



2015 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

MID-ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

APPROVED DECEMBER 2014

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INTRODUCTION

In August 2013, the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council approved the 2014-2018 Strategic Plan. The Council's strategic plan provides the first comprehensive strategic approach for fisheries management in federal waters off the Mid-Atlantic coast. Over the next five years, the strategic plan will guide the Council's efforts to achieve sustainable and productive fisheries, a healthy marine ecosystem, and stable coastal communities.

Implementation of the strategic plan will be a long-term process supported through the annual development of one-year implementation plans that identify specific tasks necessary for achieving the Council's goals and objectives. Each year's implementation plan is designed to provide a comprehensive and realistic framework for merging the Council's ongoing projects with new initiatives.

The plan will be used by the Council and staff as a planning tool and as a way to update the public on progress toward achieving the goals and objectives of the strategic plan. Although the 2015 Implementation Plan was organized around the goals and objectives of the Council's strategic plan, it is largely focused on specific tasks to be undertaken in 2015. The plan will be updated and expanded each year to reflect the Council's progress and to accommodate new opportunities and challenges.

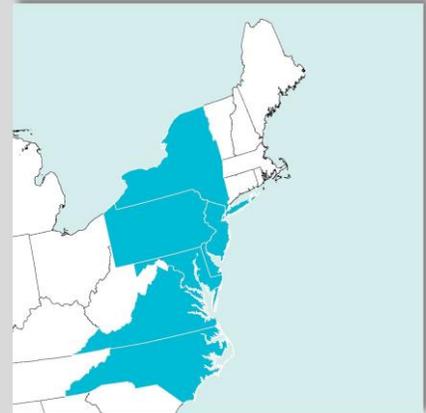
Strategic Plan Background

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

In August 2012, the Council established a Visioning and Strategic Planning Working Group composed of Council members, stakeholders, and regional leadership. Through a series of meetings from August-December 2012, the working group crafted a vision, mission, goals, and objectives for the strategic plan. The framework developed by the working group was further refined by Council staff and presented to the Council as a Draft Strategic Plan in June 2013. The final plan was approved by the Council at its August 2013 meeting.

ABOUT THE COUNCIL

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (also referred to as the Council or MAFMC) is responsible for the conservation and management of fish stocks within the federal 200-mile limit of the mid-Atlantic region (North Carolina through New York).



The Mid-Atlantic Council was established in 1976 by the Fishery Conservation and Management Act (later renamed the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, or MSA). The law created a 200 mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), eliminated foreign fishing effort within the EEZ, and charged eight regional councils with management of fishery resources in the newly expanded federal waters.

The Council develops fishery management recommendations which must be approved by the Secretary of Commerce before they become final. All of the Council's fishery management recommendations must be consistent with the ten national standards as defined by the MSA.

The Council develops fishery management recommendations for thirteen species of fish and shellfish, including summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, bluefish, Atlantic mackerel, short-finned squid, long-finned squid, butterfish, surfclams, ocean quahogs, tilefish, spiny dogfish and monkfish.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN STRUCTURE

The 2015 Implementation Plan is organized in to four sections, described below.

Proposed Deliverables

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

Action Development Checklist

A significant portion of the strategies included in the Council's strategic plan cannot ever be "completed" because they relate to tasks that should be considered an intrinsic part of every project or action. The *Action Development Checklist* section is the companion to the Proposed Deliverables section—it provides a mechanism for ensuring that the Council is upholding the standards included in its strategic plan. These tasks are expected to be addressed for each Council action for which they are relevant. The Action Development Checklist was designed to be used by the Council and Staff as a helpful guide for integrating the Council's strategic goals into everyday action.

Science and Research Needs

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

Proposed 2015 Implementation Activities

The *Proposed 2015 Implementation Activities* section identifies the specific activities and projects that the Council plans to begin or complete in 2015. The matrix is organized around the four goal areas identified in the strategic plan and includes anticipated timelines for completion of each task. Each activity is linked with one or more "primary" objectives from the strategic plan, indicated by a solid blue circle. Many activities are also linked with "secondary" objectives, indicated by an open blue circle.

STRATEGIC PLAN OVERVIEW

Vision

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

Mission

The Council manages marine fisheries in federal waters of the Mid-Atlantic region for their long-term sustainability and productivity consistent with the National Standards of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. The Council is committed to the effective stewardship of these fisheries and associated habitats by incorporating scientific information and informed public input in transparent processes that produce fishery management plans and programs.

Core Values

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

2014 – 2018 Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

COMMUNICATION

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

Objectives:

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

SCIENCE

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

Objectives:

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

MANAGEMENT

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

Objectives:

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

GOVERNANCE

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

Objectives:

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

PROPOSED 2015 DELIVERABLES

Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass

- 2016 – 2018 specifications (develop and approve)
- 2016 recreational management measures
- Fishery Performance Reports
- Comprehensive Summer Flounder Amendment (ongoing)
- Scup Gear Restricted Area Framework
- Summer flounder allocation project
- Black sea bass MSE and adaptive management project (initiate)

Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish

- 2016 squid and butterfish specifications (review)
- Squid capacity amendment (initiate)
- MSE review of Atlantic mackerel
- 2016 – 2018 specifications for Atlantic mackerel (develop and approve)
- Fishery Performance Reports
- Longfin squid mesh increase review
- Butterfish cap review

River Herring and Shad

- RH/S Cap for Atlantic mackerel fishery for 2016-2018
- RH/S Progress Update

Bluefish

- 2016 – 2018 specifications (develop and approve)
- Fishery Performance Report

Golden Tilefish

- 2016 specifications (review)
- Fishery Performance Report
- 5 year IFQ review
- Framework 2

Surfclams and Ocean Quahogs

- 2016 Specifications (review)
- Fishery Performance Reports
- Cost Recovery Amendment
- Excessive Shares Amendment (initiate)
- 5 year ITQ review (initiate)

Spiny Dogfish

- 2016 – 2018 specifications (develop and approve)
- Fishery Performance Report

Monkfish

- Amendment 6 (ongoing)
- Framework 9

Ecosystem and Ocean Planning/Habitat

- Deep Sea Coral Amendment
- National and International Habitat Practices Report
- Council Habitat Policy Documents
- Habitat Objectives for EAFM Document
- EFH Review Paper (evaluates EFH and HAPC designations, and Fishing Impact Analyses for all species) (initiate)

General

- EAFM guidance document
- Omnibus Observer Funding Amendment (GARFO Lead)
- Unmanaged forage fish action (initiate)

Communication and Outreach

- General Council communications plan
- Issue/action communication plans (e.g. Deep Sea Coral, Summer Flounder amendment)
- Fact sheets and outreach materials
- Document library/archive on the Council website
- Stakeholder group contact list updates (recreational clubs, commercial associations, ENGOs, etc.)
- Council comments on proposed MSA reauthorization legislation
- Website FAQ page
- Create river herring and shad web page

Science and Research

- Comprehensive research priority plan
- Mid-Atlantic Cooperative Research Program (revise RSA program)
- Evaluate for-hire data collection and identify Council action
- Rumble strip approach for setting multiple-year ABCs
- ABC control rule review (clarify regulatory language)

Workshops

- National SSC meeting
- Species and fisheries interactions workshop
- Cooperative Research Workshop

Possible Additions

- Scup Amendment (scoping)
- Additional Modification of Vessel Baseline Regulations (with NEFMC)
- Virtual workshop on website utility

ACTION DEVELOPMENT CHECKLIST

The following items should be used by staff and Council members in the development and evaluation of management alternatives.

Communication

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

Science

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

Management

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

Governance

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

SCIENCE AND RESEARCH NEEDS

Data Needs

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

Research Methodology, Funding, and Program Administration

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

Management Strategy Innovation

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

2015 IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES

Implementation Activity	Year				
	14	15	16	17	18
Communication & Outreach					
1. Complete strategic communications plan	•	•			
2. Update and expand stakeholder group lists	•	•			
3. Refine the Council's email distribution system	•	•			
4. Develop guidelines for collection and analysis of public input, including a stakeholder outreach checklist for council actions	•	•			
5. Fact sheets and outreach materials		•			
6. Document library/archive on the Council website		•			
7. Council comments on proposed MSA reauthorization legislation		•			
8. Website FAQ page		•			
9. Create river herring and shad web page		•			
10. Develop Council Actions pages	✓				
11. Complete initial phase of website development (finalize all existing pages)	✓				
12. Complete development of stakeholder contact database	✓				
13. Develop a website-based public comment system	✓				
14. Advise and support the Marine Resource Education Program (MREP)	✓				
15. Develop issue/action communication plans (e.g. Deep Sea Coral, Summer Flounder Amendment)	•	•	•	•	•
16. Continue to provide regular news and updates using social media tools	•	•	•	•	•
Science & Research					
17. Comprehensive research priority plan	•	•			
18. ABC control rule review (<i>Assessment level framework</i>)	•	•			
19. Mid-Atlantic Cooperative Research Program (revise RSA program)		•			
20. Evaluate for-hire data collection and identify Council action		•			
21. Rumble strip approach for setting multiple-year ABCs		•			
22. National SSC meeting		•			
23. Species and fisheries interactions workshop		•			
24. Cooperative Research Workshop		•			
25. Host East Coast Climate Change and Science Workshop	✓				
26. Complete Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Updates for all species				•	
27. Convene Scientific and Statistical Committee Meetings (as needed)	•	•	•	•	•
Management					
<i>Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass</i>					
28. Comprehensive Summer Flounder Amendment	•	•			
29. Scup Gear Restricted Area Framework	•	•			
30. Black Sea Bass MSE and adaptive management project		•			
31. Summer Flounder allocation project		•			

Implementation Activity	Year				
	14	15	16	17	18
<i>Mackerel, Squid, Butterfish and River Herring/Shad</i>					
32. Squid Capacity Amendment		•			
33. MSE review of Mackerel		•			
34. Longfin squid mesh increase review		•			
35. Butterfish cap review		•			
36. Slippage framework	✓				
<i>River Herring and Shad</i>					
37. Address additional conservation of river herring and shad through an interagency working group	•	•	•		
38. RH/S Cap for Atl. mackerel fishery for 2016-2018		•			
39. RH/S Progress Update		•			
<i>Tilefish</i>					
40. 5-year IFQ review	•	•			
41. Framework 2		•			
<i>Surfclam and Ocean Quahog</i>					
42. Excessive Shares Amendment	•	•			
43. Cost recovery Amendment	•	•			
44. 5 Year ITQ Review		•			
<i>Monkfish</i>					
45. Amendment 6	•	•			
46. Framework 9		•			
<i>Ecosystems and Ocean Planning/Habitat</i>					
47. Deep Sea Coral Amendment	•	•			
48. National and International Habitat Practices Report		•			
49. Council Habitat Policy Documents		•			
50. Habitat Objectives for EAFM Document		•			
51. EFH Review Paper (evaluates EFH and HAPC designations, and Fishing Impact Analyses for all species)		•			
<i>General</i>					
52. EAFM Guidance Document	•	•			
53. Omnibus Observer Funding Amendment (GARFO Lead)	•	•			
54. Initiate unmanaged forage fish action		•			
55. Consistency Amendment - Vessel Baseline Regulations (NERO Lead)	•	•			
56. Multi-year specification framework	✓				
57. Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology (SBRM) Omnibus Amendment	✓				
58. Omnibus Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) Framework	✓				
59. Develop management measures to reduce Atlantic Sturgeon bycatch (pending assessment review)	•	•			

Implementation Activity	Year				
	14	15	16	17	18
Governance					
60. Complete advisory panel fishery performance reports for each fishery	•	•	•	•	•
61. Provide input into the Magnuson-Stevens Reauthorization process	•	•			
62. Support the development of a MSA certification program for U.S. harvested fish	•	•			
63. Conduct a workshop to identify best practices for wind energy siting and construction (in coordination with BOEM)	✓				
64. Climate change and governance workshop	✓				
65. Participate in Partnership for Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Science	•	•	•	•	•
66. Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program	•	•	•	•	•
67. Marine Recreational Information Program	•	•	•	•	•
68. Mid-Atlantic Regional Association for Coastal Ocean Observing System	•	•	•	•	•
69. Participate on the Chesapeake Bay Goal Implementation Team	•	•	•	•	•
70. Participate in Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning activities through coordination with Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) and the Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body	•	•	•	•	•
71. Participate in Protected Resources Take Reduction meetings	•	•	•	•	•
72. Continue to coordinate with the NEFSC, particularly in relation to the goals, objectives, and strategies of the NEFSC strategic plan	•	•	•	•	•