



Preliminary Summary Results: *SAFMC Communications Survey*

I. Purpose of Survey

The purpose of the survey was to better understand the communication needs of people interested in federal fisheries in the South Atlantic and to make sure that fishery stakeholders are getting fisheries information in the most efficient and useful format so that they can stay informed and easily participate in the Council process. The goals of the survey were to,

- *Identify the effectiveness of Council communication approaches;*
- *Identify preferences for receiving Council communications;*
- *Identify communication challenges and opportunities; and*
- *Collect input for the Council to revise our communication methods.*

II. Survey Distribution

The survey was released on June 29, 2016 and closed on July 31, 2016.

An e-mail announcing the availability of the survey was sent on June 29, 2016 to 2640 subscribers to the Council's e-mail distribution list with a bounce rate of 15% (400 subscribers). Of the 2,640 subscribers that were sent the e-mail, 801 (36%) opened the e-mail and 191 subscribers clicked through to the survey directly from the e-mail. This open rate is consistent with the open rate of other e-mails sent to subscribers.

A reminder e-mail was sent on July 21, 2016 to 2,662 subscribers with a bounce rate of 15%. Of the 2,662 subscribers that were sent the reminder e-mail, 706 (31%) opened the e-mail and 94 subscribers clicked through to the survey directly from the e-mail.

A link to the survey was included in a final e-mail sent on July 25, 2016 and an additional 11 subscribers clicked through to the survey from the email.

Additionally, a postcard mailer was sent to the Council's hard copy mailing list to gauge use of mailed communication vs. electronic communication. The postcard also advertised the SAFMC Communications Survey and it is expected that some survey responses were collected from the distribution of the postcard.

III. Print vs. Electronic Communication Postcard Mailer

A postage paid return post-card mailer was sent on July 18, 2016 asking for stakeholder feedback on their ability to stay up to date on fishery issues if printed materials were not mailed. A total of 4,229 post cards were mailed and a total of 291 post cards were returned as of 8/22/16 for a response rate of 6.8%. Of those postcards returned,

- **48.8%** of respondents expressed they **would not** be affected by not receiving mailings from the Council.
- **51.2%** of respondents expressed they **would be** affected by not receiving mailings from the Council.
- **Less than 1%** of respondents indicated they would like to continue receiving both print and electronic mailings from the Council.

IV. By the Numbers –

A total of 252 unique responses were recorded during the survey period for a 31.5% response rate. The following figures describe the preliminary summary statistics from the survey.

Response by state/area:

Florida represented the highest number of respondents in the survey accounting for 24% of respondents plus an additional 19% of respondents identifying themselves from the FL Keys, FL Atlantic Coast, and FL Gulf Coast.

Age Distribution of Survey Respondents

A majority of survey respondents (51%) identified themselves in the 41-64 age bracket.

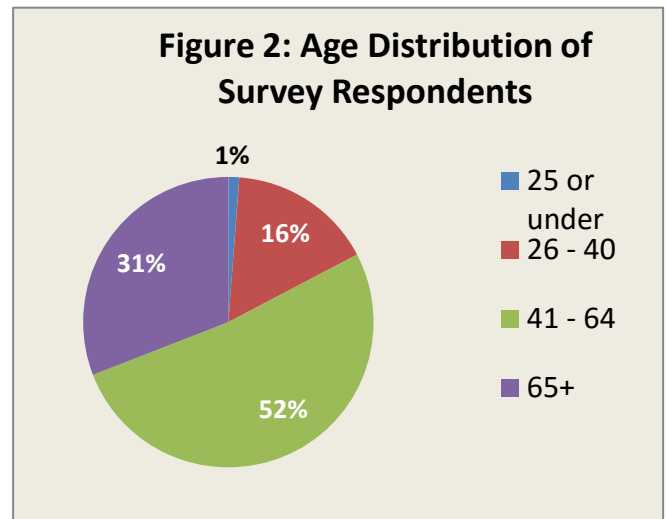
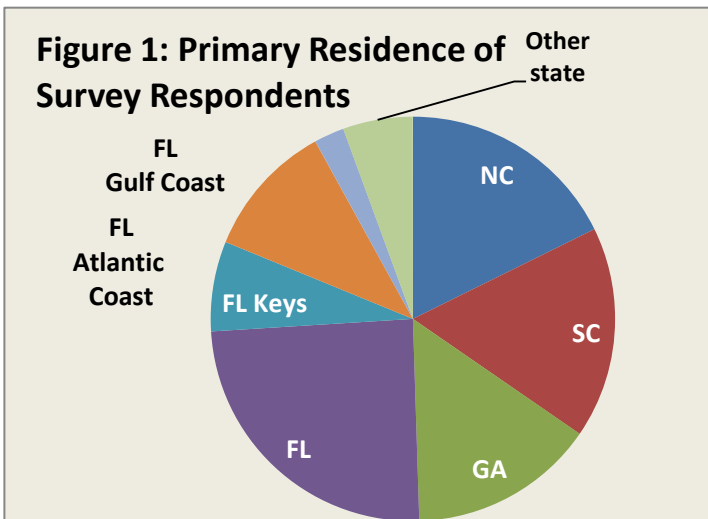


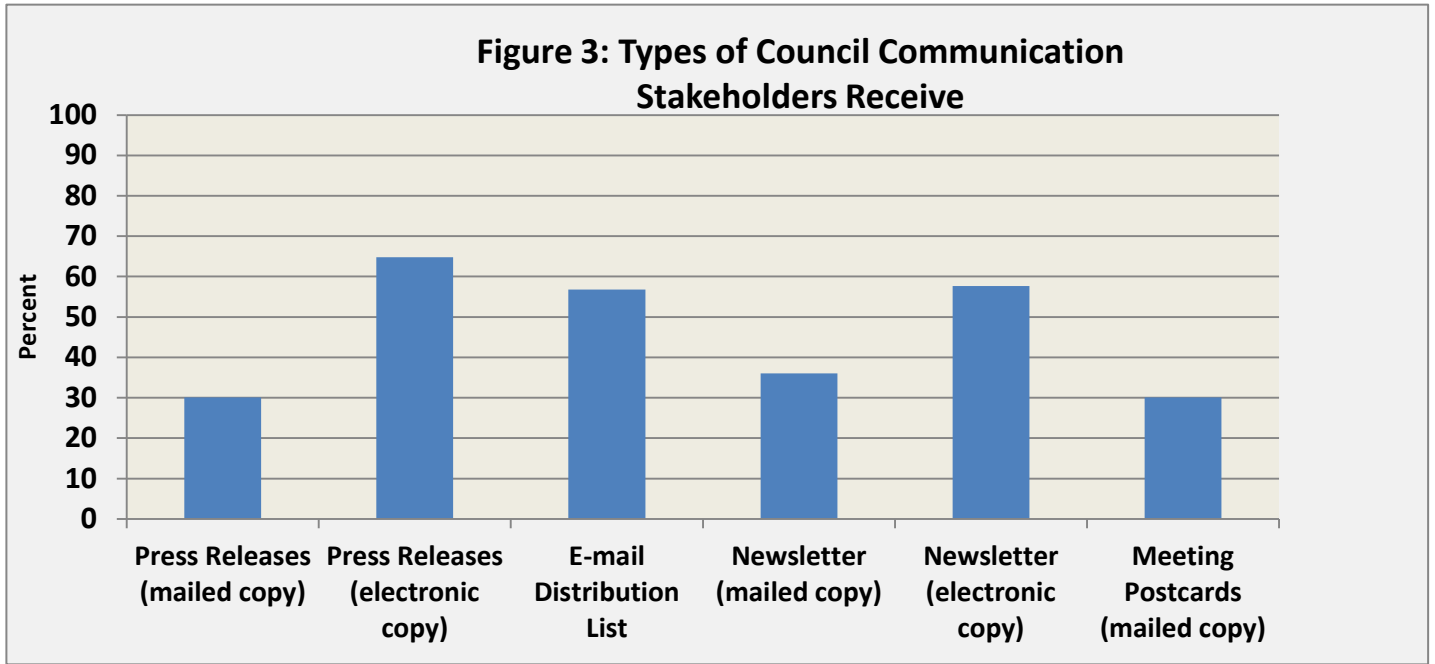
Table 1 - Response by sector:

Sector:	Percent Response:
Recreational Angler	54.00%
Commercial Fisherman	14.30%
Government Agency	13.10%
For-Hire/Charter Captain	7.50%
Environmental Non-Governmental Organization	3.60%
Other Fishing Business (Wholesaler, Retailer, Dealer)	2.40%
Sea Grant program	1.20%
Restaurant/Hospitality Industry	0.80%
Academic Institution/Student	0.80%
Media (newspaper, fishing-related magazine, etc.)	0.80%
Crew - For-hire/Charter Captain	0.40%
Coastal Tourism Operator (bait/tackle shop, marina, etc.)	0.40%
Eco-tourism Operator	0.40%
Web-based social media moderator (blogger, fishing forum moderator, etc.)	0.40%
Crew - commercial boat	0.00%

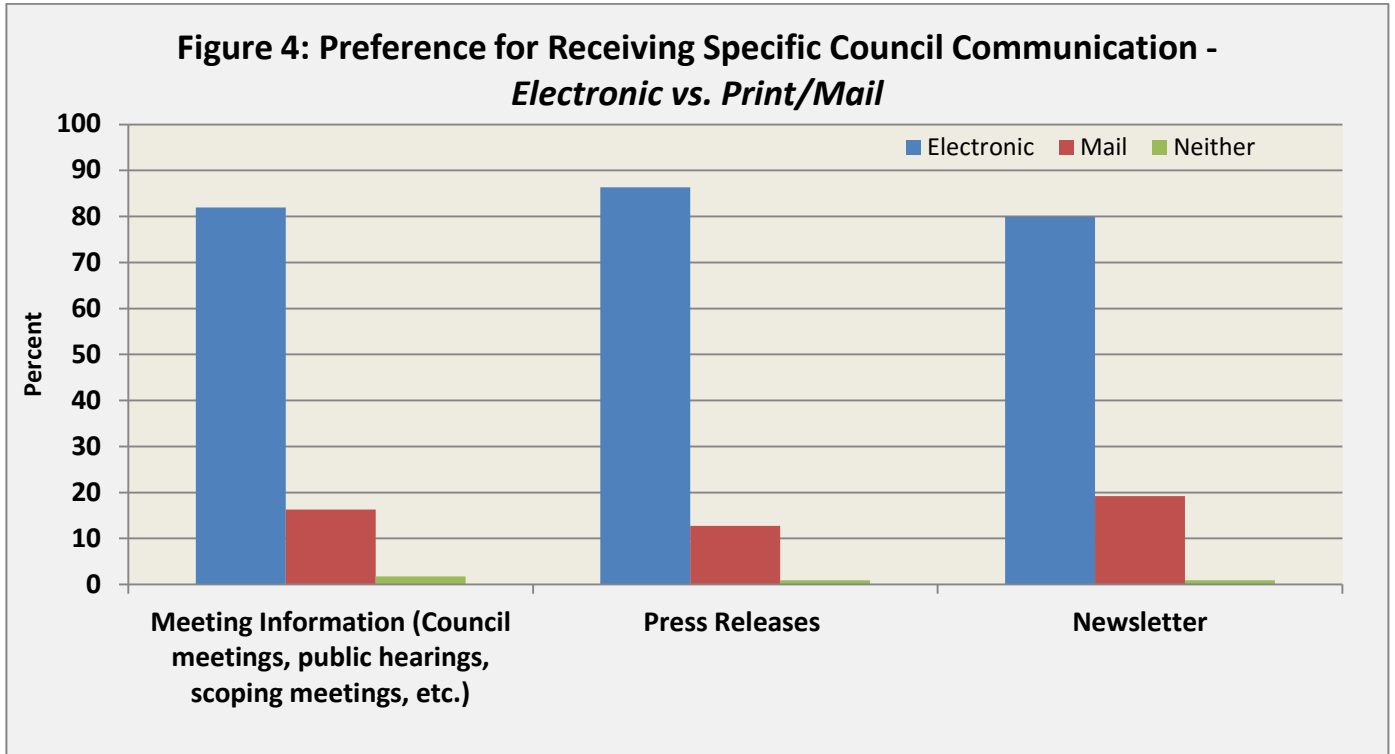
V. Understanding How Stakeholders Use Council Communications

Council Communications – What and How Stakeholders are Receiving Different Communications

Survey respondents are primarily using electronic communications from the Council when comparing mailed/printed communications vs. electronic and e-mail communication.

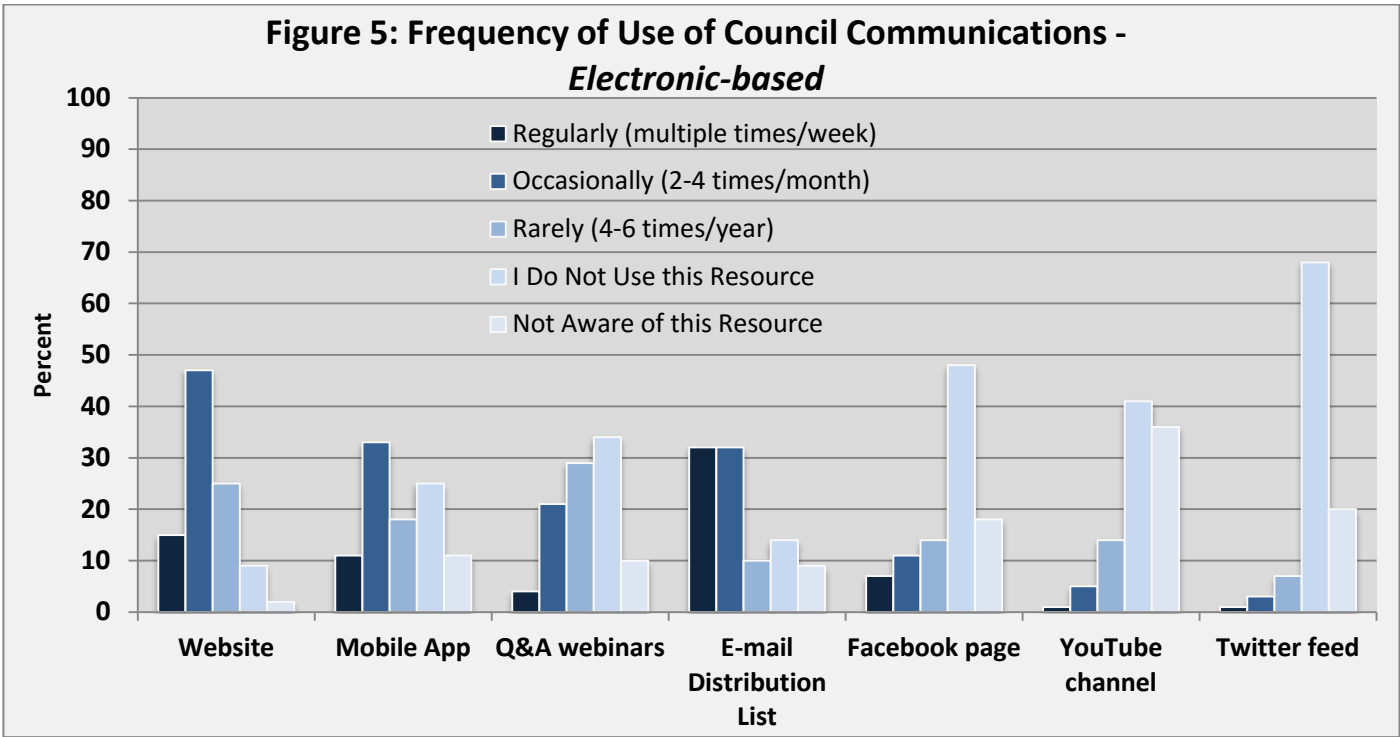


Preference for Receiving Council Communications – *electronic vs. print/mail*



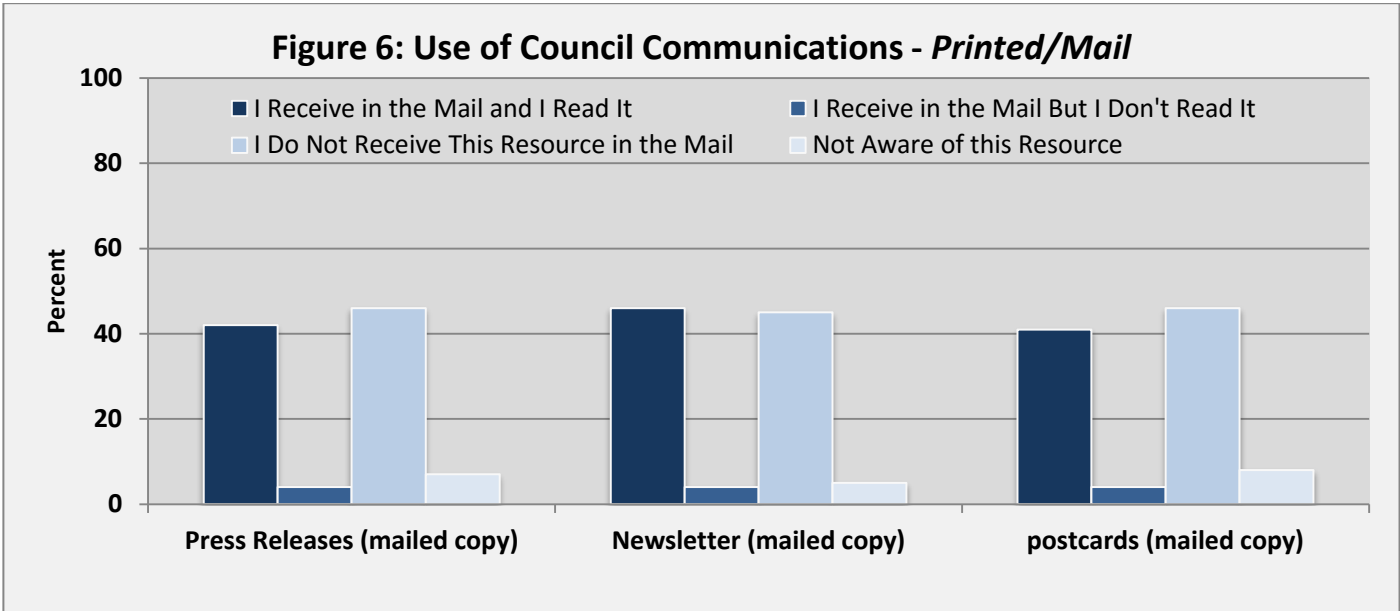
Council Communications – Frequency of Use by Stakeholders for Electronic-based Communications

The most regularly used electronic-based Council Communication is the Council’s e-mail distribution list followed by the Council’s website. The resource that is used the least is Q&A webinars and survey respondents indicated the resource they do not use at all is the Twitter feed.



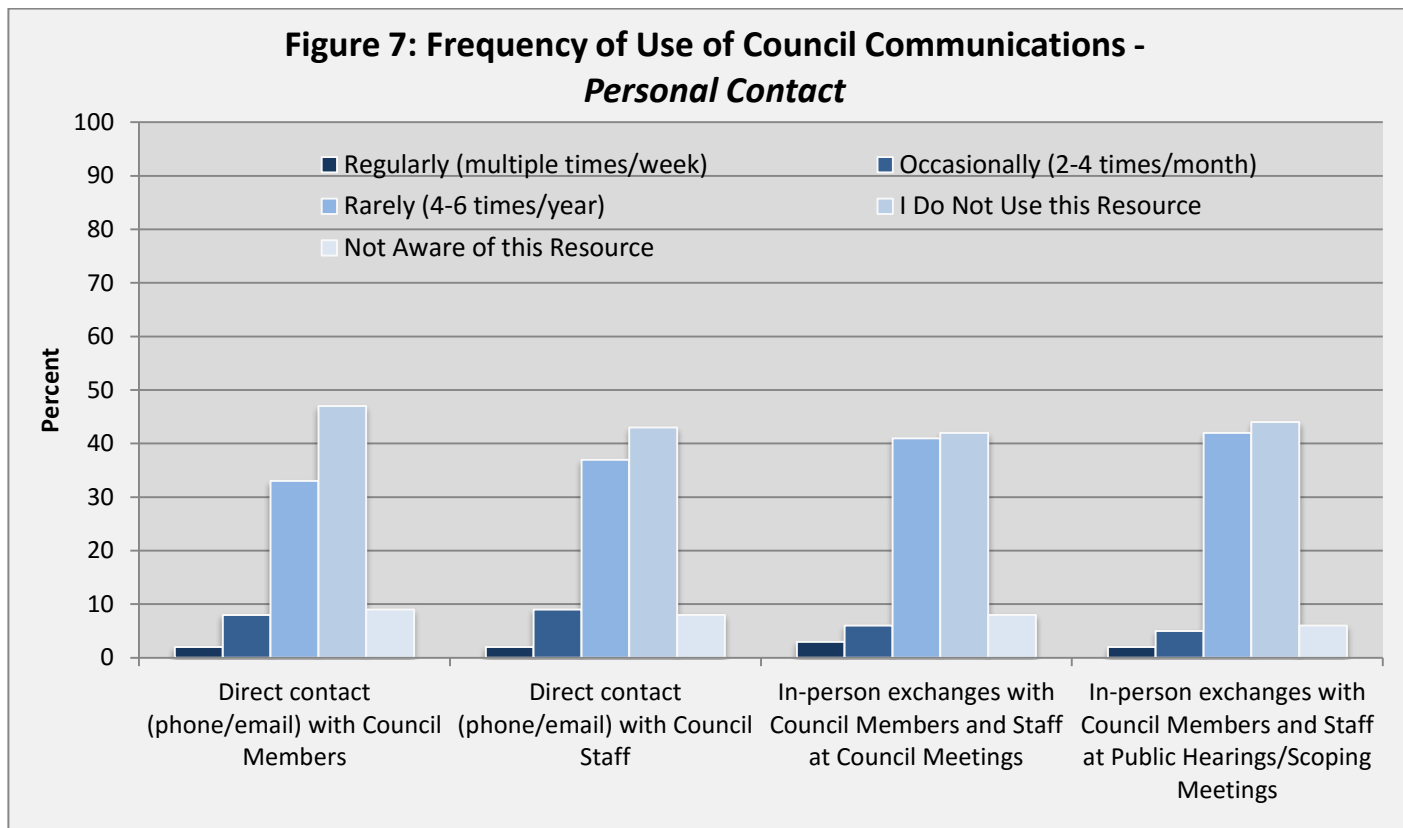
Council Communications – Use of Printed/Mail Communications

Of those survey respondents that receive printed or mailed Council communications, approximately 40-45% are receiving the press releases, newsletter, and postcards and reading them. However, 45-47% of survey respondents do not receive these materials in the mail.



Council Communications – Use of Personal Contact

Survey respondents are rarely using personal contact as a means of communication.



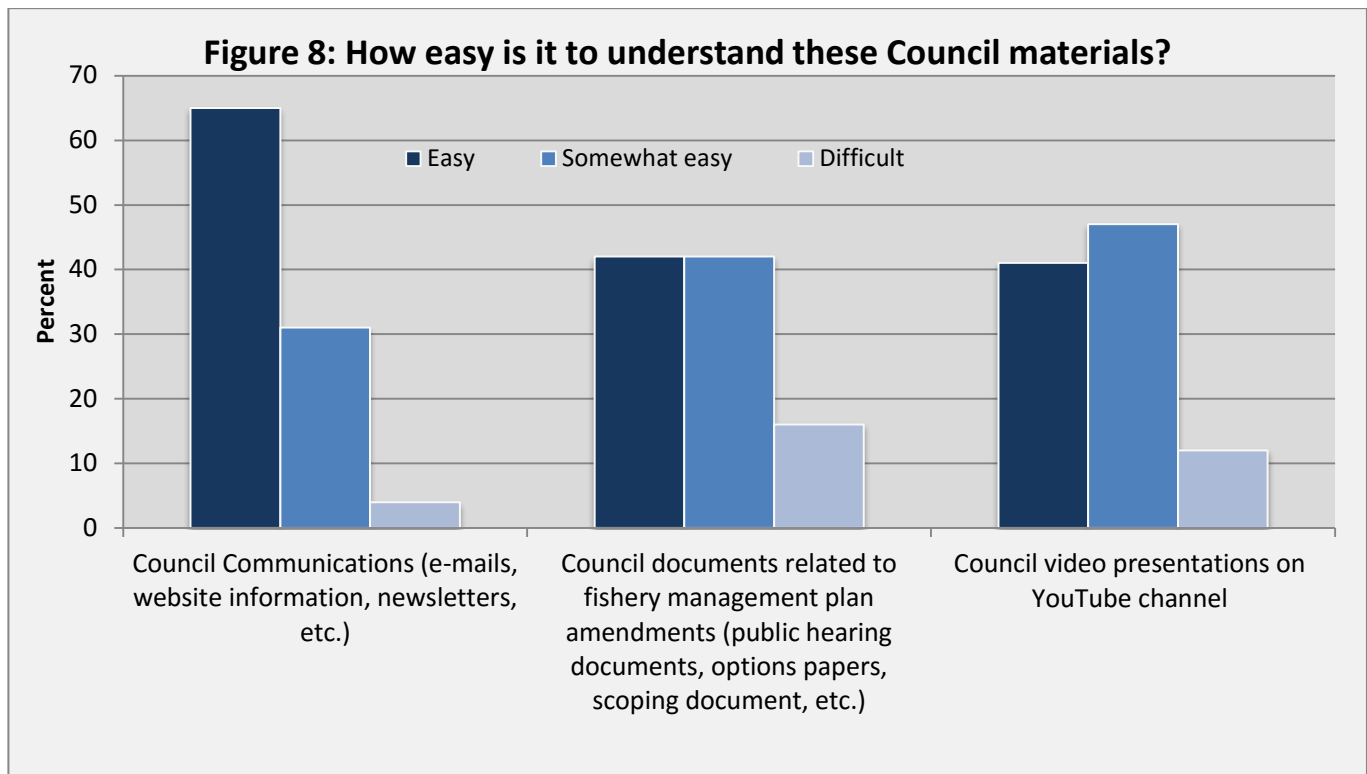
Top 3 Council Communication Resources Used by Stakeholders (using a weighted average):

Responses to this question were open ended and categorized for analysis. Responses were categorized as follows: mobile app; electronic/e-mail; newsletter; personal contact (staff/Council); press release; print; social media; webinars; and website. Of these categories, the top three resources used by stakeholders are:

- 1) **Electronic/e-mail** – this includes any communication sent via the Council’s e-mail distribution list related to meetings, press releases, newsletter availability, etc.
- 2) **Newsletter** – For this category, the majority of responses indicated they used the electronic version of the Council’s newsletter.
- 3) **Website**

Stakeholder Understanding of Council Communications & Materials

Overall, a majority of survey respondents agree that Council communication and materials are easy or somewhat easy to understand.



Recommendations for improving communications, documents, and presentations:

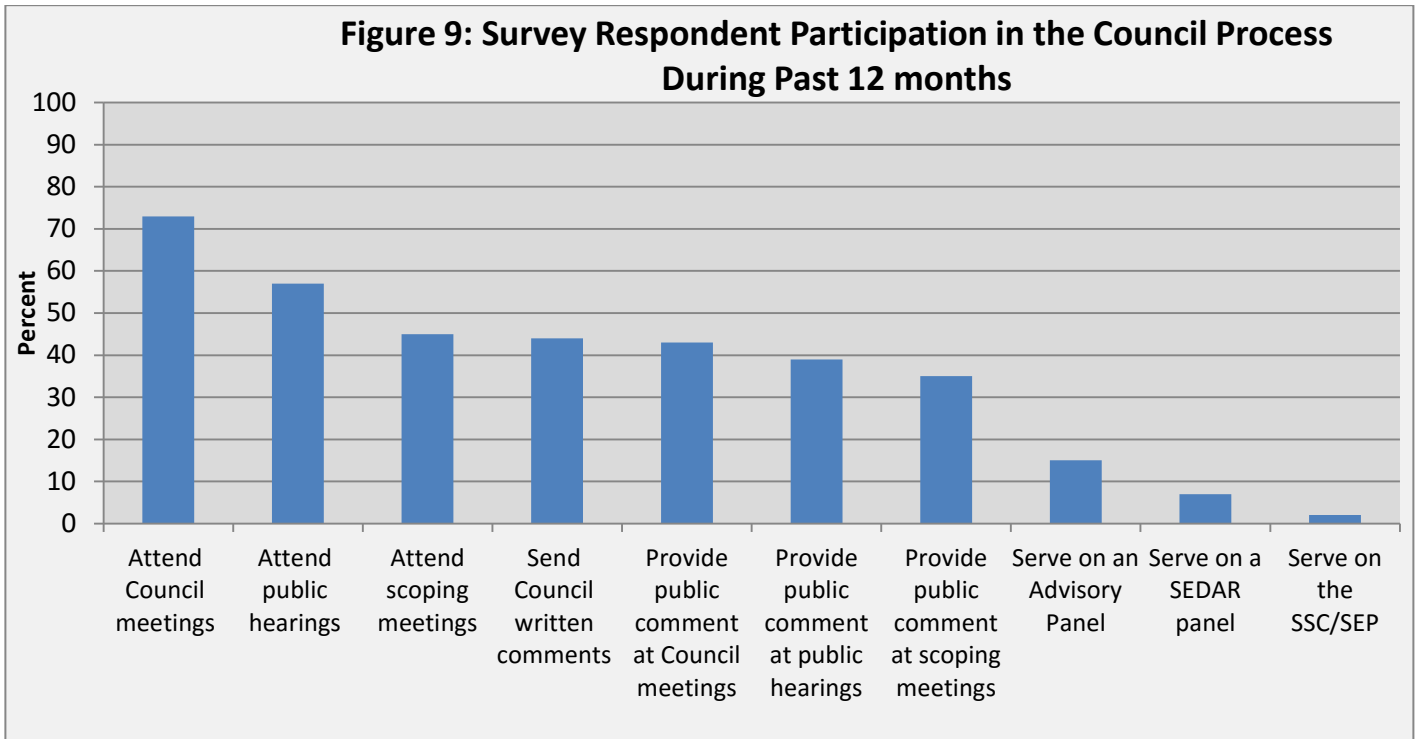
- Council Action - Understanding the final actions being voted on by Council.
- Public Participation - Better explanation of the steps in the larger management process and ways to engage.
- Documents and Presentations - More concise information in documents that is written in plain language (possibly using analogies and examples to describe the issue) and uses more visuals and imagery to explain issues and fishery science concepts.
- SEDAR - Improved transparency in SEDAR documents that outline the source of all data and research collaborations.
- News Releases - More timely release of information pertaining to meetings and upcoming issues; Also consider publicizing in newspapers as well; a simple synopsis of regulatory changes at the beginning of news releases.
- Social Media - Better use of the Council's Twitter feed; filter tweets by species or sector significance and include links to more information on the Council's website; Create more YouTube videos on the process and current issues;
- Correcting Misinformation - Use of blogs and direct e-mails to address misinformation.
- Stakeholder Engagement - Online forum for stakeholders to discuss issues.
- Webinars - Scheduling of Q&A webinars on the weekend if possible.
- Include direct URL links to the exact document or page for information mentioned in any communication (do not just direct to the main page of the website).
- Mobile app – notification of what specific change in regulation has been made when doing an update.

VI. Participation in the Council Process:

63% of survey respondents indicated they participate in the Council process in some manner.

Participation in the Council Process in the Past 12 Months

Of those respondents that participate in the Council process, the following figure shows what activities they have participated in during the past 12 months:

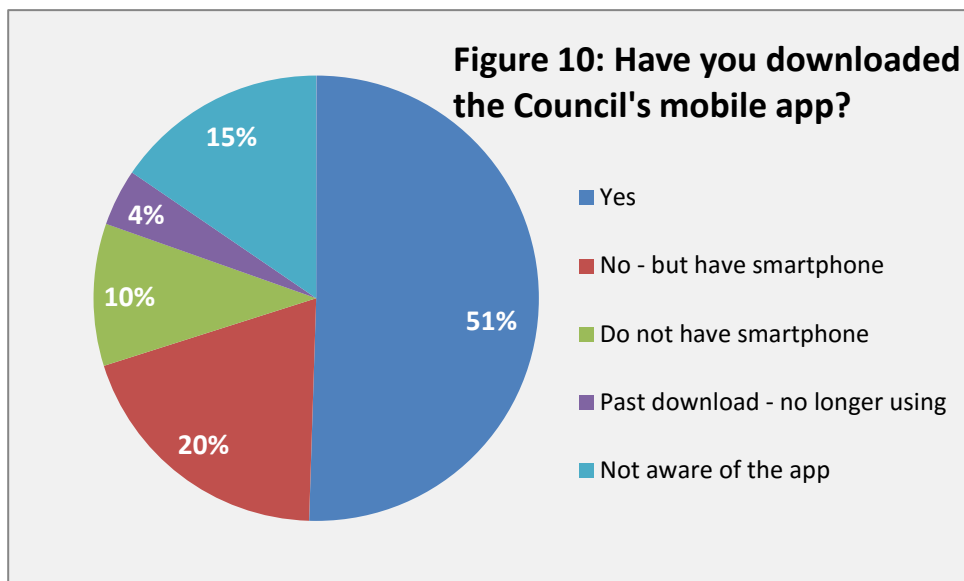


Top 3 Activities Used by Stakeholders to Participate in the Council Process (using a weighted average):

Responses to this question were open ended and categorized for analysis. Responses were categorized as follows: Of these categories, the top three activities used by stakeholders are, Council meeting (in person), Council meeting (webinar); Personal contact; Public comment (at meeting); public hearing (attend); scoping (attend); Serve on AP/SSC/SEDAR; Written comments (online, mail, fax). Of these categories, the top three activities used by stakeholders are:

- 1) Council meetings (in person)
- 2) Public hearings (attend)
- 3) Scoping meetings (attend)

VII. Use of the Council's Mobile App – SA Fishing Regulations



A majority of respondents have downloaded the mobile app (51%) and only 15% were not aware of the availability of the app.

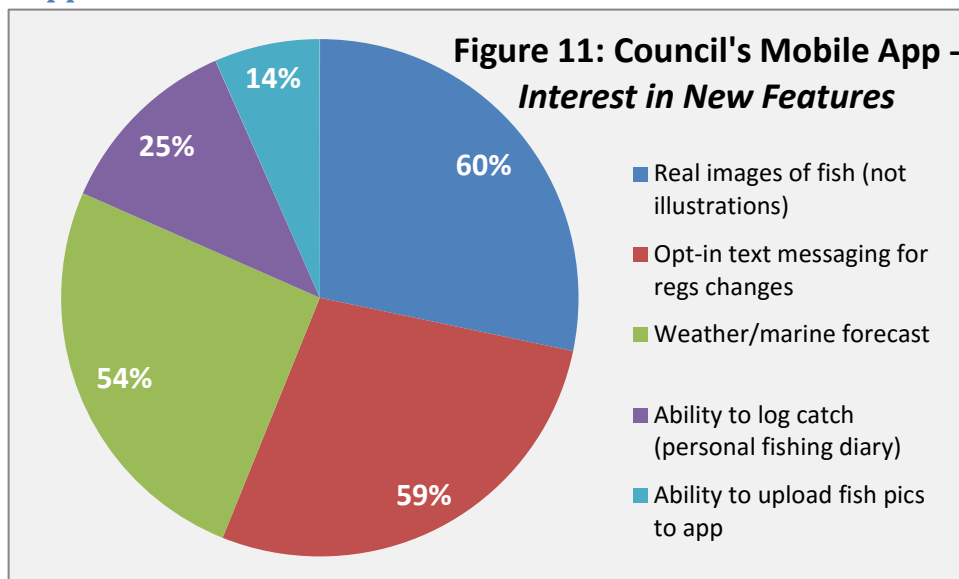
Why Respondent No Longer Uses Mobile App

If survey respondents indicated they downloaded the app in the past but are not longer using the app, they were asked a follow-up question as to why they no longer use the app.

Reasons cited for no longer using the Council's mobile app included, too difficult to use; too many regulations to look through (too big); easier to look up regulations on the Council's website; and some information was not accurate.

Improvements to the Mobile App

Council staff are considering upgrading the mobile app in order to fix some of the usability and software update issues as well as to offer new features that may be of interest to fishermen using the app. The figure below shows the level of interest in some of the proposed new features and a summary of additional features suggested by survey respondents.



Additional features:

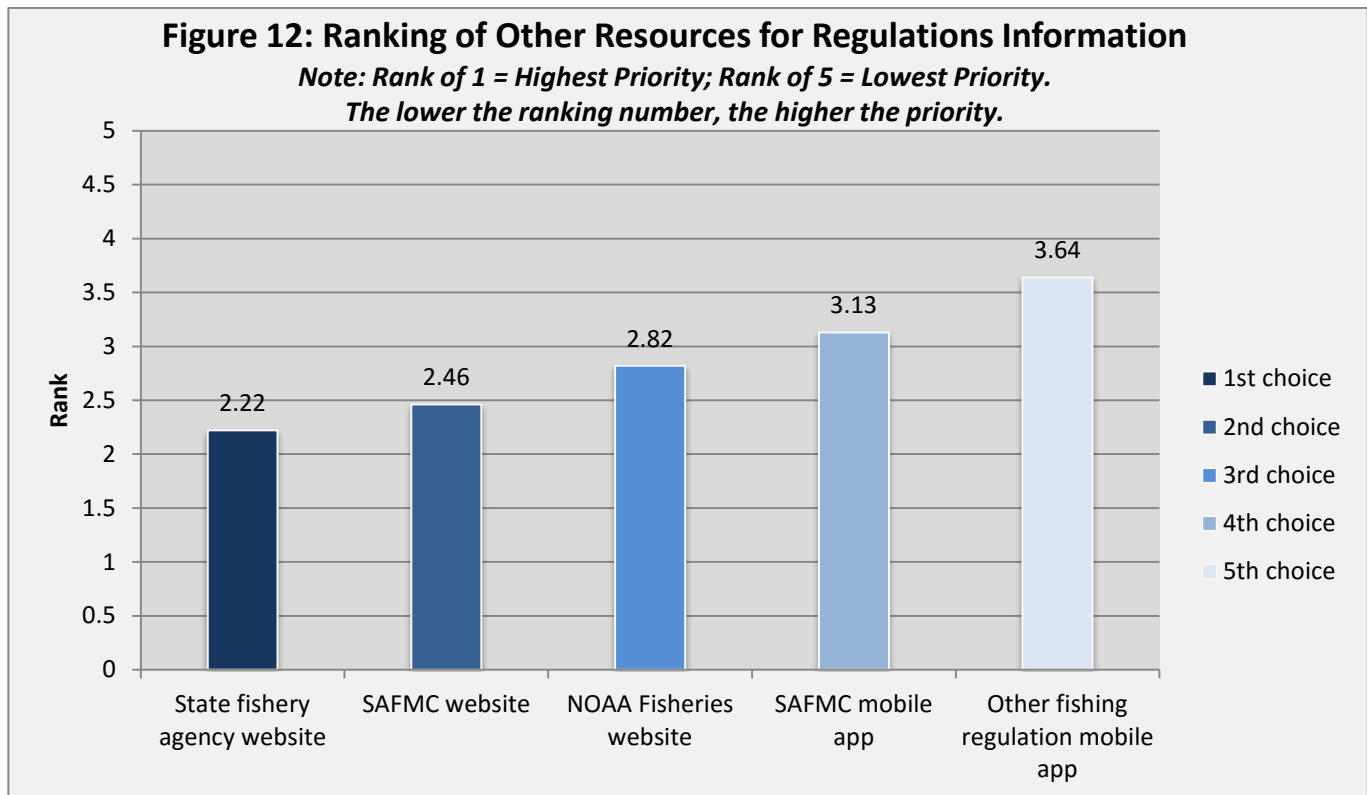
- When opening the app, display what items have been updated. (Do not use push notifications.)
- Fish identification keys
- Have a contest to let people submit their fish photos to be included in the app for fish identification.
- Recognition software within the app that allows users to take a photo of their fish and the app can scan the image and identify the species of fish.
- Have the app determine what regulations to follow based on your fishing location (using the GPS in your phone).
- Outreach with law enforcement officers on the use of the app.
- A feature that could tell you sea surface temperature, wave height, and period.

- Embedded regulations for state regulations (not just a link to the state website).
- Ability to filter the species in your fish I.D. search based on the fish that would be found in the area you are fishing (either by state, depth, etc.)
- Include species identification for bait fish.

Use of Other Sources of Fishing Regulation Information

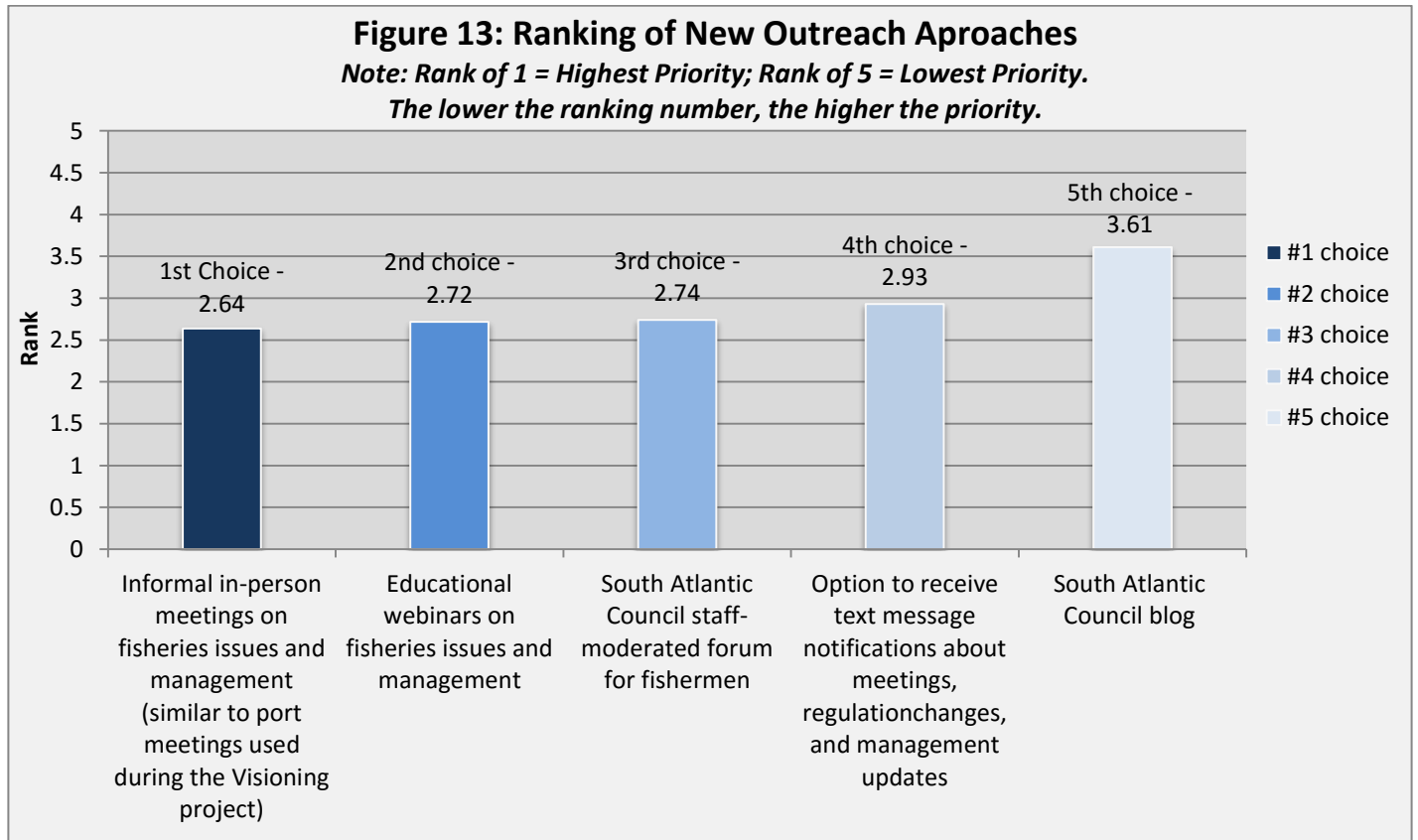
The survey asked how often respondents check fishing regulations before going fishing. About half of respondents indicated they always check before a fishing trip (48%), about half indicated they sometimes check (47%), while 5% indicated they never check regulations.

Respondents receive regulation information from a variety of resources. Respondents were asked to rank the following regulations resources that allow them to stay up to date on fishing regulations.



VIII. Future Council Communications - New Outreach Approaches

The Council’s Snapper Grouper Vision Blueprint 2016-2020 outlined several high priority communication strategies and actions under the Communication goal. The survey asked respondents to rank these communication actions to determine the level of interest and order of priority for developing these new communication and outreach approaches.



IX. Summary of Use of Other Fishery Resources

The survey also asked respondents how they use fishery resources from other agencies and organizations to get information on fisheries issues and management. The table below summarizes this information.

Table 2: Use of Other Fishery Resources

Resource Type:	Agency/Organization/Platform	Rate:
WEBSITES – (from other agencies, organizations, etc.)		
Used regularly (multiple times/week)	Fishing websites/Blogs/Forums	28%
Used Occasionally (2-4 times/month)	NOAA Fisheries SERO	38%
SOCIAL MEDIA – (from other agencies, organizations, etc.)		
Used regularly (multiple times/week)	Facebook sites	21.5%
Used Occasionally (2-4 times/month)	Facebook sites	12%
Do not use this resource	Twitter feeds and Instagram	77% and 75%
OTHER TYPES OF RESOURCES – (from other agencies, organizations, etc.; T.V./radio/magazines/listservs/forums/word of mouth, etc.)		
Used regularly (multiple times/week)	Word of Mouth from Friends	31%
Used Occasionally (2-4 times/month)	Magazines (fishing related)	41%
Do not use this resource	Port agents/samplers	60%

X. General Recommendations on Council Communications

Survey respondents provided additional recommendations on Council communications and ways to improve strategies.

Meetings:

- Better communication and meetings with advisory panels in advance of developing an amendment.
- Consideration of the timing and location of meetings (forums or other meetings) that coincide with the schedule and physical location of most fishermen to improve stakeholder participation.
- Rotate the locations of meetings and consider offering more than one public comment session when controversial topics are being considered (e.g., an A.M. session and a P.M. session).
- More informal meetings with local Council members and staff on a regular basis.

Webinars:

- More webinars for educational information on fishery issues and concepts.
- Provide directions on the Council's website on how to listen in to webinar meetings.

Other Approaches:

- Setting up an online forum for stakeholders to discuss issues.
- Use polling surveys to gauge stakeholder support for actions in an amendment.
- Consider creating regional representatives from each fishery that can be the spokesperson and/or point of contact for Council member/staff on issues pertaining to that fishery.

Specific Outreach Needs:

- Using plain, simple language with all communications – written and verbal.
- More information about statistical surveys and the fisheries science that informs stock assessments and how they are used towards making management decisions
- More information on Marine Protected Areas in the region and the results of the research/monitoring that is being conducted in these areas (and supporting literature that discuss benefits).
- Improved functionality of the mobile app when providing updates.
- Help stakeholders formulate structured public comments.
- The Council does a good job with communication; the science is what needs to be improved.

XI. ACTION – Council guidance is needed on the following items.

- Further identifying stakeholders that prefer to receive printed/mailed communication
- Further review of communication preferences by sector.
- Future survey about use of Council website.
- Development of prioritized new outreach approaches (item VIII.)
- Convening the Council's Information & Education Advisory Panel to review the survey results and provide recommendations on communication strategies and development of a Communications Plan.