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# 'What It Means to Me'

## Project Proposal

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### ***Background***

Building and sustaining trust with fishermen has long been a challenge for fisheries managers. The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) has made ongoing investments in its outreach program to increase communication with stakeholders to build trust and confidence in management actions. As a recent example, the Council has implemented an intensive Best Fishing Practices campaign to promote the use of best fishing practices for the snapper grouper fishery and involvement in the fisheries management process. However, the lack of confidence with the data and management process remains a problem in the fishing community and limits the effectiveness of communication and education efforts. Council staff is interested in exploring additional novel methods for improving relationships between fishermen and the Council and to promote more involvement in the management process.

### ***Purpose and Focus***

Fostering positive relationships within the fishing community is a long-term process that requires regular interaction with stakeholders over a significant period. The ‘What It Means to Me’ project proposed here aims to help bridge the trust gap by elevating participant's voices on Council social media (short video stories, YouTube), an ArcGIS StoryMap, the Council website, and through other Council programs such as the Best Fishing Practices Master Volunteer Program (BFP MVP) and SAFMC Release.

Informal, short conversations with fishermen, focusing on what their fishery means to them and how the use of best fishing practices supports the future of their fishery, will be filmed and edited. Conversation topics may include how the participant began fishing, why it is important that their fishery is preserved, involvement in SAFMC Release and FISHstory, and advice to fellow fishermen. Photos and video footage of their boats, fishing activities, and/or businesses may be taken by staff or received from participants to create a visually appealing video. The length of each conversation product will vary by topic and dissemination platform with none exceeding five minutes. Participants will need to sign a release form that details how the images and video footage may be used.

### ***Conversation Topics***

- How participant began fishing
  - Memories of learning how to fish, role models, inspiration
- Importance of fishery preservation
- How their fishery can be preserved
  - Best fishing practices that can be used
- Involvement in SAFMC Release and FISHstory
  - Role in fisheries management, how you got to the position you are in now

- Advice to fellow fishermen
- Additional topics
  - Preferred target species

### ***Footage Possibilities***

- Old and current pictures and videos
- Active fishing
- Boat(s)
- Businesses

### ***Target Audiences***

Research shows fishermen receive trusted fishing information from their peers and local tackle shops (*Southeast Florida and South Carolina Anglers' Release Practices and Their Attitudes Toward Descending Devices 2022*). As such, the target audience for this project will include well-respected members of the South Atlantic fishing community. This includes all sectors (commercial, private recreational, and for-hire) that focus on federal finfish fisheries such as snapper grouper, dolphin wahoo, and mackerel cobia.

### ***Goals***

1. Help bridge the trust gap between the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council and fishermen.
2. Encourage more fishermen to use best fishing practices and get involved in fisheries management by joining advisory panels, attending Council meetings, making public comment, becoming a SAFMC Release participant, and participating in the Best Fishing Practices Master Volunteer Program.
3. Document the stories of those involved in South Atlantic fisheries in a positive light.

### ***Project Timeline***

#### **July-September**

- Project planning
  - Develop project proposal
  - Solidify goals
  - Investigate platforms to be used for sharing videos to reach goals
  - Draft conversation topics
- Practice implementation with Council staff

## **September-December**

- Present project proposal to the Council at the September 11-15, 2023, Council meeting- Charleston, SC
- Identify and confirm participants
- Gather b-roll content when possible
- Project implementation
  - *Schedule filming with participants outside the meeting time.*
    - October: Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel meeting- Charleston, SC
    - November: Dolphin Wahoo and Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel meetings- Charleston, SC
    - December: Council meeting- Beaufort, NC

## **December- February**

- Continue to gather b-roll content as needed
- Video and audio editing
- Begin sharing on Council platforms

## ***Required Resources***

*These items are currently available and do not need to be purchased:*

- DSLR camera with video
- Audio/video release form
- ArcGIS StoryMap subscription
- Time outside AP/Council meetings
- Director chair
- Microphone
- Tripod

## ***Conclusion***

Given the challenges faced in building trust with fishermen and the importance of such trust to successful outreach and education, additional outreach tactics are needed to increase fishermen involvement and improve their perceptions and relationship with the fisheries management process. The 'What It Means to Me' project will capture the voice and backstory of fishermen involved in the fisheries management process to share with others and help bridge the trust gap between fishing communities and fishery management agencies and encourage more fishermen to be involved. Information is often better received from trusted members of the community, therefore sharing their personal stories and best fishing practices information through Council platforms will not only help improve trust and participation in the fishery management process but also increase the use of best fishing practices.