



SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201, North Charleston SC 29405
Call: (843) 571-4366 | Toll-Free: (866) SAFMC-10 | Fax: (843) 769-4520 | Connect: www.safmc.net

Trish Murphey, Chair | Jessica McCawley, Vice Chair
John Carmichael, Executive Director

AGENDA

Citizen Science Committee

Hilton Garden Inn Outer Banks
5353 N. Virginia Dare Trail
Kitty Hawk, NC

Tuesday, December 9, 2025, 8:30 A.M. – 10:30 A.M. (Times subject to change)

Approval of Agenda

Approval of Minutes (December 2024)

1. Update Citizen Science Research Priorities (*Attachments 1a and 1b*)
 - a. Overview of recommended updates to Citizen Science Research Priorities – Council staff
 - b. **Committee Action:** Review, discuss, and consider adopting the updated Citizen Science Research Priorities
2. Citizen Science Program Indicators (*Attachments 2a and 2b*)
 - a. Overview of Citizen Science Program Indicators – Council staff
 - b. **Committee Action:** Provide input on the indicators the Citizen Science Program should regularly monitor under each goal.
3. Citizen Science Program Organizational Structure (*Attachment 3*)
 - a. Overview of Citizen Science Program Organizational Structure – Council staff
 - b. **Committee Action:** Consider removing the ‘Citizen Science Program Advisory Panel’ (which has not yet been formed) from the Citizen Science Program’s SOPPS.
4. Citizen Science Projects & Program Update (*Attachment 4*)
 - a. Overview of project activities – Council staff via recorded presentation

Other Business

Adjourn

Committee Members

Amy Dukes, Chair

Kerry Marhefka, Vice-Chair

Robert Beal

Carolyn Belcher

Gary Borland

Dewey Hemilright

Jimmy Hull

Jessica McCawley

Trish Murphey

Judy Helme

Lt. Tom Pease

Charlie Phillips

Tom Roller

Robert Spottswood, Jr.

Andy Strelcheck

Attachments

Attachment 1a: Citizen Science Research Priority Presentation

Attachment 1b: SAFMC DRAFT Updated Citizen Science Research Priorities

Attachment 2a: Citizen Science Program Planning Progress Update – December 2024

Attachment 2b: Citizen Science Program Indicators Presentation

Attachment 3: Citizen Science Program Organizational Structure

Attachment 4: Citizen Science Program Update Presentation ([link to recorded presentation](#))

Staff Lead: Julia Byrd (julia.byrd@safmc.net)

OVERVIEW

Citizen Science Committee

The Committee will approve the minutes from the [December 2024 Citizen Science Committee meeting](#) and the agenda for the December 2025 meeting.

The Citizen Science Projects and Citizen Science Operations Advisory Panels (AP) both met in October 2025 via webinar. AP meeting summaries are available on the webpages below.

- [Citizen Science Projects Meeting Summary – Oct 6, 2025](#)
- [Citizen Science Operations Meeting Summary – Oct 16, 2025](#)

1. Update Citizen Science Research Priorities (*Attachments 1a and 1b*)

The Citizen Science Research Priorities are updated every two years in conjunction with the Council updating their overall Research and Monitoring Plan. The research priorities guide the types of projects the Citizen Science Program will pursue and support. They are meant to help narrow the Program’s focus from the many data needs in the South Atlantic to tangible ideas most important to fishermen, scientists, and managers in our region that would potentially work well with a citizen science approach.

The original Citizen Science Research Priorities were developed by the Citizen Science Action Teams during 2017-2018 and were informed by the Council’s Research and Monitoring Plan, Southeast Data Assessment and Review (SEDAR) Consolidated Research Recommendations, and project ideas generated during the 2016 SAFMC Citizen Science Program Design Workshop. These priorities were adopted by the SAFMC in June 2018 and subsequently updated with input from the Citizen Science Operations and Projects APs in December 2019, 2021, and 2023.

The Council updated their Research and Monitoring Plan during the September 2025 meeting. The Citizen Science Operations AP and Citizen Science Projects AP met separately via webinar in October 2025 to review and recommend updates to the Citizen Science Research Priorities. *Attachment 1a* provides background information on the process used to update the Citizen Science Research Priorities. The draft updated Citizen Science Research Priorities are in *Attachment 1b*. Recommended edits to the Research Priorities are highlighted in yellow or strike-through text. Recommendations from the Citizen Science Operations Committee and Projects Advisory Committee are summarized in italics under each priority.

The following questions may be helpful to consider when reviewing and discussing the priorities:

- Are there any priorities that should be removed or added to this list?
- Are there any additions or deletions to the target species listed under the applicable priorities?
- Are there any additional Council Research and Monitoring needs where a citizen science approach may work that aren’t included on this list?
- Which of the priorities may help address the most immediate needs for science and management?

The [South Atlantic Research and Monitoring Plan for 2025-2029](#) is provided as an additional resource for the Committee’s consideration when addressing this agenda item.

Required Committee Action: Review, discuss, and consider adopting the updated Citizen Science Research Priorities.

2. Citizen Science Program Indicators (*Attachments 2a and 2b*)

During 2020, the Citizen Science Operations Committee developed and refined the Citizen Science Program’s Planning document which included vision, mission, goals, objectives, strategies, and draft indicators of success. The Council reviewed and adopted these in December 2020. Since then, Council staff have used the Program Planning document to determine annual work plans and guide the overall direction of the Program.

To help evaluate progress, the Program plans to review its activities under each goal, objective, and strategy every five years. The first review took place during the Citizen Science Operations AP fall 2024 meeting, where members assessed Program activities from 2019–2024. The AP supported continuing the objectives and strategies that have been the focus of Program staff over the past five years and recommended additional strategies to prioritize in the coming years. This information was shared with the Citizen Science Committee at the December 2024 Council meeting and is provided in *Attachment 2a*.

In addition to this five-year review, staff are interested in identifying key indicators under each goal that are important to the Program that can be monitored more regularly (e.g., annually or biennially). These indicators will help assess progress toward goals and objectives between the five-year reviews, identify areas for improvement, and provide a way to measure the Program’s ongoing impact.

Attachment 2b provides an overview of the key indicators staff are recommending for regular monitoring, which were developed with input from the Citizen Science Advisory Panels.

Committee members are asked to provide input on the proposed Program indicators. The following questions may help guide discussion:

- Do the indicators assess the important parts of the Program?
- Do you think you could have a strong understanding of the Program’s progress from these indicators? If not, what’s missing that staff could reasonably track?
- Are there indicators that aren’t needed or are duplicative?

Required Committee Action: Provide input on the indicators the Citizen Science Program should regularly monitor under each goal.

3. Citizen Science Program Organizational Structure (*Attachment 3*)

The Citizen Science Program’s organizational structure, as outlined in the SOPPs, includes the Council’s Citizen Science Committee, a Citizen Science Program Advisory Panel, two Citizen Science Advisory Panels (AP) – the Operations and Projects APs - and a Citizen Science Pool that can be used to create short term ‘ad-hoc’ work groups to address specified topics. More details on the roles and responsibilities, membership, and meetings of each of these groups are available in *Attachment 3* along with a Program organizational chart.

Currently, the Program has two active Advisory Panels – the Citizen Science Operations and Citizen Science Projects APs. The Citizen Science Program Advisory Panel has not yet been established, and no ad hoc work groups have been formed since the original “Action Teams,” which developed the Program’s overall approach and best practices in 2017–2018. As the Program continues to grow, staff are exploring ways to more actively engage members of the Citizen Science Pool through the creation of ad hoc work groups.

During their May 2025 webinar meeting, the Citizen Science Operations AP discussed whether there remains a need for the Citizen Science Program Advisory Panel. Members noted that, as the Program has evolved, the originally envisioned roles and responsibilities of this group have largely been absorbed by other citizen science or Council advisory bodies (e.g., the existing CitSci APs, Project Design Teams, SSC, and SEP). Given limited staff capacity and the fact that these functions are currently being met through existing structures, the Operations AP recommended that the Council consider removing the Citizen Science Program Advisory Panel from the Citizen Science Program SOPPs.

Required Committee Action: Consider removing the ‘Citizen Science Program Advisory Panel’ (which has not yet been formed) from the Citizen Science Program’s SOPPs.

4. Citizen Science Program Update (*Attachment 4*)

Staff prepared a recorded presentation highlighting recent Citizen Science Program and project activities. The recorded presentation can be viewed [HERE](#).

Other Business

Adjourn