



Charting a New Course

A Workshop to Design a Fishery Citizen Science Program for the U.S. South Atlantic



What is citizen science?

Citizen science is a growing field in which trained members of the public collaborate and engage with scientists in the inquiry and discovery of new knowledge. Public participation in scientific research advances science, research, and policy and fosters an informed and engaged citizenship.

Why are we doing this?

For many years the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) has grappled with the challenge of ensuring adequate and timely science to support management despite limited resources, a multitude of species to manage, and a complex and highly diverse ecosystem. Discussions of data shortcomings and the resulting scientific uncertainties often lead to offers from fishermen to provide their vessels as research platforms, collect samples and record their own observations to help increase scientific knowledge and ‘fill the gaps’. The Council recognizes the desire of constituents to get involved and the need to have a well-designed program and accompanying sampling protocols to ensure that information collected through such efforts is useful. To meet this growing need, the Council intends to develop a comprehensive Fishery Citizen Science Program.

Initial Steps

In March 2015, the Council created a Citizen Science organizing committee. As a first step, the committee has recommended convening a workshop where interested citizens, fisheries managers and scientists, and citizen science practitioners gather to develop recommendations for designing such a program.

Vision

The committee crafted the following draft vision for a Fishery Citizen Science Program to serve as a guidepost for the proposed workshop:

“A collaborative fisheries research and monitoring program run by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council that effectively blends citizen science and technical science to expand the base of information available for Council decision-making.”

Workshop Goals

1. Document and evaluate existing citizen science and cooperative research experiences;
2. Identify existing funding opportunities;
3. Develop objectives for the South Atlantic Fishery Citizen Science Program;
4. Develop a framework for achieving program objectives, considering:
 - a. Research and monitoring activities appropriate for citizen science;
 - b. Funded and unfunded opportunities and avenues to support citizen science;
 - c. The full range of data needs (fishery, biological, research, assess, socio-econ, etc);
 - d. Potential web-based platforms;
 - e. Outreach and education needs, short and long term; and
 - f. Governance, including ongoing staff support, management, and oversight
5. Develop a prioritized list of citizen science project candidates, and identify 2 – 5 high priority projects that could be implemented within 1 year of the workshop.

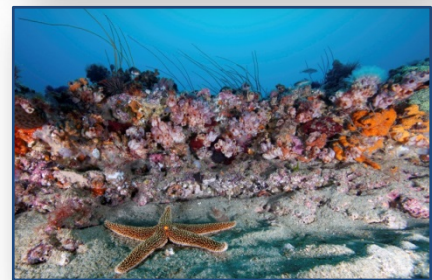
Workshop Deliverables

The deliverable from the workshop will be a report to the South Atlantic Council describing and documenting recommendations for the structure and development of a Fishery Citizen Science program for the South Atlantic. The Council will use this report and its recommendations to guide development of the SAFMC Fishery Citizen Science Program.

Partnership Opportunities

The key to the workshop's success – and ultimately the success of a long-term program - is collaboration among diverse partners. To date the Council, NOAA, and members of the fishing and NGO communities are engaged in workshop and long-term program planning. However, to ensure the success of a Fishery Citizen Science Program of this scale, the committee recognizes the importance of fostering partnerships with additional government and private entities. A program of this nature has the ability to leverage resources and expand the collaborative networks of all partners involved.

The Council and organizing committee are truly excited by this groundbreaking effort to harness the power of bringing citizen scientists together with fishery managers and scientists to produce innovative fisheries research and monitoring projects that will contribute to the management of U.S. South Atlantic fisheries. We hope you will join us as a partner in this endeavor.



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