

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

CITIZEN SCIENCE COMMITTEE

**World Golf Village Renaissance
St. Augustine, Florida**

June 12, 2023

Transcript

Citizen Science Committee

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Observers and Participants

Other observers and participants attached.

The Citizen Science Committee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened at the World Golf Village Renaissance, St. Augustine, Florida, on Monday, June 12, 2023, and was called to order by Chairman Kerry Marhefka.

MS. MARHEFKA: I would like to call to order the meeting of the Citizen Science Committee. First, let's look at the agenda. Does anyone have any additions or addendums to the agenda? Seeing none, the agenda is approved. Approval of the Minutes, does anyone have any corrections to the minutes? Seeing none, the minutes are approved.

I think we have two items today, one which requires some action, which Julia will guide us through, and I appreciate Julia finally having a few minutes to really get into the great things that this group has been doing, that Julia has been doing, all their projects, because, as most of you probably know, Julia has to speed-talk her way through the last two minutes on a Friday afternoon, when everyone is itching to go, and so I thank you, Madam Chair, for moving us to the top, and, with that, Julia, I will let you take over.

MS. BYRD: All right, and so good afternoon, everyone. The first thing on the agenda that we're going to talk about is a new online kind of project idea tool that we're developing, and so, before getting into to the tool itself, I just wanted to provide a little bit of background and information for you guys, and so a little bit about kind of our citizen science research priorities.

We update these every two years, in conjunction with you guys updating your overall research and monitoring plan, and so what you all just went through, kind of with Chip, and you're updating that research and monitoring plan, and then we'll look at what's in that plan and update our citizen science research priorities, and so what the citizen science research priorities help us do is basically take this large list of data needs and distill it down into tangible project ideas, and so that helps us guide the type of projects that we want to develop, but we also share our citizen science research priorities with other organizations who approach us wanting to do citizen science projects or wanting to collaborate with us on citizen science projects.

The process we use to update our research priorities are kind of outlined in our standard operating policies and procedures, and kind of there are multiple steps in how we update our research priorities, and so, first, you guys are updating your overall research and monitoring plan, and that's informed by the SSC, our advisory panels, SEDAR stock assessments, and you guys. Then we take that document, and we look to see if there are any new additions, or things that need to be changed within our citizen science research priorities to kind of fit those needs, and then we take the research priorities, and our two citizen science advisory panels review them, our kind of Operations Committee and our Project Advisory Committee.

Then our citizen science research priorities come to you guys to look at and review, and you provide feedback, and we kind of -- You consider adopting those citizen science priorities for the next two years, and so there's one kind of step in this process that we haven't been using yet, and it's this kind of idea of having a citizen science online project idea portal, where our stakeholders could actually submit ideas for citizen science projects to us.

We haven't used that yet, because we haven't had the capacity to develop it, but we're doing it now, and that's one of the things that we're going to walk through with you guys today, and so the idea is we want to develop this online portal, so that we can gather ideas from stakeholders for

citizen science projects. The information gathered through this online tool will help -- We'll compile that information, and it will be considered for use when we're updating our citizen science research priorities. If there are any kind of new ideas coming in that need to be added to our priorities, we can use it there.

The other thing we're really interested in using this tool for is to help us connect fishermen and scientists that may have similar research interests. When we kicked off the citizen science program, back in 2016, and had a workshop, one of the things that folks were really interested in is seeing if the program could be kind of a matchmaking tool, so that, if there are fishermen and scientists who have similar research interests, helping connect them to develop projects.

Basically, the online portal will just be a series of questions that is focused on gathering information on a project idea and relating it to our research priorities. Staff would monitor that portal, and we'll provide a feedback mechanism, so that, when folks submit ideas, they will get feedback, or they will be kind of reached out to by staff, and, again, the information will be compiled and considered whenever we update our research priorities, every two years.

Some of the input we are asking for from you guys today is to look over the draft questions in the online tool and then provide a little information on kind of when and how we should deploy this tool, and, ideally, the action we're interested in having you consider is seeing if you're ready for this tool to be adopted for use later this year.

Just going over the general kind of questions that are going to be in this portal, and I will say that our Citizen Science Operations Committee met in May, and so the information that I will be sharing with you now incorporates the feedback that they gave, and so, first, we want to just collect general contact information, and we want to know how someone is associated with the fishery. One thing that came up during our Operations Committee is we were thinking of this tool, originally, more for fishermen to use to submit project ideas, but it was brought up that it might be a good idea to see if scientists, or researchers, have ideas they might want to submit to the portal, and so we added that into kind of association with the fishery.

Then we're asking for project details, and we want to make sure that we're asking questions that will be helpful to make sure we're understanding kind of the idea being submitted, but we don't want it to be a burden, or too intimidating, for kind of one of our stakeholders to kind of submit information, and so we're trying to limit the number of kind of questions that we're asking people to do. We want someone to be able to kind of submit a project idea in less than ten minutes.

We're asking kind of the purpose of the project, a brief description, whether or not the project idea fits under one of our research priorities, and then we want to know, if we're talking to a fisherman, whether or not they've spoken to a researcher, and, if they haven't, would they like to, and maybe we can help connect them, and then the kind of reverse of that is, if it's a scientist, or a researcher, submitting an idea, asking if they have talked to an industry partner, and, if not, maybe we can help connect them.

The other questions that we're interested in asking are kind of who the target volunteers would be for the project, how much time do you think it would take to complete, and we're just kind of asking folks to kind of group time into categorical, kind of one year, two to three years, three-plus

years, kind of categories, and then a little bit of information on cost, and, again, not specific costs, but more kind of categorical, like one dollar sign, two dollars signs, kind of three dollar signs.

That's kind of what we have as questions in the portal right now, and so the input we're looking for you guys on is whether or not the draft questions cover the information needed, are there any that should be added or removed, and we want a little information on how often, and how long, you think the project portal tool should be deployed and what feedback mechanism we should use and should be provided to stakeholders that submit ideas.

I am going to pull up Attachment 1b, which has these kind of questions laid out, to get your input on them, and then it also kind of the recommendations for how long and often the tool should be deployed and for feedback mechanisms that we got from our Citizen Science Operations Committee, and so, before pulling that up, are there any general questions? No? Okay.

This is Attachment 1b, and, again, I will note that, when we are building the online tool, we're going to try to -- We're going to use radio buttons and things like that, to make it quick and easy to fill out, but, again, what we're looking for right now is information on are we collecting and gathering the right information from folks, and are there any questions that we're not asking that should be added? Are we asking anything that isn't necessarily needed? Any kind of feedback you guys have on this would be appreciated.

MS. MARHEFKA: Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Thank you. Again, being sensitive to this not being too much of a voluminous burden for folks that want to submit the idea, but I think maybe -- I don't know whether it needs to be a separate question, or maybe folded in, but to provide a brief description of the project idea and how it will improve management and conservation, and I think that would be important in getting them to articulate how they see the project having a nexus with management and conservation and a context for it.

MS. MARHEFKA: Thank you. Any other comments?

MS. BYRD: Just scrolling through the list on the screen, if you all have any other kind of feedback, thoughts, and are we asking the right questions? Are we asking too many questions? I think that's a great suggestion, Spud, that I have added in, but any other feedback?

MS. MARHEFKA: If I may, I wonder, and will they -- You said it will be like pull-down or drop-down, and radio buttons, but will they be able to move on if they don't answer all these questions, because I'm thinking like how much do you think the project would cost, and certainly there's -- There is some projects that even I wouldn't have -- As a council member, I wouldn't have a guess as to how much it would cost, and I just didn't want them to stop, and like something not being completed to stop it from being submitted. Then I have Mel.

MR. BELL: The questions where we ask them if they've spoken with a researcher, or if they've spoken with an industry partner, if not, would you like to, and is the implication there that we would facilitate that communication and have somebody get back with them?

MS. BYRD: I guess, to answer Kerry's question, and then Mel's question, and so we haven't talked about whether or not we want to require any of these questions. For the cost one, I added an I'm-not-sure kind of option that folks could answer, and we -- You know, ideally, we would want people to fill out everything, but we don't have to require things, at least initially, just to kind of see what we kind of get coming in. This is the first time we're doing anything like this, and so I'm not sure how many people will want to submit ideas and that sort of thing, but we certainly don't want it to be something that folks feel is too onerous or is intimidating to do if they don't know the answer to a question.

Then, Mel, to get at your question, yes, and, you know, I think one of the things that we really want to try to do is connect researchers and industry partners, and so, if someone says they haven't been in touch with kind of either of those groups, we would try to kind of facilitate and connect them to someone, as best we can, and we may not kind of -- It may take a little legwork, on our end, to figure out who would be good to connect them to, and we may have to talk to folks at federal or state agencies to help do that, but that's the idea.

MR. BELL: That would be predicated on us kind of thinking that, okay, this is at least in the realm of a rational -- Something that could happen, or might be worth following through on, and there's no -- Every single one of these we get, there is no obligation for us to hook them up with a researcher, necessarily.

MS. BYRD: Yes, and I think that's a little bit of what kind of feedback mechanism we want to give to people. You know, we really want to try to concentrate on projects that meet our research priorities, and so, if someone submits an idea, and it doesn't necessarily meet our research priorities, we definitely want to kind of communicate that to them, but, if they're interested in developing their idea more, we can still, you know, try to help connect them to folks, but we really want to try to -- We have limited resources, and we want to try to make sure the resources that we're doing are developing projects that meet our kind of research and data needs.

MS. MARHEFKA: Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: I was just trying to think, and so what feedback should be provided through the stakeholders that submit ideas, and I guess what feedback are you looking to provide? Like say someone puts in an idea, and it's not a good idea, and what -- How would you -- What happens to those, and then there's others, I'm sure, that will be good ideas that -- What am I trying to say?

They're good ideas, but it may be difficult for a citizen-science-type of project, and I'm just kind of thinking about the reality part, you know, that folks could give good ideas, but it may not be a good citizen science idea, or it just -- Everybody has great ideas, but just in case there is not a good idea, but how to stay positive, and I guess, also, how to stay positive to keep the interest, if any of those questions make sense, and I'm just kind of thinking about the end result.

MS. BYRD: No, I definitely think they make sense, and that was some of what I was hoping to get some guidance from you guys on, on what kind of feedback -- We only have so much capacity, and the program is Meg and myself, and so, you know, we want to make sure that we are spending our time how you guys feel like it would be best for us to spend our time. When we talked about this with the Operations Committee, we want stakeholders to automatically get kind of an email response, saying, hey, we got your idea, and then they suggested that, you know, we're reviewing

submissions quarterly or, you know, not every day, but some certain time, quarterly, three-times a year, twice a year, and then, you know, ideally, we would want to try to have some sort of individual contact with everyone who has submitted an idea.

I am sure -- You know, I have already talked to some folks who have had ideas that may not be a good fit for citizen science, or don't necessarily meet kind of the research needs that we have right now, and so I think the idea is to try to kind of explain that to folks who are submitting ideas and encourage them to keep coming up with ideas, and I'm sure that there are a ton of stakeholders who have awesome citizen science project ideas that we haven't even thought of yet, and so this is a way to try to kind of harness the ideas that they have and kind of get them on our radar, but I think we also need to be realistic.

I have no idea how many people will use this portal, and, again, there are two of us, and so I think how we're going to be able to provide a feedback mechanism, and how we're kind of able to do that, is going to depend a lot on how many ideas come through, and that's just something that I'm not sure is going to happen yet.

MS. MURPHEY: Then I guess the purpose is to get some -- I guess where I'm going to, and I think, when I was on the -- In the early days, when we were doing the whole citizen science thing, but, if somebody does submit an idea, and we get them with a researcher, and there's going to be a funding issue, and so I guess I'm -- Maybe I am jumping too far ahead of the process, because I think this is a great idea to collect information, and it's a great idea to collect ideas, but then just the reality of where will it go, and will that person who submits the idea, if we did find funding, and would they stay, you know, involved, and maybe I'm just getting too into the weeds at this point, but, overall, I think this is a great idea, and don't get me wrong, and just, down the road, where is this going to lead, and that's just something to think about.

MS. BYRD: I mean, I think that's really important, when doing something like this, managing expectations, and this isn't a grant program. We don't have money to give out to folks, and I think it's going to be important that that's clearly stated, and so, I mean, I think, you know, we can try to match people up who may have similar research interests, and then, if it's a project that fits our research needs, we can try to help work with them to kind of find proposals and, you know, encourage them to find funding, that sort of thing.

I think, seeing the program grow now, we have both internal and external projects. When I think internal, I think we're doing all the project management, like SAFMC Release and FISHstory, and we also have more external projects, and SMILE is an example, where it's really kind of REEF, that group, that's doing the day-to-day project management, and so I think, you know, we're not going to be able to help everyone find money and find tools, and it's going to be a mix of internal and external projects.

We just want to use this tool to help kind of up with new project ideas and then to help try to connect people, and that doesn't mean that we're going to be able to provide funding or work with every single researcher and fisherman who comes to us to develop projects, just based on the capacity and resources we have, and I don't know if that addresses kind of what you're --

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, I agree, and, like I said, I think this is going in a great direction, which made me think, back in the early days of the citizen science, where we had all those teams, one of

the things that the team that I was on talked about was endorsing good potential projects, and maybe that's another piece that you could add to those good projects, is if you could give an endorsement that they can fund, and there's something that may be helpful in getting funding, is like, you know, the South Atlantic Council Citizen Science Program endorses this. I don't know if that got -- I don't know where that endorsement idea went, but I know we talked about it years ago.

MS. BYRD: Yes, and you all did a wonderful job kind of building out kind of a criteria for how projects get endorsed, and we just haven't had an opportunity, or really needed, to kind of implement that yet, just based on kind of our program is going, but I think that's a great idea, and it's certainly something that we can think on, to think about kind of officially implementing moving forward.

MS. MARHEFKA: All right. I have Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: I thought of maybe another question, especially since this discussion makes it even more relevant, is maybe to ask them if they are being provided support by any sort of organization, like a fishing club or industry or anything like that, just to see what they may have already available to them, and, as far as the feedback goes, I think that's always a delicate matter.

You certainly don't want to squash people's ideas, but I don't know how many times people have wanted to tag fish, and it's like, you know, just how do you explain to them that everybody can't do their own personal fish tagging project, and, you know, it's always a delicate thing to get them to understand, but I think maybe one of the things that would be important is, as much as possible, is to keep an inventory of all the other kind of projects that are out there, which is hard to do, and just point them in those directions, you know, so they can partner up with something that's already been established, that already has some credibility and some discipline to it, and so just some thoughts.

MS. BYRD: Spud, I think that's a great idea, and we do have an inventory of projects, and it's not as up-to-date as it perhaps should be, but I think that's a great idea, because I think even helping connect people to another project that's doing kind of what they want to do would be a huge help.

MS. MARHEFKA: Thanks, Julia. I have Dewey, and then I have Tom.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I don't know -- I guess you're going to have to manage people's expectations and let them down easy, because you could spend a lot of time on certain individuals that come to you, and you only have a certain amount of time, and, you know, have you ever watched Shark Tank? I kind of consider this to be kind of like Shark Tank.

As citizen science, you all are there, and these folks are coming to you, and some of them with some, you know, just crazy stuff, and just go away type of stuff, and then other things -- But maybe, with asking these questions, the more you can put upfront, on your list, to kind of -- Not validate, but check the folks that are coming in and asking all these questions, and let them go do some research, and like you put it out there that here's all the projects we're doing, and here's all the people that you could partner with that are choosing -- Or something, because I see where you could use a lot of time with folks that have got all these ideas, and they're pulling them out of thin air, hypotheticals and all this stuff, and you're just going to eat up a lot of time.

I know it's not, you know, folks -- Everybody's aspiration is like catching a bluefin tuna, and it's always the number-one fish, and it ain't always going to be number-one when they come to their project, and so you need to figure out a way to let them down easy, and, not only that, send them in a direction where they can do some homework, but, yet, you gave them some tools to do the homework, because, if not, you're going to spend a lot of time just spinning the wheels, and that's just the way it is when you come to this research and funding and places and an avenue, and so there's no need for you to waste all that time, and let them do some work at the same time.

MS. MARHEFKA: I have Tom, and then I have Judy.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you. I have two thoughts on this, and Spud hit the first one, was that I think it's really important to make sure that we have -- You know, to have do you work with any organizations, and do you have any support from that, and so I'm glad that Spud brought that up, and I agree with it.

The only thing I'm slightly uncomfortable with is just this idea of what would the project cost, and the question format, and it reminds me of like Yelp or something, and, given my involvement in some, you know, independently-funded research projects recently, it's impossible, even for really good researchers, and even stakeholders, to understand what these things are going to cost. If you do have a good idea, it could cost -- Even a cheap project could cost twice as much if it goes through a certain university which has super high grant overhead, right, and so I think, if we're going to ask that question, I would leave it more like open-ended, and do you have any idea what this costs, and allow people to maybe write a sentence or two, or just click "I don't know", right, because, you know, I think back to conversations that I have with stakeholders that approach me in my roles, and some of the comments of what things should cost are quite interesting, from what I hear from people, and so, you know, a little off-base.

MS. MARHEFKA: Judy.

MS. HELMEY: I think it would be a good idea to list the things and their options, and, when they do post something, or when they make a suggestion, will that be posted where other people can see it?

MS. BYRD: That's a great question, and it's not something that we've thought about yet, if I'm being honest, and so, right now, we're thinking of building an online tool where we could gather information, and we could definitely build a report, so it would be available online, and we would probably want to -- I don't know that we would want to put specific people's contact information online, and so there may have to be some of it kind of redacted from a public report, but, if you all think that would be great to post online, that's something that could be done, and it's, honestly, something that we haven't really talked about yet.

MS. MARHEFKA: Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: You were saying about you and Meg kind of being some of the limitation, just because it's two of you all, but is there the possibility that your ops group or something -- Because, I mean, again, you don't know what the magnitude of response is going to be, and so is it something

that maybe you kind of go into the idea that you're groundtruthing it to start with, with the idea that people understand that there is some limitation.

Like, if you've got a person who is like a real big idea generator, maybe you limit them to one a quarter or something, just to kind of help keep you down, as opposed to the person that's like, oh, I've got a notebook of things that I would love to sit here, and I'm just going to do twenty-five things to you in a matter of one stream, consciousness stream, because I feel like there's good information that can be gleaned through it, but I just don't want you guys to get inundated, and the idea of evaluations and, you know, having other folks to kind of help with that, because, again, what might be, in you and Meg's opinion, something that could be done, and you get the Science Center involved, or someone else, and they're going to be like, yes, that's kind of been implemented, or tried, and it's not what we think it is, and it either goes off the tracks, or it's a bigger scope than we bit off. That's almost treating it like it is kind of a grant thing, without the idea of -- Again, it's just the idea of kind of how do we go about, you know, metering it.

The responses, I kind of have the same idea, and we've kind of hit on some of the things that will happen along the way, and so I think those ideas that -- Again, it's having the -- We're not making you any promises, and here are some things that, yes, it hits really well, and we'll make sure to talk with more folks about it, and, to Dewey's comment about trying to pair people up ahead of time, and it's kind of the same thing.

I would hesitate to put people's information out there, because, once you say something about an individual, everybody is going to see the name of a person and start ping-ponging that person, and so you're just directing some of the questions, and some of the idea drops, to people outside of the program, and so I think that idea of trying to corral it, and bring it into citizen science, and let citizen science kind of do the matchmaking, and I almost feel that it's a little bit better, and then having the group input from, you know, your state folks, and your Science Center folks, to help determine what are ones that -- How do we bin them to get the responses back, and I think that would be a good thing to do, and I do think it's a good idea.

MR. ROLLER: Just another comment that came to mind, and what about adding something to say have you submitted -- Like have another box to say have you submitted this sort of proposal to any other entity, right, and the reason I bring that up is, you know, in North Carolina, we've got multiple license funds, right, that people submit grants to, and not all of them get approved, and this could be another way for people to take a project and to just get it to different eyes as well.

MS. MARHEFKA: All right. While Julia is typing that up, and I know she wanted to respond back to Carolyn, and I just want to have everyone's heads thinking, because our other bullet point under this, or action item, is sort of how long this portal will be open, and so be thinking on that, while that discussion is happening, so that we can maybe help Julia out with that before we're done.

MS. BYRD: Carolyn, I think that's a great idea. When we -- About getting kind of our Operations Committee involved in helping kind of review these, us putting them together and then having them review them, and that's not something we talked about, and so it's something that I would definitely want to run by that group, but I think it's a good mix of we have kind of SERO, Science Center, SSC, and then a variety of -- We have some fishermen, some Sea Grant folks, and so it's a good mix of people, I think, and I think that could be helpful, but, again, I think we would want

to run that idea by them, and, also, you know, we talked about this a little bit at the Operations Committee meeting, and we just haven't -- I mean, maybe no one will submit an idea, and maybe 150 people will submit an idea, and it's just a little bit is going to have to be us doing this and seeing what comes in, just making sure that we're very clear about expectations and management of this upfront.

DR. BELCHER: Just coming to the timing thing, maybe there's a potential way of thinking about what is a manageable number to process, and like say, if you're talking about looking at them quarterly, and you're not going to be responding to them daily or weekly, and it's a quarterly thing, and what seems like a reasonable number to look at? You know, is it like twenty, or twenty-five, and, once that number hits, you shut it, and then you sit and you have your evaluation and discussion, with the idea -- It's trying to get an idea of what the flow is going to be like.

If it's like you're saying that you might get five or six trickled in over six months, with the idea that there is a quarter -- No matter what number is there, at a quarter window, we're going to do that, but recognizing what time goes into it, to say, okay, twenty is reasonable in a quarter, and we can't take 150 in a quarter, and there's just not the resources and the manpower to evaluate that, where maybe 150 over a year may be manageable, and, I mean, obviously, yes, we're kind of shooting in the dark, because we really don't know what the floodgates will open or not open to, but I think it's just that idea of, initially, for you guys to kind of temper it, I think the idea that there is, you know, a certain number of bins that you can fill, that are reasonable to give each one a time to figure out how you want to address them, and you're controlling basically how much the cap is open, and you're not getting drowned, or waterboarded, with it, and you're drinking it slowly, as opposed to quickly.

MS. MARHEFKA: John.

DR. WALTER: I think the citizen, or community, science could play a really big role in some things that may be coming down the pipeline, and, in particular, we have, in the works, an exploration of gene tagging versus conventional tagging, a simulation study to determine which one of those gives a bigger bang for the buck.

Gene tagging would be collect a genetic sample and release the fish or collect a genetic sample when the fish comes to the dock, which is currently what's going on for the South Atlantic red snapper research program, and it would just be extending that to be able to estimate the magnitude of discards. Conventional tagging also could be one of the parts, but that would be a great on-ramp for citizen science to do.

It would, ideally, as Spud notes -- If it operated under some sort of an organization, and so it wasn't just here's a bunch of -- It's got to be tissue samples, and if people had protocols and did it right, and that might be a real opportunity for people to provide data, and then there's other opportunities that I think are going to come down, in terms of potentially funded research opportunities for pilot fishing programs or, as we've talked about, pilot study fleets, and that's an idea that there would be a fishery that would take on a particular role, and maybe experiment with different fishing strategies that might minimize discards and collect more refined data to inform modeling, or management, options, and so I think those are on-ramps for citizen science, and so, as there are citizens that are wanting to get involved, I think there are going to be some coming down the line that are going to really need people to pitch in. Thanks.

MS. BYRD: If there is any more input on kind of timing for the tool to be deployed, and I know one thing that the Operations Committee suggested is that -- Because we had originally said you can keep it open for two months, or whatever, a certain time period that you wanted to, but they suggested that we keep the tool open year-round, because, when people get ideas, you want them to go ahead and be able to put them in when they're thinking about them and not in two months, when the portal is open, and that sort of thing.

I just wanted to mention that to you guys, and I really appreciate your comments, Carolyn, in making sure that we don't overcommit ourselves, based on our kind of small capacity, but, if anyone else has any thoughts on how long should this tool be deployed, and do we want to do in, you know, small batches, at least initially, until we see what comes in, and does that make more sense than leaving it open year-round right now, and any kind of other feedback, or guidance, on that would be helpful.

I will say, you know, depending on how the rest of this conversation goes, if this is something that's adopted for use, you know, ideally, we would love to launch it sometime this fall, so that, when we update our research priorities late this year, we would be able to gather kind of the information and compile that and consider it when we're updating research priorities.

MS. MARHEFKA: I am going to say something, real quick, and then Carolyn, but I was just thinking that is there anything stopping us from, you know, keeping it open year-round, and, because we have no idea what's going to happen, if you get slammed, you know, a little sticky goes on the screen that says, you know, due to the volume, large volume, of submissions, at this time, we're not accepting any more, you know what I'm saying, and we just don't know. As someone with pretty severe ADD, if the idea is my mind at that moment, that's when I would want to do it, and, two months from now, my idea will be different, and I will be thinking about squirrels and not fish.

DR. BELCHER: So similar, and that was where I was going to go. Like I said before, I think it's just the idea of how you can keep the tap -- Whether, again, you have a critical mass that you're willing to entertain, twenty-five a quarter or whatever, and keep it open, and you don't have to shut it down if you're getting them in slow trickles, but, like you're saying, and it's that idea that you get 150 that hits you all of a sudden, and you're like, woah, woah, woah, and this is more than we can handle, and you have that ability to work it, but I do think year-round, because you think about the triggers for people.

You know, it's rule changes, and it's stock assessments, and it's the things that come out and hit the sound bites that really kind of get them going, and so it would really kind of -- Like Kerry said, you're kind of in that vein of moving an idea forward when you can, and so I do think that year-round is good, provided you can definitely keep the flow to the level that you can handle it.

MS. MARHEFKA: Do you feel good about that feedback? Is there other feedback on this specific -- On the portal that you feel like you have not gotten? All right. So then, when you're done making your notes, I think we will move into the Citizen Science Projects and Program Evaluation Update. Laurilee, I'm sorry. I did not see you.

MS. THOMPSON: That's okay. You guys covered it, and I was going to say that maybe you would put an announcement up that you're going to open it for a quarter and then close it for a quarter, so you can analyze what came in the first quarter, and then reopen it, and so like have it open two quarters a year, but not consecutive, but I like keeping it open, because, as Kerry said, you know, when somebody has a brilliant idea, they're going to want to put it on right then, and they will forget about it in a couple of months, and so you can always shut it down if you get run over and then reopen it after you assess what you've taken, but I think it sounds like fun.

MS. MARHEFKA: Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: You will get wonderful ideas. I know you will.

MS. MARHEFKA: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I mean, I don't think we really should cap it, and I understand it can be, you know, overloading, but, if you cap a number, there's nothing to stop a couple of internet trolls from completely gumming it up with silly stuff, right, and, also, in the same note, let's say that a large percentage of them are unviable, but a small percentage are, and we get some really good projects, and that's huge, right, and that's really good outreach for the council and for NMFS and everybody else.

MS. BYRD: So I guess the last thing I would say is, if folks are comfortable, would you all want to consider this tool for adoption, based on the modifications we've talked about now, and, if so, it might be helpful if someone made a motion.

MR. WOODWARD: **I will be happy to do that, and I make a motion that we approve the portal to go operational, based on the modifications from our discussion.**

MS. MARHEFKA: It's seconded by Tom. All right. Any modifications to this motion? **Any objections to this motion? Hearing none, so moved.** Now you've got what you needed, and I didn't overlook anyone, and so we'll move into our next agenda item, which is the update on all the programs we have going on.

MS. BYRD: I know I am what is stopping you from the end of the day, and so I will go over this pretty quickly, but that was good. That was a great discussion, and that's exactly the feedback we were looking for, and so thank you for that, and I will try to do this quickly, and slow me down if I'm going through things too fast.

First, I just wanted to update you on a few kind of programmatic-level things, and then I will give you quick updates on projects, in particular some of the citizen science program evaluation work that we've been working on with Rick Bonney, and I want to make sure to update you guys on kind of where that is.

First off, I just wanted to let you know that, if you guys want a deeper dive into what's been happening with the program, we did a seminar with the NOAA Central Library, back at the end of March, and there's a link to that in the presentation, if you want to check that out, and I also wanted to make sure you guys were aware that NOAA released their citizen science action plan, back in

April, and so that plan basically gives concrete steps on how NOAA will incorporate citizen science in support of their key missions.

One of the actions was to increase awareness and collaborations with organizations that provide high-quality data in support of fisheries management, and our program was an example for that action, and so it was really awesome to get kind of recognized and mentioned in their action plan.

I also just wanted to make you guys aware that we've been really fortunate to be able to participate in a few conferences and symposiums to share information about our projects and get feedback. There was a Florida American Fisheries Society meeting back in April, and they had a symposium that was focused on integrating stakeholders in fisheries science and management, and so Meg and I were able to go and present on FISHstory and Release there.

There was a Citizen Science Association annual meeting, and we were able to present on those projects there as well, and go to a few workshops to help us with recruitment and retention of our volunteers and to learn more about the Zooniverse platform, which will be helpful to expand our FISHstory project. Then the European Commission's Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Office does a seminar every year, and their seminar this year is focused on citizen science, and we were invited to put together a poster to be presented at that conference, and so we're spreading the words about what we're doing and what's going on with the program and getting a lot of helpful feedback, as we're able to talk to more folks about the work we're doing.

Now a quick update on projects, and the first project that I wanted to give you an update on was SMILE, and so this is a project that is being run by our kind of REEF partner, and it's working with recreational divers to collect length information on some of our data-limited species, and so they've been developing this handheld stereo camera. They have gone through a couple of iterations of it, and the camera that they will hopefully be using with citizen scientists is just about ready to go into the field for testing later this summer, and so we're excited to see that moving forward, and, once they have a little bit more information and data, we'll bring REEF folks in to give you guys an update on that.

Next is the Release project, and so, again, you guys are familiar with this project, and we still have participants that are logging their information on released shallow-water grouper and red snapper in SciFish, and, really, the last kind of year even has really been focused a lot on recruitment and retention of participants, and we've been working really closely with our best fishing practices campaign, and doing a lot of outreach together, which has really kind of amplified the voice of kind of this project and our best fishing practices initiative.

One of the things that Meg has done this year, to help with kind of participant recruitment and retention, is launch a participant recognition program, and so that was launched I guess two months ago, and it's really designed to celebrate kind of participants' achievements within the project, and so we've set 2023 milestones, and we're really excited to kind of kick that off.

The next thing that I wanted to share with you guys about Release is, at the end of each year, we put together a data summary, and I know this summary was kind of emailed out to you guys, but I just wanted to hit kind of a few high notes. Again, this is 2022 data, and this first slide shows you kind of where the submissions are coming from, and so, if you look on the donut graph on the left-hand side of the screen, you can see that the largest majority is coming from kind of Florida,

followed by North Carolina and then South Carolina and Georgia, and then, in 2022, the largest percent of kind of logs were from the recreational sector, followed by the charter sector.

If you look at the percent of releases logged by species, half of them are red snapper, and that's followed by gag and red grouper, and I think there are a total of seven species that have been logged through the program, and then this was one of the things that we were really interested in. Through the app, you're able to kind of log the depth of the fish that was caught and then whether or not you descended or vented the fish when you released it, and so kind of what we saw in the data collected through 2022 was that, as you got kind of into deeper water, where you would be more likely to see signs of barotrauma, folks were treating their fish, whether it was being descended or vented.

We put together these data summaries every year, and there's a link at the bottom of the screen if you want to check it out, and it's in the slides, but, if there are certain aspects that we didn't cover in the data summary, let us know, because we're always happy to kind of expand the data summary to make sure it's showing you the things that you guys are interested in in the data that we're gathering through this program, and so that's a quick hit on Release.

Now on to FISHstory. I know that, last June, we were able to give you kind of an update on what was happening in the FISHstory project, and a couple of great things have happened since then. First, we were able to get funding through ACCSP to help us move this pilot to a full-scale project. Through that, we were able to partner with NC State and folks at the Science Center, and so we have a graduate student who will be working on this project, helping a lot with the analysis and some of the day-to-day coordination that Allie was doing before, and so he came last week, and our crew kind of helped onboard him to the project.

Then the next thing we're really trying to do is we're trying to expand the geographic and temporal kind of range of photos that we have, and so one of the ways we're doing this is through scanning events, and so the goal of the events is just to gather more photos from across the South Atlantic, from kind of the 1940s through the 1980s for this project, and the idea is that we want to host these scanning events, in collaboration with some of our upcoming council and advisory panel meetings.

We're planning to have a scanning night at the in-person Mackerel, Dolphin Wahoo, and fall Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel meetings. The Mackerel and Snapper Grouper APs met in the spring, and we shared this idea with them, and I was so excited, and there were so many people who volunteered to bring photos in for this, and so I'm so excited, and then, also, at your September and December council meetings, we're planning to hold scanning events, and so I just wanted to give a little information on scanning events, just in case there are any folks around the table who may have photos, or any folks listening in who may have photos, that they would want to bring in to these events.

At the events, folks can bring digital photos, hard-copy photos, and, if they're hard-copy photos, we will scan them in, and we're going to save the digital photos. We're going to collect a little bit of additional kind of metadata information, and then, if someone is bringing us hard-copy photos, we want to make sure to provide them with the digital photos that we're scanning in, so they have those back.

Then what we're really looking for in the photos -- For the photos that we need for analysis, good photos, that we're able to use for our FISHstory analysis, are -- We really want pictures that are taken at the end of a trip, where the harvested catch is displayed with the anglers that caught those fish around them. We need to have a year associated with the photo. For location, we at least need a state associated with the photo, and then, ideally, we want the photo provider's name and contact information, and that's simply so that we can keep them up-to-date on what's going on with the project.

What makes photos even better is if they're fish kind of hanging on a leaderboard. When they're hanging on a leaderboard, we have a better chance to estimate size of the fish, and then more specific date information, and, if we can have month, that lets us look at seasonality, and then, if we can more specific photo location, like city, dock, even vessel name or captain name, that's even better.

Just to give folks around the table and online some examples of photos that we're looking for, this is one of Rusty's photos, and his are kind of like the gold standard. You have kind of all the fish are on the leaderboard, and we know the exact day, month, and year. We have kind of the city, the dock, the vessel name, the captain's name, and another example of a photo that's great -- This is one that we gathered from the Outer Banks History Museum, when we were in the Outer Banks earlier this year, and there's a great museum that has a ton of photos, and this is another great photo. All the fish are hanging on the leaderboard, and you can see them all clearly. We have the year, and we know the city and the dock.

Another example photo, and this one was provided by Judy, and, if you look close, you might be able to see her in the photo. This is another photo, and we don't have the fish hanging on the leaderboard, and so it would be harder for us to estimate size, but you can see the catch laid out, and all the fish are kind of beside each other, and so you can probably get ID, and so this is another great kind of photo that we're looking for.

Then this is kind of the last example, and this is another Judy photo, and, again, you can find Judy in the picture, and so this is another photo, and we're telling people to bring photos like this in. It gets a little bit harder for analysis, because you can see the red snapper that are being held by people, and you can identify some of the fish that are in the pile, but not all of them, and so it's a little bit harder to kind of get the analysis we need out of these photos, but we're still asking for folks to bring this in, and so these are just sort of kind of example photos that we'll be hoping to collect, and so, at your September council meeting, Meg and I will be in the back of the room with scanners, and hopefully gathering photos, and so we'll probably be asking you guys, closer to the date, if you know anybody who may have photos, to encourage them to bring them.

Then the last thing, and then we'll wrap up for the day, is I just wanted to give you a quick update on the program evaluation work that we've been working on with Rick Bonney, and so, just as a reminder, this is really trying to establish baseline information about kind of the knowledge, confidence in, and trust in the citizen science process of collecting data to inform fisheries management, and so it's going to help us evaluate our Program Goal Number 4, which is all about trust, collaboration, engagement, that sort of thing.

Rick Bonney did interviews with a very kind of small number of fishermen, scientists, and managers, and they focused on these four areas, and he presented to you last June, and, if you're

interested in checking out those results again, there is a link in the presentation that will take you there.

What we're hoping to do is we were going to get the information from the interviews and then try to gather information from a much -- Take what we learned from those interviews and gather information from a much broader group of fishermen and scientists and managers, and we were very lucky, thanks to the generosity of you guys and NOAA Fisheries, in particular Russ Dunn's shop, and we were able to get a little bit more resources for this project.

We consulted with Rick Bonney about how we wanted to move forward, and so what we're doing is Rick is going to continue being the lead researcher to gather information from a broader group of scientists and managers, and he'll be doing that through an online survey, and then we put out an RFP, a request for proposals, in December to get researchers to help us gather information from a broader group of fishermen, and so we're really excited that Jennifer Sweeney-Tookes, Tracy Yandle, and Bryan Fluech are the researchers who we'll be working with moving forward and, to gather information from a broader group of fishermen, they're planning to do more interviews.

They can gather kind of more helpful information, we think, from kind of the fishermen audience, which includes so many different groups of folks, through these interviews, and so I have provided their kind of proposal, which lays out what they're doing, in your meeting materials, but, just to quickly give you an overview, they wanted to make sure that they're gathering kind of diverse perspectives and that they're using a sampling method to gather this information that could be repeated in the future, and so, if we wanted to do this in five or ten years, to see if people's perceptions of citizen science have changed over time, we could do that, and then they also wanted to make sure that we were including fishermen in all of the sectors, in all four of our states, but we have limited resources, and so they thought long and hard about what was the way to take the first bite out of that kind of elephant of big group of fishermen that we're wanting to kind of learn more from.

What they did is they broke it down into kind of the commercial/for-hire sector and the recreational group. For the commercial/for-hire group, they're using kind of the NOAA permit database, and that still has over 19,000 something permits, and so, to distill it down more, they're focusing on two fisheries for this work, the snapper grouper fishery and the mackerel fishery. Those are two of our largest fisheries, and so those are the two that they're going to focus on for this interview work.

Then they're going to focus on four geographic areas along the South Atlantic coast, and, to identify those areas, they're looking at recent landings and then snapshot some information produced by SERO, that kind of a snapshot of fishing communities, to see kind of which communities rely heavily on these species. That's what is being done for the commercial sector. Once they get kind of their sampling frame, they will then select folks to invite to do interviews kind of randomly.

The private recreational sector is a little bit different, and we don't have kind of a known database of all these folks, and so what they decided to do were to kind of build a sampling frame with folks who are in fishing clubs or organizations, and that could be everything from a local fishing club to a national organization, like CCA, to a Facebook group, and so they're gathering kind of a list of all of those entities, and our Snapper Grouper and Mackerel APs were really helpful, helping us

kind of suss out that list, and they're going to focus on the same four geographic areas and also hopefully incorporate kind of a randomized sampling as well.

For the commercial and for-hire sector, they will be reaching out to folks via -- They will be recruiting folks via kind of letters, postcards, and via the phone. The private recreational sector, they're going to try a lot more things to get in touch with that group, and then folks who are invited to do interviews could do it kind of one of three ways. They can do a phone interview, or they can do kind of a Zoom interview, or they can do an interview in-person, and so I know many people sitting around the table have permits, or know people who have permits, or are private recreational anglers, and so I just wanted to say, if Tracy or Jennifer or Bryan reaches out to you, please consider participating in this survey. We really want to learn from folks kind of what their attitudes and perceptions are of citizen science.

Just to let you know timeline-wise, Rick is putting together survey questions now, and his online survey will go out this fall, and then Jennifer and Bryan and Tracy will start doing interviews in two or three weeks, and so that's a little bit about that, and I know that was a quick run-through of everything, but I appreciate you guys listening here at the end of the day, and, if you have any questions on any of the stuff that I've talked about, feel free to ask now or grab me throughout the week.

MS. MARHEFKA: Julia, we're sending you off to a champion speed-talker event, but it's a lot of amazing information that you give us quickly, and it always puts me in a really good mood, thinking about all the other things we talk about that are kind of doom-and-gloom, and everything you talk about is the potential for the future. Any questions for Julia? Okay. I see no questions. Is there any other business to come before this committee? All right. Seeing none, the committee is adjourned.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on June 12, 2023.)

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Certified By: _____ Date: _____

Transcribed By
Amanda Thomas
August 16, 2023

Citizen Science Committee

Monday, June 12, 2023		
Attendees	Present	Remote
Kerry Marhefka, Chair	✓	
Tom Roller, Vice Chair	✓	
Robert Beal	✓	
Carolyn Belcher	✓	
Mel Bell	✓	
Gary Borland	✓	
LT Cameron Box	Not Attending	
Chester Brewer	✓	
Tim Griner	✓	
Judy Helmey	✓	
Jessica McCawley	✓	
Trish Murphey	✓	
Andy Strelcheck	✓	
Laurilee Thompson	✓	
Spud Woodward	✓	
Julia Byrd, Staff Contact	✓	
SAFMC STAFF		
Myra Brouwer	✓	
Julia Byrd	✓	
John Carmichael	✓	
Chip Collier	✓	
Judd Curtis	✓	
John Hadley	✓	
Allie Iberle	✓	
Kim Iverson	✓	
Kelly Klasnick	✓	
Michele Ritter	✓	
Mike Schmidtke	✓	
Nick Smillie	✓	
Christina Wiegand		
OTHER		
David Hugo		
Rick Devictor	✓	
Dr. Jack McGovern	✓	
Monica Smit-Brunello		
Dr. John Walter	✓	
Shep Grimes	✓	
Dewey Hemilright	✓	
Lt. Patrick O'Shaughnessy	✓	

Attendee Report: SAFMC 2023 June Council Meeting Citizen Science Committee

Report Generated:
06/20/2023 01:11 PM EDT

Webinar ID	Actual Start Date/Time	Duration	# Registered
147-909-795	06/12/2023 01:00 PM EDT	4 hours 36 minutes	118

Attendee Details

Attended	Interest Rating	Last Name	First Name
Yes	66	ALHALE	SYDNEY
Yes	34	Antonaras	Manny
Yes	82	Beal	Bob
Yes	83	Bell	00 Mel
Yes	92	Berry	James "chip"
Yes	43	Bianchi	Alan
Yes	49	Brennan	Ken
Yes	78	Brouwer	Myra
Yes	34	Clinton	Haley
Yes	94	Clinton	Haley
Yes	90	Cox	Jack
Yes	54	Cox	Derek
Yes	50	Crosson	Scott
Yes	50	DeFilippi Simpson	Julie
Yes	34	DeJohn	Frank
Yes	46	DeVictor	Rick
Yes	34	DuBeck	Guy
Yes	39	E Brown	Julie
Yes	96	Finch	Margaret
Yes	45	Flowers	Jared
Yes	45	Foss	Kristin
Yes	41	Franco	Dawn
Yes	58	Gore	Karla
Yes	35	Gray	Alisha
Yes	34	Guyas	Martha
Yes	92	Hallas	Sara
Yes	41	Helies	Frank
Yes	88	Helmey	Judy
Yes	69	Hemilright	Dewey
Yes	61	Heyman	William
Yes	92	Hoppe	Walter
Yes	64	Howington	Kathleen
Yes	98	Hudson	Joseph

Yes	93	Hull	James
Yes	49	Iverson	Kim
Yes	38	Karnauskas	Mandy
Yes	100	Klasnick	01Kelly
Yes	43	Knowlton	Kathy
Yes	65	Kramer	Rob
Yes	59	LaRoche	Kelcie
Yes	90	Laks	Ira
Yes	53	Lazarre	Dominique
Yes	92	M Borland	Gary
Yes	55	Malinowski	Rich
Yes	62	Marhefka	00Kerry
Yes	38	Masi	Michelle
Yes	53	McCoy	Sherylanne
Yes	72	McGovern	Jack
Yes	90	McWhorter	Will
Yes	90	Meehan	Sean
Yes	68	Mehta	Nikhil
Yes	45	Meyers	S
Yes	39	Moore	Jeff
Yes	47	Muffley	Brandon
Yes	89	Murphey	00Trish
Yes	44	Neer	Julie
Yes	97	Newman	Thomas
Yes	37	O'Shaughnessy	Pat
Yes	59	Oliver	Ashley
Yes	35	Peterson	Cassidy
Yes	41	Poston	Will
Yes	97	Prewitt	Brian
Yes	63	Privoznik	Sarah
Yes	67	Pugliese	Roger
Yes	36	Ramsay	Chloe
Yes	100	Ritter	Michele
Yes	91	Roller	00Tom
Yes	43	Sauls	Beverly
Yes	53	Seward	McLean
Yes	66	Smit-Brunello	00Monica
Yes	38	Soltanoff	Carrie
Yes	34	Sramek	Mark
Yes	48	Sweetman	CJ
Yes	43	Travis	Michael
Yes	90	Vecchio	Julie
Yes	40	Vincent	Matthew
Yes	62	Walia	Matthew
Yes	42	Walsh	Jason
Yes	82	White	Geoff
Yes	81	Withers	Meg

Yes	85	brewer	00chester
Yes	91	broussard	billy
Yes	37	collier	chip
Yes	36	gloeckner	david
Yes	37	sandorf	scott
Yes	42	stephen	jessica
Yes	99	thomas	01 suz
Yes	59	thompson	laurilee
Yes	47	walter	John
No	0	Bailey	Adam
No	0	Batsavage	Chris
No	0	Blair	Holly
No	0	Cimo	Laura
No	0	Dover	Miles
No	0	Groeteke	Mike
No	0	Heffernan	Katie
No	0	Keilin Gamboa-Salazar	Keilin
No	0	Kersting	Anne
No	0	Kolmos	Kevin
No	0	Mahoney	Andrew
No	0	Merten	Wessley
No	0	Noell	Brian
No	0	O'Malley	Rachel
No	0	Owens	Marina
No	0	Pehl	Nicole
No	0	RINCONES	RON
No	0	Rohrer	Frank
No	0	Salmon	Brandi
No	0	Sedberry	George
No	0	Sheridan	Sean
No	0	Smillie	Nick
No	0	Stemle	Adam
No	0	Stephenson	Sarah
No	0	Thomas	Lauren
No	0	Wamer	David
No	0	alvarez-stratton	ally
No	0	griner	tim
No	0	vara	mary