

**SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**

**OUTREACH AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**Blockade Runner  
Wrightsville Beach, North Carolina**

**December 8, 2022**

**Transcript**

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Trish Murphey  
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Chester Brewer, Vice Chair  
Kerry Marhefka  
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**Attendees and Invited Participants**

Scott Baker  
Rick DeVictor  
Dewey Hemilright

Susan Boggs  
Frank Helies  
Jamal Ingram

Dr. Jack McGovern  
LT Patrick O'Shaughnessy  
Monica Smit-Brunello

Ashley Oliver  
Charlie Phillips  
Meg Withers

The Outreach and Education Committee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened at the Blockade Runner, Wrightsville Beach, North Carolina, on Thursday, December 8, 2022, and was called to order by Chairman Spud Woodward.

MR. WOODWARD: I am going to call the meeting of the Outreach and Communications Committee to order. For those of you online, I am Spud Woodward, from the thriving metropolis of Brunswick, Georgia, your committee chair. Just for the record, our members are myself, Chester Brewer is Vice Chair, Lieutenant Cameron Box, Kerry Marhefka, Trish Murphey, Tom Roller, and Laurilee Thompson. Of course, we always expect and invite the full participation of everybody on the council.

Our first item is Adoption of the Agenda. Are there any additions or modifications to the agenda? If so, just signify by letting me know. I don't see anything, and so we'll consider the agenda accepted. You also had, in the briefing materials, the transcript from the December 2021 meeting. Are there any modifications, edits, or corrections to the transcript? If not, then we consider that accepted by unanimous consent.

All right, and we only have a couple of items, but the first one is going to be our advisory panel report by our chair, Scott Baker, from our meeting in October. I want to thank Scott for his willingness to continue to chair this very important advisory panel and go on the record of thanking all the folks that participate in it. It's a really diverse and highly-energetic advisory panel, and I'm going to turn it over to Scott.

MR. BAKER: Thank you, Spud. Thanks for the introduction. Again, my name is Scott Baker, and I work with North Carolina Sea Grant, in fisheries, and I'm based here in Wilmington, at the Center for Marine Science at UNCW. We have the report here, and I've kind of highlighted some areas that I want to discuss, and, first, I want to call-out the council staff, which did a great job at this meeting, and particularly all the presentations that they gave and all the information, particularly to the different aspects that they're working on, and so I'm just going to hit on some of these bullets as we come down the minutes, the first one being the website update and some social media analytics.

I think we can all -- I assume that most people can agree that the new website looks really good, and a lot of stuff is easy to find. We talked a lot -- We got a good presentation about how it's been received, and there's just a couple of things to point out, and there have been over 40,000-plus users visiting the new website, since its launch earlier this year, and the top five pages, in order of page views, are regulations, the home page, red snapper, dolphin and best fishing practices, and about 27 percent of visitors are heading to the red snapper regulations page, and then they went on to the best fishing practices page, and I will hit on this a little bit later in the report. Also, the Fish Rules application was also heavily used, or at least visited.

We were asked to contribute to, you know, the ongoing development of the website and social media analytics and things in use, and, in general, again, everyone agreed, and we have a very diverse group of people on the AP, and, generally, everyone loves the website.

There were several comments about how the analytics were very useful, and I don't know to what extent we've seen a lot of that, prior to this meeting, and I know that Nick was talking about this a lot, and I think, moving forward, there was a consensus that there was a lot of power in seeing

how people are using the website over time, and, particularly, as there are hot-button issues, and seeing if people are going to that, and so I think something like, with Google Analytics, that is being used, that's something that we can kind of come back to.

Actually, there was one interesting comment, which was that, you know, for all the analytics, it would be important to exclude, if possible, all the time that staff actually spends on the website, and so, I mean, we don't want to be artificially inflating the numbers and things like that.

Some other specific comments, which I thought were all really good, were, you know, consider the use of Google Ads, or geofencing, to actually who is receiving, or who is getting this content, particularly with social media, and I know that Google Ads are relatively inexpensive, at least for limited things, and you can try things out, and another good comment was Canva Pro is available for foundations to use, and there's a lot of image access, and there was also a lot of talk about the Fish Rules app, and that's a whole, potentially, other universe of users, and how can we track use from that, if the Fish Rules app people would be willing to share some of that.

We had a lot of discussion, primarily generated from Melissa Crouch from Florida, talking about linking, or following, the user of the website as they go through their journey, and so an example of that would be, if a lot of people are coming to the red snapper page for regulations, then we should be feeding them into the best fishing practices page, and then, if they want to go further, then perhaps send them to the citizen science page, and so make it easy for them to continue their journey to where they need to go, and so that just involves putting links in different places and things like that. In terms of social media recommendations, there's nothing really new here. Again, talking about using more videos, multiple images, and things like that.

On our second bullet, we talked about best fishing practices, and we received three presentations to our group, and the first was David Moss with the Nature Conservancy, and he talked about the responsive management survey of anglers in 2021 in Florida and South Carolina on their awareness and use of descending devices, and that was very informational. It basically was talking about behavior change and how they're using social media influencers to try to drive that message home.

We received a presentation from Melissa, from FWC, about the initiative that they're working on called Descending Device Outreach Coordination Team, and there was a lot of acknowledgement, throughout the meeting, and throughout our recent history, that a lot of different people are doing best-fishing-practices-type outreach and education, and so this is an effort that they started to try to get all the different players together to figure out how they could coordinate, or better coordinate, their efforts and be aware of what other people were doing.

The final presentation in this group was with Ashley Oliver, who is the Sea Grant Reef Fish Extension person, the fellow, on her workplan, basically, for best fishing practices, and, basically, Ashley discussed like her workplan to-date, and some of the things that she's seen, particularly noting some of the regional differences in knowledge and understanding of BFP across our region.

Again, we were asked to, you know, provide input on some of Ashley's activities, and these are some of the other presentations that we received. Again, there's a lot of overlap between different organizations that are doing best-fishing-practices-type outreach, which is a good thing, and there was a lot of talk about trying to expand our message, by partnering with other people, again with

that -- With other government quasi-agencies or charter captains or social media influencers, that type of thing.

I will say that, you know, prior to the meeting, and during the meeting, Spud brought to us that we really need the ability to measure the use of descending devices, and we really need to have positive enforcement, and there really needs to be a way to give people a way, a roadmap, to what are they working towards, and that's kind of a theme that was present in a couple of our different conversations that we had.

In terms of how to better demonstrate the use of that, we talked about, you know -- I know this can be very difficult, but there were several comments about adding questions to MRIP surveys and things like that, and I know that adding questions to MRIP surveys are very challenging, but, again, just having an idea of who is using these has been relatively difficult to find out.

We talked about social media influencers and how that can really amplify your message, if you can get the details straight, and, again, as anybody who has looked at social media, you know, there is all kinds of caveats to that, from paid to unpaid, the expectations, and there's a lot of potential there, but there could be a lot of pitfalls, too. David had a great presentation about that, or a section.

We talked about continuing Ashley's work to visit the bait and tackle shops, and that was an activity that the council initially was really interested in, and it's a footprint of -- You know, it's a footprint of places to be able to get a personal relationship. There was a great comment that we had, and I believe it was from George, but he was thinking that it would be great to see where the majority of these descending device sales are occurring and if like, for example, if SeaQualizer or Shelton, if they would be willing, or maybe if some of these retailers would be willing, to share, you know, their sales by zip code, or something like that, which I thought was kind of interesting, and it would be a good contribution, if a business would be willing to share that.

I can't remember the person who provided this quote, but I believe it was Melissa, but her quote was, "If you can't touch it, feel it, and try it, it will always be hard for people to buy into it." I think that's pretty apt for descending device use.

Another comment, and it's not in the report, was somebody made a recommendation that, you know, oftentimes, these descending devices -- If they're in the store, you know, they're basically hanging on a peg with everything else, right, and, if there was an opportunity to actually develop a display, whether that's a reel with the device hooked up to it, with the sash weight, you know with a paper fish or whatever, I mean, that would kind of go a long way, but, obviously, that takes real estate in the store.

Some other recommendations were, again, reach out to some potential partners, including the Outdoor Writers Association, the American Sportfishing Association, potentially with port agents, and, again, using push notifications from Fish Rules to help kind of amplify the message of the BFP program. Another interesting concept that was brought up, that we talked about at lunch, was a vehicle wrap, and so, in other words, a way to informally advertise the BFP program, and I don't know who wants to do that with their vehicle, but I'm sure we can make it happen.

Moving on to the third bullet item, the council Release and Citizen Science Program update, as always, we heard about all the great activities going on with these programs, and, particularly, we were asked for recommendations on outreach, particularly recruitment and retention strategies.

In terms of recruitment, I will say there was not -- You know, we didn't have a lot of really new information, or new ideas, and, again, going back to this comment that Melissa made, which was to define the journey, and that's kind of like what we want -- You know, what do we want people to do, and then marketing the best fishing practices and the Release as a package concept, and so, if they're interested in best fishing practices, maybe they will be interested in the Release, and to make it very personal.

There's been some success with partnering with the Division of Marine Fisheries on promotions, doing a mailing with their flounder release app, and there's been -- There was talk about potentially partnering, and, again, I say this without knowledge of the details, but partnering with the Fish and Wildlife, Florida's State Reef Fish Survey. When we think about the challenges of outreach, it's basically the same as the challenges of fisheries science, and we really need a universe of people who want to be able to quantify changes, and I guess, to my understanding, you know, the State Reef Fish Survey is the only existing, you know, hardcore number of people that you could easily access. Again, also trying to use creel survey personnel, port agents.

We did have some really good comments, I thought, with regard to retention, and, again, things that have been very successful in other programs have been like recognition programs, and I know that the Virginia Sportfish Program has some good programs like this, and, of course, if there is the ability to give incentives, and I think there is a time and place for that, and another concept that was brought up was just the concept of a rolling responsibility.

You know, if we think about it, when we're asking someone to sign-up for the Release project, at this point, it's a lifetime commitment, and that's a long time to be associated and have interest in something, and so if there was a way to put a bookend on somebody's involvement, that might make them more apt to be able to participate, and then another comment was to ask people to make a commitment for how much they would be involved before they even sign-up, so that we could actually follow-up with them and see if they did follow-up with their initial commitment.

Other comments were if there was a way for users of the Release to easily ask questions, you know, of staff through the app, like an email-us button, and we had some comments about potentially linking outreach pushes when there were periods of good weather, if that was possible, and we looked at, again, to make the app user, like a quicker way to log multiple catches, and that was something that was kind of brought up. Again, auto-generated reminders and push notifications, and anything that makes the job of reminding people to do something easier.

Moving on to the fourth bullet, just outreach and communication strategies in general, we had a -  
- We basically just had a conversation to talk about the pros and cons of the different types of mechanisms that the council has, and, again, we're talking about the website, in-person outreach, partnerships, and shows and conferences, and, obviously, the website is, you know, a good tool for most everything to host, and in-person outreach, of course, has always been the gold standard, if we can continue that.

Partnerships, no new information there, and, you know, it can be a minefield, but it's something that we basically need to do for these big-time events, and shows and conferences are always a good way to reconnect with continuing audiences, and we may be able to reach new people.

Moving on to the Amendment 35, I will say that I did listen-in this week, and a lot of the comments that we heard at our meeting were similar to the comments here, in terms of defining an angler universe. If that were possible, that would certainly make outreach efforts easier, and, if a goal is to try to produce, you know, quantifiable outcomes associated with outreach, it really helps to have that universe of people, to see how many people we can reach and what their response is.

Again, just some other comments here, and one thing that AP members really liked was the Return 'Em Right program that is, obviously, operated in the Gulf, and I know that we're currently under different constraints here, but, basically, the AP was asking other members that were affiliated with that program what made that program so successful, and I would just like to hit some of those here, but certain things were branding that was separate from the council, a dedicated communications manager, a marketing firm that helped develop the logo, the branding, and the message. Involving, you know, fishers in the program development, and it was not a top-down type of thing. It has defined benefits, and it's distributing essentially free descending devices, and I think with weights, already rigged and ready to be used, and they also have an online educational module and survey, and so to follow-up and see how people are using that, and so people really like that program. Obviously, it's -- The budget is extensive, but, again, if there was a wish list, that would be on it.

We talked about, again, basically, Amendment 46, and Spud talked about that, and, again, there was a lot of consensus that we needed to have a universe. Another topic that came up, or an idea, was this concept of a master gardener, or a train the trainer program, and how can we amplify the work that a limited number of people are doing, and those are -- If you all aren't familiar with the master gardener program, it's basically run by cooperative extension, or other county programs, where you take people who already have a very good interest in that, and you provide some pretty rigorous training, and then, as part of that training, they have to do outreach and education on those topics, and then, once they reach that level of training, they can kind of go off on their own and distribute this message to others, and so it's a way to kind of perhaps amplify the message, but perhaps with little financial input.

We just talked a little bit about communicating science. In general, you know, most of us here around the room kind of respond pretty well to numbers and statistics, but we're all kind of familiar with it, whereas the general public is not, and so we really need to communicate science in a story, or a narrative, in a way that's going to hook them into understanding.

Of course, we did talk a lot about a lot of things, and I mismanaged the time, and we did not finish the meeting in time, and so we had a hard stop with the next panel meeting, and so we didn't get to equity and environmental justice, and I did ask for people to have some -- If they had bold recommendations for BFP, and so I sent an email to folks, to provide that, you know, in a supplement, and we included an appendix, and I won't go into that too much, and it is in the record here.

We did have a few comments about environmental equity and justice, and one comment, that I think a person provided a link to, which I thought was very interesting, which is the -- I think this

was made perhaps by the Executive Director of the Pacific Management Council, and I'm not sure, but the link is in the report, but, essentially, they were wrapping-up the meeting, and they were remarking on how well it went, and how organized it was, and the feedback that they got, but the comment was that all of that is essentially based on the fact that everybody that's there kind of already knows how everything works, and many of the rules associated with a good meeting, or good public input, are kind of not written in stone, and they're kind of passed down from one person to another, and so it makes it a little bit difficult, for somebody who has never engaged with the council, to essentially come to the council and make an informed good comment, if they don't kind of know the history, or the hidden information, so to speak, of not at least watching a council meeting or something from time to time. With that, I think that concludes my report, and I will take any questions.

MR. WOODWARD: Thank you, Scott, and I want to correct the record that he did not mismanage it, but it was just very enthusiastic, engaged conversation, and there just simply wasn't enough time to cover all of it, but I think you can see, from the report, that there was a lot of involvement, and, also, for the record, I will confess that I am the one that brought the wrap, the vehicle wrap, up, and, you know, my vision is a monster truck app that Ashley and Meg, if they can get in it, would drive around the South Atlantic, you know, and put a pretty high profile to this whole best fishing practices subject matter. All right. With that, any questions for Scott? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: It's just more of a comment, and I really appreciated seeing the comment to use creel survey personnel to raise awareness with recruitment and best fishing practices, and I know that issue sounds a lot easier than it is to actually do, right, but we have to remember, with our state partners, those creel samplers, they really are the front line, and they talk to more anglers than anybody, and we need to find a better way to utilize them, even for small issues, and this is not a small issue, but this is something that can be easily communicated, and so I like -- I just really appreciate seeing that in there, and it's a great idea.

MR. WOODWARD: All right. Thank you, Tom. Anybody else? Any other questions? Susan, and then I will go to you, Gary.

MS. BOGGS: Well, I'm sorry that I didn't wear my Return 'Em Right shirt that I have upstairs in my room today for this meeting, but, you know, one of the, I guess, benefits of the BP oil spill was that afforded us the funding, in the Gulf, through a grant for the Return 'Em Right program, and so that's something that I don't know if it would be available to you all in another manner, but that is how we were so active with that, in getting those things out.

Talking about displaying, I don't have the descending devices, and I am still trying to figure out how to get them, but we do -- You're right that, if you display them -- We have a fuel dock at our marina, and I have the venting tools available, and we have sold many, many, many of those, and so I agree that, if you can get a visual, it does help, because people don't think about it until they see it.

MR. WOODWARD: All right. Thanks, Susan. Kim. I'm going to let Kim speak to that.

MS. IVERSON: Thank you, Susan, and thank you, Scott, for the really informative report. We did have a wonderful meeting, and a lot of good input, and I did want to point out that Ashley, as part of her fellowship, has created a display, and she did it at West Marine in Charleston, and it



was really well received. They put it in the front of the store, and so, when you walked in, you had a display, with the weights and the multiple descending devices that you could choose from, and how to rig it, and it was very well received, and we used that same approach at our ICAST display this year, last summer, this past summer, and it was well received, and so ICAST is targeting those bait and tackle companies, and then the mom-and-pop type of local stores as well, and so I agree, and I think, with Return 'Em Right, that that approach has been used, and how to effectively go in and what you need, and it's more than just a descending device, but it's the weights and the tackle and, you know, everything that goes along with it, and so it's a package, and so that's very helpful. Thank you.

MR. WOODWARD: All right. Thank you, Kim. All right. Gary.

MR. BORLAND: I will make a volunteer statement, and there was a comment made about wanting to understand how much distribution we have on descending devices, and, if needed, I could probably pretty easily -- I know a guy who could probably pull together some information, with the field staff that I have, and that would be pretty easy to do, and so, if that's something that the council wants, or the outreach program wants, I'm willing to help there.

MR. WOODWARD: I think anything that helps quantify the distribution of equipment, the number of interactions with people, and I think all of that is desperately needed to -- If nothing else, to give us a baseline on kind of where we are now, and what are we shooting for in the future, and so thank you for that. Any other questions for Scott? All right. Thanks again, Scott, very much, for your service.

Our next agenda item, and I want to set a little context for this, and we already have a little bit, thanks to Scott's presentation, and that is this best fishing practices outreach campaign as an appendix to Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 35. You know, as we continue to talk about ways to increase the survival of released fish in the snapper grouper complex, you know, one of the topics that continues to rise up is the need to create effective outreach, and to maintain that over time, and so I want to call on Christina.

They have worked to develop an outreach campaign strategy, and she's going to review it, and the purpose of this, for this committee, is to provide any feedback on this that may be needed, and, ultimately, this will be incorporated into Amendment 35, and it will be an actionable item that will be on an ongoing basis. In other words, this is not a one-and-done thing, and this is going to -- I think we all understand that changing behaviors is a marathon, and not a sprint, and I think this strategy reflects the commitment of that approach of doing it, doing it right, and doing it on an ongoing basis, to make a real difference, and so, with that, Christina.

MS. WIEGAND: Thank you, Spud, and so I'm going to go over this presentation, and it tracks directly what was provided in your briefing book. This is the best fishing practices appendix. If you guys will all recall, you asked to have staff develop a proposal for expanding our best fishing practices outreach for inclusion in Regulatory Amendment 35, and so that's what I am going to be going over here.

I do sort of want to let you know -- I may be the one up here going over this presentation with you all, but this was very much a group effort to put together, and particularly Ashley, Meg, and Julia spent a lot of time working to put this together, and our entire outreach and communications team

reviewed it, along with, of course, Mike Schmidtke is the one involved in red snapper, and so I want to make it very clear that, while I'm here giving the presentation, this was a full-council-staff effort.

With that, we'll dive into what the problem is, and you guys had asked us to create sort of a problem statement, what we're sort of trying to communicate to anglers when we are out and about on the road, explaining what's going on with red snapper and, more broadly, survivorship in the snapper grouper fishery, because, as we all know, this is not a red-snapper-specific problem.

We've been focusing on talking a lot about issues with, you know, regulatory measures, combined with the significant amount of growing fishing effort along the coast, are simply leading to a drastic increase in the number of non-target snapper grouper that have to be released, be these for regulatory reasons or other reasons, and snapper grouper is inherently a multispecies fishery, and so, regardless of what you're targeting, it's likely that you will end up catching fish that you will ultimately have to release.

Large numbers of fish that don't survive release effectively limit the council's ability to prevent overfishing, and, as a result, sort of reduce the, you know, ABCs and ACLs that you guys are being given, the number of fish that can be sustainably landed, and so, to sort of address that problem, what's really needed is more outreach and education, to ensure that these best fishing practices become ubiquitous throughout the fishery.

We've been focusing on several sort of outreach goals and objectives, both with our current outreach efforts as well as those that will go into this expansion, and so, just baseline best fishing practices knowledge, making sure that fishermen know about the different fishing methods, including, but not limited to, descending devices, avoidance, not holding fish by the gills, and this is a much broader project than descending devices, though we do tend to talk about descending devices quite a bit.

We're also looking to get at that behavior change, and we don't want fishermen to just know about these best fishing practices, but we want to make sure they're actively being utilized in the fishery, and, of course, gathering data, and you guys have talked a lot about more information is needed on the use of descending devices and these other best fishing practices, and, of course, all of that sort of coalesces together to also help us achieve the goal of just broader council knowledge and how fishermen can participate in the council process and be a part of what you all are discussing here day after day.

Then, finally, maintaining relationships, and I will talk about this a little bit more in a minute, but building and maintaining relationships with fishing communities is key. This isn't something that can sort of be achieved by just one tackle shop visit here and there, and it takes sort of a long-term, consistent effort to build and maintain relationships with these communities, and so we have been actively working to achieve those goals, particularly with the work that Ashley, as the Sea Grant fellow, and Meg, as our citizen science project coordinator, have been doing all year long, and we've done things like tackle shop tours, and I think Ashley said she's visited about sixty-five tackle shops this year, up and down the South Atlantic coast, which is a pretty significant number, given that it's just, you know, one and two people, and so think about how many more sort of tackle shop touches we could get with an expanded program.

We've also been doing fishing seminars, and we've done one this year, which we've talked to you guys a little bit about before, but we found it to be an incredibly valuable tool for spreading the message, and we partnered with two well-known charter captains in Charleston, Captain Mark Phelps, who is on your Outreach and Communication AP, and Captain Chuck Griffin, who is on the Mackerel AP, to have a seminar at Haddrell's, where they spoke initially about sort of the best ways to bottom fish, and we held this in April, and so right as bottom fishing season was getting ready to kick off, and then our staff was about to come in, at the end, and present information on best fishing practices and release. Having Chuck and Mark there, to really speak highly, and to bring fishermen in the door, I think really helped increase our buy-in for best fishing practices in the Release project.

We have attended other industry events, and this here is sort of a picture of our booth that we had at ICAST, and then we've been partnering with state agencies, and one of the things we did, most recently, was partner with South Carolina DNR, and they did a series of charter summits, and their outreach team was generous enough to sort of invite us to go along with them, up and down the South Carolina coast, to present information to fishermen as well, and then, of course, with Release, they've been sending monthly newsletters to participants, and also annual summaries of all the data that's been submitted through Release, so that these fishermen that are participating can sort of see what's coming of it and the different trends that that data is able to capture.

Now we need to expand, and this work is great, but it's Ashley and Meg and myself and Julia, which is a fairly small number of people, when you're thinking about the huge number of anglers that we've got here in the South Atlantic, and so our goal, with this expansion, is really to increase the overall use of best fishing practices, including, but not limited to, descending devices, increased stakeholder awareness of the need to improve the survival of released fish and the best fishing practices currently in place, and hopefully get the behaviors to start to change as well.

Like I said, that's needed because, right now, our outreach activities are limited by available funding and available staff, and, like I said earlier, fostering a behavior change is a long-term goal, and this isn't something that can be sort of, you know, done halfway. If we really want to see a significant impact in this fishery, we need to sort of dive all in and start pushing this outreach effort, as much as we possibly can, because they really are crucial to developing these relationships with fishing communities.

With that, the expansion sort of includes two major things, and the first would be a brand-new, full-time best fishing practices outreach specialist position, and the second would be extension of the current citizen science project coordinator position, and, again, I know I've said this two or three or four times now, and I will probably say it another four times before the end of this presentation, but having these positions are key to building relationships with participants.

When we think about, you know, the relationships that have been most successful for us thus far, they're often people based in Charleston, because that's where we are day-to-day, and so we're able to have consistent contact with these people, and they're seeing the same faces over and over again, and, in order to really scale that up and down the coast, we're going to need a bit more staff support, and we need staff support that's going to stay for a significant length of time and not just sort of be in and out every few years, and so we really want to make these positions desirable positions.

What will these people actually be doing, if we hire them? First, they will be complementing current efforts, and the big one being organizing fishing seminars. As I noted, we were only able to get one done this year, and that's because they do take a significant amount of time to organize, and you really want to build the relationship with the community and be able to sort of identify those key community leaders that you want to be, for lack of a better term, the bait that are helping get other fishermen in the door, because, as we all know, people aren't necessarily excited about coming to see the council present on something, but, if we're able to partner with these community leaders, these influencers, whatever you would like to term them, we're much more likely to get people in the door to hear this messaging.

Of course, attending different fishing tournaments, more industry events, extending our ability to do mailings and doing these personal communications, particularly with Release participants, because we found that those that have really actively participated, and continue to participate, in the Release program are those that staff has been able to develop a personal relationship, be it through phone or email, but that personal contact.

Expanding the number of tackle shops that we're able to visit throughout the South Atlantic region, and Ashley has been maintaining a huge tackle shop database, and each of the states in our region provided information on all of the tackle shops within their region, and we would like to be able to hit as many as possible, but, also, part of that is sort of figuring out which tackle shops are worth our time.

For example, we don't necessarily want to be going to a tackle shop that only caters to inshore fishermen, that's not catering to people that are targeting the species we're concerned about. Some of those are closed, or have moved locations, and so part of this tackle shop tour, in addition to spreading information, is also sort of getting a better handle on where we really need to be spreading this information.

Then content creation and media charter trips, and part of what Ashley has been working to do is to get writers out onboard charter vessels, so that we can actively show them best fishing practices in use, and we've been hindered by the weather quite a bit this year, and we've only been able to go out a couple of times, but we're really hoping that the weather will be a little bit more favorable to us, come next year, and we'll be able to get out quite a bit more than we were this year.

The next thing this best fishing practices outreach specialist would do, specifically, is focus a lot more on the advertising and marketing aspect of best fishing practices, and we've sort of taken what the Outreach and Communication AP recommended to us, along with some things that we know worked for Return 'Em Right, and Return 'Em Right is a very well-funded initiative that we're likely to not be able to match, but we can take some of what they've learned, and some of their successes, and tailor it to what we're trying to do here in the South Atlantic region, which is what we've done here, and a lot of this also comes from advice and working with that descending device coordination team that Scott mentioned during his outreach and communication report.

Then, in addition to doing things like billboard, targeted social media, push notifications to weather applications on various best fishing practices stuff, we've also sort of tossed around the idea of creating an interactive outreach tool, to test users on their knowledge of best fishing practices, and so Return 'Em Right has the, you know, tutorial that they had people go through a few years ago, and our staff partnered with South Carolina Fish and Wildlife Federation to put together a best

fishing practices descending device tutorial, and so that's what's been done, and we were thinking something that's a bit more like a quiz.

Say you're on the best fishing practices website, and you've scrolled through and read everything, and there's an option at the bottom where you can see pictures, and determine what signs of barotrauma are being exhibited by the gag grouper in this picture, or how much weight can be attached to a descending device, and then, to sort of rope-in the Release project, if people would like to help inform managers about what they were seeing on the water, which would then kick them to the Release website, and so these are very much sort of ideas that we've just thrown around, as staff, that we think could be very valuable.

The next big thing this person will be working on is the best fishing practices master volunteer program, or getting people to become a BFP MVP, and so we would be looking to train volunteers to sort of become experts in all things best fishing practices and then encourage them to train their community, similar to the master gardener program that Scott was talking about. We would be looking to target, you know, first maybe our AP members, and some MREP graduates, but we would also hope to bring in things like port samplers and creel surveyors into this, so that they can then also be providing this information to the community, given that we know that they tend to interact with anglers regularly quite a bit more often than we do.

We hope to make these in-person workshops throughout the region, and hopefully not only teach people to become the teachers, but also get information from them on how we can be bettering our outreach efforts, and, of course, they would get something like a certificate, once they completed it, to be able to sort of market their, you know, BFP MVP status.

Then, of course, we're looking to extend that citizen science project coordinator position beyond where it's funded now, and part of doing that would be looking to explore organizing these sort of short, periodic virtual fishing, quote, unquote, tournaments, and these would be virtual, to help facilitate discussions about best fishing practices and Release submission, and part of this stems from, again, what Scott was talking about the OC AP meeting, finding a way to sort of sometimes bookend things, to get people to participate. Also, setting up a recognition program, to encourage people to continue to submit releases and to continue to be involved in the project, and, of course, just developing more individual personal communications with participants and fostering those relationships.

Then, of course, as you guys have been talking about, it's great if we do all this stuff, but how are we actually going to evaluate this? How do we take that a step further, and so what we've proposed, in the appendix, is to organize a workshop with different researchers that are conducting work on best fishing practices, perceptions, outreach, and uses, within the region.

There's quite a lot of survey work currently going on. The Nature Conservancy has done some work, and there is some work going on with the reef fish fellowship that Ashley is a part of, and there's been some independent academic studies that have looked at this type of information, and so our goal is to get those different groups together and have a workshop where we can, you know, one, just learn about all the research that's currently going on in the South Atlantic, but also how we can use that sort of past research to set a baseline for what descending device use was in the past and then plan how we can move forward and use new research to look at how that has changed

over time, and it really feels like the first step is to get all of those different groups in a room to talk about how we can make this useful for the council initiatives that are going on.

Those are evaluation of the outreach efforts, and that is the quickest of summaries of what's in that best fishing practices appendix. I'm happy to take questions, and then, just to give you guys sort of an idea of what we're looking for, from this committee right now, is, you know, provide any feedback that you have on the planned best fishing practices expansion, and then we're looking -- So we don't really need a motion, but just sort of direction to staff that you're comfortable with what we've proposed, so we can sort of move forward to start implementing some of this stuff, so that, by March, when you're, you know, looking at Reg 35 again, it's no longer a proposal, and it's this is what staff is actively working on, and so, with that, I will turn it back to you, Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Thank you, Christina. She didn't mention, but, if you get to be a BFP MVP, you get to borrow the wrapped monster truck for a weekend, and so just factor that in. You know, it could be a real hit at the family reunion, the birthday parties and that sort of thing, but, no, seriously, this is a -- I think it's a great plan, and it's ambitious, but, you know, you've got to be ambitious to achieve things, and so, at this point, I will open it up for questions. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I think it's a great presentation, and very informative. One of the key phrases that I understand is that we don't have no money, and, given that I said that, I will finish my comments. You are looking to target an audience, right, and that audience, probably 90 percent of them or better, have a vessel to go fishing. You target them folks by some type of permit, or email, to go fishing that has to take a class, or do something online, to get them into the interest of that, and that's your targeted audience.

Then, from there, you work on that targeted audience, and so, therefore -- I mean, you know, you have some shoreside anglers, but I would venture to say that 90, or 95, percent are folks that have a vessel, and they're going fishing with a vessel, and you've got to target them. You know, you can go target a tackle store, but probably a lot of people buy their stuff online, because they have limited time and different things, and so you get them chummed up first with the permit, voluntarily or making them -- But you get your universe of who you're going to go target with the money you have, which is going to be a limited amount, and that's how you start to get them, and, as you're chumming them up, then you start your other stuff and outreach that you're looking at here, which is awesome, but, right now, you could do a lot of targeting to these different shows and stuff, and you're not getting to the folks that are on that vessel on that water, and that's just my opinion. Thank you.

MR. WOODWARD: All right. Thanks, Dewey. John, did you want to speak to the funding part of this equation?

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, I will speak to the funding, because, you know, as you know, that's what we discussed with the ExCom, and, you know, we've been under budget, thanks to the COVID of the last couple of years, and, when we've talked about this in the past, the council has shown a willingness, or a desire, to have that money, you know, go to things that are important to your program and all, and this is certainly one of them, and we have the money now to cover this through 2023 and 2024.

Our five-year grant ends in 2024, and so, as we go into 2025, you know, we're not able to just carry over a whole bunch of money, you know, and so we have the ability, within this five-year period though, to use this, and we have the money to cover this program as it is, and so that's not a concern at this time, and, you know, I think one part of it, as far as, you know, chumming people up and getting them in, is what we've done on a shoestring has been pretty darned incredible, as far as we really have started to chum some people in and identify, you know, the right communities and the right areas and the right anglers, and so I think the guys are really doing a great job on this.

You know, I think Dewey makes a good point too, about moving into future years, when we won't have the luxury of what has been, you know, the COVID funding luxury that we've had. You know, when we're back on our regular budget, and staying within that, things would be considerably tighter, and being able to focus-in on perhaps a permit universe, which may be known by that time, would be very helpful to us, to maybe better know how to target it and better look at the funds that we need to do it, and focus-in on those people.

I'm also hoping that, perhaps, as we continue to do this with council funds, that maybe, at some point, we'll be the beneficiary of some attention, along the lines of release 'em right, and, somewhere, we're get some millions, or something, to continue to do this, and not always have to do it on a shoestring, but, for now, it's not a concern of the money for what's being proposed right here, and that's covered.

MR. WOODWARD: Just to add to that, you know, if you can develop a coherent plan, you've got not only the funds that come to this council from the federal government, but you've got state funds for licenses, from Sportfish Restoration, and you've got industry, and you've got a lot of people who are willing to back this. You know, if you've got a good horse, people want to back your horse, and I think that's part of what we've got to do, is, you know, get all this stuff pointed in the right direction, and then you can build a plan where you can sustain it over the long haul. I would dare say that it probably ought to be something that's considered in the National Recreational Fishing Policy, in terms of what this means to the long-term sustainability of recreational fishing, and so, Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Thank you, Christina. I am very excited about this, and I think you all are doing such a good job, and so I'm definitely pro on moving forward with the proposals in there. I also wanted to note that I think the idea of this BFP MVP reminds me a lot of sort of a partner, and I hate to use this term, but like the MSC, that whole certification, and we have South Carolina certified, that we can hang that in our store, and it comes a marketing tool, and so, like you said, I can see charter guides -- Maybe they get certified as a BFP MVP, and they can put the seal on their website, and I, as a consumer, would be more likely to patronize someone who, you know, has those credentials, and so that's a great idea, and I think there's a lot of utility in it.

I would also recommend, once that gets going, and, you know, I listen to South Carolina Public Radio in the morning, because I'm a nerd, but there's a woman who is a master gardener, and she does like a three-minute segment in the morning, and so, you know, once that program gets going, I think there's all kinds of avenues for those people to have a voice on our behalf, and so I'm really excited. Great job.

MR. WOODWARD: All right. Gary.

MR. BORLAND: You know, just to add, I think that -- Great presentation, for sure, but I think that understanding that this is vitally crucial to the success and the future of the fishing tackle industry, and I know you were at ICAST, but I think you can lean harder on manufacturers, including the one I work for, to partner with you, and I think, you know, as marketing levers today, social influencers that we deal with, that are on our team, are on every manufacturer's team, would be a crucial way to get the word out there. Their YouTube videos get hundreds of thousands of views, when they post one, a lot of them, and so I think it would be inexpensive, and a way to get the word out, to start with.

I did just text with Jeffrey Liederman, who is one of the owners of SeaQualizer, and we have a lot of runway to get more SeaQualizers, or release devices, in tackle shops, and, again, I'm willing to partner in any way, going forward, to help with the program.

MR. WOODWARD: Thank you, Gary. Do you want to respond to that, Christina?

MS. WIEGAND: I was just going to say that we'll definitely be taking you up on that, and all of the contacts you have, to sort of help us get in a bit more with tackle shop manufacturers.

MR. WOODWARD: She actually has a bucket over here that she's going to pass around later for collections, and so, if anybody is feeling particularly inspired by this presentation, you can -- Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: I think I'm real excited about this too, and I think I've mentioned, in past meetings, the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries is working really hard to broaden our education and outreach, and we've developed a plan, an outreach plan, and we actually have done a descending device video, that I think Kim had shared.

I wanted to let you know that, as far as partnering with other agencies, definitely be in touch with DMF for partnering, but what's coming up, and I had mentioned that we've got our 200-year celebration, and we have a bicentennial jamboree that's going to happen on June 10, which is actually two days before the Florida council meeting, but it is on a Saturday, and it is during the Big Rock Ladies Tournament as well, and so the idea was that we would have a lot of folks from outside wanting to come see the, you know, weigh-ins and everything, and so, if you guys would like to participate in that jamboree, and I don't know if you would be interested in contacting the Big Rock Tournament as well, but, yes, please continue to reach out. We've actually just hired a new outreach specialist, and she's wonderful, Michelle Brodeur, and so definitely reach out to her, and I think we could have some great partnerships going on.

MS. WIEGAND: I absolutely -- Thank you, and we would love to be involved in that, and to get some contacts with the Big Rock guy, and we have found tournaments, whether or not they're related to snapper grouper species at all, can actually be pretty powerful tools for outreach. Ashley and Julia spent some time at the Governor's Cup Tournament this year in South Carolina, and they actually found that, as a result of their outreach there, we saw a pretty substantial uptick on our best fishing practices webpage, and so, even if the tournaments aren't geared towards snapper grouper species specifically, we have found them to be great outreach avenues.

I will also add, and I know one of the big outreach helps for Release was partnering with mailings that North Carolina DMF sent out, and so we would be interested in furthering those partnerships with, you know, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, sort of as much as possible.



MR. WOODWARD: All right. Any other questions or comments? Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Thank you, Christina. Could you make sure that that presentation gets into the briefing book, because I think it could be valuable later on. Thank you.

MR. WOODWARD: All right. Questions or comments? What we need is, you know, feedback from the committee on the content of this strategy, and what I hope would be general consensus on moving this forward and starting to turn these ideas into actions, and so this is your opportunity, and, of course, you can always, you know, provide more feedback later, as you process some of this and read the Appendix H document, which has a lot more detail in it, and, you know, I think I can speak for that team and that, you know, there are no bad ideas, and so, I mean, if you've got ideas, please bring them forward, and I think that will help everybody, to make sure that we do this the best we can.

I am particularly pleased to see that there's going to be effort given to making sure that we put together the brightest minds in this sort of human dimensions world, and figure out how to quantify what we're doing, because, you know, behavioral change is a difficult thing, at best, to quantify, but it is absolutely necessary for us to determine whether our return on investment is right, and so any other questions or comments? All right. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I mean, I will just, once again, reiterate what others have said, and I think this is fantastic, and I think that staff have really put a lot of thought into this. You know, I think this is something that will continue to evolve over time, and you're going to learn from your outreach and education strategies that you're working on now. I really liked what Gary said, in terms of partnering with industry.

I think you want to keep the end in mind, in terms of kind of where you want to go with this, and I think there's a lot of opportunity that, obviously, we've talked about with partnering with the states, NOAA Fisheries, Sea Grant, industry members, and that could really get the ball rolling, in terms of a huge expansion of this over time, and then I think the most important part, which we've often wrestled with, is kind of the downstream, and what's the benefit, right, and what have we quantified from this, and Christina talked about that, and working with researchers, and so I think part of the strategy, for me, and really what I want to dig into and think a little bit more about, is that end product, as to how do we know we've been successful, and how have we quantified that, that then informs the management, and also is kind of the feedback loop to our constituents.

At the end of the day, this isn't going to harm anything, in my view, and it's only going to benefit our resources and conservation and fishing industry, but how can we make it as successful as possible, and so kudos to the staff, and this is a great first step.

MR. WOODWARD: Thank you, and, just to make absolutely clear, while this is an appendix to Amendment 35, we're not at a stand-still and waiting for Amendment 35 to be finished, in whatever form it is, and so, basically, you're giving consent, as this committee, and the members, to moving forward with the actionable items of this, and it will be an appendix to that plan, and that's where it will sort of live, but it is -- Functionally, it's a separate, you know, guiding document for a set of actions and outcomes that we hope will occur, and so hopefully that's clear to everybody. Chester.

MR. BREWER: I was an early proponent of this, and I continue to be a huge proponent of this. I want to caution though that I think there is some danger, with regard to expected outcomes, because we have been pitching this whole program as the way to get some more red snapper out there that we can catch, and we're hearing, more and more, that it may not make that big of a difference, and so I am fearful of people being sold 100 percent on the idea of, hey, this is how we're going to be able to catch some more red snapper and have a season, and, when that doesn't happen right off the bat, or maybe for a few years, or maybe for God only knows how long, these people are going to fall off the bandwagon, when, in fact, the program benefits more than red snapper, just as Andy says.

It's across, you know, a lot of species, that it's going to be very helpful for, but, heretofore, and I'm probably the most guilty of this, and it's been pitched as this is the solution for the do loop that we find ourselves in with red snapper, and I haven't been to any of the presentations that have been put on with the public, and so I don't know, but I am concerned about what expectations people are going to have about utilizing this program.

MR. WOODWARD: Thank you, Chester, and I think there is a great sensitivity to that, and you noticed that it's being presented as, you know, fishery-wide, and not to fix a particular problem, but I will let Christina elaborate a little bit on that.

MS. WIEGAND: I would just say that I couldn't agree more, Chester, and that's something that our outreach team has talked quite a little bit about, that, when we're communicating with the public, we will sort of need to manage expectations, while sort of encouraging the use of best fishing practices and the power that using best fishing practices can have, and also sort of manage expectations, in terms of how immediately, or what effect, we may see, in terms of sort of concrete changes to catch levels, and so I would say that's certainly something that our outreach team has talked quite a bit about, and making sure that we're communicating in a way that sets expectations appropriately.

MR. WOODWARD: All right. Any further questions or comments? The Chair is scowling at me, and I'm five minutes over my time, and this is the only committee that I'm still chair of, and I would hate to get fired for that, and so any concerns about this? Is everybody content with where we're at and what the plan is? I see lots of heads nodding, and so I'm going to consider that as a green light, and proceed and make wonderful things happen. Any other business to come before the Outreach and Communications Committee? Seeing none, I will consider us adjourned. Thank you.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on December 8, 2022.)

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Certified By \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Transcribed By  
Amanda Thomas  
February 6, 2023

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**SAFMC                      December**  
**Council Meeting (12/5/22 -**  
**Attendee Report: 12/9/22)**

Report Generated:  
12/11/2022 01:51 PM EST

**Webinar ID**  
338-488-243

**Actual Start Date/Time**  
12/08/2022 07:50 AM EST

**Duration**  
9 hours 19 minutes

**Attendee Details**

<b>Attended</b>	<b>Last Name</b>	<b>First Name</b>
Yes	AYALA	OSCAR
Yes	Bailey	Adam
Yes	Bard	Dave
Yes	Batsavage	Chris
Yes	Bell	00 Mel
Yes	Bianchi	Alan
Yes	Bonura	Vincent
Yes	Borbely	Bernard
Yes	Borland	Gary
Yes	Box	Cameron
Yes	Brouwer	Myra
Yes	Bruger	Catherine
Yes	Byrd	Julia
Yes	Byrd	Julia
Yes	Calay	Shannon
Yes	Chaya	01Cindy
Yes	Clarke	Lora
Yes	Coleman	Heather
Yes	Conklin	Chris
Yes	Cooksey	Cindy
Yes	Cox	Derek
Yes	Cross	Tiffanie
Yes	Crosson	Scott
Yes	Dale (NMFS SERO)	David
Yes	DeVictor	Rick
Yes	Dixon	Michael
Yes	Dorman	Holly
Yes	Dukes	Amy
Yes	EL ALI	NAJI
Yes	Fifer	Jocelyn
Yes	Finch	Margaret
Yes	Flowers	Jared
Yes	Floyd	Brad

Yes	Foss	Kristin
Yes	Franco	Dawn
Yes	Franke	Emilie
Yes	Freeman	Matt
Yes	Friedrich	Tony
Yes	Glazier	Ed
Yes	Gore	Karla
Yes	Gray	Alisha
Yes	HEMILRIGHT	DEWEY
Yes	Hadley	John
Yes	Harper	Rich
Yes	Helies	Frank
Yes	Helmey	Judy
Yes	Hildreth	Delaine
Yes	Howington	Kathleen
Yes	Iverson	Kim
Yes	Kappos	Maria
Yes	Karnauskas	Mandy
Yes	Klasnick	01Kelly
Yes	LARKIN	Michael
Yes	LaRoche	Kelcie
Yes	Labocetta	Mark
Yes	Lazarre	Dominique
Yes	Malinowski	Rich
Yes	Markwith	Anne
Yes	Masi	Michelle
Yes	McCoy	Sherylanne
Yes	McGovern	Jack
Yes	Mehta	Nikhil
Yes	Murphey	Trish
Yes	Neer	Julie
Yes	Newman	Thomas
Yes	Newman	Sondra
Yes	Oliver	Ashley
Yes	Package-Ward	Christina
Yes	Poston	Will
Yes	Pugliese	01Roger
Yes	Ralston	Kellie
Yes	Ramsay	Chloe
Yes	Reichert	Marcel
Yes	Roller	00Tom
Yes	Rubner	Cody
Yes	Sedberry	George
Yes	Seward	McLean
Yes	Siegfried	Katie
Yes	Smart	Tracey
Yes	Smillie	Nick

Yes	Spurgin	Kali
Yes	Stam	Geoff
Yes	Stemle	Adam
Yes	Stephen	Jessica
Yes	Sweetman	CJ
Yes	Thompson	00 Laurilee
Yes	Travis	Michael
Yes	Vecchio	Julie
Yes	Waine	Mike
Yes	Walia	Matthew
Yes	Walter	Kate
Yes	Wamer	David
Yes	Williams	Erik
Yes	Withers	Meg
Yes	Wolfe	Wes
Yes	Wyanski	David
Yes	brewer	00chester
Yes	gloeckner	david
Yes	merino	joy
Yes	moss	david
Yes	oden	jeff
Yes	sandorf	scott
Yes	thomas	suz
Yes	thompson	laurilee
Yes	vara	mary