

SAFMC Staff Report September 2023

Website and Digital Communications Updates

- Currently archiving SSC and AP Briefing Books.
- Development of a page detailing allocations for each sector and FMP.
- Aided in the creation of the “What It Means To Me” project proposal and began filming/editing the first video.
- Filmed and photographed a content creation trip in June.
- Aided staff in various design projects; FISHstory flyer, public hearing documents, and presentations.
- Continued general website maintenance.
- Continued public comment upkeep.
- Continued social media management.
- Continued FishRules updates and management.

Marine Resource Education Program (MREP) Update

Staff continues working with the MREP Southeast Plan Team in finalizing plans for the November 13-17, 2023 MREP Science and Management Workshop in St. Petersburg Beach, Florida. Accepted applicants have been contacted with approximately 30 participants expected from both the South Atlantic and Gulf. Workshop presenters have been contacted and the Plan Team will finalize the agenda during its September meeting.

Both the South Atlantic and Gulf Councils are provided an opportunity for council member participation at workshops through MREP Southeast. Kerry Marhefka will represent the SA Council as a workshop participant in November. Additional staff members will have the opportunity to attend. This is the first time a week-long MREP workshop combining both Science and Management into a single workshop is being held in the Southeast and presents a unique opportunity for the program. An MREP Steering Committee meeting is scheduled for early January 2023.

South Atlantic Stakeholder Meetings

Council Staff has begun work to develop a plan for holding stakeholder engagement meetings along the south Atlantic coast, meeting fishermen in their communities. The traditional public comment format does not always allow for two-way discourse between Council members and fisheries stakeholders. These stakeholder meetings will provide an opportunity for productive dialog with fisheries stakeholders. By engaging stakeholders in this more informal setting, Council members will be able to build relationships and increase engagement in the management process.

Council leadership was briefed on the concept in early 2023 and was supportive of Council staff's request to develop these meetings. Council staff has begun developing a framework for

these meetings with the tentative goal being to hold the first round in late-2024/early-2025 so as to not overlap with other stakeholder-driven efforts (mackerel port meetings, MSEs, etc.) Staff will present details to the Council for discussion during an upcoming Council meeting.

National Academies Committee on the Distribution of Fisheries Management Benefits

In early 2023, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine created an ad hoc committee to determine what data and information are required to assess whether the distribution of federal fisheries management benefits is equitable. Specifically, the Committee is tasked with determining the categories of information required, what information current exists and what needs to be collected, obstacles to that collection, and methodologies that can be used to assess the distribution of benefits. On August 14th staff from the regional councils were invited to provide presentations detailing their perspectives on the Committee's tasks. Information discussed during the meeting will be considered as the Committee drafts their final report. More information on the Committee and recordings of past meetings (as available) can be found here: <https://www.nationalacademies.org/our-work/assessing-equity-in-the-distribution-of-fisheries-management-benefits-data-and-information-availability>

Citizen Science Program

- SAFMC Release
 - Data collection, recruitment, and retention efforts continued for the SAFMC Release Project. Outreach activities have included: monthly newsletters; social media posts; partnering with FL FWC on a recruitment email distributed to Florida's State Reef Fish Angler designees on the Atlantic coast in June 2023; collaborating with the Sea Grant Reef Fish Fellow on tackle shop outreach in GA and northern FL; and participating in ICAST in July 2023 where the Council had a booth focused on best fishing practices and SAFMC Release. Additionally, staff collaborated with Best Fishing Practices personnel and FL FWC to do a seminar at the Jacksonville Offshore Sportfishing Club sharing information on BFP and SAFMC Release in August 2023.
 - The SAFMC Release Participant Recognition Program (PRP) launched in Spring 2023. Visit the link below for details on the 2023 PRP milestones. <https://safmc.net/documents/safmc-release-prp-2023-milestones/>
- SciFish
 - Work continues on the SciFish platform. Beta testing for the project builder is underway and two new projects (NCDMF's Tagging Program and the University of New Hampshire's Mail-A-Scale) are being built to assist with platform testing.
 - Draft SciFish policies and procedures have been developed and are being presented to ACCSP's Coordinating Council for initial feedback on August 31, 2023. The policies will then be presented to the ACCSP Operations and Advisors Committees in September 2023 and come back to the Coordinating Committee at their October 2023 meeting for final action.
- FISHstory

- Funding for FISHstory’s FY23 ACCSP proposal was received in July 2023 and work has gotten underway to expand the project. An NC State University graduate student, Alex Rocco, has joined the project team and will be helping coordinate the project through this funding cycle. The project team will begin meeting in September to incorporate changes to FISHstory based on information learned through the pilot project with the goal to re-launch the project in Zooniverse in early 2024.
- To help expand the FISHstory photo archive, staff will hold scanning events this fall during several Advisory Panel meetings (Snapper Grouper, Dolphin, Wahoo, Mackerel Cobia, and Outreach and Communication) and at the September and December 2023 Council meetings. At these scanning events, individuals can share historic fishing photos with the FISHstory project by providing hard copies (that will be scanned and returned) or digital photos along with some background information on the photos. Individuals who share hard copy photos will also receive digital copies of their photos. Additionally, partner, Rusty Hudson, has begun scanning photos provided by Captains Billy Smitherman (FL) and Bobby Freeman (NC).
- Staff in collaboration with colleagues from North Carolina State University and the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, submitted a FY24 proposal to ACCSP in August 2023 to continue and expand the FISHstory project for another year.
- SMILE (Size Matters: Innovative Length Measurements)
 - The SMILE Core Project Team has been meeting monthly to coordinate project activities. REEF staff conducted initial pilot testing of new depth of field camera technology developed by UCSD Engineers for Exploration for the SMILE project throughout August 2023 with project partners and citizen science REEF Advanced Assessment Team (AAT) members. The laser-mounted Olympus underwater camera is user-friendly and performed well at capturing fish lengths of target species; analyses from these initial dives paired with GoPro stereovideo camera system are ongoing. Additional field tests will be conducted by project partners and AAT divers August 29 - September 1, 2023 in the Florida Keys using six SMILE cameras and three stereovideo camera systems and paired with roving visual census surveys. This project is funded through a NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program grant in collaboration with South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Reef Environmental Education Foundation, Scripps Institute of Oceanography, UCSD Engineers for Exploration, Southeast Coastal Ocean Observing Regional Association, and Axiom Data Science.
- Staff continued to work with researchers Rick Bonney, Jennifer Sweeney-Tookes, Tracy Yandle, and Bryan Fluech on the Citizen Science Program’s initial evaluation. Bonney is working to refine the online survey questions for managers and scientists with the target to launch the survey in fall 2023. Sweeney-Tookes, Yandle, and Fluech finalized their interview guide and completed their initial research trip in the southern-most geographic segment (Miami, FL south through the Florida Keys) in July 2023. Interviews with for-hire and recreational fishermen have been completed for this geographic region while interviews with commercial fishermen are still underway. Interview recruitment has

started for their next geographic segment (Miami, FL north to Cape Canaveral, FL) and a research trip for this region is scheduled for September 2023.

- Staff helped coordinate two symposia focused on citizen science at the [American Fisheries Society's Annual Meeting](#) in August 2023: 'Challenges and Solutions for using Citizen Science Data in Fisheries Management' and 'Growing Fisheries Research and Management through Angler Engagement'.
- Staff were invited to present a poster on FISHstory as part of the European Union's Maritime Affairs and Fisheries 2023 Science Seminar focused on citizen science in June 2023 and invited to present on the development of the Council's Citizen Science Program and key takeaways for developing citizen science projects to the Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council in July 2023.

ICAST

Several Council members and staff attended the ICAST sportfishing tradeshow from July 11-14, 2023, which was held in Orlando, Florida. Members and staff engaged with representatives from the recreational fishing industry on the Council's efforts towards education on best fishing practices and the Council's Citizen Science Program.

IRA Funding Update

The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) includes an allotment of \$20 million to the eight regional fishery Councils to support fishery management and governance actions related to climate ready fisheries and climate related fisheries management in support of underserved communities. NMFS provided an overview of the funding and allowable activities at the May 2023 CCC meeting and has held several follow-up discussions with Council leadership. Preliminary plans at this time indicate that \$3 million will be distributed to the 8 Councils equally, by the end of 2023, and the remaining \$17 million distributed to the Councils through a competitive grant process with proposals desired by early 2024. As detailed in the May 2023 CCC presentation (available at <https://www.fisherycouncils.org/ccc-meetings/may-2023>), IRA funding cannot be used to support existing staff, operations, or existing activities and cannot require funding support beyond 2026. Activities supported through IRA funding should result in the following outcomes:

- Operationalize fish climate vulnerability assessments or other scientific products (e.g., ecosystem status reports, Integrated Ecosystem Assessments, etc.);
- Operationalize recommendations from climate scenario planning efforts;
- Implement management changes to address climate vulnerability or improve climate resiliency of fisheries, including those that are important to underserved communities;
- Implement measures that increase responsiveness of allocations or other management measures to climate impacts;
- Develop and advance climate-related fisheries management planning and implementation efforts in support of underserved communities.

The initial distribution of funding is intended to be provided to the Councils by December 31, 2023, through a new grant with a 3-year operating window. As noted, this will consist of \$3

million divided equally among the 8 Councils (each Council receiving \$375,000). Councils will be required to submit a grant proposal to detail the budget and activities supported by the funding. These proposals may be requested as early as September 30, 2023, however process details and an RFP are yet to be provided. Additional discussion on the competitive process for distributing the remaining 17 million is expected during the October 11 – 13, 2023 CCC meeting.

There is another allotment of \$20 million for Red Snapper. Based on a presentation given at the last GMFMC meeting, this funding is allotted to Gulf Red Snapper and there was no mention of any Atlantic or SAFMC component.

Figure: Overview of NMFS IRA funding devoted to climate ready fisheries

