



SAFMC Citizen Science Program Development

More Collaboration + More Data + More Trust = Better Management

DRAFT Plan of Work – YEAR 1

Overview

For many years the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) has grappled with the challenge of ensuring adequate science to support its fisheries management program despite inadequate resources, a high number of managed species, and a complex and highly variable ecosystem. Discussions of data shortcomings and the resultant scientific uncertainties often include offers from fishermen, both commercial and recreational, to provide vessels and samples and their own observations to help increase scientific knowledge and ‘fill the gaps’. While many fields facing similar challenges of gathering observations across wide expanses of time and space have turned to the concept of Citizen Science to take advantage of such offers, development in the marine arena has been slow. Recognizing the desire of constituents to get involved and the need to have well designed sampling protocols to ensure that information collected through such efforts is relevant and meets scientific standards for use in decision making, the Council intends to develop a comprehensive Citizen Science Program.

The Council took a considerable first step in the process of developing a Citizen Science Program in the South Atlantic by convening a workshop in January 2016 where interested citizens, citizen science experts and fisheries professionals came together to develop recommendations for a council based program. Support from the scientific and fishing community was considerable. Over 65 people from throughout the region participated in the workshop including commercial, for-hire, and private recreational fishermen; partners from each of the four state Sea Grant programs; data managers and scientists from state and federal agencies; academic institutions; and non-governmental organizations. Recommendations from workshop participants were used to develop a citizen science framework ([Citizen Science Program Blueprint](#)) to guide the Council’s efforts in developing a viable citizen science program.

Goals & Objectives

The mission of the SAFMC Citizen Science Program is to “Improve Fisheries Management Through Collaborative Science.” Program goals include adopting a collaborative approach to address data needs, ensure data collected are appropriate and useful, build partnerships, enhance stewardship for South Atlantic resources, and foster active engagement and communication.

To support the goals of the SAFMC Citizen Science Program, the development project will conduct activities to meet the following objectives:

- Objective 1:** Establish programmatic resources to support initiation and coordination of the SAFMC Citizen Science Program.
- Objective 2:** Create a system of organizational governance to support the infrastructure and activities of the SAFMC Citizen Science Program.
- Objective 3:** Develop programmatic communication strategies to promote the SAFMC Citizen Science Program to stakeholders.
- Objective 4:** Initiate a “kickstarter” citizen science project to serve as a test project for the SAFMC Citizen Science Program.
- Objective 5:** Develop comprehensive outreach and training approaches to support the SAFMC Citizen Science Program and associated projects.
- Objective 6:** Foster development of partnerships to support the SAFMC Citizen Science Program and funding and administration of projects.
- Objective 7:** Pursue funding opportunities to support citizen science projects under the SAFMC Citizen Science Program.

Scope of Work

Note: The SAFMC Citizen Science Program is hereafter referred to as “the program.”

Objective 1 – Establish Program Resources:

Activities –

- A Citizen Science Program Manager will be hired by the Council to coordinate the program and work with stakeholders and the Council to develop specific objectives and activities for the program.

Objective 2 – Create Organizational Governance:

Activities –

- Establish a Citizen Science Committee under the Council to establish a mechanism for Council engagement and oversight of the program.
- Work with the SAFMC Organizing Committee to establish membership and function of the program’s Transition Team.
- Prioritize action items in the program Citizen Science Program Blueprint and designate quarterly discussion topics.

(The Transition Team may work on items such as establishing membership, function, and charge of the Program Oversight Committee, Advisory Committees, and/or the five Action Teams as outlined in the program blueprint – *Volunteers; Data Management; Project/Topics Management; Communication/Outreach/Education; and Finance*)

Objective 3 – Develop Communication Strategies:

Activities –

- Establish a program website, volunteer portal, and other materials to promote the program to the public.

Objective 4 – Initiate a “Kickstarter” Project:

Activities –

- Develop a list of potential projects to help identify an initial “kickstarter” project for the program, in coordination with fishermen, the SE Fisheries Science Center, the Council and other partners. *Projects will cover a range of fishery issues/topics that can be applied to management and will be identified as short-, mid-, or long-term projects.*
- Select an initial “kickstarter” project and manage the development and operations of the project. *The project that is selected will be able to be conducted in one-year or less and collect data that can be used to contribute to information for an upcoming stock assessment.*

Objective 5 – Develop Outreach/Training Approaches:

Activities –

- Convene regional workshops (up to four) with stakeholders to recruit volunteers and provide information about the program, project opportunities, and results.
- Based on the “kickstarter” project selected, develop training materials for project volunteers.
- Coordinate webinars (bi-weekly) with project volunteers and scientists to encourage project communication and evaluation.
- Develop outreach materials to highlight the “kickstarter” project and the project results.

Objective 6 - Partnership Development:

Activities –

- Identify potential collaborative partners and their roles within the program related to the five Action Teams – Volunteers, Data Management, Project/Topics Management, Communication/Outreach/Education, and Finance.
- Establish a formal Memorandum of Understanding with a program partner that may serve as a grants administrator for the project funds that come through the program.

Objective 7 – Funding Opportunities:

Activities –

- Pursue collaborative funding opportunities to support projects.