



# 2016 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

MID-ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

*APPROVED DECEMBER 10, 2015*

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# INTRODUCTION

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 approved by the Council in August 2013. The final 2014 – 2018 Strategic Plan is available at [www.mafmc.org/strategic-plan](http://www.mafmc.org/strategic-plan), along with other related documents and background information.

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. Annual implementation plans are designed for use as a planning tool by the Council and staff and as a way to update the public on progress toward achieving the goals and objectives of the strategic plan. Each year's plan is designed to provide a comprehensive and realistic framework for merging the Council's ongoing projects with new initiatives.

## 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

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# 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 2016 DELIVERABLES

*This 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.*

## SUMMER FLOUNDER, SCUP AND BLACK SEA BASS

- 2017 specifications (review)
- 2017 recreational management measures
- Advisory Panel fishery performance reports
- Comprehensive summer flounder amendment (ongoing)
- Black sea bass amendment (initiate)
- Scup gear restricted area framework
- Summer flounder allocation project
- Black sea bass assessment (contract)

## MACKEREL, SQUID, AND BUTTERFISH

- 2017 squid and butterfish specifications (review)
- Squid capacity amendment
- 2017 specifications for Atlantic mackerel (review)
- Advisory Panel fishery performance reports
- Longfin squid mesh increase review
- Butterfish cap review

## RIVER HERRING AND SHAD

- RH/S cap for Atlantic mackerel fishery for 2017 (review)
- RH/S progress update
- Stock in fishery issue

## BLUEFISH

- 2017 specifications (review)
- Advisory Panel fishery performance report

## GOLDEN AND BLUELINE TILEFISH

- 2017 specifications (review)
- Advisory Panel fishery performance report
- 5 year IFQ review
- Framework 2
- Blueline tilefish amendment
- Blueline tilefish genetics study (contract)
- Blueline recreational landings workshop

## SURFCLAMS AND OCEAN QUAHOGS

- 2017-2018 specifications (develop and approve)
- Advisory Panel fishery performance reports
- Excessive shares amendment (ongoing)
- ITQ review project (contract)

## SPINY DOGFISH

- 2017 specifications (review)
- Advisory Panel fishery performance report

## ECOSYSTEM AND OCEAN PLANNING/HABITAT

- Council habitat policy documents
- Habitat objectives for EAFM approaches
- EFH review paper

## GENERAL

- EAFM guidance document
- Omnibus observer funding amendment (GARFO lead)
- Unmanaged forage fish action (ongoing)
- NJ SMZ request

## COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH

- General Council communications plan
- Council action web pages
- Fact sheets and outreach materials
- Website FAQ page
- Virtual workshop on website utility
- Public comment policy/guidelines

## SCIENCE AND RESEARCH

- Mid-Atlantic collaborative research program review
- 2016 – 2017 Mid-Atlantic collaborative research projects
- For-hire fisheries eVTR framework
- Framework to modify Council's risk policy
- Omnibus amendment for data modernization (GARFO lead)

## POSSIBLE ADDITIONS

- Black sea bass adaptive management project (contract)
- Black sea bass allocation project (contract)
- Scup quota period framework
- Goals and objectives for MSB
- Add Deep Sea Coral protection areas to national MPA network
- Develop a mechanism to notify the Council of landings of unmanaged species

# ACTION DEVELOPMENT CHECKLIST

*A significant portion of the strategies included in the Council's strategic plan cannot be "completed" because they relate to tasks that should be considered an intrinsic part of every project or action. This 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. The Action Development Checklist was designed to be used by the Council and Staff as a guide for integrating the Council's strategic goals into 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

*This section summarizes 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.*

## 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



# 2016 IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES

This section identifies the specific activities and projects that the Council plans to begin or complete in 2016. The matrix is organized around the four goal areas identified in the strategic plan and includes anticipated timelines for completion of each task. Please note that the matrix below does not include routine or annual activities such as development of advisory panel fishery performance reports or annual specifications.

Implementation Activity	Year				
	14	15	16	17	18
<b>COMMUNICATION &amp; OUTREACH</b>					
1. General council communication and outreach plan		•	•		
2. Website FAQ page			•		
3. Virtual workshop on website utility			•		
4. Public comment policy/guidelines		•	•		
<b>SCIENCE &amp; RESEARCH</b>					
5. Mid-Atlantic collaborative research program review		•	•		
6. 2016-2017 Mid-Atlantic collaborative research projects			•	•	
7. For-hire fisheries eVTR framework			•		
8. Framework to modify Council's risk policy			•		
9. Omnibus amendment for data modernization (GARFO lead)			•	•	
10. Convene Scientific and Statistical Committee Meetings (as needed)	•	•	•	•	•
<b>MANAGEMENT</b>					
<b>Mackerel, Squid, Butterfish and River Herring/Shad</b>					
11. Squid Capacity Amendment		•	•	•	
12. Longfin squid mesh increase review			•		
13. Butterfish cap review		•	•		
<b>Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass</b>					
14. Comprehensive summer flounder amendment	•	•	•		
15. Black sea bass amendment			•	•	
16. Scup gear restricted area framework	•	•	•		
17. Summer flounder allocation project		•	•		
18. Black sea bass assessment (contract)		•	•		
<b>River Herring and Shad</b>					
19. Address additional conservation of river herring and shad through an interagency working group	•	•	•	•	
20. Review RH/S Cap for Atl. mackerel fishery for 2017			•		
21. RH/S Progress Update		•	•		
22. Stock in fishery issue			•		

Implementation Activity	Year				
	14	15	16	17	18
<b>Surfclam and Ocean Quahog</b>					
23. Excessive Shares Amendment		•	•	•	
24. 5 Year ITQ Review (contract)			•	•	
<b>Golden and Blueline Tilefish</b>					
25. 5-year IFQ review	•	•	•		
26. Framework 2		•	•		
27. Blueline tilefish amendment		•	•		
28. Blueline tilefish genetics study (contract)		•	•		
29. Blueline recreational landings workshop			•		
<b>Ecosystems and Ocean Planning/Habitat</b>					
30. Council Habitat Policy Documents		•	•		
31. Habitat Objectives for EAFM Document		•	•		
32. EFH Review Paper		•	•		
<b>General</b>					
33. EAFM Guidance Document	•	•	•		
34. Omnibus Observer Funding Amendment (GARFO Lead)	•	•	•		
35. Unmanaged forage action		•	•		
36. New Jersey SMZ Request			•		
<b>GOVERNANCE</b>					
37. Complete advisory panel fishery performance reports for each fishery	•	•	•	•	•
38. Participate on Seafood Marketing Committee		•	•	•	•
39. Participate in Partnership for Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Science	•	•	•	•	•
40. Participate in Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program	•	•	•	•	•
41. Marine Recreational Information Program	•	•	•	•	•
42. Mid-Atlantic Regional Association for Coastal Ocean Observing System	•	•	•	•	•
43. Participate on the Chesapeake Bay Goal Implementation Team	•	•	•	•	•
44. Participate in Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning activities through coordination with Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) and the Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body	•	•	•	•	•
45. Participate in Protected Resources Take Reduction meetings	•	•	•	•	•
46. Continue to coordinate with the NEFSC, particularly in relation to the goals, objectives, and strategies of the NEFSC strategic plan	•	•	•	•	•