

Strategic Planning: Facts and FAQs

CONTEXT

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council is developing a strategic plan that will guide the Council's fishery management efforts for the next decade. In September 2011, the Council launched the *Visioning and Strategic Planning Project* with the largest stakeholder engagement initiative in its history. Through online surveys, small group meetings, and position letters, more than 1,500 stakeholders provided feedback and ideas for the strategic plan. The results of this outreach and data gathering effort were published in July 2012 in the *Stakeholder Input Report*—a comprehensive and detailed summary of stakeholders' concerns and recommendations for Mid-Atlantic fisheries. The completion of the *Stakeholder Input Report* marked the beginning of the next phase of the project: Strategic Planning.

In August 2012, a working group composed of Council members, advisors, and other stakeholders met for the first time to begin work on a 10-year strategic plan. This fact sheet is intended to answer a few frequently asked questions about the Council's strategic planning process.

WHAT IS STRATEGIC PLANNING?

Broadly defined, strategic planning is a process by which an organization develops a strategy for fulfilling its responsibility and achieving goals more effectively. The planning process enables an organization to clarify its mission, articulate a vision of success, and prioritize specific goals.

The Council's strategic plan will include five main components:

Vision: Describes an ideal state for Mid-Atlantic fisheries and for the Council as an organization.

Answers the question: "What do we want Mid-Atlantic fisheries to look like in the future?"

Mission: Articulates the organization's fundamental purpose.

Answers the question: "What do we exist to do?"

Goals: Broad, long-term aspirations that stay relatively consistent over time.

Answers the question: "What aspirations will help us to fulfill our Mission and move toward our Vision?"

Objectives: Short-term goals with clearly defined milestones and metrics; Can be periodically revised.

Answers the question: "What specific steps do we need to take to accomplish our goals?"

Tactics: Specific action items, or strategies, designed to help the organization achieve its goals and objectives.

Answers the questions: "What are we going to do, how are we going to do it, and who will be responsible?"

A critical component of strategic planning is an assessment of the organization's current internal and external environments. This process, sometimes known as a **SWOT Analysis** (Internal Strengths & Weaknesses, External Opportunities & Threats) helps to identify factors that could help or hinder progress toward the organization's goals.

WHY DOES THE COUNCIL NEED A STRATEGIC PLAN?

Every organization, regardless of their successes or challenges, can benefit from a strategic plan. A strategic plan ensures that individuals understand the priorities and objectives of the. It also helps ensure that the organization operates efficiently while clearly communicating its objectives and rationales for decisions to the public.

HOW IS THE PLAN BEING DEVELOPED?

The strategic plan will be developed using a consensus-based approach with guidance and facilitation from a neutral strategic planning expert. The planning process will rely heavily input collected from stakeholders during the first phase of the project. Working group members, with various areas of expertise and experience, will collaboratively develop specific and actionable strategies for achieving the Council's goals.

WHEN WILL THE STRATEGIC PLAN BE FINISHED?

December 31, 2012 is the target date for completion of a complete draft for public review.

WHO IS INVOLVED IN PLANNING?

The strategic planning working group includes Council members who served on the Visioning and Strategic Planning Committee, former members of the Visioning Advisory Panel, and other key stakeholders. All strategic planning meetings are open to the public. An opportunity for public comment will be announced once the final draft has been published.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

Check out the website: www.mafmc.org/vision, or contact Mary Clark: mclark@mafmc.org, (302) 526-5261.