

SAFMC VISIONING WORKSHOP
DECEMBER 3, 2012
WILMINGTON, NC

The South Atlantic Council's Snapper Grouper Committee, which includes all the voting members on the Council, convened on Monday December 3, 2012 to discuss a vision for the snapper grouper fishery. The workshop began at 9:00 am and concluded at noon. A presentation on the Mid-Atlantic Council's Strategic Planning and Visioning Process by the Mid-Atlantic Council's chairman, Mr. Rick Robins, kicked off the workshop. A question and answer period followed Mr. Robin's presentation and the subsequent discussion was facilitated by John Henderschedt, Fisheries Forum Executive Director and North Pacific Council member. Below are the three topics that were discussed and the pertinent items brought up under each topic.

I. What are the overarching, thought-provoking questions that will elicit the stakeholder input and information needed to build/define a vision for the snapper grouper fishery?

- The Council is clear in that the visioning process should involve close communication with stakeholders.
- The Council should consider what questions will best solicit the response and input from stakeholders.
- Council members offered other questions: What is the geographic scope? How do we accommodate the northern boundary? Why are we limiting this to the snapper grouper fishery? The response to the latter question was due to resource constraints. The Council felt they need to learn lessons first before embarking on a similar approach that addresses all Council-managed fisheries. Also, the snapper grouper fishery is a complex.
- Council members expressed the need to consider latitudinal issues affecting fisheries managed by the SAFMC; both socio-cultural, economic, and ecological (habitat, etc).
- The following items were suggested as shortcomings to current management:
 - Lack of resources devoted to expanding cooperative research. How can we engage stakeholders in cooperative research?
 - Need to address volunteer angler data
 - How to deal with future threats to habitat (including water quality issues) and how they will affect fisheries and fishing communities?
 - What is the productivity of stocks? Where are we now? What can fishermen expect in the future?
- Council members stated that to address the above shortcomings the Council needs to be clear on what the public's expectations are and whether they are realistic.
- Other issues identified included:
 - How to frame whether management is "leaving fish on the table" (with the understanding that the commercial industry's perspective will be different than that from recreational stakeholders).
 - Need to do a better job of tapping into fishermen's experience and incorporate into the management process

- Is the diversity of the fishery important? How important? Do we want to maintain? The Council values diversity and is aware of linkages among fisheries but should focus on determining linkages more closely.
- What are some of the unintended consequences of regulations? Impacts may be different depending on the economic environment.
- On the subject of enforcement Council members stated that the Council could provide more information on efficacy and utility of existing technologies (i.e., VMS) since stakeholders may feel that not enough information has been considered.
- The Council should also consider whether the law understandable. Is it clear? How can regulations be made more understandable and accessible? Can the Council do a better job of this?

II. What is the desired product/outcome? (i.e., a strategic plan, blueprint for the fishery, etc)

- Council members agreed that the outcome of the visioning process should be a strategic plan that is understandable to the fishing community, easy to read and clearly lays out the management actions the Council plans to undertake.
- Council members provided the following when asked to comment on whether the document would contain specific strategies for plan amendments or other ways to implement some of the objectives detailed in the document and to what extent would the document be a guide to management
 - The strategic plan would lay out fairly specific, prescriptive, recommendations.
 - The strategic plan should consider new management tools. Are there any that the Council has not yet considered?
 - The workplan is already established by Congress, so some Council members offered that the Council may want to focus on management tools (i.e., artificial reefs).
 - The strategic plan should include specific strategies to address issues.
 - The strategic plan should include evaluation of tools that have been proven useful.
- What questions should the Council consider asking stakeholders?
 - Is it better to have year-round fisheries?
 - What are some trade-offs?
 - What is the best scenario for stakeholders?
 - How can the Council best consider economic needs (both commercial and recreational)?
 - Are stakeholders interested in solutions or values?
 - What time of the year is best for fisheries to be open?
- A suggestion was made to consider a pilot project where a “town-hall” meeting would be held to engage fishermen, ask questions, and listen to their recommendations. The Council would then consider using this feedback to frame the Council’s strategic plan. This suggestion would use stakeholder input to define the process.
- Consider reviewing the original goals and objectives in the snapper grouper FMP and update those. Request input from stakeholders on revised list of goals and objectives to determine what the best process to follow would be.
- Consider requesting input on needs: identify goals and objectives and tools to achieve them – the Council wants to look at both a roadmap and the tools that they will use. Reaching out to stakeholders would be a critical part of this process.

III. What kind of process do we want to follow to achieve the desired outcome, and within what timeframe?

- Council members offered the following suggestions on how decisions should be made about this process:
 - Engage stakeholders who have already been involved in the process (APs, etc.) and rely on their input.
 - Form a Visioning Committee which would report to the Council.
 - Continue to hold discussions with all Council members on Monday mornings of the Council meeting week.
 - The Council could begin putting together a road map and then request input from stakeholders.
 - Consider whether the process would continue between Council meetings.
 - Consider an Ad Hoc Visioning Committee that would work with the existing snapper grouper AP and staff to put together a strawman strategic plan. Some Council members suggested that such a committee would need to have representation from SERO and the SEFSC as well as industry leaders.
 - Consider tasking a core group (3 council members, 3 AP members, 2 staff and a representative each from the SERO and SEFSC) to outline a strawman for the Council to discuss. A facilitator would not be necessary to accomplish this.
 - The roadmap should lay out the whole process.
 - Consider a facilitated meeting of the snapper grouper AP to begin this process since resources (staff and funding) are limited.
 - If resources are limited, then the Council should look at visioning and strategic planning for all managed fisheries under the Council's purview.

CONCLUSIONS

- The Council made clear their intent to go forward with a visioning process in 2013.
- A Visioning Workgroup would look at the process the Council would follow (considering timeframe, cost, etc).
- The Visioning Workgroup would bring a strawman of a process to the March 2013 Council meeting for the Council to consider.