

ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION

Working towards healthy, self-sustaining populations for all Atlantic coast fish species or successful restoration well in progress by 2015

Five-Year Strategic Plan
2009-2013



The nation behaves well if it treats the natural resources as assets which it must turn over to the next generation increased and not impaired in value.

Theodore Roosevelt

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

Five-Year Strategic Plan (2009-2013)

Introduction

Each state has a fundamental responsibility to safeguard the public trust with respect to its natural resources. Fishery resource managers are faced with many challenges in carrying out that responsibility. Living marine resources inhabit ecosystems that cross state and federal jurisdictions. Thus, no state, by itself, can effectively protect the interests of its citizens. Each state must work with its sister states and the federal government to conserve and manage natural resources.

Beginning in the late 1930s, the 15 Atlantic coastal states from Maine to Florida forthrightly took steps to develop cooperative mechanisms to define and achieve their mutual interests in coastal fisheries. The most notable of these was their commitment to form the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) in 1942, and to work together through the Commission to promote the conservation and management of shared marine fishery resources. Over the years, the Commission has remained an effective forum for fishery managers to pursue concerted management actions. Through the Commission, states cooperate in a broad range of programs including interstate fisheries management, fisheries science, habitat conservation, and law enforcement.

Congress has long recognized the critical role of the states and the need to support their mutual efforts. Most notably, it enacted the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act (ACFCMA) in 1993. Acknowledging that no single governmental entity has exclusive management authority for Atlantic coastal fishery resources, the Act recognizes the states' responsibility for cooperative fisheries management through the Commission. ACFCMA charges all Atlantic states with implementing coastal fishery management plans that will safeguard the future of Atlantic coastal fisheries in the interest of both fishermen and the nation.

Accepting these challenges, and maintaining their mutual commitment to success, the Atlantic coastal states have adopted this five-year Strategic Plan for the Commission. The states recognize that circumstances today make the work of the Commission more important than ever before. This Strategic Plan articulates the Mission, Vision, values, goals, and strategies needed to accomplish the Commission's Mission to promote cooperative management of fisheries, marine, shell and diadromous, of the Atlantic coast of the United States by the protection and enhancement of such fisheries, and by the avoidance of physical waste of the fisheries from any cause.

Commitment to Action

The Strategic Plan guides the Commission's activities from 2009 through 2013. It is a proactive approach to dealing with current and anticipated challenges. The Commission will implement and monitor this Strategic Plan on a continuing basis.

The Strategic Plan provides the context for the development of the Commission's goals and strategies. It presents the Commission's Mission as it was first stated in 1942 and as it is interpreted in today's political, social, and economic situation. The Vision provides the Commission's primary long-term objective in achieving its Mission. This Strategic Plan recognizes that the Vision's 2015 deadline is fast approaching, presenting significant and unique challenges in rebuilding Atlantic fish stocks.

The values section of the Plan highlights the qualities of states, Commissioners, and Commission staff required to attain the Mission, Vision, and goals. The driving forces section outlines issues that were considered in developing the Plan's goals and strategies.

The Plan sets forth goals that the Commission seeks to realize during the five-year planning horizon and strategies for achieving these goals. Most importantly, the Strategic Plan identifies the steps needed to turn strategies into action, monitor progress, and adjust course when necessary. Implementation of the Plan will occur through the development of annual action plans identifying specific tasks. Also, the Commission will develop measurable indicators to allow state members and their constituents to monitor the Commission's progress toward achieving its broad-scale objectives.

Mission

The Commission's Mission, as stated in its 1942 Compact, is:

To promote the better utilization of the fisheries, marine, shell and anadromous, of the Atlantic seaboard by the development of a joint program for the promotion and protection of such fisheries, and by the prevention of physical waste of the fisheries from any cause.

The Mission grounds the Commission in history. It reminds everyone of the Commission's sense of purpose that has been in place for over 65 years. The constantly changing physical, political, social, and economic environments have led the Commission to restate the Mission in more modern terms:

To promote cooperative management of fisheries, marine, shell and diadromous, of the Atlantic coast of the United States by the protection and enhancement of such fisheries, and by the avoidance of physical waste of the fisheries from any cause.

The Mission and nature of the Commission as a mutual interstate body incorporate several core concepts. They include:

- States are sovereign entities, each having its own laws and responsibilities for managing fishery resources within its jurisdiction
- States serve the broad public interest and represent the common good
- Multi-state resource management is complex and dependent upon cooperative efforts by all states involved
- The Commission provides a critical sounding board on issues requiring cross-jurisdictional action, coordinating cooperation, and collaboration among the states and federal government

Vision

The long-term Vision of the Commission is to work together towards:

Healthy, self-sustaining populations for all Atlantic coast fish species or successful restoration well in progress by the year 2015.

The Vision declares the Atlantic coast states' commitment to work together through the Commission to establish a timeframe and goals for restoration of depleted fish and shellfish stocks. This mutual commitment will ensure progress toward sustainability of renewable populations of marine and estuarine resources along the Atlantic coast. The states' collaborative actions will be coordinated with the federal government and other key stakeholders (commercial, recreational, and for-hire fishing industries; consumers; environmental organizations; and other interested public).

The intended outcomes are:

- Abundant, sustainable fish and shellfish stocks
- The restoration of currently depleted or overfished stocks
- The determination of the status of species for which it is unknown
- Successful management and progress toward the Vision

Values

The *states'* values embedded in the Commission's Mission and Vision include:

- ◆ Conservation of the resource as the states' highest priority
- ◆ Stewardship to maintain recovered species' status
- ◆ State sovereignty; each state has its own constitution, laws, regulations and policies
- ◆ Accountability for actions
- ◆ Coordination, cooperation, and mutual action through the Commission

- ◆ Representative decision-making
- ◆ Logic and transparency in programs and actions
- ◆ Marine resources are owned by all citizens
- ◆ Flexibility within basic conservation parameters

The *Commissioners'* values include:

- ◆ Effective Stewardship of the Atlantic coast's marine resources
- ◆ Work cooperatively with honesty and integrity
- ◆ Transparency and accountability in all Commission actions
- ◆ Courage to make difficult decisions
- ◆ Forging a vision for the future
- ◆ Support decisions of the Commission
- ◆ Ensure the long-term financial stability of the Commission
- ◆ Respect for everyone involved in the Commission process
- ◆ Dedication to growth and learning
- ◆ Freedom and flexibility to solve problems creatively
- ◆ Commitment to preparation for and participation in meetings

The *Commission staff's* values include:

- ◆ Assistance and service to ensure states achieve their Vision
- ◆ Honesty, integrity, and accountability for actions
- ◆ Professionalism
- ◆ Efficient use of time and fiscal resources
- ◆ Respect for other staff, Commissioners, and the public
- ◆ Teamwork among staff, Commissioners, and committee members
- ◆ Freedom and flexibility to solve problems creatively
- ◆ Commitment to growth, learning, and improvement

Driving Forces

Many forces drive the way the Commission operates and influence the goals and strategies in this Strategic Plan. Increased pressure on fishery resources has created new challenges for states that are responsible for stewardship of marine resources. States continue to work within budget constraints while reacting to ever-changing physical and political environments. The following forces will influence the Commission's goals and strategies.

Pressure on Fishery Resources and Industry

Pressure on coastal fishery resources includes sources that the Commission can significantly influence as well as those over which it has little or no control. Harvest levels (i.e., fishing mortality) have a significant impact on species health and can be controlled through fisheries management. While the Commission has recovered several Atlantic coastal species, most species require significant work to reach recovered status. The Commission must maintain the abundance of recovered stocks and focus on rebuilding depleted stocks. Harvest levels must be set at a level to rebuild or maintain spawning stocks and account for predator-prey interactions.

Impacts on fisheries habitat and water quality have placed heavy pressures on fish stocks. Increased coastal development and point and non-point source pollution have led to degradation of important fisheries habitat. The Commission has little or no direct authority over non-fishing activities that impact habitat. Partnerships with agencies or organizations with regulatory authority in these areas can be sought to leverage resources for effective change. Natural forces changing the environment can drastically alter fish stocks. Climate change may have impacts on the productivity and abundance of fish stocks and their habitats. The Commission must take into account those changes and their impacts.

The fishing industry also faces a variety of pressures, including global, national, and local market forces. Essential waterfront infrastructure is being lost to or dramatically changed by more profitable coastal development. Fishermen face increasingly stringent regulations that at times shift fishing effort, create inefficiencies, and restrict fishing opportunities. The Commission is committed to considering the many forces affecting the fishing industry.

Legislation

Enactment of ACFCMA by Congress in 1993 was a significant recognition of the value of states working together. It also served as recognition that mutual interstate cooperation is needed to achieve national policy goals for fisheries along the Atlantic coast. Implementing the Act through cooperative management continues to provide both opportunities and challenges.

The Magnuson-Stevens Reauthorization Act (MSRA) of 2007 strengthens requirements for federal managers to end overfishing and to maintain sustainable harvest of healthy fisheries. In addition, managers have an increased mandate to follow scientific advice. These requirements drive the need for sound science and data collection. The MSRA provides an opportunity to forge stronger state/federal partnerships in the interjurisdictional management of Atlantic coast species.

ACFCMA and MSRA have broadened the Commission's responsibilities, authority, and funding options in the management of Atlantic coastal fisheries. The Commission embraces the challenges and opportunities that have come as a result. In addition, the Commission is committed to remaining aware of and proactive regarding forthcoming legislation that may affect its process or responsibilities.

Federal, State, and Commission Resources

Current federal and state resources for fisheries science and management are inconsistent with the mandates and associated responsibilities. Due to the increasing complexities and volume of tasks, the

cost of concerted action on fisheries management issues rises every year. At the same time, the states and the federal government are required to handle growing workloads with a shrinking body of personnel. There is no sign of imminently increasing fiscal or human resources at the federal and state levels. States are experiencing large budget cuts, making them more reliant than ever on the continuation of federal support. Federal and state government resources will continue to be stretched thinly as complex requirements are added without adequate complementary funding.

Federal resources for fisheries law enforcement have also declined due to homeland security demands. States struggle to assume responsibilities previously executed by the U.S. Coast Guard. The use of Joint Enforcement Agreements has significantly improved states' abilities to meet the law enforcement responsibilities resulting from expanding fishery regulations. Given the challenges associated with reduced fisheries enforcement, the Commission should continue to seek ways to increase stakeholder buy-in so as to maximize compliance with its fisheries management actions.

The Commission can help leverage federal and state resources by facilitating collaborations among partners. The Commission is committed to exploring opportunities to increase the efficiency of the U.S. fisheries management system on the Atlantic coast. Innovative funding arrangements and sources could help the increased workload.

The Future for Fisheries Management

An evolving understanding of fisheries conservation and management provides new challenges and opportunities for the states. As ecosystem-based management principles continue to evolve, there is a greater need to consider the human impacts on fish resources. The new federal requirements to immediately end overfishing will focus greater attention to many Commission FMPs including allocation and management decisions. To deal with these high profile issues the Commission must employ scientific advice, creativity, good judgment, courage, and all other resources.

The polarization of issues is an emerging theme throughout fisheries management. There is a growing tendency to question the science that supports fishery management decisions. Stakeholders expect the Commission and its partners to meet their needs. Indicative of this polarization is the highly litigious climate surrounding fisheries management. The Commission must clearly communicate its intentions and explain its actions to its stakeholders to foster transparency and accountability. A proactive approach can help address stakeholder concerns, reducing or obviating the need for litigation.

As noted above, the Commission's stakeholders demand accountability. This can be addressed through improved communication, transparency, and progress reports. In recent years, the Commission has developed procedures to ensure consistency of management programs and decisions.

The Joint Ocean Commission Initiative (JOCI) has evolved as the action body dedicated to promoting the findings of the Pew Oceans Commission and the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy. Both of these groups recognized the speed, flexibility, and responsiveness of the Commission process. Engaging with JOCI can help ensure that improvements to fishery management and ocean governance processes complement and enhance Commission activities.

Internal Factors

A changing internal environment at the Commission poses challenges and opportunities for the next five-years. Retaining institutional knowledge within the Commission is a challenge, given that turnover of experienced Commissioners is occurring. It is important for the Commission to continue its efforts to preserve institutional knowledge. New Commissioners and staff also present an opportunity: those who fill vacant positions bring new energy and ideas that the Commission can capitalize on. The Commission is committed to proceeding with strategies that foster learning and growth so as to drive continuous improvement.

Goals and Strategies

Broad Policies

This section describes the basic tenets of how the Commission will pursue its overall Mission and Vision. To assure success, the member states, the Commission, and its staff will:

Promote Fisheries Governance. Commission members will advocate decisions that focus on long-term benefits of conservation, and will maintain focus on policy issues directly related to attaining the Vision and/or goals of the Commission.

Manage Proactively. The states are committed to proactive management of fishery resources under their jurisdiction, avoiding the historical pattern of taking action only after there has been some type of failure. The Commission will strengthen fisheries management plans by defining success in terms of specific measures and timelines.

Seek Long-term Ecological Sustainability. Habitat issues, protected species interactions, and ecosystem concerns will be integrated with other elements of fisheries management.

Create and Strengthen Partnerships. The Commission will maintain and seek new partnerships to leverage resources and achieve results.

Strive for Transparency and Accountability in all Actions. The Commission will clearly communicate its intentions, decision-making processes, and actions to its stakeholders to foster transparency. The Commission will implement responsible management measures and evaluate the success of management programs. An annual review of each species stock can highlight progress towards meeting the Vision.

Set Priorities for the Pursuit and Use of Fiscal Resources. Given the potential for competitive needs for fiscal resources, it is critical for the Commission to coordinate with member states to prioritize its pursuit for fiscal resources.

Respond to Member States' Needs. The Commission is committed to ensuring that its policy agenda and work priorities are responsive to the needs of its member states and their stakeholders. While the Commission is directly accountable to its member states it also recognizes that the states, in turn, have their own stakeholders to whom they are accountable. The Commission must conduct effective outreach on the impact of its programs to the states and their stakeholders. In order to respond to member states' needs the Commission will provide support as a regional fisheries agency. The Commission will:

- Facilitate interaction and issues resolution
- Act as a catalyst, honest broker, and sounding board
- Develop plans for the states to implement and enforce
- Mutually develop a common agenda and set of priorities among the states
- Maintain a partnership with federal agencies to meet the states' needs
- Represent the general public interest across state lines

Goals

The Commission will pursue eight major goals during the five-year planning period, from 2009 through 2013. Those goals are to:

1. Rebuild and restore depleted Atlantic coastal fisheries, and maintain and fairly allocate recovered fisheries through cooperative regulatory planning
2. Strengthen cooperative research, data collection capabilities, and the scientific basis for stock assessments and fisheries management actions
3. Improve stakeholder compliance with Commission fishery management plans
4. Protect, restore, and enhance fish habitat and ecosystem health through partnerships, policy development, and education
5. Strengthen congressional, stakeholder, and public support for the Commission's Mission, Vision, and actions
6. Represent member states collective interests at regional and national levels
7. Strengthen human resource management and enhance learning and growth within the Commission

8. Provide efficient administration of the Commission's business affairs and ensure the Commission's financial stability

Goal Achievement Strategies and Issues

This section describes how the Commission expects to achieve each of its goals and specifically addresses the key issues that will be involved. While committed to the strategies included in this plan, the Commission stands ready to adopt additional strategies to take advantage of new opportunities as they evolve.

Goal 1 – Rebuild and Restore Depleted Atlantic Coastal Fisheries, and Maintain and Fairly Allocate Recovered Fisheries Through Cooperative Regulatory Planning

This goal focuses on the responsibility of the states to conserve and manage the Atlantic coastal fishery resources for sustainable use. States will develop fisheries management programs that account for ecological interactions, bycatch, habitat quality, and socioeconomic concerns. Effective conservation and management of fishery resources must be achieved within the human and fiscal resources of the states. Cooperation and coordination with the federal government and stakeholders can streamline the fisheries management process. Actively involving partners into the process can increase efficiency, transparency, and, ultimately, success. In the next five years, the Commission is committed to making significant progress on rebuilding overfished or depleted Atlantic fish stocks.

Strategies to Achieve Goal

- Develop and implement new fishery management plans, amendments, and addenda in a timely manner to address the conservation and management needs of Atlantic coastal fishery populations
- Determine status and monitor progress of interstate fisheries conservation and management programs
- Evaluate management program progress using appropriate metrics such as biological reference points
- Utilize the best available scientific advice
- Manage responsibly when facing uncertainty
- Encourage the use of monitoring programs (e.g., observer programs) to characterize fisheries
- Document, evaluate, and minimize discards and bycatch in commercial and recreational fisheries
- Commit to implementing full commercial and recreational catch and landings reporting systems for all species
- Evaluate interactions and minimize impacts on protected species
- Enhance integration of habitat, compliance, and socioeconomic concerns into the fisheries management process
- Promote development of effective fish passage approaches and projects through state and federal collaboration

- Monitor and promote cooperative planning with the Regional Fishery Management Councils, NOAA Fisheries, and other entities
- Promote efficiency and accountability in the Interstate Fisheries Management Program process
- Annual review of Commission progress towards achieving ASMFC Vision
- Strengthen incorporation of stakeholder input into the interstate fishery management planning process, including contributions from advisory panels, environmental organizations, and other interested parties
- Evaluate alternative allocation approaches including conservation incentives to promote fair allocation

Goal 2 – Strengthen Cooperative Research Capabilities, Data Collection, and the Scientific Basis for Stock Assessments to Support Fisheries Management Actions

This goal recognizes that successful fisheries conservation and management depends on high quality research and scientific information. It seeks to improve the quantity, quality, and timeliness of the information used to support stock assessments and manage fishery resources. Stock assessment data need to be accurate, relevant, and timely to reduce the uncertainty and perceived mistrust in stock assessment results. This goal encompasses the development of innovative scientific methods and research and also augments the states' stock assessment capabilities. It provides for the administration, coordination, and expansion of cooperative interstate research and data collection programs. Achieving this goal will ensure sound science is available to serve as the foundation for effective management actions and improve the Commission's evaluation of stock status.

Strategies to Achieve Goal

- Continue to promote the development of sound science
- Improve, expand, and focus interstate and state-federal cooperative research and statistic programs to support critical scientific and fishery management needs, including the Northeast and Southeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Programs (NEAMAP and SEAMAP) and Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistic Program (ACCSP), and NOAA Fisheries research program priorities
- Strengthen the quality and credibility of Commission stock assessments
- Develop cooperative programs to address Commission research needs through partnerships with agencies, universities, private research organizations, and stakeholders
- Identify and evaluate sources of mortality, other than fishing mortality, and methods to integrate them into the assessment process
- Increase data collection and research for ecosystem based management strategies
- Provide opportunities for stakeholders to participate in regional assessment processes
- Improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the Commission's ISFMP technical process
- Facilitate stakeholder involvement in cooperative data collection for use in stock assessments and fisheries management
- Increase the Commission's involvement in decisions of how joint state-federal fishery management plan research-set-asides will be used
- Participate as a partner to fully implement the ACCSP

Goal 3 – Improve Stakeholder Compliance with Commission Fishery Management Plans

This goal recognizes that fisheries managers, law enforcement personnel, and stakeholders have a shared responsibility to promote compliance with fisheries management measures. Stakeholder support and compliance is vital to successful management plans. Activities under this goal seek to increase and improve the extent to which states coordinate their law enforcement efforts with each other and with federal agencies. Commission members recognize that adequate and consistent enforcement of fisheries rules must keep pace with increasingly complex management activity, including thorough reviews of proposed management measures for enforceability. Achieving this goal will improve the effectiveness of the Commission's fishery management plans.

Strategies to Achieve Goal

- Develop practical compliance requirements recognizing state fiscal limitations
- Evaluate effectiveness of enforcement and compliance measures of fisheries management programs
- Enhance communication of enforcement and compliance issues to Atlantic state agencies and other law enforcement programs
- Promote and expand existing partnerships with state and federal natural resource law enforcement agencies
- Develop and implement fishery management measures that include compliance incentives and foster stakeholder buy-in

Goal 4 – Protect, Restore, and Enhance Fish Habitat and Ecosystem Health Through Partnerships, Policy Development, and Education

This goal aims to improve fish habitat and ecosystem health to the benefit of Commission managed species. Habitat loss and degradation have been identified as significant factors affecting the long-term sustainability of the nation's fisheries. Consequently, the Mission of the Commission's Habitat Program is *to work through the Commission, in cooperation with appropriate agencies and organizations, to enhance and cooperatively manage vital fish habitat for conservation, restoration, and protection, and to support the cooperative management of Commission managed species.* The Commission's Habitat Program embraces the National Fish Habitat Action Plan, and will continue to work cooperatively with that program to improve aquatic habitat along the Atlantic coast.

The challenge for fisheries managers and the Commission is maintaining fish habitat in the absence of specific regulatory authority for habitat protection, restoration, or enhancement. This goal calls for the Commission to be a change agent in effectively integrating habitat protection, restoration, and enhancement into fisheries management programs, in recognition of ecosystem-based management principles.

Strategies to Achieve Goal

- Effectively protect, restore, and enhance Atlantic coastal fish habitat through fisheries management programs and partnerships, such as the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (ACFHP)
- Identify important habitat areas for Commission-managed species

- Build and support partnerships with fishery and non-fishery management agencies, researchers, and habitat stakeholders to leverage regulatory, political, and financial resources
- Educate Commissioners, stakeholders, and the general public about the importance of protecting, restoring, and enhancing habitat to achieve successful fisheries management
- Implement performance metrics to focus efforts and monitor progress of the Habitat Program
- Engage local governments in habitat protection, restoration, and enhancement programs

Goal 5 – Strengthen Congressional, Stakeholder, and Public Support for the Commission’s Mission, Vision, and Actions

This goal recognizes and supports the critical role of stakeholder and public participation in Commission programs. In order for this participation to be effective these groups must have a clear understanding of the Commission’s Mission, Vision, and decision-making processes. This goal seeks to foster an informed constituency, including our federal partners, stakeholders, and Congress. It does so through expanded outreach and education efforts about Commission programs, decision-making processes, and its management successes and challenges. It aims to engage congressional delegations in the process of fisheries conservation and management, and promote the activities and accomplishments of the Commission. This goal strives to provide Commissioners and stakeholders with the tools to effectively communicate the Commission’s Mission, Vision, achievements and challenges to their peers. Achieving this goal will increase stakeholder participation in and congressional understanding of Commission activities.

Strategies to Achieve Goal

- Increase public understanding and support of the Commission and its activities through expanded information and education efforts for stakeholders
- Engage and assist congressional delegations with an interest in supporting the Commission’s goals and objectives
- Strengthen national, regional, and local media relations to increase coverage of Commission actions
- Empower partners and stakeholders to promote Commission to stakeholders and state legislatures through outreach efforts
- Promote transparency of the Commission’s decision-making process and activities

Goal 6 – Represent Member States’ Collective Interests at Regional and National Levels

This goal recognizes that state fisheries interests are often underrepresented at the regional and national levels. States are positioned to achieve many of the national goals for marine fisheries through their mutual and cooperative efforts. Policy formulation is often disconnected from the processes that provide the support, organization, and resources necessary to implement the policies. The capabilities of the states need to be kept sharply in focus as approaches to national fisheries policy are developed. This goal seeks to emphasize the importance of achieving conservation goals consistent with productive commercial and recreational fisheries and healthy ecosystems, and of working with all stakeholders in all phases of the process.

Strategies to Achieve Goal

- Promote the interests of the states to Congress and administration, and in national forums
- Maintain working relationships with national state government associations and other interstate organizations
- Engage state marine councils/commissions to address stakeholder concerns and increase understanding of Commission actions
- Develop a clear, proactive, and visionary federal legislative agenda
- Participate in the formulation of national strategies stemming from the reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Conservation and Management Act
- Work to ensure that JOCI action and policy complements and enhances Commission activities

Goal 7 – Strengthen Human Resource Management and Enhance Learning and Growth within the Commission

This goal promotes human resource policies that attract talented and committed individuals to carry out the Commission actions. It also highlights the need for the Commission as an organization to continually educate itself. Increased understanding of the Commission process and issues will improve the efficiency of decision-making. It calls for Commissioners and Commission staff to maintain or expand the institutional knowledge of the Commission through periods of turnover. The Commission also embraces the opportunity to integrate the talents, perspectives, and energy of new Commissioners and staff to continually improve. The Commission is committed to promote learning and growth of state personnel in order to leverage scarce fiscal and human resources. Achieving this goal will build core strengths enabling the Commission to respond to increasingly difficult and complex fisheries management issues.

Strategies to Achieve Goal

- Strengthen the human resources policies of the Commission, including strategies to recruit the best talent to fill open positions and expand the skills of existing staff
- Provide learning opportunities to state members in the areas of science, policy, and meetings management to improve efficiency of decision-making during Commission meetings
- Strengthen orientation for new Commission participants, including Commissioners, technical committees, and other committees
- Benchmark Commission processes with similar organizations to increase institutional efficiencies
- Facilitate learning and growth opportunities for staff and state personnel

Goal 8 – Provide Efficient Administration of the Commission’s Business Affairs and Ensure the Commission’s Financial Stability

This goal addresses the Commission’s administrative and management opportunities, including operational stability. This goal will ensure that the business affairs of the Commission are managed effectively and efficiently. This goal encompasses efficiency of operations, including workload balancing through the development of annual action plans to support the Commission’s management process. It also highlights the need for the Commission to efficiently manage the resources it currently receives, and develop strategies for finding new funding sources to carry out its

programs. This goal promotes the efficient use of legal advice to proactively review policies and react to litigation. Achieving this goal will ensure that the Commission has sufficient fiscal resources to support its Mission.

Strategies to Achieve Goal

- Develop, implement, and monitor an annual action plan
- Conservatively manage the Commission's operational and programmatic budgets and reserves to ensure fiscal stability
- Maintain and seek to increase long-term funding for programs that support Commission goals
- Explore new information technology to increase efficiency of business management and presentation of technical information
- Incorporate proactive legal advice on new management strategies and policies and respond to litigation as necessary
- Provide an administrative home for the ACCSP

Implementation: Action Plans

The Commission intends that this Strategic Plan be a living, working document, used to set priorities and develop programs and policies for the Commission over the next five years. From 2009-2013, the Commission and its staff will annually monitor progress in meeting the Commission's eight goals, and reevaluate the effectiveness of the strategies. Based upon this evaluation, the Commission will adopt an annual Action Plan for the following year, with specific objectives, targets and milestones.

The value of this Strategic Plan is to ensure that the Commission's actions and activities are directed at making progress to meet the its eight goals. The Commission recognizes the need to measure the effectiveness of its actions in meeting its goals, and is committed to developing and applying those measures. Such measures would include tracking the status of stocks under Commission management as well as the completion of annual Action Plan items.

The Action Plan will be prepared and implemented according to the following schedule.

Implementation of Current Year Action Plan

- Executive Director, in coordination with senior staff, provides for implementation of Action Plan (January)
- Executive Committee reviews status of accomplishments relative to current year's Action Plan, and recommends adjustments if necessary (May/June, Spring Meeting)

- Executive Committee reviews progress on goals and effectiveness of strategies relative to current year's Action Plan, and recommends adjustments if necessary (October/November, Annual Meeting)

Development of Future Year Action Plan

- Executive Director announces start of Action Plan development cycle for the following year, encouraging Commissioners to consult with Board and Committee chairs (Spring Meeting)
- ASMFC staff consults with Board and Committee chairs on future activities (July/August)
- Senior Staff presents draft action plan to the Administrative Oversight Committee (August/September)
- Administrative Oversight Committee review/approval of revised draft Action Plan (October/November, Annual Meeting)
- Final Action Plan presented to Commissioners during Action Planning Workshop (October/November, Annual Meeting)
- Significant changes addressed and approval of Action Plan addressed during business meeting of full Commission (October/November, Annual Meeting)