

# Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council Five-Year Strategic Communications Plan



8/3/11

## Stakeholder engagement

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council has many audiences, and successfully reaching this group of diverse stakeholders requires a variety of communication techniques. When a single, clear message is repeated in many places and through different formats, it is more likely to be seen/heard and remembered. Our best efforts at public information should be clearly focused on direct communication with our constituency.

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# Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council Five-Year Strategic Communications Plan

## STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

### INTRODUCTION

Communication, both internal and external, is an integral part of any successful operation. One of the best ways to build credibility and increase public confidence and satisfaction is through an effective public information program that is honest, accurate, open, and presented in a timely manner.

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, through its development of Fishery Management Plans (FMPs), affects the lives of its constituents every day. Fisheries management is a complicated scientific and political process punctuated by multiple opportunities for public involvement. The Council creates and chooses management policy that affects everyone, whether directly or indirectly.

This creates a challenge for the Council, through its Public Information Program, to present a cohesive picture of the Council and its function. The public needs to have both the general message of what the Council is about, as well as a variety of specific messages on policies and procedures affecting the public.

Additionally, because the fisheries management plan process is a public process and public involvement is a welcome and valued part of that process, great strides must be taken to ensure the public not only has every opportunity to become involved, but also has the knowledge and information necessary to be effectively involved.

The communications plan should provide those opportunities by promoting the Gulf Council as a participatory, open door agency that seeks the involvement of its constituency as partners in the decision-making process. A successful program will help instill confidence and satisfaction in the Gulf Council, while creating partnerships between the agency and the many people and organizations with which it works. This plan provides a general outline of strategies and tactics intended to help achieve an effective and informative communications program.

## COUNCIL GOAL

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council is a quasi-governmental agency that develops policy to manage the fishery resources in the Gulf of Mexico for sustainability. The primary goal of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council is to ensure that the fishery resources of the Gulf of Mexico are conserved and maintained to provide optimum yields on a continuing basis. This is done through the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) process.

## COMMUNICATIONS GOAL

The goal of the strategic communications plan is to improve awareness and understanding of the Gulf Council management goals, regulations, activities and process; improve communication between the public and the council; and improve participation in the Council process.

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council has many audiences, and successfully reaching these different audiences requires a variety of communication techniques. When a single, clear message is repeated in many places and through different formats, it is more likely to be seen/heard and remembered. Our best efforts at public information should be clearly focused on direct communication with our constituency.

## SITUATION ANALYSIS

For purposes of developing this strategic communications plan, a list of agency strengths, challenges, opportunities, and threats was developed by the Outreach and Education Advisory Panel.

### Strengths

- Large network of resources
- Open Process
- Accessibility

### Challenges

- Weak community presence
- Network of resources underutilized
- Image/trust lacking
- Technical nature of fisheries management

## Opportunities

- Outreach and Education
- Government Accounting Office Report – Fisheries Management – Core Principles and a Strategic Approach (2/2006)
- Cooperative research

## Threats

- Image/community perception
- Understandability of information/process/role of Council
- Media coverage
- Stakeholder disenfranchisement
- Inter-agency differences

## KEY AUDIENCES

### Internal

- Council members
- Council staff
- Advisory Panel members
- Scientific and Statistical Committee members
- Stock Assessment Panel members
- NOAA Fisheries/Southeast Regional Science Center
- SEDAR Panels
- Law enforcement

### External

- Private recreational anglers
- Charter boat/head boat operators
- Commercial fishers
- Dealers and processors
- Non-governmental agencies
- Clubs and organizations
- Fishing-based business
- Media
- General public
- Other government agencies
- Scientific community/academia

## OBJECTIVES

### Year One

1. Identify and prioritize constituencies and their needs
2. Educate Council members and constituents about the Council process and goals
3. Develop a timeline and delivery mechanisms for each constituency
4. Define evaluation criteria during the design phase

### Year Three

1. Continue to educate Council members and constituents about the Council process and goals
2. Develop program to educate media to ensure accurate reporting and coverage of fishery management policies and issues
3. Develop tools that will de-mystify Council activities and facilitate the dissemination of information
4. Identify specific educational opportunities outside of the decision-making process
5. Develop evaluation tools

### Year Five

1. Build an informed public through outreach and education
2. Enlist knowledgeable spokespeople/leaders from all constituencies to be educators of their peers
3. Develop constituent education plan that is self-sustaining (i.e., Marine Resource Education Program)
4. Develop education program for state fisheries field biologists who can serve as spokespeople and local educators
5. Evaluate effectiveness of programs and tools

## STRATEGIES

1. Leverage key messaging across communication channels to convey the goals/charge of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council
2. Broaden outreach to key stakeholders and improve community presence
3. Improve two-way communication between user groups and the Council
4. Increase and enhance participation in the Council process

## TACTICS

1. Increase communication efforts
  - a. Develop informational materials (FAQs, fact sheets, summaries, etc.)
  - b. Write newsletter cover stories about the Council, challenges, mandates, etc.
  - c. Participate in TV and Radio Fishing shows
  - d. Write/pitch magazine articles
  - e. Create fishing blog and use other social media
  - f. Establish regulations Hot Line
2. Use web site as a community vehicle
  - a. Evaluate web site navigation and availability of information
  - b. Continue to post educational videos and promote availability
  - c. Continue to stream Council meetings on the web
  - d. Include photos and bios of Council members and staff
  - e. Create and promote a web “News Room”
  - f. Promote online, user-friendly e-mail “opt-in” preferences link
  - g. Develop web checklist to ensure updates occur in a timely manner
3. Develop print and online versions of fact sheets, meeting information, regulations, etc.
  - a. Scoping fliers
  - b. Public hearing fliers
  - c. Frequently Asked Questions for ongoing issues
  - d. Continue to publish “Council Update” and “Gulf Fishery News”
  - e. Develop abridged regulations

4. Use available communication networks to convey Council messages
  - a. Define networks best suited for different audiences
  - b. Use social networking sites
  - c. Train law enforcement and field representatives of other agencies
  - d. Outreach to community leaders (fishing clubs, etc.)
  - e. Improve outreach/cooperation with other agencies
  - f. Use web “News Room” to train media to better report Council activities
  
5. Broaden outreach around Council meetings
  - a. Restructure NMFS/Council Q&A Sessions during Council meetings
    - i. Meetings should be more focused (time/area considerations)
    - ii. Council members should be more involved in the discussions
  - b. Plan a stakeholder social during each Council meeting
  - c. When possible, plan some other stakeholder event during Council
    - i. Dockside chats
    - ii. Fishing trip
    - iii. Training activity
  
6. Initiate web chats/blogs
  - a. Hold monthly web chats with stakeholders
    - i. Establish topic based on key messaging and monthly talking points
    - ii. Highlight stakeholder interests/concerns
  - b. Blog to include official posts based on monthly messaging
  - c. Include member feedback mechanism to generate discussion and ideas
  
7. Investigate the use of a Council Facebook page
  - a. Videos of council meetings
  - b. Press releases
  - c. Links to interesting marine news and science papers of interest
  - d. Gulf Council video messages
  - e. Meeting reminders
  - f. Species profiles
  - g. Monthly Council member/staff profile



- h. Advisory panel/committee recruitment
  - i. Job postings
  - j. Blog
8. Establish a greater community presence
- a. TV and radio fishing shows
  - b. Magazine articles
  - c. Blogging, message boards, and other social media
  - d. Dockside chats
  - e. Enlist help from other agencies
  - f. Trade/fishing show participation
  - g. Rodeo participation
9. Develop educational curriculum for key audiences
- a. Fisheries 101 – all audiences
  - b. Media training
  - c. “Train the Trainer” program
  - d. Stakeholder training

## COMMUNICATIONS PERFORMANCE METRICS AND TIMELINE

### Year One

Audience	Desired Outcomes	Delivery Method	Timeline	Metrics*
Private Recreational Anglers For-Hire Charter Operators Clubs and Organizations Fishing-based Business Commercial Fishers Dealers/Processors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Better understanding of fisheries management and the process                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Why we manage</li> <li>○ Where the data comes from and how it's applied</li> <li>○ Consequences</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Fisheries 101                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Presented during council meetings</li> <li>○ Offered online</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ Video Messaging                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Post on web site</li> <li>○ YouTube</li> <li>○ Facebook</li> <li>○ Offered to other organizations</li> <li>○ Played during other meetings</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ Write &amp; disseminate articles about Council activities</li> </ul>	Four sessions complete and posted by 1/12  Twelve videos complete and circulating/airing by 3/12  Five by 3/12	Number of: Web hits Meeting attendance  Number of: Website hits YouTube views Facebook "likes" Reposts Times played  Number of: articles Readership Reposts/views
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Improved participation                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Two-way communication</li> <li>○ Informed testimony</li> <li>○ Conveyance of new ideas &amp; information</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ Improved relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Auto-subscribe to receive important information</li> <li>➤ Outreach Visits                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Dockside chats</li> <li>○ Fishing club meetings</li> <li>○ Rodeos/trade shows</li> <li>○ Fisher forums</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ Fact Sheets/FAQs</li> <li>➤ Streaming Meetings</li> </ul>	Ongoing  Twelve events by 1/12  Prepare for all activities Ongoing	Number of subscribers  Number of: events Participants Materials distributed Increase in Subscribers  Number of pieces disseminated
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Regulation Awareness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Regulations Hotline</li> <li>➤ Abbreviated Regulations</li> <li>➤ Regulations App</li> </ul>	Operational by 1/12 Designed, printed, and delivered by 1/12 Operational by 4/11	Number of inquiries Number disseminated  Number of downloads

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Other Government Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Greater cooperation between agencies</li> <li>➤ Partnerships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Develop Curriculum</li> <li>➤ Provide Access/Gain Access</li> <li>➤ Training Opportunities</li> </ul>	Generic curriculum developed by 3/12 with at least two training sessions completed by 12/12.	Number of people trained
Council Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Well informed/have information necessary to make decisions and communicate with public</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Fisheries 101</li> <li>➤</li> </ul>	Four sessions complete and posted by 1/12	Number of: Web hits Meeting attendance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Improved stakeholder relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Reformatted Public Hearings</li> <li>➤ Track &amp; report input from informal stakeholder interactions</li> <li>➤</li> </ul>	Ongoing	Attendance and feedback
	Improved accessibility to the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Other Opportunities to Engage                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Informal Q&amp;A (Council Meet &amp; Greet)</li> <li>○ Bios on Web Site</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	First meet & greet held by 10/11  All bios posted by 1/12	Attendance and feedback
Media Non-Government Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Accurate Reporting</li> <li>➤ Message Dissemination</li> <li>➤ Improved Relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Fact Sheets/FAQs</li> <li>➤ Personal Contact</li> <li>➤ Web “News Room”</li> <li>➤ Auto-subscribe to information</li> <li>➤ Write/pitch articles</li> </ul>	Prepare for all Council activities  In Place by 9/12 Ongoing	Number disseminated  Number of inquiries Number of web hits Number of subscribers

**NOTE:**

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\* While quantitative performance metrics have been defined to measure the Council communications output, establishing a baseline of current attitudes and perceptions is necessary to define qualitative performance metrics to assess program outcomes. A baseline survey will be conducted using a statistical sampling of commercial, recreational, and charter-for-hire fishermen. Follow-up surveys will be conducted in years three and five. The results of each survey will be incorporated into the program evaluation process and used to adjust strategies and tactics accordingly.

### Year Three and Year Five

Metrics for year three will be developed after the one-year review and year five will be developed after the three-year review. This provides an opportunity to evaluate program effectiveness and make adjustments as necessary.