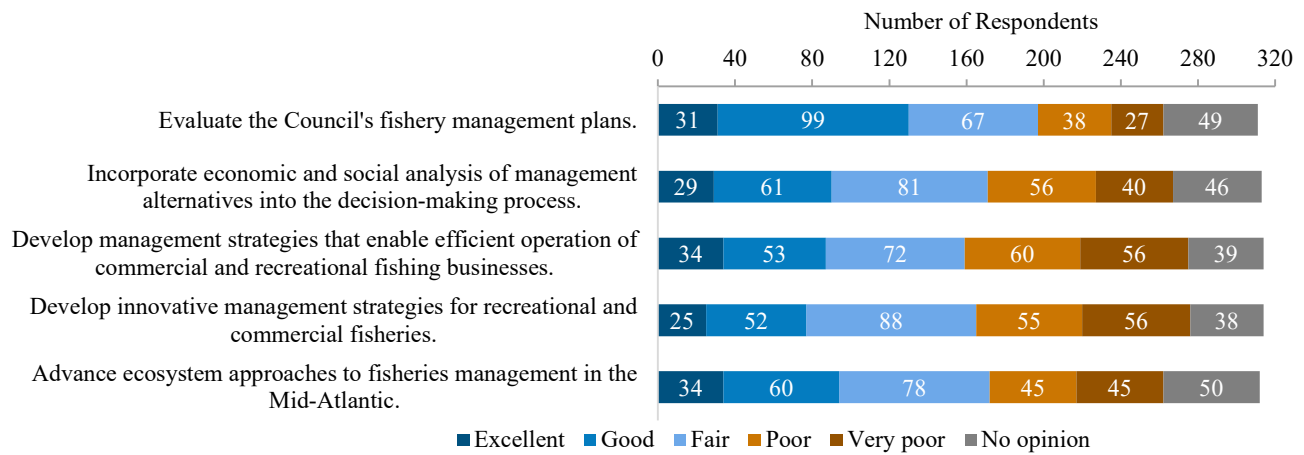


Figure 102: Management Objectives Performance Ratings, All Respondents (Q37)

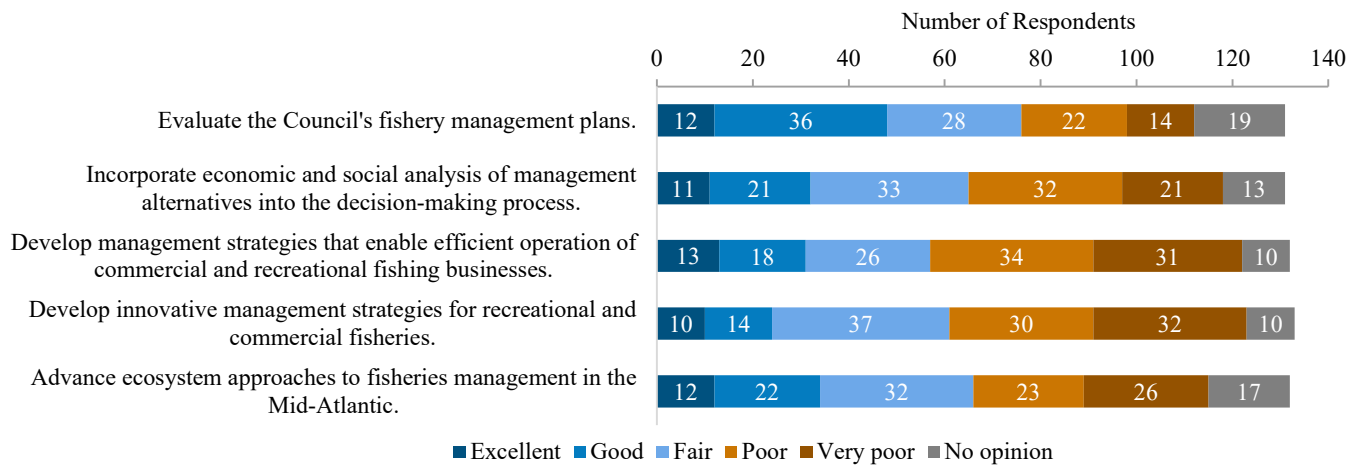


Figure 103: Management Objectives Performance Ratings, Recreational Respondents (Q37)

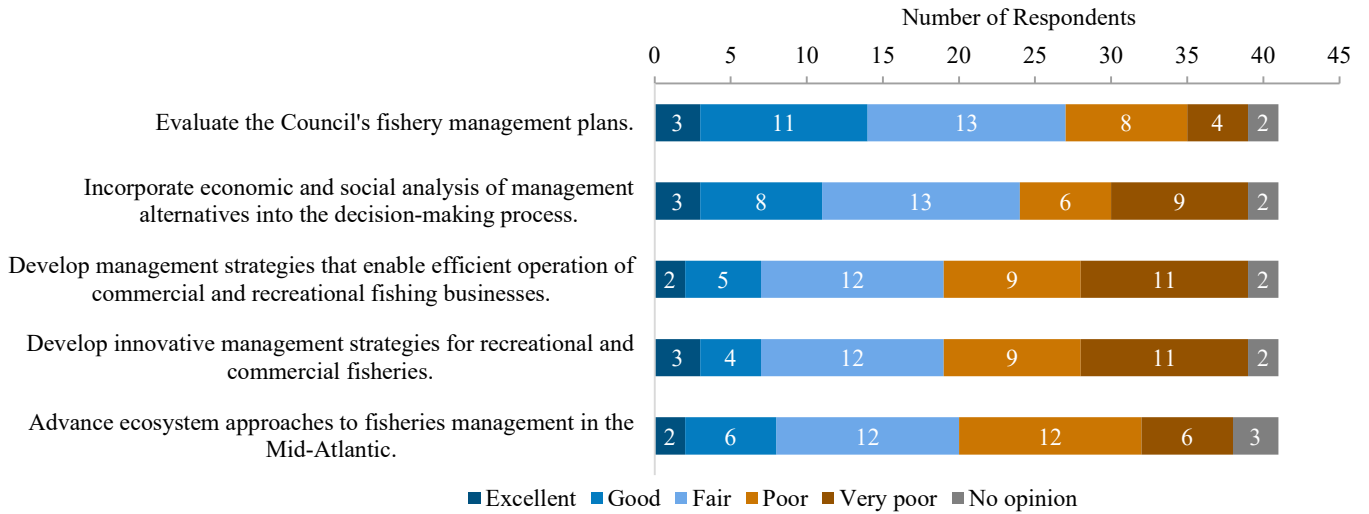


Figure 104: Management Objectives Performance Ratings, For-Hire Respondents (Q37)

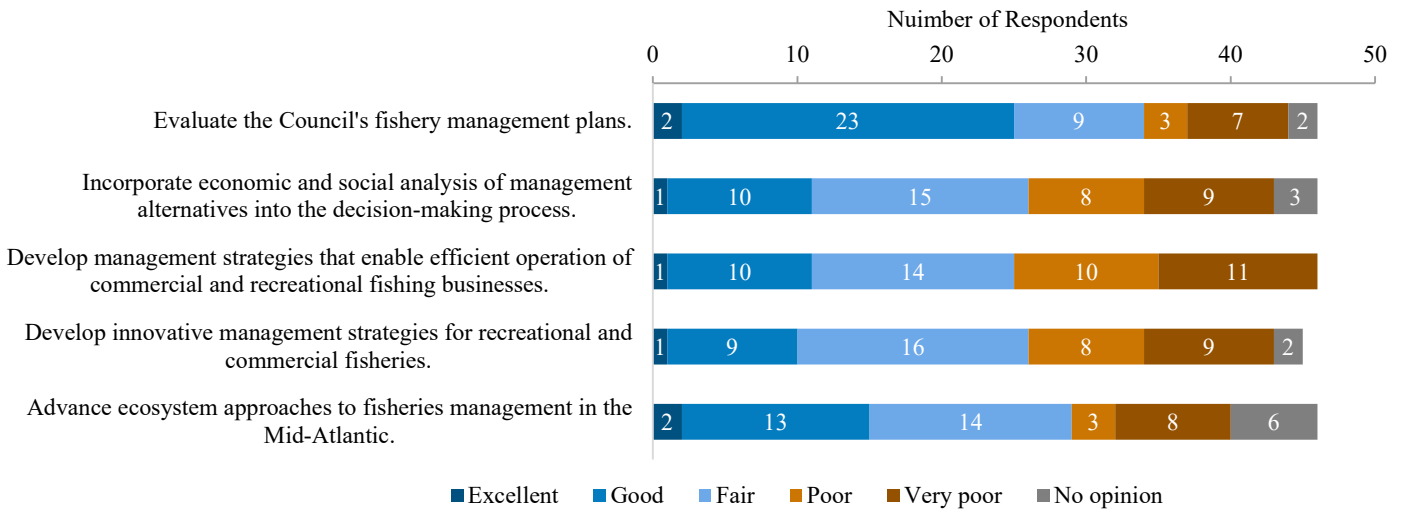


Figure 105: Management Objectives Performance Ratings, Commercial Respondents (Q37)

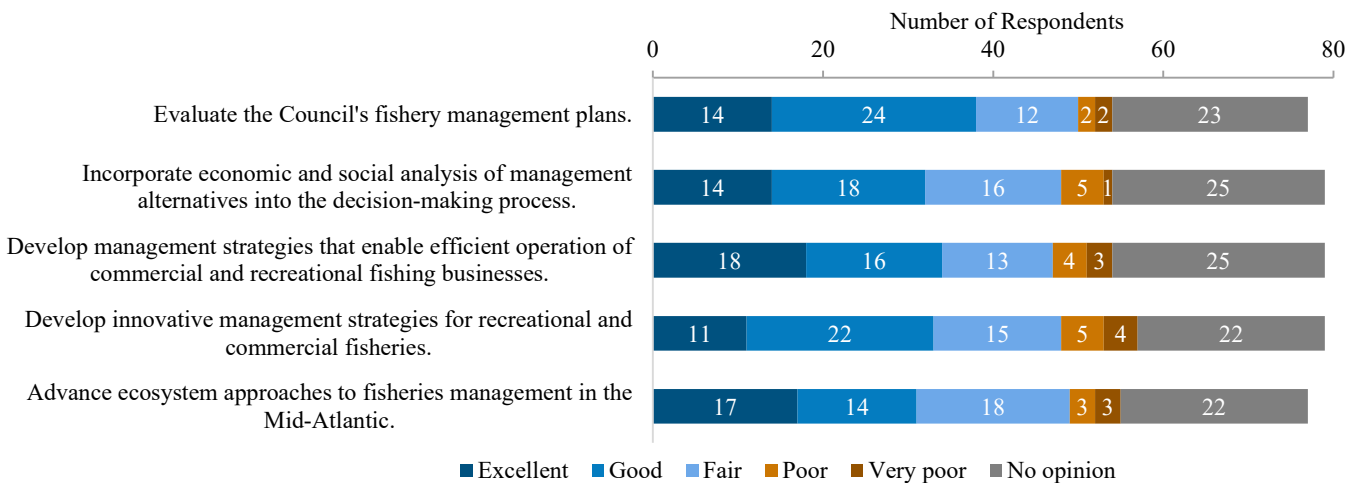


Figure 106: Management Objectives Performance Ratings, Interested Public Respondents (Q37)

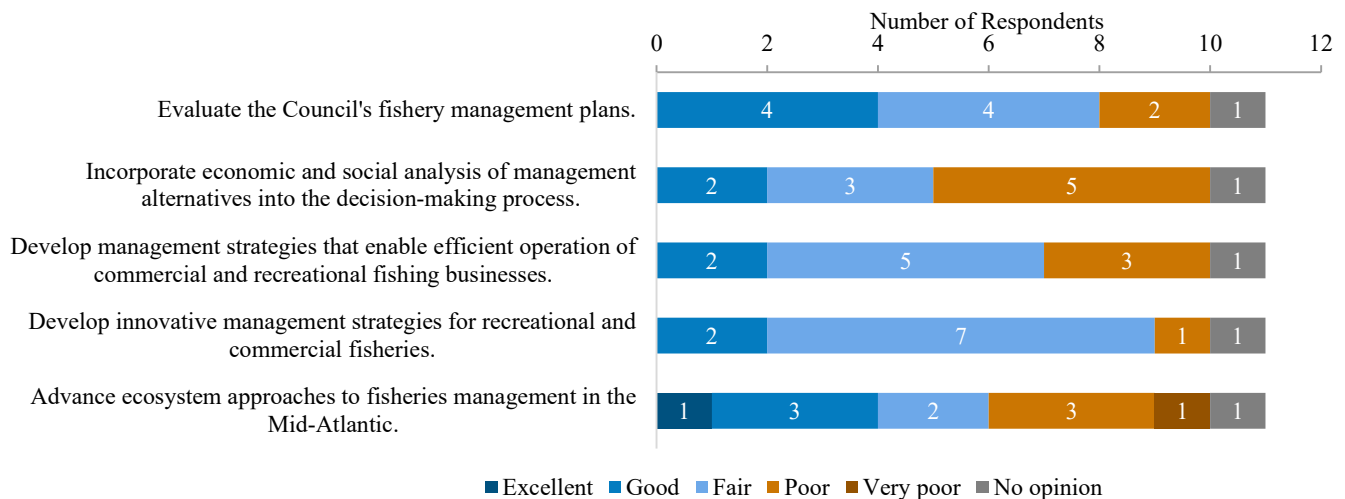


Figure 107: Management Objectives Performance Ratings, NGO Respondents (Q37)

Question 38. If you have suggestions for new Management objectives or changes to existing Management objectives you think the Council should consider for the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan, please provide them in the space below.

Most Common Themes: Recreational Respondents

Percent of Recreational Respondents

- Shift management philosophy and tactics 32%
 - *“I understand fishing is an economic driver for many industries and a bill payer for others. I suggest considering turning your approach to support the fish not the (me included) guy looking to take a picture with a 45” striped bass full of eggs...Focus on the fish not the people who will cry about not being able to keep that fish.”*
 - *“Adjust catch limits to prevent long closures of species (closures during spawning only).”*

- Account for value of recreational fishery 16%
 - *“There is not a specific way the council accurately reflects recreational economic impact in management.”*
 - *“The economic implications of regulations are not taken into account as they affect the recreational and small charter fishing businesses.”*

- Stakeholder balance 12%
 - *“Better definitions to more clearly define and specify constituents and desired outcomes.”*
 - *“Change the commercially myopic attitude of management decision making to better reflect all stakeholders.”*

- Implementation/execution 8%
 - *“Goals and objectives need measurable metrics. What are you measuring?”*
 - *“Objectives are fine. Results poor.”*

Most Common Themes: For-Hire Respondents

Percent of For-Hire Respondents

Habitat management

40%

- *“Knocked it out of the park with forage. Does coral count too?”*
- *“Build Habitat, grow the fishery quickly.”*

Effectiveness and execution

40%

- *“I wish there was an easy plan that would work. The problems have gone on for so long it is like trying to close the barn door long after the horse are gone. I believe you are too intimidated to take the kind of actions that will really make a difference in a meaningful time frame.”*
- *“The objectives are not stated in terms that are specific, measurable, actionable, reasonable and time-bound; so it is difficult to determine how well you are meeting any or all objectives.”*

Most Common Themes: Commercial Respondents

Percent of Commercial Respondents

Support alternative management approaches

38%

- *“Manage to the MSY. Eliminate discards by allowing species to be retained and transition to days at sea management.”*
- *“Try to regulate recreational fluke landings better. The current system has no mechanism to close recreational fishing if found to have exceeded their quota.”*

Ecosystem-based strategies

25%

- *“The ecosystem is not well enough known to create an ecosystem management system.”*
- *“Ecosystem management is another method to further cripple commercial fishing.”*

Most Common Themes: Interested Public Respondents

Percent of Interested Public Respondents

Transition to an ecosystem approach

33%

- *“Often EBFM gets reduced to forage issues. I think ecosystem related issues need to stress the fact that we are trying to measure, understand and manage coupled ecological-human social system.”*
- *“Management must be clearly & visibly supportive of science-based methods & the current & potential effects of climate change as well as the cause & effect nature of human interaction with marine life, their habitat, & the environment that supports all life on this planet.”*

Consideration of social/economic factors

17%

- *“You weigh economic factors too much in your decision making.”*
- *“Too much emphasis recently on social analysis.”*

Most Common Themes: NGO Respondents

Percent of NGO Respondents

Include ecosystem, habitat and forage strategies	71%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Develop ecosystem-based fishery management strategies for all species, especially forage fish, and protect essential fish habitat.”</i> • <i>“Develop forage specific management strategies for forage species.”</i> 	
Economic/social considerations	29%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Unfortunately, economic and social issues do not help, and should not determine, policies to save ecosystems and marine life. They are two of the main reasons for the sad state of our marine life.”</i> • <i>“Ecosystem approaches tend to blame all problems on commercial fishing activity. This needs to be re-evaluated so that the researchers focus more on climate change.”</i> 	

Question 39. If you have suggestions for specific Management-related activities or projects you believe the Council should include in the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan, please provide them in the space below.

Most Common Themes: Recreational Respondents

Percent of Recreational Respondents

Consider recreational needs in management approaches	33%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Consider ways to manage predominantly recreational fisheries (e.g. bluefish) for recreational opportunity and abundance rather than for yield.”</i> • <i>“Compare success rate per trip for all fisheries pre-Magnuson vs. post Magnuson. The numbers will show the terrible results.”</i> 	
Focus on forage species management	11%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Putting species like bunker into multiple species categories where they belong. Better management and reasonable conservation measures.”</i> • <i>“Focus more and more on good management of the lower trophic levels. The secret to great fisheries is an abundance of forage.”</i> 	

Most Common Themes: For-Hire Respondents

Percent of For-Hire Respondents

Relationship between habitat and productivity	60%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Discover existing natural habitat footprint. Then discover what that footprint was in 1950. Find ways to bolster spawning production biologically....”</i> • <i>“You need to study the affect the pollution the road salt/ice melting agents have in our rivers. Every single ounce of calcium chloride, magic salt, calcium magnesium ends up in our rivers, sound and oceans. This stuff is extremely toxic and dissolves metal. There is no way it's not affecting our river and estuary ecosystems. This stuff has been used most frequently within the past 10 years.”</i> 	

Note: The total number of responses prevented additional themes from being generated. However, comments addressed enforcement, social/economic factors, and data.

Most Common Themes: Commercial RespondentsPercent of
Commercial
Respondents

Governance and stakeholder interactions

33%

- *“I think the council concept has been shown to be flawed. I believe that a czar of Mid-Atlantic fisheries would be better, more successful than the current concept of trying to herd cats.”*
- *“Recreational and commercial need to work together and understand why they are both important.”*

Management approaches

33%

- *“Support development of sustainable aquaculture in the EEZ.”*
- *“Consider ways to improve recreational summer flounder fishery, reducing discards and improving retention and angler satisfaction. More technical analysis/stand-alone projects needed to advance this evaluation.”*

Most Common Themes: Interested Public RespondentsPercent of
Interested
Public
Respondents

Execution

33%

- *“Obtain independent assessment of management objectives.”*
- *“Set incremental specifics and times for action/completion.”*

Regulatory stability/efficiency

22%

- *“‘Management strategies’ - need to move toward more stable fishing regulations. Is the science really good enough to justify changing creel, size, and season limits on recreational anglers every year??”*
- *“The council seems to be taking steps to improve efficient operation of commercial and recreational businesses but is hindered by “the process” and “delay tactics”. Things need to move a little faster, so these businesses can expect changes within a year or two, not 3+ years down the road. This long time frame is enough to put these fishermen out of business before change can be affected.”*

Most Common Themes: NGO RespondentsPercent of NGO
Respondents

Incorporate ecosystem approaches in management decisions

75%

- *“The Council must continue and build on its work to take an ecosystem-based approach to fishery management. That means taking the EAFM “guidance” document and operationalize it through FMPs, ACLs, rebuilding plans, area protections, and EFH in a way that will be difficult but necessary. Right now, when decisions become hard, the Council reverts to short-term economic decisions...”*
- *“Support healthier ecosystems in all aspects of marine species life cycles. Improve specific areas where help and restoration is needed, such as spawning areas.”*

Note: The total number of responses prevented additional themes from being generated.

Governance Goal Area

Question 40. The Council’s Governance goal is: “Ensure that the Council’s governance structures and practices fairly represent stakeholder interests, are coordinated with the Council’s management partners, and include a clear and well-defined decision-making process.” Do you believe this is an appropriate goal for the Council? (A “goal” describes a broad outcome that helps an organization achieve its vision)

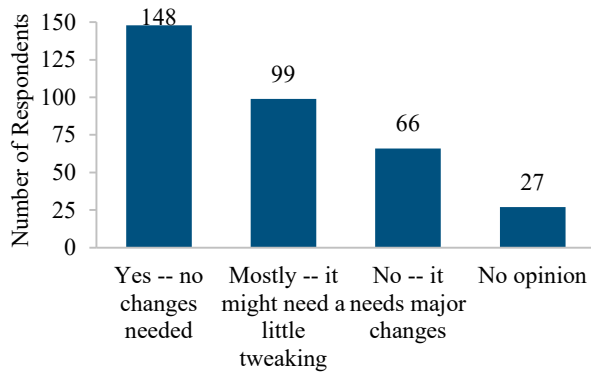


Figure 108: Appropriateness of Governance Goal, All Respondents (Q40)

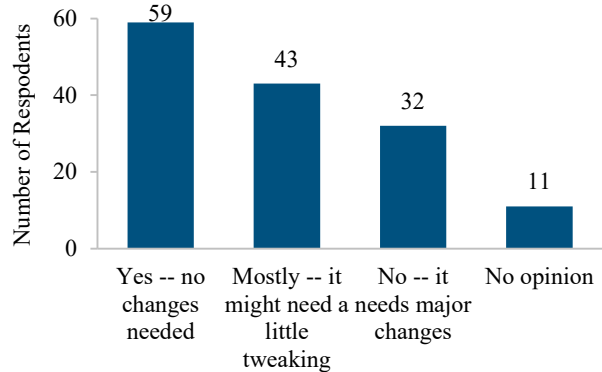


Figure 109: Appropriateness of Governance Goal, Recreational Respondents (Q40)

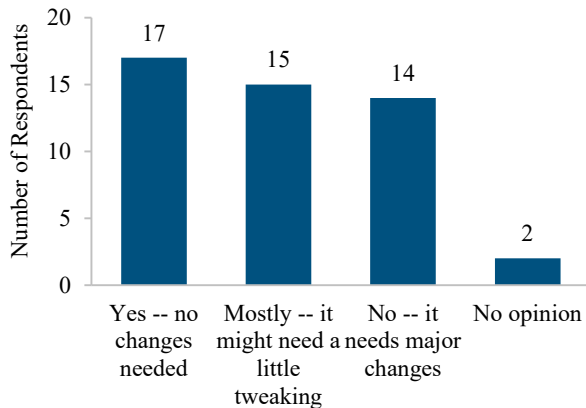


Figure 110: Appropriateness of Governance Goal, Commercial Respondents (Q40)

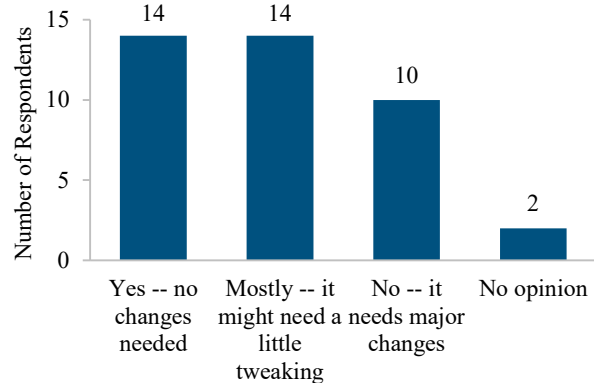


Figure 111: Appropriateness of Governance Goal, For-Hire Respondents (Q40)

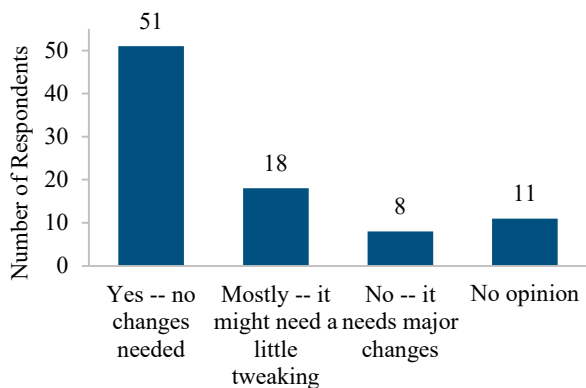


Figure 112: Appropriateness of Governance Goal, Interested Public Respondents (Q40)

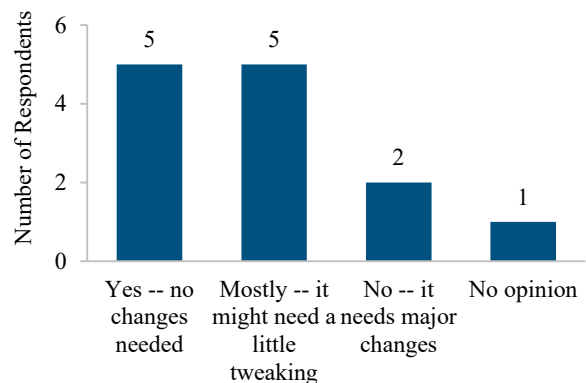


Figure 113: Appropriateness of Governance Goal, NGO Respondents (Q40)

Question 41. If you have any suggested changes to the Governance goal, please provide them in the space below.

Most Common Themes: Recreational Respondents	Percent of Recreational Respondents
Poor goal execution	23%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Problem as I see it is with some words in the goal that don't appear to be utilized like FAIRLY, CLEAR, and WELL-DEFINED.”</i> • <i>“Fine goal that was poorly applied.”</i> 	
Representation of recreational interests	23%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“More respect for recreational sector. Fair policies for commercial and recreational sectors.”</i> • <i>“Definition of what ‘fairly’ representing stakeholder interests means. Is it revenue-based, participation-based?”</i> 	
Too much political influence	16%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Stop being politicians and protect the fisheries.”</i> • <i>“Sounds like too much influence from people and not scientific results of studies.”</i> 	
Define/clarify the term "stakeholders"	16%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Stakeholders doesn’t accurately represent the usage of the fishery.”</i> • <i>“Defining ‘stakeholder’ is important.”</i> 	

Most Common Themes: For-Hire Respondents	Percent of For-Hire Respondents
Balance of stakeholder needs/representation	50%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Support the fishermen, not big corporation permit holders. You have made it too complicated.”</i> • <i>“There should never be a point in time where a resource is open to one user group but closed to another. If there is enough resource for you to sell me there is enough resource for me to harvest for myself.”</i> 	
Implementation	33%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Great goal just in implementation.”</i> • <i>“Not met.”</i> 	

Most Common Themes: Commercial Respondents

Percent of Commercial Respondents

Stakeholder representation/ participation

58%

- *“Stakeholders need to be members of FMATs when administrative actions are being developed that impact the industry. NMFS and MAFMC staff alone do not completely understand the impact of proposed actions on business.”*
- *“Again, I believe most fishermen are looked at as criminals that are bound to be breaking the rules. There is not enough representation of commercial interests on the councils and far too much ENGO representation.”*
- *“There are northern states that depend on and land a lot of MAFMC managed species and they do not have enough of a say in their management. Species are on the move in a NE direction, but the management isn't keeping up with the changes.”*

Clearly define terms

17%

- *“Recurring theme - emphasize fisheries and communities over 'stakeholders'.”*
- *“Who are the ‘Council's management partners’? They seem to be mostly recreational. I suggest that you listen to them less and to the commercial guys more in order to make your communication input more balanced.”*

Most Common Themes: Interested Public Respondents

Percent of Interested Public Respondents

Stakeholder representation

50%

- *“Again, it's designed with benefiting a certain set of people it needs to address all species and benefit all species.”*
- *“I don't think you represent all stake holders fairly. Special attention is paid to commercial fishermen, for hire fishermen, and the bait and tackle industry when they have created their issues and should be held accountable to fix them.”*

Balance of stakeholder and ecosystem needs

27%

- *“Stakeholders interests in balance with environmental balance not just sustainability of fish stocks.”*
- *“Sustainability is based on the health of species and the ecosystem that may not be appreciated by certain stakeholders, who are more concerned with exploitation.”*

Execution and process accountability

20%

- *“Obtain an independent assessment of the governance structures and practices.”*
- *“The process is bureaucratic! Designed to serve the bureaucrat.”*

Most Common Themes: NGO Respondents

Percent of NGO Respondents

Note: Due to the small number of responses to this question, themes could not be generated. Responses received addressed stakeholder balance/representation and management partner outreach.

Question 42. The 2014-2018 Strategic Plan includes three objectives designed to help the Council achieve its Governance goal. Please rate how well you think the Council has addressed these objectives. ("Objectives" are specific, measurable targets that help an organization achieve its goals)

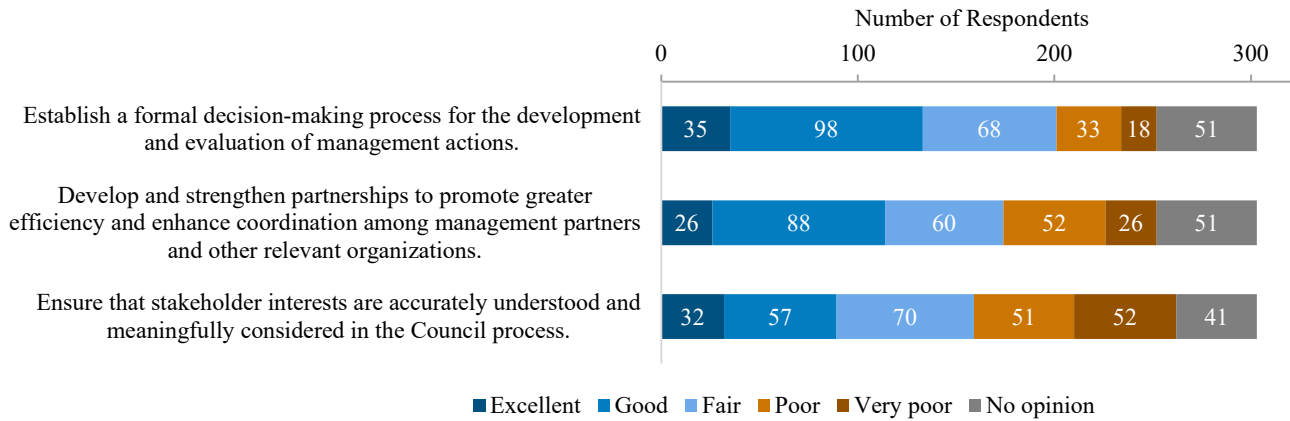


Figure 114: Governance Objectives Performance Ratings, All Respondents (Q42)

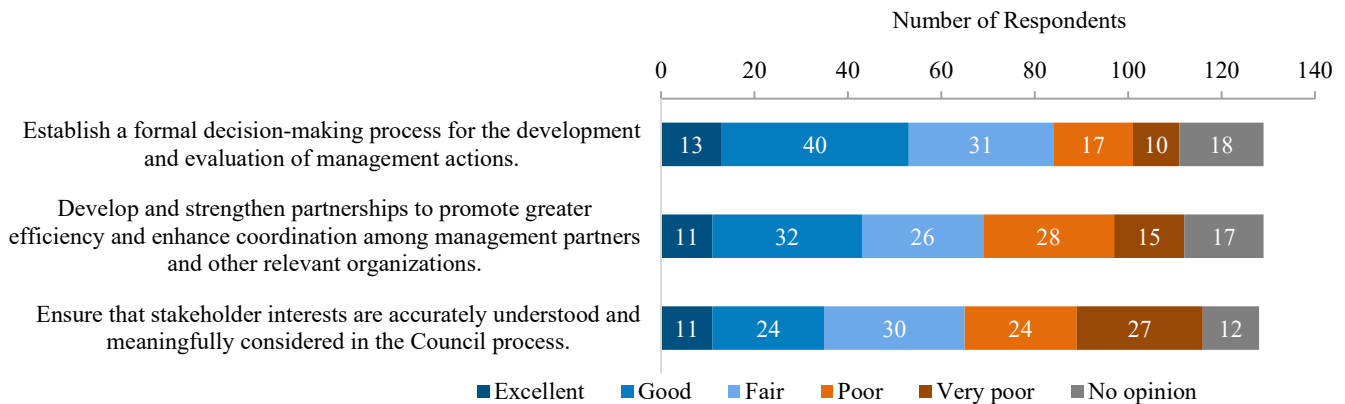


Figure 115: Governance Objectives Performance Ratings, Recreational Respondents (Q42)

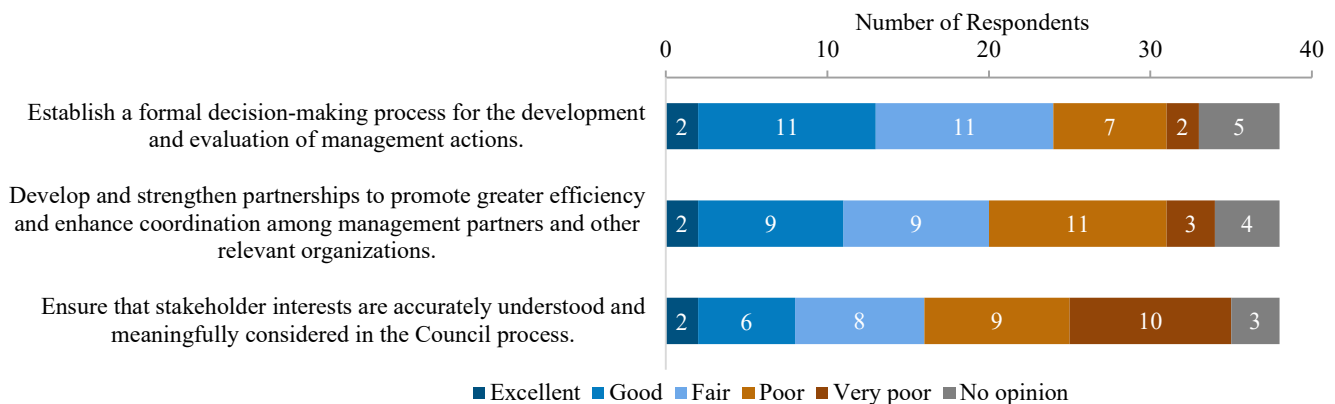


Figure 116: Governance Objectives Performance Ratings, For-Hire Respondents (Q42)

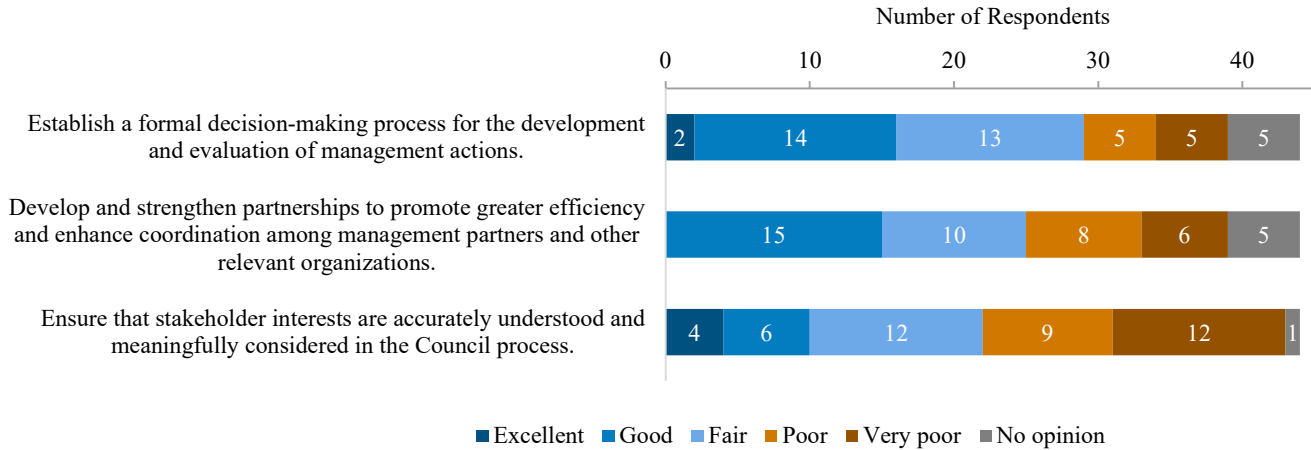


Figure 117: Governance Objectives Ratings, Commercial Respondents (Q42)

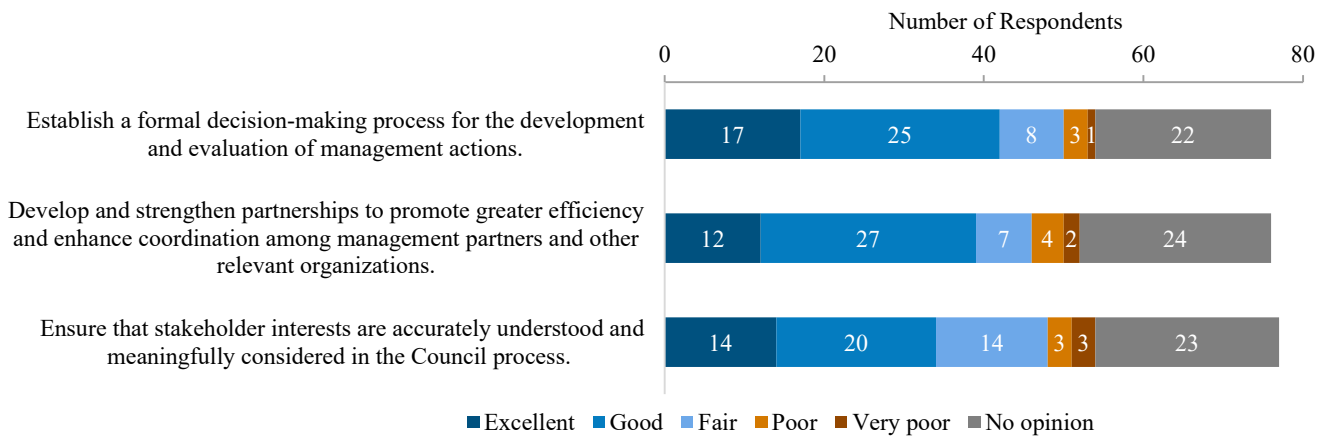


Figure 118: Governance Objectives Performance Ratings, Interested Public Respondents (Q42)

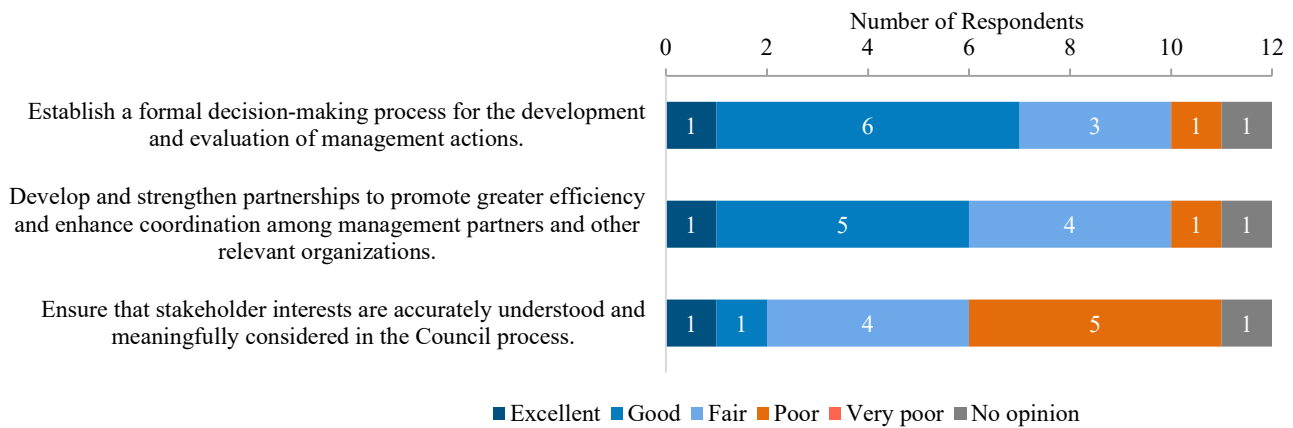


Figure 119: Governance Objectives Performance Ratings, NGO Respondents

Question 43. If you have suggestions for new Governance objectives or changes to existing Governance objectives you think the Council should consider for the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan, please provide them in the space below.

Most Common Themes: Recreational Respondents

Percent of Recreational Respondents

Consideration of stakeholder interests

50%

- *“Ensure that all components of the stakeholder community are adequately considered in management decisions.”*
- *“Stakeholder interests combined with data drive decisions. You must do more than just consider stakeholder interests.”*

Management strategies and recreational priorities

21%

- *“Again, transferring bluefish quota from the recreational sector to the commercial sector insults the recreational anglers desire to conserve fish rather than harvest them all.”*
- *“Stop commercial exploitation of salt water recreational fisheries.”*

Most Common Themes: For-Hire Respondents

Percent of For-Hire Respondents

Execution/accountability

40%

- *“It all sounds good and looks good on paper but seems very ineffective. Don't know how you can change things for the better.”*
- *“The objectives are not stated in terms that are specific, measurable, actionable, reasonable and time-bound; it is difficult to determine how well you are meeting any or all objectives.”*

Focus on recreational interests

40%

- *“More focus on recreational fishing and the environmental benefits of managing for abundance.”*
- *“There is a tendency to give more weight to commercial interests vs. recreational (general public) interests.”*

Most Common Themes: Commercial Respondents

Percent of Commercial Respondents

Execution and staff influence

33%

- *“The problem here is not with the governance goal or objectives, but the fact that it has not really been followed...the underlying problem is that the staff has too much power and influence in formulating Council policy and influencing its decision making – certainly more influence than the stakeholders have, and this should not be the case.”*
- *“The staff should stop trying to sell their ideas to the council members. They are the workers not the decision makers.”*

Interaction with management partners	22%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Choose better informed MAFMC liaisons to participate in NEFMC activities that impact MAFMC areas of responsibility.”</i> • <i>“Provide better suited MAFMC liaisons to attend and participate in NEFMC activities that impact MAFMC resources.”</i> 	

Most Common Themes: Interested Public Respondents

Percent of Interested Public Respondents

Execution and process accountability	30%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Obtain external audits.”</i> • <i>“Again, objectives must have incremental deadlines.”</i> 	

Stakeholder representation	20%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“I am concerned that stakeholder interests and outside interests, are also understood and take into consideration.”</i> • <i>“As previously mentioned, the issue of industry consolidation is a real problem and Council appointments are being directed towards the ‘big players’.”</i> 	

Governance approaches	20%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“More conservation partnerships need to be made to help reduce the over fishing and pollution problems.”</i> • <i>“Have to meet National Standard 1, first and foremost.”</i> 	

Most Common Themes: NGO Respondents

Percent of NGO Respondents

Stakeholder representation, balance	67%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“If ‘stakeholders’ refers to commercial and recreational fisheries, it does not address those of us who believe this prevents the Council from saving that which the Council is trusted to protect.”</i> • <i>“Ensure that current and future stakeholder interests are accurately understood and meaningfully considered in the Council process.”</i> 	

Note: The total number of responses prevented additional themes from being generated.

Question 44. If you have suggestions for specific Governance-related activities or projects you believe the Council should include in the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan, please provide them in the space below.

Most Common Themes: Recreational Respondents

Percent of Recreational Respondents

Process accountability and execution

30%

- *“Less debating on issues and following the plan would get better results.”*
- *“Once again, it is about trust & credibility, and that comes from the people who are in the fisheries to say that ‘we hear you and are going to immediately do something about it...’.”*

Quantity and balance of stakeholder input

30%

- *“Give non-industry stakeholders (e.g. private boat anglers) consideration at least equal to that given to sectors of the recreational and commercial industries.”*
- *“Get more input from each sector.”*

Most Common Themes: For-Hire Respondents

Percent of For-Hire Respondents

Fishery viability

50%

- *“Throughout fisheries management, stakeholders have held much weight in the decision-making process. Although I strongly support this idea, the health of the Fishery must always come before those that wish to utilize it.”*
- *“Build Habitat, grow the fishery quickly.”*

Note: The total number of responses prevented additional themes from being generated. However, comments reflected enforcement and management partner cooperation.

Most Common Themes: Commercial Respondents

Percent of Commercial Respondents

Collaboration/communication with management partners

40%

- *“Continue to work with management partners to prepare for climate impacts in regional fisheries.”*
- *“Have Advisory Panels evaluate the performance of any MAFMC liaison to NEFMC Committees and make changes where appropriate.”*

Note: The total number of responses prevented additional themes from being generated. However, comments reflected seafood imports, transparency and outreach.

Most Common Themes: Interested Public Respondents**Percent of Interested Public Respondents**

Fishery viability

40%

- *“Throughout fisheries management, stakeholders have held much weight in the decision-making process. Although I strongly support this idea, the health of the fishery must always come before those that wish to utilize it.”*
- *“Build Habitat, grow the fishery quickly.”*

Note: The total number of responses prevented additional themes from being generated. However, comments referenced outreach and enforcement.

Most Common Themes: NGO Respondents**Percent of NGO Respondents**

Tradeoff between economics and stakeholder interests

67%

- *“As an advocate for a non-profit, representing thousands of stakeholders and the environment first, it's been disappointing over the last decade how often those voices are ignored for short-term economic interests... the third objective is often ignored, with the idea that Council members are "stewards" who know better, vs. "representatives" of the National interest in sustainable fisheries.”*
- *“The Council must continue and build on its work to take an ecosystem-based approach to fishery management...right now, when decisions become hard, the Council reverts to short-term economic decisions.”*

Note: The total number of responses prevented additional themes from being generated.

Question 45. Please list up to three issues or challenges that you feel were not adequately addressed in the 2014-2018 Strategic Plan.

Most Common Themes: Recreational Respondents**Percent of Recreational Respondents**

Accuracy of data used for management decisions

11%

- *“Standing up to deficient science.”*
- *“Bad science continues to create bad data, which is used to make decisions which unfairly punishes stakeholders.”*

Striped bass management

8%

- *“The striper fishery is failing, and it's not even on your radar.”*
- *“Striped bass migratory spawning stock.”*

Management that reflects recreational priorities

8%

- *“Recreational access and success.”*
- *“Managing recreational fisheries primarily for abundance, not yield.”*

Stakeholder balance and recreational input/participation	7%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Too much deference to commercial interests.”</i> • <i>“Recreational participation in the process.”</i> 	
Snapper grouper management	6%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Study and open long seasons for red snapper and grouper for recreational fishermen.”</i> • <i>“Ban on grouper to help them rebuild.”</i> 	
Ecosystem sustainability	6%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Sustainability of fisheries and ecosystems.”</i> • <i>“Marine ecosystems have been grossly overexploited.”</i> 	
Enforcement	6%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Lack of enforcement of existing laws and regulations of commercial interests.”</i> • <i>“On the water enforcement.”</i> 	
Importance of forage species	5%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Abundance of forage fish - lower commercial take of many.”</i> • <i>“Importance of bunker (understanding most of that lies inside 3 miles).”</i> 	
Exploitation of fish stocks	4%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Over harvesting marine resources, over fishing.”</i> • <i>“Fish populations are down.”</i> 	
Governance and political influence	4%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“How to keep politicians from meddling and negating conclusions from the science and fishery studies.”</i> • <i>“No interest in truth and honesty.”</i> 	
Fair allocations	4%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Equitable catch allocations.”</i> • <i>“Fair share allocation for the recreational angler.”</i> 	

Most Common Themes: For-Hire Respondents

Percent of For-Hire Respondents

Inaccurate science and impacts on management	15%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Addressed - but not repaired - MRIP’s brute force on recreational regulation.”</i> • <i>“Adopting overly strict regulations based on poor science.”</i> 	
Ecosystem, forage, habitat management	15%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Continue to improve on being progressive and ecosystem management driven.”</i> • <i>“Forage fish.”</i> 	
Process credibility and stakeholder input	11%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Factions battling and not working toward a fair solution.”</i> • <i>“We are heard but never listened to.”</i> 	

Management approaches 7%

- *“Not protecting spawning stocks.”*
- *“Meaningful way to restore fisheries in a reasonable time frame.”*

Consideration of economic impacts 4%

- *“The need to understand the financial burden we are all under.”*
- *“Not addressing the economic impact on small businesses.”*

Most Common Themes: Commercial Respondents

Percent of Commercial Respondents

Addressing inaccuracy and uncertainty in science and data 13%

- *“Minimize the use of the scientific uncertainty club to limit the growth of sustainable fisheries. Use a broader time horizon rather than interannual swings in productivity that can now occur.”*
- *“Admitting stock surveys were flawed and correcting in future years.”*

Offshore wind 8%

- *“Proliferation of windfarms.”*
- *“How to get the Council more aggressively engaged in protecting highly productive clam harvesting areas from effective closure by wind farm interests.”*

Open ocean aquaculture 7%

- *“Aquaculture in federal water.”*
- *“Support and education surrounding mariculture.”*

Process transparency and external influence 7%

- *“Deals are made behind closed doors.”*
- *“The leadership need to put a stop to the council staff attempting to make decisions for the council members.”*

Social/economic impacts and well-being 7%

- *“Promoting lasting, healthy fishing communities should be a focus.”*
- *“Sustainably growing fishing economies.”*

Access to fishing grounds 6%

- *“Coordination with NEFMC on Habitat displacement of species under the MAFMC purview.”*
- *“Surf Clam and Ocean Quahog access to New England areas.”*

Efficiency and flexibility in management 6%

- *“Flexibility in management process and protocol.”*
- *“Efficiency in fisheries.”*

Stakeholder balance and input 6%

- *“The stakeholders and the APs must have input into developing the management plans.”*
- *“Promoting fisheries not stakeholders.”*

Most Common Themes: Interested Public Respondents	Percent of Interested Public Respondents
Ecosystem management approaches	14%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Please focus on developing ecosystem-based fishery management for all species.”</i> • <i>“Protection of all species.”</i> 	
Climate change	11%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Climate warming and changes in the marine environment.”</i> • <i>“Impacts of climate change and how to modify the threat.”</i> 	
Pollution	9%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Dumping organic waste in ocean. Warming of ocean.”</i> • <i>“Pollution in the waters from abandoned nets, fishing line, trash.”</i> 	
Process transparency and external influence	7%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Deals are made behind closed doors.”</i> • <i>“The leadership need to put a stop to the council staff attempting to make decisions for the council members.”</i> 	
Timely science/data	5%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Timely science informed by real engagement with fisheries and ecosystems in which they operate which is essential in systems undergoing rapid change.”</i> • <i>“Timely scientific studies.”</i> 	
Outreach and communication	5%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Engagement with other organizations.”</i> • <i>“Communication has greatly improved but you must constantly adapt to changes in the way that people communicate.”</i> 	

Most Common Themes: NGO Respondents	Percent of NGO Respondents
Implementation/execution of ecosystem-based management	22%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Operationalizing/requiring EBFM.”</i> • <i>“Developing a data collection plan that would enable the Council to better evaluate economic, social and ecological impacts and tradeoffs. This information is necessary for adopting ecosystem-based approaches to management.”</i> 	
Management of forage species	22%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Conservation of forage species, ex. river herring.”</i> • <i>“Herring sustainability.”</i> 	
Other ocean uses	13%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Evaluating impacts of offshore wind farms.”</i> • <i>“Oil and gas development.”</i> 	
Climate change	9%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Evaluating climate change and its effects on coastal fishing processes.”</i> • <i>“Rapidly changing environment.”</i> 	

Note: The Council received 225 identical responses to this question from survey participants who did not select a primary role. These can be viewed in the “Other Survey Responses” section.

Other Survey Responses

The Council received identical responses to three of the survey questions noted below from respondents who did not select a primary role type in Question 3. The survey questions below were the only ones answered by these respondents.

Question 31. If you have any suggested changes to the Council’s Science goal, please provide them in the space below.

The Council received 188 of the following responses:

“The Council should 1) prioritize the collection of data and improvement of information for identifying and protecting essential fish habitat; 2) determine the true status of river herring and shad populations and put in place a biologically based cap as part of full conservation and management under the Magnuson-Stevens Act; 3) develop the science needed to set an ecologically based catch limit for Atlantic and chub mackerel, 4) establish a science-based spawning protection for squid; and 5) employ predictive modeling to get ahead of environmental changes that will affect habitat and managed and unmanaged species.”

Question 36. If you have any suggested changes to the Council’s Management goal, please provide them in the space below.

The Council received 199 of the following responses:

“The Management Goal should be to, “Develop ecosystem-based fishery management strategies that provide for productive sustainable fisheries.” To complete the Management Goal, the Council should continue to develop ecosystem-based fishery management using the best available science for all species, especially forage fish, while protecting essential fish habitat. In doing so, the Council can operationalize its EAFM Guidance Document through its fishery management plans, annual catch limits, rebuilding plans, area protections, and essential fish habitat—helping the Council to navigate the tough management decisions that demand foresight to ensure our public resources remain abundant for all the benefits they provide today, and those that will be even more valuable in the future.”

Question 45. Please list up to three issues or challenges that you feel were not adequately addressed in the 2014-2018 Strategic Plan.

The Council received 225 of the following responses:

Issue 1

“Increasing protections and ensuring abundance of forage fish, including rebuilding Atlantic mackerel to a healthy level as fast as possible.”

Issue 2

“The rebuilding and conservation of river herring and shad populations.”

Issue 3

“Improving protections for and the health of essential fish habitat.”

Section 2: Advisory Panel and Scientific and Statistical Committee Input

Each of the Council's Advisory Panels and its Scientific & Statistical Committee received a presentation on the preliminary results of the online stakeholder survey. Members were asked to provide additional feedback and suggestions regarding the Council's performance under the 2014-2018 Strategic Plan and recommendations for future priorities.

Mackerel, Squid, Butterfish Advisory Panel

Advisory Panel members in attendance: Katie Almeida, Eleanor Bochenek, Joseph Gordon, Emerson Hasbrouck, Jeff Kaelin, Meghan Lapp

Other attendees: Jason Didden (Council staff), Michelle Duval (Council contractor)

- Several advisors noted that they had taken the online survey.
- An advisor noted that it seems as though the Council has moved away from its core mission of managing commercial and recreational fisheries. It has focused more on the discretionary components of the Magnuson-Stevens Act to address coral and other issues that do not really have an impact on sustainable fisheries. Two other advisors noted that this was a valid point to consider.
- One advisory panel member stated that it is important in the Council process to differentiate between “real” stakeholders and the interested public. True stakeholders are those people who derive some portion of their income from commercial or recreational fishing.
 - For example, environmental non-governmental organizations providing comments on an issue may obtain signatures on a petition from many members of the public. While this input is acceptable as this is a public process, the people signing these petitions are not true stakeholders. They are members of the interested public, who are also important to the process. However, true stakeholder comments should have a little bit more weight. The Council needs to better differentiate between these two groups and determine what management actions are appropriate given those considerations.
 - An advisor questioned if stakeholders who sign online form letters/petitions understand what they are signing and that the Council needs to consider how this input is weighed.
 - Another advisor noted the number of online survey participants who provided comments, and the smaller group of industry members and others who participate (at Council meetings). However, these are publicly-managed fisheries and millions around the world depend on their sustainability. It is good that the Council is looking broadly at this -- not just in regard to communication, but where it is headed in the future.
- A recommendation was made to consider conducting some of the Council's other advisory panels and committee meetings over webinar as well. Some of the in-person meetings for which webinars are not available are several hours away, and can be difficult to attend, especially when members have other meetings to attend as well.
- It was noted that both New England and Mid-Atlantic Councils are moving forward with ecosystem approaches to fisheries management, although at different paces, and that there should be more communication between both councils on this.
 - Species moving in different directions could complicate these efforts without further communication.
 - Another advisor agreed that ecosystem work needs to be considered more dynamically with the New England Council throughout the interconnected system of the Atlantic coast. However, the Mid-Atlantic Council has its area of jurisdiction with a lot of well-managed species, and other jurisdictions perhaps not so much.
 - It was noted that the Council has talked a lot about its ecosystem approach to fisheries management (EAFM) and forage, which is really about smarter management. These are dynamic systems and the interplay between species is important. The sooner we can understand the tradeoffs in maintaining

the health of these fisheries, the better of we will be. There is still a lot we need to know to manage these fish the best we can.

- An advisor noted that Strategy 6.4 under Objective 6 of the 2014-2018 Strategic Plan was to enhance the RSA (Research Set Aside) program. Near the beginning of that time, the Council voted to suspend the RSA program, but it is in the 2019 Implementation Plan as a possible item for reconsideration.
 - Public input on the Science goal of the survey included improvements in collaborative science, inclusion of on-the-water observations, and suggestions for the future also included improving collaborative science.
 - A suggestion for the next Strategic Plan is inclusion of a strategy to review and consider re-development of the RSA program. This could also address some of the future priorities related to improving discards and fishing methods as RSA provides a venue to do so.
 - Another advisor agreed that the RSA program is working well in New England and needs to be brought back to the Mid-Atlantic.

Post-Meeting Input

An advisor provided the following comments subsequent to the meeting:

- Overall the current Strategic Plan has a pretty good report card, with some deficiencies.
- He noted that it was surprising that many survey respondents didn't know how or when to participate, or thought that it was not easy to participate and suggested better promotion of social media built around the website.
- Survey respondents who provided input into the current Strategic Plan were in the minority and most were dissatisfied that their input was not incorporated. He suggested that the plan could explain this and diffuse some dissatisfaction.
- The science perspectives and credibility, along with collaborative efforts and on-the-water experiences is a continuing vulnerability to create consensus, trust and inclusive governance. He encouraged more collaboration and also more flexibility with targets and thresholds bounded by some critical risk point.
- It appears that the recreational sector doesn't participate as much as other stakeholder categories. In general, he expected that except where their objectives overlapped with those of NGOs or the for-hire sector, recreational stakeholders feel somewhat orphaned and suggested that more outreach might provide for a better long-term outcome.
- The future visions from the presentation all looked good. The coastal communities piece of the vision was fine, and for various reasons almost always has to be included, but he has always felt this makes for a weak objective and is rightly the outcome of successfully implementing good coastal fisheries management.

Surfclam and Ocean Quahog Advisory Panel

Advisory Panel members in attendance: Tom Alspach, Tom Dameron, Pete Himchak, Sam Martin, Ken McDermott, Jeff Pike, Dave Wallace

Other attendees: Jessica Coakley (Council staff), Jose Montañez (Council staff), Kiley Dancy (Council staff), Michelle Duval (Council contractor), Tom Hoff, Salvatore LaMonica, Doug Potts, Chris Shriver

- One advisor stated that it is good the Council has this strategic planning process, and in general the Council does a good job.
- Another advisor stated his interest in the matrix that this strategic planning effort becomes a part of. Given a particular fishery management plan, how do you take all those factors and then come to some conclusion because they are so variable – how did that work in the last Strategic Plan and will it work the same way in this one? You have all this input, and then will have an output, but how is that actually done?
- The same advisor stated that he participated in a minor way in the previous process six years ago and didn't realize that all fisheries were essentially going to be graded based on this strategic plan. He read that the clam fishery only got a 30 percent rating out of 100 percent. He disagreed with this as he believes the clam fishery is the best-managed fishery in the United States.
 - He read this number in the Strategic Plan and could not figure out where it came from.** He thinks the old plan misrepresents the fishery. As a result, he plans to be highly involved in this process, because he wants to hear everything that everyone has to say.
 - He could understand using a matrix where all information is loaded into it and everything becomes an average, but if it's a decision process made by some unknown individual or group, is there bias in this, and that bias could be positive or negative.
- The advisor also noted that he had previously participated in the review of both NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) and NMFS (National Marine Fisheries Service) while serving as a member of MAFAC (Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee). In those reviews, MAFAC was asked to prioritize functions. Science was always the highest priority as it drives all management of fisheries and the marine ecosystem, which made sense. If this effort is going to be used in that way, it's great, but if it's being used to pigeonhole individual fisheries, he is concerned.
- The clam fishery is the simplest fishery; there is no recreational component so there are no issues with access as there are in finfish fisheries. Quotas are high, fishing activity is low and there is minimal bycatch. It is a simple fishery to manage from the Council's perspective. The clam fishery has managed itself via ITQ for the last 30 years, so there is interest in seeing how this is all going to play out in the next iteration of the Strategic Plan.
- It was noted by an advisor that with the online survey being anonymous, there is some concern that there could be groups filling it out on multiple occasions trying to influence the outcome they would like to see. It was recognized that this is very hard to monitor, but he thinks about it every time he fills out a survey as there are groups that passionately try to influence these processes.

**Follow-up indicated that the fishery ratings referenced were the result of fishery-specific online surveys conducted during the Visioning Project that asked respondents to rate both the health of stocks and effectiveness of management. Survey results for the Surfclam and Ocean Quahog fisheries begin on page 74 of the July 2012 [Visioning and Strategic Planning Stakeholder Input Report](#).

Spiny Dogfish Advisory Panel

Advisory Panel members in attendance: Bonnie Brady, Scott Curatolo-Wagemann, James Fletcher, Scott MacDonald, John Whiteside

Other attendees: Jason Didden (Council staff), Michelle Duval (Council contractor), Alan Bianchi, Fiona Hogan

- An advisor asked if the input from the open questions would be broken out by user group, and it was confirmed that it would.
- One advisor noted that nothing in the presentation addressed imports of seafood and that 93 percent of all seafood consumed in the U.S. is imported. The Council doesn't have a process to address imports.
 - When Russians were 12 miles off the coast, we could produce 60-70 percent of the seafood needed so how is it that under management we have moved to 93 percent of seafood being imported and 60-70 percent being discards?
 - We are not about producing seafood, we are about stopping commercial fishing – the Council, Departments of Commerce and State are happy with imports. With proper management the U.S. could produce all seafood needed for consumption, but we are not using proper management.
- The same advisor stated that we need to focus on total utilization in the Strategic Plan – use everything that is caught.
 - Over 65 percent of what is caught commercially is discarded, not because of size or markets, but due to regulations. He suspected that on the recreational side 95 percent of what is caught, especially summer flounder, is discarded.
 - His organization has pushed for the Council to implement the same regulations for the recreational sector as the commercial sector, and to use total length limits to eliminate discards, but the Council refuses to consider it.
 - The other half of the Council process is ASMFC (Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission). Article I of the ASFMC Compact requires preventing physical waste by any means; yet when he brought this up, he received a response that this needed interpretation by ASMFC staff.
 - We need to re-think the Strategic Plan and come back with total utilization of everything and reduce imports to 75 percent in the next four years, then 50 percent, and in a 12-16 period of time reduce imports to 15 percent.
- It was noted that the Japanese started aquaculture in 1987 and we are just now talking about it 40 years later in the U.S. The Council needs to get out of the way of aquaculture – there are so many rules right now that no one can get a permit. There are many agencies that shouldn't have input on this issue outside of three miles (offshore), yet the Council has allowed all these other agencies to participate. What does the Coast Guard have to do with aquaculture?
- An advisor stated that we talk about trying to use the best science, but it is more of a deception because the Council won't require the use of recreational reporting phone apps, and implements regulations that target genetically superior fish, and leave the inferior fish.
 - Why did scientists come up with this approach? Do they think it is best to kill females (larger fish) and leave the males?
 - We have no plan to survey the male dogfish offshore – specifically outside the 100-fathom curve. His organization has asked for this for a long time; we need to survey what we haven't surveyed.
- The same advisor acknowledged that he is frustrated, but mostly because he feels as though he has been misled all these years by the approach to management. The Strategic Plan needs to focus on reversing seafood imports and any management that leads to imports or targets females. The Council is running a show that says “look what a good job we're doing,” but if you add up satisfied vs. dissatisfied ratings, they are almost equal.

Pre-Meeting Input

An advisory submitted the following comments to staff for distribution to all advisory panel members prior to the advisory panel meeting:

- The Council, ASMFC and National Marine Fisheries Service have failed to comply with statutory management requirements.
- Regarding best available science, the Council and ASMFC have failed to implement electronic/smartphone reporting apps for the recreational sector. Thus, the recreational data is not the best that should be available. The Council and ASMFC must require recreational data reporting using electronic methods.
- Article I of the ASMFC Compact requires “prevention of physical waste by any means.” Total retention by the recreational sector prevents physical waste.
- Magnuson-Stevens Act Section 3 (Definitions): “The term bycatch means fish that are harvested in a fishery, but which are not sold or kept for personal use, and include economic discards & regulatory discards.”
- A total retention requirement would eliminate bycatch in the recreational fishery
- The Strategic Plan must be compliant with existing originating legislation.

Tilefish Advisory Panel

Advisory Panel members in attendance: Dave Arbeitman, Ron Callis, Greg Hueth, , Mike Johnson, Doug Zemeckis

Other attendees: Matt Seeley (Council staff), Michelle Duval (Council contractor), Laurie Nolan (Council member)

- There was a request for clarification and whether folks should be viewing the Strategic Plan with respect to its application to tilefish or looking at the Strategic Plan as a whole and providing recommendations on the entire plan. (It was clarified that both perspectives were welcomed).
- An attendee noted that in regard to the commercial tilefish sector and applying the goals and objectives of Strategic Plan to that sector, it has worked well. The fishery is well-managed, and participants are very involved in the fishery and the science. The commercial sector does feel that it has input into this fishery.
 - Implementation of multi-year specifications as far out as possible to create stability for the commercial sector is the only issue that needs to be put on the front burner.
 - It's a good approach to go species by species presenting this to the advisory panels. Different fisheries have different needs and we may find that plan is coming up way short for some fisheries. For golden tilefish, the Council is spot on.
 - Awareness and input from public is what we are really looking for. But species by species is opening a can of worms and we need to hear from all advisory panels on all the species.
- An advisor noted that he has spoken before about a tagging program for blueline tilefish and would like to see that implemented to get a better idea of what's going on with these fish and how they are migrating.
 - If someone supplied the tags, people could send in for the tags to use on any fish caught above the current 7-fish bag limit. Party boats and recreational fishermen could also participate.
 - It was discussed whether or not tagging is successful at the depths at which tilefish are caught. It was noted that vessels are fishing in 200-400 feet of water, vs. the 800 feet where commercial vessels operate. The fish do go back down when after being reeled up, as blueline tilefish have a smaller swim bladder and are a bit more robust than golden tilefish.
- The same advisor stated that for the for-hire fleet, having regulations similar to those in the Gulf of Mexico (which allow for two daily bag limits on for-hire trips spanning more than 24 hours, with appropriate documentation) implemented in the Mid-Atlantic for the 2020 or 2021 season would be helpful.
 - Customers generally don't catch their limit of golden tilefish, but these regulations would be helpful in selling a trip from a business and economic standpoint. People will at least have a vision or expectation of being able to catch that many fish even if it is unlikely that they will do so.
 - The recreational sector harvest is only three percent of the overall quota so this would not be asking much. It would at least provide for the opportunity.
- It was noted that when doing a survey for a fishery, you need to have people in the fishery itself being surveyed; randomly surveying someone coming off a private boat in New Jersey is not really the solution. Talking to people who actually do it will be the most helpful.
- Another advisor noted that part of the problem is lack of consistency in regulations for blueline tilefish. We are told it's one genetic stock from the Atlantic through the Gulf, but there are three councils involved and three different management approaches. For recreational fishermen and industry, that generates a lot of doubt as to credibility because there is no consistency.
 - In the Gulf of Mexico, he will be able to take 20 fish per day and could get a two-day total. If he stops somewhere in the South Atlantic on the way home, that will be more fish under a different bag limit (three).
 - The public doubts the credibility of the process, because of these different approaches which is why people get upset and have no faith in the system. There is a lot we don't know about these fish.
 - This may be an opportunity going forward to instill some confidence in the system by taking some new approaches in deepwater species management.

Bluefish Advisory Panel

Advisory Panel members in attendance: Vince Cannuli, Victor Hartley, Arnold Leo, Peter Moore, Lisa Poyer, Tom Roller, Judith Weis

Other attendees: Chris Batsavage (Council member), Tony DiLernia (Council member), Matt Seeley (Council staff), Michelle Duval (Council contractor), Alan Bianchi, Steve Witthuhn (Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass Advisory Panel member)

- One advisor asked how the new MRIP (Marine Recreational Information Program) survey impacted the accuracy of recreational harvest estimates, going from the phone survey to the mail survey to estimate fishing effort. Staff responded that until the assessment updates are complete, we can't be certain. Currently, it looks like there is a threefold increase in annual landings, but advisors need to remember that this is relative and if there is a significant increase in landings, there is likely to be an increase in the quota but we until there is a new assessment we cannot say for certain.
- The same advisor referenced ways to reach out to the recreational sector and asked if there had been outreach to local fishing clubs, where there is more understanding of the local fishing interests? Staff responded that most coordination occurs with stakeholders through the advisory panel, but this was a great suggestion moving forward.
- Another advisor asked if there were any comparisons between the different councils regarding involvement of the general recreational public. Most of what the Council addresses is not very recreationally-focused, so perhaps that may explain the lower levels of recreational participation.
 - A Council member noted that the focus of each council is different, and is driven by the Council members themselves, so this impacts the focus on recreational vs. commercial issues. Staff carries out the Council's priorities.
- An advisor asked what the goals were for getting more public input. Is the goal to get the poor ratings on Communication goal reduced?
 - The Council is looking for feedback from the advisors regarding how it could address these issues and do a better job with one particular stakeholder group or all stakeholder groups. Are there strategies the Council could undertake or activities they could engage in to improve communication?
 - The same advisor noted that Facebook was mentioned as a tool during the presentation — is the goal to start something with Facebook for general knowledge to provide a place people feel they could go and vent online, or provide that input and discuss? It might be helpful to have a venue where people could express comments and concerns openly and somewhat anonymously that staff could track and may not even be aware of.
- Another advisor stated that he works in both commercial and recreational fields but spends a lot of time explaining the components he understands to other people. Many members of the general public don't want to read through written articles by scientists that they have hard time understanding, and don't want to get into the details to understand the process components and how they all work.
 - It would be nice to have concise, straightforward responses regarding what is going on generally in fisheries, rather than a lot of data. People lose the point when they have to do mental calisthenics. A simplified version of what comes from scientists and the Council would be great.
 - It would also be nice to have something simple regarding how to generally become involved. Once they listen to some programs, folks would realize they have a lot to offer to the process.
 - Suggestions include invitations to various communities to review pieces of information, providing better access to some of the website resources (e.g. not just directing people to the main webpage, but providing a specific page). There are a lot of great resources on the website, but you could get lost on the main page and never get to what you started looking for.
 - How do we let John Q. Public who is spending time on the water know what is happening at the Council level? The Council almost needs a marketing campaign of what it is doing using snippets of information given the social media environment people operate in today.

- For commercial fishermen with a financial interest for whom this is feeding their family, they have an incentive to keep up with what is going on.
- Consider use of tackle shops to help advertise what the Council is doing. Perhaps a simple postcard to tackle shops and/or magazines regarding what the council is doing that contains targeted information focused less on the science.
- An advisor noted that as a tackle shop owner, they do not have resources to put together postcards or other materials. If it is just a matter of re-sharing, that is fairly easy. They already do host discussions at the tackle shop with local officials, trying to foster conversations regarding data improvement and why people need to report their catch. But they are only one shop, and just like commercial fishermen, they are trying to make a living at the end of the day. If the literature was already out there, it would be easier to reshape it.
- Another advisor stated that in general, the recreational community does not hear about changes in management, and it is usually tackle shop owners and groups such as the National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA) who stay on top of the issues. One of NMMA's big tenets is to get recreational folks on the water. They have a lot of information and resources that the Council could tap into for its outreach.
- It was noted by another advisor that management really depends on the data that is available. In particular, the data for stock assessments and for economic dependence of fishing communities is severely lacking. Improving data improves management. Perhaps one of the goals or priorities for the new Strategic Plan might be for the Council to support in any way that they can increased Congressional budgets for data gathering.
- It was stated that people have to take time out of regular day jobs to attend Council-related meetings (such as advisory panel meetings), so consideration for scheduling meetings earlier in the morning or later in the afternoon would be appreciated.
- A Council member noted that in regard to disseminating information to the general public, the Council has a short news release that goes out after each meeting, as well as a meeting summary. Given that every state has a recreational fishing license in Mid-Atlantic region, is there a way of accessing those databases of the different states? If so, would it be legal for the Council to send out a mass email to registrants/licenseses to let folks know of an upcoming meeting? Social media is great, but if the Council could be proactive in getting notices out there that would be helpful. This may be something to consider for the new Strategic Plan.
 - The Council does not have access to those databases
 - Another Council member stated that emails may be confidential information for some of the states (e.g., North Carolina). Whether or not release of such information is legal is likely to be state-specific. There may be opportunities to work with states to indirectly access that information.
- An advisor stated that if the Council doesn't have access to those databases, perhaps there may be a way to opt-in to newsletters via fishing license registrations.

Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass Advisory Panel

Advisory Panel members in attendance: Katie Almeida, Carl Benson, Joan Berko, Bonnie Brady, Jeff Deem, Skip Feller, Carl Forsberg, Howard King, Arnold Leo, Michael Plaia, Robin Scott, Christopher Spies, Harvey Yenkinson, Doug Zemeckis.

Other attendees: Chris Batsavage (Council member), Peter Hughes (Council member), Mike Luisi (Council member), Julia Beatty (Council staff), Kiley Dancy (Council staff), Karson Coutre (Council staff), Michelle Duval (Council contractor).

- One advisor asked if the science on black sea bass has caught up to what is happening in the real world and can react fast enough to real world changes? Was the delay due to the assessment or to rules, regulations or policy?
 - Staff noted that it was a combination of having no accepted stock assessment combined with the Council's risk policy, but mostly it was an assessment issue. It is part of the Council's risk policy that if there is not an accepted assessment, the Scientific and Statistical Committee has to use fallback methods to develop catch recommendations.
- The same advisor noted that he really appreciated the way the council addresses flexibility and paybacks one quota overages happen in one area and not the entire jurisdiction.
- Another advisor expressed some surprise that people were unaware of where and when Council meetings are held since all are posted on the website and listed on the calendar.
- One advisor is concerned with how the Council develops fishery management plans and the regional depletion we are seeing in some of the species. While it's the policy of the Council to manage on a unit basis, the National Standards also require paying attention to socioeconomic impacts.
 - Example: Delaware Bay used to be one of the most productive estuaries, but now one of the areas he used to fish is almost devoid of fluke.
 - When fishery management plans are developed, we address the species as a whole, but fail to pay attention to the communities on the recreational side.
 - For east-west species we need to be careful not to deplete the stock regionally, even if it is doing okay as a whole. Environmental factors don't fully explain why the stock has shifted so far north and east. Some of this is due to commercial and recreational fishing pressure.
 - When quotas were established, Virginia and North Carolina were given 49 percent of the stock because historically the stock was down there, but now those folks have to go way north.
 - Recreationally, fishing pressure is not distributed equally up and down the coast – there is huge pressure in New Jersey. To be successful in fisheries management, the Council needs to be sensitive to those local pressures. Consider developing fishing zones on a north/south axis to reduce pressure.
 - We also have recruitment problems in some of the fishery, and a lot are related to regional portions of the stock because they contribute unequally to recruitment. The Council needs to devote some resources to this issue and pay attention to regional depletion.
- Another advisor recommended looking at the focus groups that Doug Zemeckis and others at Rutgers have conducted in New Jersey, as they may be helpful to incorporate.
 - The focus groups were funded by the Sea Grant consortium and hosted throughout New Jersey, working with recreational anglers regarding their motivations and perceptions in fishing for certain species such as sea bass, scup and tautog. They are looking to incorporate this input into selecting state management options for these species.
 - A statewide survey following up on topics from the focus groups will be conducted this summer, with results coming out in the fall and winter.
 - A Council member asked if the results would be published somewhere and available to the Council? There will be multiple publications occurring and although the target audiences are in New Jersey, they will definitely be available for both the Council and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission.

- A suggestion was made that it would be productive to have a formal presentation of these results at a Council meeting
- An advisor noted that one problem that sometimes comes up in the work of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission is that they are stuck with the findings of the Council's SSC (Scientific and Statistical Committee). Related to the flexibility of the management process, waiting for the SSC to review a new assessment takes quite a lot of time. Some of the short-lived species such as squid, scup and butterfish change so rapidly that the industry is working on very restrictive quotas when the stock is monumentally huge. One suggestion for future priorities is that we ought to encourage more investment in stock assessments because the whole management process depends on that.
- Another advisor stated he would like to see Council do better job of reaching out to fishermen not represented on the Council. The states of Rhode Island, Connecticut and Massachusetts have large fisheries for species managed by the Mid-Atlantic Council, but they are not represented on the Council. The liaison from the New England Council doesn't seem to be working well representing those interests.
 - Meetings like the Strategic Planning public input meeting in Narragansett help, but there's very little in the form of outreach in those New England states participating in Mid-Atlantic fisheries.
 - To the extent that the Council can have hearings or listening sessions and collect public input in those states would certainly help. Maybe even a council meeting on the border. New York once a year is helpful, but perhaps consider Rhode Island or Massachusetts. The point is that recreational and commercial fishermen feel underrepresented.
- An advisor asked if there was consideration under the new Strategic Plan of adding a staff member who can evaluate and comment on changes coming to the ocean, not necessarily wind, but things like tidal energy and wave energy which concern him more than wind. Staff responded that they have been trying to expand their habitat coverage and obviously wind is taking up a lot of that time, but if that's something that comes through strongly in the Strategic Plan, it's possible more staff support would be needed.
- It was noted by one advisor that among recreational fishermen, there is a great deal of anger and confusion about fishery management. He spends hours trying to explain the process to folks on the docks. He has been involved in the process for long time and continues to learn more about process, but it is complex and confusing.
 - For the average recreational fisherman, the process is so confusing that people get angry, disheartened, and frustrated and don't participate.
 - People get most of their information from Facebook and fishing magazines. The Council could do well to reduce this problem by communicating through those means, perhaps a guest editorial; it could explain the fluke quota and why the minimum size limit is what it is.
 - If the Council developed its own Facebook page, it would help with the anger and understanding. It would also help with noncompliance — people get so frustrated they don't follow the rules because they don't understand them. It would help with public perception.
 - Also, in regard to the performance ratings – he would consider fair responses as bad. The Council needs to explore avenues of communication people pay attention to.
- Two advisors agreed that a Council Facebook page would be better than Twitter feed; most folks probably don't use the Council's Twitter feed. Another advisor stated it's generally accepted in marketing that you use Facebook for folks over the age of fifty and Instagram for folks under fifty. Phone calls and mail won't get stakeholders to respond, but Facebook will generate lively responses.
- Most agreed generally that the Council's Strategic Plan was a good thing.
- One advisor made the comment that no one believes MRIP (Marine Recreational Information Program) numbers. While the Council is not responsible for those numbers, the Council is still using them. We need a PR campaign if those numbers are right, and if not, what do we need to do to make them right.

Post-Meeting Input

One advisor submitted the following comments subsequent to the meeting:

- He believes the stated goals of the plan, are good. However, as the feedback on the 2014-2018 Plan shows, it's the implementation that needs work.
- He pointed out the survey results for the 2014-2018 plan demonstrated that private recreational anglers have the least participation in the program, however, they make up the majority of the regulated community in numbers. The for-hire and commercial stakeholder categories are smaller in size, but have greater participation in the management process, and the NGO's (non-governmental organizations) while the smallest stakeholder group, had the highest percentage of participation. Private recreational anglers are fishing for their recreation and do not have the same stake in the management process as stakeholders who make their livelihood from fishing. Commercial fishermen and for-hire operators, although a much smaller group by population, earn their livings by fishing and taking people fishing. Therefore, the regulations have a much greater impact on their incomes, and they expectedly have greater interest in the management process.
- He noted that NGOs earn their income and notoriety by influencing the management process. Their employees are often paid to attend meetings and lobby the governing bodies for regulations. They may not even ever fish, but they lobby for regulations which often directly contradict the interests of the stakeholders that do have the actual "skin in the game." Their approval of the last plan and the process that it is based upon demonstrates that the plan has been designed to serve the wrong interest group.
- He commented that the Science, Management, and Governance sections were generally rated much more poorly by all of the stakeholders that actually participate in fishing activities and much more favorably by the NGO's. It should be recognized that those who are frequently (recreational anglers) and constantly (commercial fishermen) on the water and interacting with the resource would have a better comprehension of the effectiveness of these sections.
- He noted that many NGOs would like to see an end to fishing, supporting unnecessary and burdensome regulations. For example, black seabass regulations are continuing to over-protect a species that is well above its thresholds and straining other species viability. This action is unduly hurting all of the fishing industries (commercial, for-hire, and tackle) and destroying the credibility of the entire management process. Meanwhile the SSC continues to support overly restrictive regulations based on the "best available science" which has been proven to be, and continues to be, severely flawed.
- He concluded stating that a new Strategic Plan should seek to improve the level of investment and confidence from the stakeholders that are actually impacted by the regulations and carry a more dependent relationship with the resource.

A second advisor submitted the following comments subsequent to the meeting:

- Anglers are frustrated that previously they couldn't keep black sea bass because they were too small, but now they can't keep the fish because they are too big or because there will be too many discards. This is the catch-22.
- He also stated that the language of the scientists is frustrating for anglers to understand; listening to scientists talk about models and development, etc. can be very challenging. He would like to see scientists get out on boats. Science needs to catch up with what people are seeing on the water. There needs to be a better way to communicate science to anglers and for-hire operators.
- The Council also needs to have industry provide information – it's equally frustrating to hear that there's not enough money to finish off some of the studies that would help to understand the fishery better. Despite all the reporting by the for-hire sector, the numbers are not "validated" which is also frustrating.
- He also noted that six months out of the year is all that he and other charter captains have to work with in terms of a season, so they are trying to sell people on the experience. The industry has lost flounder and mackerel, so captains are concerned about what species are next.
- He indicated that anglers are tired of changing regulations, year to year. "If I make a mistake, I pay, but if you make a mistake, I pay too?"

- This is how anglers feel when they are faced with changes in size and bag limits that are reactive to the science – e.g. a size limit increase so that overall harvest is decreased, but then that size limit increase leads to too many dead discards, so management has to change again.
- Anglers feel like they are being unfairly penalized for deficiencies in science.
- He noted that we can't give scup away, but are allowing more commercial allocation during the spawning months, which does not make sense.
- Sea bass and fluke are the most important fish and unfortunately, they have catch-22 management in New York. The commercial trip limit is 50 pounds, which is ridiculous; fishermen will look for 10 five-pound fish, which happen to be the female fish, which are the productive fish.
- He commented that he has a lot of concerns about the RSA (Research Set-Aside) Program, based on previous abuses. It really seems more like a license to steal program, and law-abiding fishermen end up paying the price for that.

Joint Ecosystem and Ocean Planning/Shad and River Herring Advisory Panels

Advisory Panel members: Fred Akers, Katie Almeida, Jeff Deem, Bill Gordon, Gary Grunseich, Annie Hawkins, Lyndsey Hice-Denton, Jeff Kaelin, Carl LoBue, Tim O'Brien, Pam Lyons Gromen, Brad Sewell, Amy Trice

Other attendees: Sara Winslow (Council member), Jason Didden (Council staff), Brandon Muffley (Council staff), Michelle Duval (Council contractor), Zack Greenberg

- An advisor asked if anything from the stakeholder survey struck the Council's contractor as remarkable.
 - Contractor responded that the for-hire response and sense of frustration based on performance ratings and comments was one item.
 - The other was the idea of defining stakeholders. There are a lot of questions, concerns and differing opinions on who the Council's stakeholder are.
- Another advisor asked if there was any interest expressed in using angler logbook surveys so that recreational and commercial fishermen's observations and landings could be recorded.
 - Suggestions have been made regarding use of phone apps for reporting of private angler data, such as those in the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic.
 - The Council previously hosted a volunteer/self-reported angler workshop in 2012. The briefing materials on the website have quite a bit of information on the strengths and weaknesses of self-reported data. It is not so much a question of whether the technology exists but how do you get a representative sample, as the avid anglers tend to want to report more.
- An advisor noted this is the third such webinar he's attended and offered a comment on the question of who a real stakeholder is. He was encouraged to see that the NGO stakeholder category thought the Council was communicating very well about FMPs and didn't seem to have a lot of concerns about that piece. That says to him the interested public, which is the American public, where every citizen is a stakeholder technically, is satisfied with the Council's performance. He was curious if a search of the Magnuson Act would show if the word "stakeholder" was used and how many times? That is both a question and comment — maybe we are going a little overboard with having equal impacts through the nomenclature of Council outcomes.
- The members were asked if they were surprised by the survey results and one advisor stated he was not surprised.
- Another advisor made the observation that as the survey results were reviewed by the different stakeholder categories, she wondered about council members and the staff and if they are captured in the survey or is there a separate outreach initiative to capture their input? They have such insight and are so instrumental in the implementation she would like to know their thoughts on the Strategic Plan and what they think we should do moving forward.
 - There was a question on the survey regarding whether or not someone was Council member, but the responses are not likely to be very useful for parsing out that input in that fashion.
 - Staff have participated in the review and development of survey questions, so their role is more assisting with the process to ensure the public feedback needed is obtained. They have participated in informal discussions regarding staff perspectives but have not engaged in any formal evaluation process.
 - Once stakeholders and the Council determine how they view the Strategic Plan and where the Council needs to be going over next five years, it is a staff responsibility to think about how to implement those priorities moving forward.
- An advisor requested that the Council consider one thing when using MRIP data. MRIP staff gave a presentation and indicated they recognized that they had data that were outliers, but that they didn't have the authority to reject those. The Council needs to consider what approval it needs to reject outliers.
 - Outliers can be impacted by three things: 1) a small sample size, especially if estimating harvest in one wave or mode; 2) the catch/trip from the dockside intercept survey that generates catch estimates; 3) the effort estimates generated from the mail survey.

- The advisor indicated he didn't have a clear sense of which of these items might be contributing to the outlier, but noted that with cobia, estimates came in at five times the historical record for one period. There are some estimates that are so obviously wrong, they have no business being used in any scientific decision.
- Three advisors stated that the Strategic Plan was a good idea. In general, people recognize the value of a Strategic Plan; the challenge is to try to communicate to the Council what could change to create better outcomes. Likewise, every organization needs a mission statement for direction, and that is the purpose of the Strategic Plan. The leader is the keeper of the mission.

Post-Meeting Input

An advisor provided the following comments subsequent to the meeting:

- He thought that the 2014-2018 MAFMC Strategic Plan was a brilliant success. It laid out an elaborate road map for MAFMC goals and objectives that fully informed the management process.
- He recalled referring to the 2014-2018 strategic Plan during a public comment made at an MAFMC meeting.
- He stated that the Council is undertaking a very comprehensive and deliberative process in the outreach and development of the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan. After participating with the MAFMC for over 10 years, he thinks that the MAFMC is a leader in fisheries management and stock rebuilding because of its use of a very deliberative and inclusive process.
- Looking forward to the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan, he offered the following comments with an ecosystem management emphasis:
 - The Management Goal should be to "Develop ecosystem-based fishery management strategies that provide for productive sustainable fisheries." These ecosystem-based fishery management strategies should be included in all fishery management plans, annual catch limits, rebuilding plans, area protections, and essential fish habitat management and protection.
 - The MAFMC vision should be one that maintains all regional and migratory fisheries in the Mid-Atlantic at abundant and healthy levels to provide for ecosystem and human needs, while also continuing to protect and restore ocean habitat from the coast to the deep sea.
 - The Council should focus on increasing protections and ensuring abundance of forage fish, the rebuilding and conservation of river herring and shad populations; and improving protections and the health of essential fish habitat.
 - The Council should prioritize and determine the true status of river herring and shad populations and put in place a biologically-based cap as part of full conservation and management under the Magnuson-Stevens Act, prioritize the collection of data and improvement of information for identifying and protecting essential fish habitat, and employ predictive modeling to get out ahead of environmental changes that will impact Council managed and unmanaged species, and habitat.

Scientific and Statistical Committee

Scientific and Statistical Committee members in attendance: Dr. John Boreman (Chair), Dr. Lee Anderson, Dr. Michael Frisk, Dr. Mark Holliday, Dr. Ed Houde, Dr. Olaf Jensen, Dr. Robert Latour, Dr. Tom Miller, Dr. Paul Rago, Dr. Brian Rothschild.

Other attendees: Warren Elliott (Council Vice-Chair), Brandon Muffley (Council staff), Kiley Dancy (Council staff), Michelle Duval (Council contractor).

- A committee member noted that the participants in the survey were a self-selected sample, and that the results are really unweighted means. Will the Council be provided any advice with respect to this being a self-selected survey? There is a potential for skewing of results, for example, there are lots of participants from New York, while there are very few from the NGO community. There are some cautionary tales in there, which lead to some caveats for interpretation.
- It was stated that there seems to be spectrum of how people value the system ranging from cheerleaders to malcontents. Looking at that with respect to the frequency of participation, how does that shake out? Does familiarity breed contempt? Another committee member responded that if someone is annoyed, he or she would probably participate more often.
- Another member commented that, coming from a state where he interacts with many of the same stakeholders, there are quite a few who are dissatisfied with how the process has worked out regarding allocations and other issues. Have you considered looking at results by state? If the survey was conducted in New York, might find out that you get a different range of negative vs. positive responses.
- A committee member expressed interest in the group who indicated they never participate or only participate once per year. What is unique about them in terms of the Council being able to contact someone who never or rarely participates? There must be something in the questionnaire to distinguish this. They seem over-represented, so have you considered where they got the survey?
- It was noted that another dynamic to consider is that there are two groups of people — regulated vs. non-regulated stakeholders. They would have some different perspectives and interesting revelations. The results could be binned by those entities, which could provide some interesting revelations.
- Another committee member was interested in why the for-hire group is so dissatisfied. The state of Maryland took an in-depth look at the for-hire industry and got very similar results. It consisted of primarily Chesapeake Bay with some coastal representatives. It would be worth looking more deeply into why they are dissatisfied. Are there any for-hire stakeholders participating in the advisory group or working group that is developing the strategic plan? Are they under or over-represented?
- It was stated by one committee member that he has seen a lot of strategic plans and has been through four or five at the university level. People invest lots of time and effort into these plans and then they sit on a shelf because in reality there is very little they can do to change their models. At universities, these are driven by tuition returns, etc. What is there in these results that would change the Council's process?
- Another committee member agreed with these comments and noted that universities have these plans and generally try to hide from them, but the Council's Strategic Plan is different in that the Council meets annually to determine priorities for implementation for the following year. Do people know about this implementation plan? We need to ask folks if they are aware of the implementation plan and how that is used to make forward progress, as they might value the plan more. The most telling arguments were that the Council needs to improve social and economic information and analysis. Were there any surprises and as a result of all this, will there be significant changes in the plan and in the how it will be implemented?
- There was discussion whether and to what extent people understand the system in terms of how management is actually accomplished, and if people actually understand the different roles? There seems to be some conflation of roles — there are a lot of players involved, lots of organizations. Another point is that the governing document (Magnuson-Stevens Act) and the National Standards consists of nine or ten mutually orthogonal objectives that are extremely difficult to satisfy. It is difficult to affect allocation without

impacting discards, etc. Getting that part across to stakeholders will be extremely difficult. Is there an opportunity within the Communication goal to make some headway here?

The Committee provided the following recommendations when asked for suggestions regarding tracking the progress of priorities within the Council's five-year research plan, and for effective coordination with the Science Center on development of priorities.

- One committee member stated that he thinks there's a weak link between the Strategic Plan, the Implementation Plan and the Research plan. He doesn't ever remember discussing this at an SSC meeting. There's a very weak link between providing requested advice to the Council and improving the quality of the five-year research plan. This is an area for growth, but the role of SSC has been minimal because this has not been asked of the SSC nor advocated for by the members.
- Another committee member noted that it's an excellent question, and there is probably not a simple answer. When putting man on the moon, everyone in NASA knew what the mission was and there was a coordinated plan moving forward. Not so sure that there's such a coordinated approach in fisheries (e.g., different councils definite overfishing and overfished in different ways). How can we be responsive to national standards and the MSA if there is no coherent approach to this?
- One committee member commented that strategic plans are usually forage for dust bunnies, but he has also been impressed with how well the staff and Executive Director have referred to the Strategic Plan in the annual planning process. We need more evaluation of feedback and how well we are making progress — the priorities are there, but are we making true progress.
- It was noted that with respect to implementation of strategic plans, that we live in a finite world with infinite wants. When we try to implement things, we never explain how something ends up on the cutting room floor, in other words, explaining how certain priorities get excluded from the implementation plan. That might go a long way towards helping stakeholder understanding, describing why things weren't done.
- It was stated that one of the things people do when a strategic plan is mentioned is make jokes about it, which is one of the reasons it is never adopted. Whoever is doing it can never marshal the resources to get it done. We could put more emphasis on strategic plans and instead of planning forward, look at how we spent the budget past five years and which goals/objectives did the plan accomplish?
- A committee member noted his favorable view of strategic plans; a lot of folks have a bad taste because they look at it from the wrong end of the lens. We all spend money and how do we make those choices to spend it on project A vs. project B? What was the tool used to make those choices? That would help establish accountability — you then have some reference point for criticism on how you spent your money. Knowing where you're trying to go is critical to justifying how you spent money and improve governance of fisheries. A strategic plan is a touchstone for how to improve how we make decisions.
- Another committee member stated that he has advised the regional council on academic accreditation, and having a strategic plan is looked at as an important thing. He's just not sure we've looked into whether we are implementing the Strategic Plan effectively.

Section 3: Public Input Sessions

Three in-person public input sessions and a general public webinar were conducted to provide an opportunity for stakeholders to offer feedback on the previous five years and recommendations for future priorities. Similar to the advisory panel webinars, participants initially received a presentation on the survey results.

Narragansett, Rhode Island

Attendees had a number of questions during the presentation:

- Regarding the numbers on the respondent roles slide, it was noted that Rhode Island has hundreds of participants in the summer flounder fishery alone - these numbers reflect a small percentage of participants.
- Attendees asked how the survey was distributed and if it was publicly available? It was stated that the survey was heavily weighted toward the Mid-Atlantic states, and there would have been a higher response rate from Rhode Island if it was a member of the Council, and the representative had reached out through their base. They also stated that no notice of the survey came out through the state agency listserve.
- It was noted that Pennsylvania had more responses than the state of Rhode Island, when Rhode Island harvests more fish than all the Mid-Atlantic states combined. This reflects upon us poorly and diminishes the credibility. Either we (Rhode Island respondents) messed up something or the survey failed to reach Rhode Island stakeholders.
- How does the Council respond to the survey question saying that people weren't satisfied with incorporating input into the process? One attendee noted that this was really dependent on how long people have been in the process. Someone new has a completely different opinion than someone who's been in it for years.
- Another attendee stated that if people only answered some of the questions, and said they weren't satisfied, that should be looked at differently than someone who answers all the questions. If you care enough on one end but not the other, that dissatisfaction should be weighed accordingly.
- On the vision statement question (regarding if this is still an appropriate vision?), were there any statements as to why people would answer no? Is the question whether it's a good statement in its essence or good in the sense that the Council can have an effect on these things?
- Who are the interested public?
- Why is there so much negativity on the for-hire goal ratings? Is there an explanation or basis for that?
- Why are people interested in outreach to high schools, universities, etc? How far should that go, and how many resources should be spent for what benefit?
 - Another respondent noted that hopefully more communication would be directed to folks that land the fish, like in Rhode Island. It appears that focus was on Mid-Atlantic states, not on New England states where a lot of Mid-Atlantic species are landed. The Council didn't hear from Rhode Island because Rhode Islanders didn't know about the survey.
 - One of the issues would be better communication to states outside Mid-Atlantic.
- An attendee asked for clarification on the non-governmental organization group and the difference between that and interested public?
- Another attendee asked why did NGOs rate incorporating economic and social analysis poorly?
- What are forage species? Another attendee noted that they are fish like menhaden, which can also eat the eggs/larvae of larger fish like striped bass. There needs to be an appropriate balance.
- Regarding the Governance goal, an attendee asked what is meant by stakeholder interests are accurately understood - who are the stakeholders referred to? It would be nice to understand why NGOs have such a negative response to this objective. Do they feel they are stakeholders and they're not getting their interests understood?
 - Another attendee stated that NGOs get involved in issues because it perpetuates their existence not necessarily because it serves the public. They have a private goal that sometimes conflicts with the best interests of the public.

- Are there members of the public surveyed who consume the fish but don't harvest it? Consumers are huge number of people and are often neglected.
- What about going to public where people are eating seafood? Seafood shows, stuff during the season, etc.? Another attendee stated that this is a fishery management council, so to interview people who eat seafood doesn't really get at management issues.
- One attendee noted that sometimes people aren't as connected to the process but would be interested in participating and would have opinions if they knew how to participate.

Attendees had the following comments after the presentation:

- One attendee stated that he believes you have to start with the foundation, which is survival of the egg. If you don't produce fish, they die. The ecosystem approach and habitat protection should be the main instrument protecting whole foundation of fisheries. He noted that oil companies are legally allowed to dump chemicals to deal with oil spills that are more toxic than oil itself, and we need to consider pollution/toxins and the impact on the food chain. The Council needs to spend more time looking at the base of the food chain and how it is being altered, rather than chasing down fishermen to determine who should catch how much. The system is not looking at the food chain -- survival of the egg is the main instrument. He noted that fishermen take the blame when pollution causes fish declines. Where was the National Marine Fisheries Service who are supposed to protect the fish?
- Another attendee agreed with the above comments and noted that the dispersants used in the Gulf oil spill were more toxic than the oil. Corporations with the money can cover their tracks well. He noted that in Rhode Island, they use 1,500 gallons of chlorine a day to treat sewage, and sulfates to neutralize that, which has caused a tremendous drop in shellfish. Environmental groups haven't stood up against the use of these chemicals. Fishermen see the difference over time and the harm that it causes.
- Several other attendees agreed that pollution is problem, but there is a limit to what NMFS can do and regulation of pollutants is not necessarily part of that.
- One attendee read a prepared statement:
 - He is representing over 7500 recreational anglers from the Rhode Island Saltwater Anglers Association. They believe private anglers are underrepresented on the Mid-Atlantic Council
 - According to NOAA Fisheries Economics of the U.S. recreational fishing has as much impact as commercial. In Rhode Island, it is roughly equal between the two.
 - The Council is weighted toward commercial interest; it needs private angler and for-hire representation to balance it out and economics shows why recreational and for-hire interests need more representation in council process.
 - Fluke, black sea bass, scup, and bluefish along with forage are experiencing shifts in abundance northeast into the New England states and regulations are not adjusting for these shifts.
 - The New England states are not adequately represented on council and this needs to be addressed.
 - They agree with the goals of communication, increased management efficiency, etc. but the Council should pay more attention to shifting species distributions.
 - An emphasis on ecosystems is important, including forage fish, and manage for abundance of fish in the ocean, even if some are released; therefore, they support increasing target and reference points.
- There was some disagreement regarding the representation of commercial vs. recreational interests at both the Council and ASMFC, and if there was an appropriate balance. The main point was that Rhode Island has no representation on the Mid-Atlantic Council. The ASFMC has applied some pressure to try to shift allocations, but that has not worked out.
- When asked if there were ways the Council could address representation by Rhode Island, all attendees agreed that there is no substitute for a Council seat.
 - There is recognition that the Council has taken steps to address representation at the Committee level and that is appreciated and there has been some positive effect, but attendees still feel that their interests are under-represented.
 - The New England Council liaison is only one person, and there is a limit to how much one person can be leaned on to represent an entire region.

- Attendees recommended sending notices to the Rhode Island DEM listserv – while they all received notice of this public meeting, they did not receive notice of the Council’s survey.

Toms River, New Jersey

- One attendee noted that in looking at the performance ratings, he doubted any one was 50 percent excellent and good. How do Council and staff react to these poor ratings? The objectives are well-defined and the mission is great, but scores are horrible.
- Another attendee responded that a 50 percent rating would mean he wouldn't have a job if he was judged like this on his job. It gives the impression that the Council doesn't know what they're doing, which he doesn't think is the case. However, he is not surprised, and hears it all the time from members of his fishing organization.
 - Perfect example: black sea bass is completely rebuilt and we have a short season. The Council should open up the fishery, especially with electronic reporting, there should be no secret anymore regarding what people are catching. A two-fish bycatch season is a joke.
 - There is a lot of negative feedback from the for-hire category probably from issues like that.
 - He also noted that busy fishermen can't come to all meetings.
 - We need to go back to NMFS and ask them to give more fish to people for both black sea bass and fluke. The recreational sector was supposed to get a fluke increase this year and got nothing – a 40 percent increase became zero.
 - Also, the available days at sea aren't there anymore due to the short season and bad weather. At least the commercial fishery fishes under a quota and they can switch fishing days. The for-hire sector is on a time clock and can't make up lost days. This is probably where a lot of negative feedback on the for-hire side is coming from.
 - We need the flexibility to take weather, etc. into account on recreational side. The public doesn't understand the details of why regulations are set the way they are, for example Wave 3 vs. Wave 5 effort. People that get on for-hire boats don't understand. Let the for-hire fleets pick their own days.
 - Finally, it's hard to get help today on these boats - can't employ people long enough to get through a year with the seasons set up the way they are.
- Another attendee indicated he filled out the survey online. He suggested that if an FMAT is formed for an amendment or framework that isn't resource sustainability related, but more of an administrative process, the Council really should rely on advisory panel input.
 - Showing up as part of the public and being able to comment on at an FMAT meeting really is not as helpful and is really not part of the process. He provided the example of the Surfclam/Ocean Quahog Excessive Shares Amendment.
 - Especially when actions affect business models of fisheries, we really should take advantage of fishermen's knowledge -- not to steer the direction of preferred alternatives but to give information about alternatives. Industry has more to contribute than waiting to see a document and then picking it apart. He agreed that providing input as part of the advisory panel has not really been effective to address this.
- One individual noted that he has served on the Surfclam and Ocean Quahog Advisory Panel for more than 30 years. He has participated in writing FMPs and feels that now there's no transparency. The FMAT writes it, which is mostly NMFS employees. They all come with orders from their superiors. Then they also write parts of document. They write it, impose it, and enforce it. That's not fair to the industry.
 - Fisheries are businesses, and if you want to make everybody poor you can do it. States have some of the screwiest rules in the world. We have a finite resource and hundreds of fishermen who are made poor by design. Business is almost considered naughty word. This applies to the for-hire sector too.
 - In most fisheries there is not enough fish to go around, so we have to exclude fishermen in some way or the other. We have created a system (in general) that is approaching being unworkable and NMFS is partly responsible. The Council is not pushing back against this. FMATs need to have industry members, but NMFS doesn't want to hear from industry. There is a better relationship with NEFSC for the clam industry, but the regional office is not interested in hearing from industry.
- One suggestion for accountability is that in between Council meetings, you should be able to defend your voting record from a Council meeting. Members should be able to explain their votes.

- It was also noted that most Council members who are appointed don't get paid to read, they get paid to show up, and they wing it. This is very dangerous. They don't understand the issues, and that makes it difficult to make a reasonable argument to Council members regarding a management approach. We rely too much on trying to figure out what other members will do.
 - It can be overwhelming for new Council members to learn how to work through material; there is NMFS training, but one suggestion might be for the Council itself to have some in-house training for new members.
- One attendee provided a brief history of the surfclam and ocean quahog ITQ (Individual Transferrable Quota) program and noted that at the time it was created everyone was still learning about the process and people were quite willing to think outside the box, or to create the box. The clam industry had to be managed because it was its own worst enemy.
 - This system has been very successful and should be considered for more fisheries.
 - He noted that the Council used to meet every month, now meet 6 times a year. While fisheries like sea bass and fluke get debated endlessly, the rest don't and are given very little time.
 - Staff and FMAT proposals can be hundreds of pages. Debate and motions are often too short for the issues at hand. If you're the audience and you're invested in the decision, and they're not making informed decisions, you have serious problems with the reliability of the Council.
 - We need to have better transparency, and more input. We don't have advisory panel meetings anymore, only once or twice a year and never in person. We now have advisory panel members who don't know the difference between a surfclam and an ocean quahog – the Council just appointed everyone that applied.
 - Advisory panel involvement needs to be improved; members would be willing to meet at the Council offices to save the Council money in order to have meaningful discussion.
- Another attendee asked if the Council was planning to look at the analysis from other angles? Collectively, the questions are pointed toward the Council - members, staff, etc. It is referred to as the Council collectively, but answers may differ with regard to which component of the Council process the ratings and comments may be targeted at. Some components may be meeting objectives better than others.
- One attendee noted that the state of New Jersey (agency staff) used to confer with fellow Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) members prior to a meeting. Is this done by Council members as well?
 - Both Council members noted that this is done Commission meetings, but not necessarily for Council meetings.
 - It was noted that this brings up question of each state getting one vote at ASMFC, where it is important for everyone to be able to decide what that should be. This is less important at the Council, because votes are on an individual basis. It is great when state can vote as a block but can't always do that.
 - An attendee sees this as a great way to exchange information and help Council members be prepared.
 - A Council member noted that in terms of understanding material, there's a balance between timeliness of decision making and taking the time to fully understand an issue before making a decision. What are you most interested in as members of the public? Expediency or getting the decision right.
 - Attendees are looking for the right decision.
 - Getting a briefing book a week before a meeting makes it difficult to ensure the right decision is being made, for members to digest committee actions.
- An attendee noted that the recent public hearing document for the excessive shares amendment had only one alternative that had any input from industry whatsoever. People in Gloucester don't know how the business works. Used to have committee and AP meetings to jointly to explain things to them. This practice should be revived.
- It was noted that the coastwide recreational season for black sea bass dictated by NMFS has a May 15 opening date. Fish are in and gone by the time they can even get out. Why can't we come up with a different opening date? The northern zone is restricted while the southern zone can fish all season.

- Other comments include loss of employment. We are losing boats at docks all over the place here. Why is that? Lack of participation. People are tired of short seasons and having to throw a bunch of fish back. There are gaps in seasons between important target species, where boats just sit at the dock.
- Considering this is a five-year strategic plan, how does the Council evolve to respond to changing stock distribution?
- There was a suggestion for the Council to increase partnerships with universities and Sea Grant organizations. The Council does a great job getting information out there, but Sea Grant organizations can help link to stakeholders and foster relationships with industry.
- It was suggested that survey respondents almost need to be rated, given respondents from the Midwest and the number of questions with no opinion responses. Some of these are complicated issues, but we almost need to emphasize the Council more to not draw conclusions from this group because they don't have an opinion. The strong opinions are more important.
- An attendee asked if we have tried displaying data differently-- by objective with rankings going down the side for each stakeholder category to more clearly highlight how answers differed by respondent role.
- It was noted the relatively low number of respondents in almost all categories, while recreational fishing had the most respondents. NGOs had low response rates. This is a small universe to draw conclusions from. Point is that there's a low level of response to individual questions relative to the number of survey respondents.
- A Council member noted that perhaps the respondent role categories should be considered in proportion to their available sample size. NGOs is the lowest number but probably well represented, whereas the recreational fishery is probably a very low proportion of recreational users.
- There was an additional comment about the economics of the for-hire industry. The number of people going fishing is going to continue to decrease with the way the limits and size limits are set (e.g. one striped bass).

Hampton, Virginia

The attendees offered the following comments:

- One attendee suggested having representatives or liaisons for each stakeholder group for later stages of strategic plan development to make sure their concerns are being heard and considered.
- Another suggestion to have people connected to tackle shops, etc. come and provide input.
- Attendees also suggested reaching out to a wider constituent base, such as universities. They both are students and found out about this meeting by Googling. A handful of different groups came up and this happened to be a local meeting. Their attendance was really focused on learning, as it is important for students to have real world examples beyond the classroom.
- Both would consider themselves in either the interested public category – mostly general public, with some science/research thrown in as a result of college coursework. Both are actively involved in marine science undergraduate research.
- One attendee noted that “General public” is toughest role to be in to get involved, because people may not be in touch with the communication outlets that stakeholders in other role categories might use to find out about meetings like this.
- It was noted that generally in fisheries management, we hear from those who have an interest (e.g. fishermen); but in 2013 the state of Virginia had a lot of general public not involved in fishing but who didn’t want crab dredging. The general public is very important — how do we make those connection.
- It was stated that if the attendees had not been Googling for this, seeking information from the Virginia Institute of Marine Science or word of mouth from related groups might have been the next try. At school, professors and the department try to make students aware of different organizations involved in fisheries.
- One comment was that a common theme with the general public is ecosystem health and management, but obviously it is harder for a Council to entertain those concerns from the general public. Fisheries seems to be a good way to combine an interest in ecosystem health with marine biology.

Public Webinar

- One attendee expressed surprise that the existing 2014-2018 Strategic Plan does not focus more on the National Standards, given that the Council has to adhere to them, and they drive the Council's actions. In the next plan maybe it should be made clearer that those constraints are in place. A lot of recreational stakeholders don't seem to be that sensitive to preventing overfishing. Maybe if that were clearer in the plan there would be less strife about some of those things.
- It was noted that the comments from somebody who is making a living off the resource and using it all the time have the same weight as someone who is just interested in it. It's unclear how to get around that with this survey methodology, but it is concerning that everyone's comments have the same weight.
- Surprise was expressed that there weren't more NGOs on the webinar. The Mid-Atlantic is not like New England and he would have expected that NGOs would have had more comments.

Additional Public Comment

One individual who was unable to attend the public meetings submitted written comments by email. His comments were organized around the four goal areas of the Council's 2014-2018 Strategic Plan.

Communication

- Fisheries science and monitoring data need to be better translated into information products for diverse constituent groups; policy makers and elected officials. University Sea Grant programs and the National Estuarine Research Reserve programs do better jobs and have greater public confidence than outreach programs by the FMCs/NOAA Fisheries.
- There needs to be more dialog on issues related to biodiversity loss; changes in the marine food chain; increases in natural mortality; interactions with protected and natural trust resources; shifting ocean baseline; etc.

Science

- Fishery managers should transition toward an adaptive, ecosystems-based fisheries management approach. Consideration should be given to how primary productivity is affected by nutrient enrichment, warming waters, and increased ocean acidity.
- There is a need for research on economic multiplier effect of fishing in coastal counties. Specifically, we need to examine the consequences of spending/investment to direct, indirect and induced benefits in coastal counties as well as the role of saltwater angling in the local economy. Managers should also consider the importance of fishing as a historical component of many coastal communities.
- Scientists and managers should pursue new ways to involve stakeholders in data gathering and monitoring initiatives that support an ecosystem approach to fisheries management.
- The Council should explore more cost-effective options for monitoring onboard commercial vessels (such as electronic monitoring systems).

Management

- Objectives 11 through 14 are generally good, but the Council may need to revisit allocations between commercial and recreational groups as species ranges shift in space and time.

Governance

- There is a need for better coordination among agencies and organizations involved in ocean management and fisheries management. This is necessary to integrate the shifting ocean baseline, promote "compatible" ocean uses, and coordinate various management endeavors across state and federal waters.

Section 4: Management Partner Outreach

The Council engages with several management partners in the implementation of identified priorities. The Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office and the Northeast Fisheries Science Center of NOAA Fisheries provide regulatory, analytical and scientific support to the Council; the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and New England Fishery Management Councils are critical partners in the joint management of multiple species; and the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council has lead management authority for several migratory species through the Council's area of jurisdiction.

Outreach meetings were scheduled with management partners, either in-person or by conference call. All partners were asked to provide recommendations for the Council's priorities during the next five years, as well as suggestions for improved coordination on objectives of mutual interest.

NOAA Fisheries

The Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (Regional Office) and the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (Science Center) jointly offered the following comments and recommendations.

NOAA Strategic Planning Process

- The Regional Office and the Science Center each have a strategic plan. Broadly, both plans support much more than just the fisheries mission of the agency.
- Most of the fisheries objectives in the Regional Office strategic plan support the Mid-Atlantic and New England Councils. In addition to the Councils, the agency also supports the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission as well as NOAA Fisheries Headquarters.
- The challenge for the agency and the Council is how do we work collectively toward shared priorities in a more effective fashion. To do so, there will need to be some flexibility in the Mid-Atlantic Council's Strategic Plan to accommodate/recognize different agency priorities.
- It is expected that the next strategic planning effort for the region will be one integrated plan for both the Regional Office and the Science Center.

Recommendations: Future Priorities

- Wind energy:
 - The agency is committed to coexistence with wind energy and encourages the Council to proactively engage on this issue and work towards both sustainable fisheries and sustainable wind.
 - The analyses needed for decisions regarding offshore wind and aquaculture need to be coordinated as the information is the same regardless of the topic. An ecosystem approach is essential for these issues so as to not duplicate effort.
 - The Council does have tools that it can repurpose for addressing these issues, e.g. designation of Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPCs) to highlight their importance to fishing, rather than to set aside as an area to prohibit fishing. Be more creative with the existing authorities provided in the Magnuson-Stevens Act.
- Aquaculture:
 - While this activity is not currently permitted in federal waters, it is an administration priority
 - Similar to wind energy, it would be good for the Council to position itself at the forefront of smart development on this issue.
 - As noted above, an ecosystem approach that includes coordinated analyses for both wind/offshore energy and aquaculture is necessary to make the most efficient use of available resources.
- Climate-related issues:

- The agency would like to see all of the east coast Councils and the Commission address changing species distributions more directly. All entities need to have a discussion among themselves to ensure consistency in approaches.
 - This is an issue that lends itself well to scenario planning, which is less intensive than Management Strategy Evaluation. The Council could develop different strategies for each of possible future state: stocks moving in/out of a jurisdiction, declining, expanding or moving offshore.
 - Within the current structure, the Council could make better use of committees. New England Council Committees meet outside of Council meetings, and motions from the committee are largely unopposed when presented to the full Council. Many Mid-Atlantic Council committees meet as a Committee-of-the-Whole, so New England Council members feel that they have very little influence on the discussion or final decision.
 - Restructuring the Demersal Committee could allow for the concerns/interests of New England stakeholders to be addressed and for committee recommendations to go through minimal changes when presented to the full Council.
- Allocations will also be impacted by climate change and need to be addressed in a generic fashion to ensure the focus is not on winners and losers when considering optimal use of the resource.
- The Council's Risk Policy could also incorporate a structure for species that do well in a changing climate and consider situations that might allow for more risk.
- Agency priorities beyond those outlined above include protected resources (primarily entanglements), community resiliency (how the issues below will impact fishing communities), and optimum use of the resource (as it pertains to commercial and recreational opportunities).

Recommendations: Process and Coordination

- The NRCC was supposed to be a process to discuss overlapping council priorities, although that has not really been the case. Although the intent is to discuss science, it could provide a venue for all five Atlantic coast organizations (three Councils, the Commission, NOAA Fisheries) to hear/discuss the same information regarding coastwide issues and agency priorities.
- A January/February NRCC intercessional could be added to review New England, Mid-Atlantic and Commission priorities once those have been finalized. Focus discussion on items that have potential to achieve economies of scale (e.g., extended economic analyses).

Recommendations: Strategic Plan Components

- Stakeholder engagement should still be a core component of the plan. Consider a broader definition of stakeholders in light of community resiliency issues and re-engage with communities that may be impacted by Council actions.
- Electronic reporting is a tool the agency will need to rely on to improve information on multiple ocean uses. Tools cannot be designed for just one use. Maintaining this as a strategy or objective could also be a way to engage stakeholders via collaborative research.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Strategic Plan

The Commission also has a Strategic Plan that it uses in a similar fashion to guide its activities and workload planning as noted below:

- The Commission will be approving its fourth Strategic Plan for 2019-2023 and will be considering some modest but significant changes (NOTE: The 2019-2023 ASMFC Strategic Plan was approved at the Commission's May 2019 meeting).
- The current Strategic Plan is organized around the following components: Mission, Vision, Driving Forces, Goals, and Strategies.
 - The Vision will likely be modified to reflect/include "cooperation." Some challenges over the past year have raised concern that the Commission needs to re-emphasize its guiding principle of cooperation and collaboration.
 - The "Driving Forces" section of the plan describes factors that impact and influence the Commission's actions and will be restructured to include Changing Ocean Conditions as the primary driver that impacts the remaining forces (Allocation, Science as the Foundation, Ecosystem Functions, Competing Ocean Uses, Protected Species, Increased Cooperation/Collaboration).
 - The Commission currently has seven goal areas that are broadly focused on fisheries management, fisheries science, compliance/law enforcement, habitat and ecosystem health, outreach, legislative activities, and administration. Another goal focused on data collection will be added to reflect program oversight of the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program.
- The Commission has a full plate of issues, and over the course of the next five years the members would like to focus more time on the most high-profile items. While all issues are important, not everything can be prioritized at the same time.
- Another priority will be fostering interstate communication, collaboration and understanding to more effectively resolve high profile issues.
- Staff will also be focused on making the Commission's Strategic Plan more accessible and useful to commissioners and has restructured its annual Action Plan as one method for doing so.

Recommendations: Future Priorities

- Given their offshore jurisdiction, Councils spend more time on the issue of competing ocean uses than the Commission. This may be something to consider and focus on more in future strategic planning given the multitude of ocean activities underway.
- Changing ocean conditions might also be a priority due to the impacts they are having on the activities of all management partners on the Atlantic coast, but most obviously species distributions.

Recommendations: Process and Coordination

- Management partner cooperation and communication:
 - Given the challenges imposed by changing ocean conditions, all four management bodies (three east coast Councils and the Commission) and our federal partners will need to focus more time on this issue.
 - How can we best allocate work between the four management bodies (Councils and Commission) without duplicating efforts given that staff resources for all are stretched thin?
 - More planning at a strategic level with all entities is critical. How do we communicate further during the year regarding changes in strategic direction that often occur at separate decision-making tables?
 - We need to find an efficient approach that saves staff time/resources and provides assurance that the concerns of all management bodies will be considered and addressed.
 - Perhaps some regularly scheduled leadership (Chairs, Vice-Chairs, EDs) check-in calls to discuss strategic direction for jointly-managed (or shifting) species could address issues of big picture planning/direction.

- Governance considerations:
 - This issue will only become more important as species distributions change.
 - The NRCC (Northeast Regional Coordinating Council) doesn't include the South Atlantic Council, nor does SEDAR (Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review) include the Mid-Atlantic and New England Councils. However, the fall 2017 NRCC meeting was great start to communication regarding shifting species impacts at the operational science level.
 - The NRCC could continue to be a forum for discussions regarding how science is addressing changing ocean conditions, with inclusion of the South Atlantic Council, Southeast Fisheries Science Center, and Southeast Regional Office in a portion of the NRCC venue for these large-scale issues.

New England Fishery Management Council

Recommendations: Future Priorities

- Offshore wind/energy and habitat:
 - This issue is constantly evolving with the number of projects and moving very fast because the federal BOEM (Bureau of Ocean Energy Management) notice and comment process is only 18 months long.
 - Both Councils have similar policy statements on offshore energy and the staffs work collaboratively to share workload on tracking of projects and drafting comment letters. While some projects have greater overlap in one jurisdiction vs. the other, the staffs are closely linked on these issues.
 - Regional Habitat Assessment: This is a joint project between the Councils that will also involve the Commission and is focused on status and distribution of key inshore/offshore habitats. The goal is to better support Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) delineation and Council management of that habitat. The assessment should be of assistance in designating of EFH in a way that is useful for offshore energy projects, but it is also a product that the Councils should be able to use for other purposes.
- Allocation and access:
 - The Council seems to be dealing with state allocation systems that may impact its ability to create flexibility for industry as species distributions shift and change.
 - It can be extremely challenging to react to changing conditions with this type of system, and equally challenging to modify it.
 - Changing species distributions may also require the Council to re-think its approach to accountability measures. If New England fisheries start catching more Mid-Atlantic managed species, it may impact Mid-Atlantic vessels' ability to harvest those species.
- Data collection and consistency:
 - While data collection is relatively consistent across both Councils, rather than a single reporting system that covers everyone, there are sub-systems for different fisheries that make data access challenging. For example, surfclam/ocean quahog data are in a separate database.
 - There are a few inconsistencies in trip reporting requirements between Mid-Atlantic and New England fisheries, such as pre-trip notification for the observer program. It would be less confusing for industry to resolve these inconsistencies.
 - There also needs to be a focus on collection of data at the resolution necessary to make the appropriate decisions regarding conflicting ocean uses/offshore energy. Currently, logbook data do not contain location information that is useful for offshore wind issues.

Recommendations: Process and Coordination

- Joint fishery management plans:
 - There is really no good process for determining what the joint management priorities should be. For an action to move forward, both Councils must agree on the preferred approach. A better process is needed to reconcile differing priorities and move forward.
 - While each Council includes representatives from the cooperating Council on the joint species committees, that process has not necessarily been as effective as it was probably intended.
 - New England Council committees meet outside of Council meetings, while it seems that Mid-Atlantic Council committees have operated more as a Committee-of-the-Whole in recent years.
 - Although not universally true, most New England Council committee motions carry a lot of weight when heard/reviewed at the full council level.
 - There is reluctance on the part of New England Council members to travel for a Committee-of-the-Whole meeting, particularly if the scheduled time on the agenda is fairly short. There is a sense they will be competing to have their interests heard, as there are many more Mid-Atlantic Council members than at the committee level.
 - Consider conducting committee meetings for jointly-managed species outside of Council meetings to allow more time for engagement and dialogue.

- Regional coordination:
 - All three management bodies (New England Council, Mid-Atlantic Council, Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission) discuss upcoming issues at the fall NRCC meeting, but the timing is such that none of the management bodies have finalized priorities for the following year.
 - Perhaps adding a regular call at the beginning of each year, prior to the spring NRCC meeting would be helpful to review final priorities and discuss overlaps and divergences.
 - Consider ways to enhance dialogue with New England stakeholders (not necessarily Council members), such as in-person outreach in New England on issues of importance that may impact stakeholder interests.

Recommendations: Strategic Plan Components

- Consider including a sub-link to the Implementation Plans on the website homepage (under “About Us>Strategic Plan”) so that they can be more easily/quickly located, rather than only on the sidebar of the Strategic Plan webpage.
- Perhaps refine some objectives to be more specific or constructing them so as to allow for performance metrics to be assigned. This could create a stronger connection between the Strategic Plan and the Implementation Plans.
- Consider inclusion/mention of all management partners in the new plan (the current plan only includes reference to the Commission).

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

Recommendations: Priority Issues

- Shifting species distributions and allocations:
 - We are just seeing the tip of the iceberg on this issue with regard to cobia and snapper grouper species.
 - For species that are shifting, from an operational perspective, set aside any permit-related items (i.e., requirements for commercial or recreational snapper grouper permits) and let each council continue handling those as they have been within their respective jurisdictions. Instead, address allocating a portion of an annual catch limit to a specific region for future management.
 - A related concern is where are fishermen catching these fish that we are not even aware of yet.
- Recreational catch data and discards:
 - The focus should be on addressing the reliability of those data and reporting structures. Getting a single report to cover everyone's needs is difficult, but there needs to be some coordination on this.
 - Permitting is tied to this issue — understanding how fishermen and their permits overlap these jurisdictions has been an important learning experience (e.g., Gulf & South Atlantic e-reporting for charter vessels that operate in both jurisdictions).
 - Each state developed their own solutions regarding private angler reporting in the Gulf of Mexico and we could learn from this. Even though ACCSP is putting together their own mobile app, if we could get agreement on set of data standards on east coast, we could avoid some of the issues that occurred in the Gulf.
 - We also need clarity from the agency regarding the application of “most stringent” reporting requirements to vessels with permits from multiple jurisdictions. The South Atlantic Council would rather get less information, but have it be more timely/accurate.
- Offshore energy:
 - This is an issue that is heating up more for everyone.
 - Companies seem to have moved from not paying attention to fishermen, to now being excited to work together on development of trawling alleys and siting projects to promote/allow for fishing activities.
 - This issue has not been as front and center in the South Atlantic as in other regions, but interest is increasing so coordinating and learning from one another will be important.
- Some of these issues will be really difficult for the public to track —effective communication with constituents of all types will be critical. As an example, when the Councils were working on blueline tilefish, some charter captains did not know they needed Mid-Atlantic Council permits for bluefish.

Recommendations: Process and Coordination

- Changing and shifting species distributions and related management issues will require significant coordination. Likewise, reporting/permitting issues will also require cooperation to avoid duplication (ensuring stakeholders only report once) and stakeholder frustration.
- The South Atlantic Council is planning to expand liaison efforts into the Mid-Atlantic on a case-by-case basis, to help increase coordination and cooperation between the two councils and hopefully improve understanding of each other's priorities.
- Coordination approaches:
 - When the South Atlantic Council was the administrative lead for swordfish and billfish, it used to have an inter-council meeting where each council had the same number of representatives present. Each committee voted separately, and each vote was reported out to the larger group. This process worked fine as long as each council went forward with the committee votes as discussed.
 - Inclusion of Mid-Atlantic and New England members on South Atlantic Council committees seems to have worked well so far, despite the challenging nature of the issues (cobia, dolphin).
 - Continued use of the NRCC meetings to coordinate management priorities (not just science priorities) at some level is very helpful from a coastwide perspective.

- Opportunistic, informal sessions at meetings such as the American Fisheries Society annual meeting would also be a way to foster coordination. A joint council staffs meeting would be great for cross-fertilizations, but there are pros and cons and an awareness of adding yet another meeting to busy schedules.
- It could be helpful to promote a leadership call among the three east coast councils and the Commission between Council Coordination Committee meetings.
- When joint amendments come up at the South Atlantic, an informal conversation with the appropriate Gulf Council staff counterpart is helpful in addressing differing priorities. The Council has also worked with the Regional Office to involve them more on cross-jurisdictional amendments with the Gulf, to ensure that the two councils and agency are meeting each other's needs and to avoid conflicts.

Recommendations: Strategic Plan Components

- Consider maintaining stability in regulations, particularly in terms of recreational harvest.
- Consider including a strategy for data collection to work towards one report across all management bodies (i.e., one set of elements).
- Consider inclusion of an evaluation process. This could help focus future effort.
- Consider specifically linking amendments to the strategic plan to better identify how they are meeting goals and objectives.
- Perhaps think about opportunities for cross-fertilization at science level. As we think about cross-fertilization of councils and staff, it would be good to encourage similar cross-fertilization of SSC members or consideration of SSC liaisons.