

FINAL
SUMMARY REPORT
CITIZEN SCIENCE COMMITTEE
SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
Wrightsville Beach, North Carolina
December 3, 2024

The Committee approved the December 2024 Citizen Science (CitSci) Committee meeting agenda and the transcript from the December 2023 meeting.

Citizen Science Initial Program Evaluation

Staff provided background information on the initial CitSci Program evaluation efforts. These efforts included working with researchers to collect baseline levels of knowledge about, confidence in, and trust in the citizen science process of collecting data to inform fisheries management. Rick Bonney presented findings from an online survey of scientists and managers, and Jennifer Sweeney Tookes presented findings from her research team's interviews with fisherman.

Staff shared efforts the CitSci Program is currently doing to help address the researchers' key findings and shared recommendations from the CitSci Operations Advisory Panel (AP) on future efforts that can be used to refine the CitSci Program based on these research findings. The Council thanked the researchers for their work and noted that their findings will be very useful both to the CitSci Program and to the Council more broadly. They recommended that the researchers present their findings to the Outreach and Communications AP and CitSci Projects AP.

The Council was supportive of the CitSci Program continuing the activities it is currently doing to help address the researchers' key findings. They supported the CitSci Operations AP's recommendations on future efforts to refine the CitSci Program. Council members noted the importance of continued investment for outreach initiatives in fishing communities (e.g., CitSci / BFP outreach, Stakeholder Engagement Meetings) as they are critical to helping address many of the researchers' key findings. The Council provided guidance to prioritize future activities that help address the following researcher findings: 'federal fisheries management is a black box', 'fishermen deeply distrust management', 'fishermen are skeptical of science used by management', and 'fishermen do not feel valued or heard'. They recognized the Citizen Science Program has limited resources, so suggested staff strategize and consult with advisors on how the recommended activities can be combined to help address them more efficiently.

Council members acknowledged that working to address the trust issues identified through this research cannot be done by the Citizen Science Program alone. These are larger issues that will require work on a much broader scale from the Council and the wider fisheries community.

Due to time constraints, the Council wasn't able to review the Program Planning document which provides an overview of the CitSci activities that have occurred under each of the Program's goals/objectives and provides recommendations for future activities. Council members were encouraged to review this information and provide any feedback to Council staff.

Citizen Science Program Update

Staff shared that the Council has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission which will help expand and enhance opportunities for the Citizen Science Program. Due to time constraints, staff were not able to present an update on CitSci project activities. The Council was encouraged to review the presentation and contact staff with any questions or feedback.

Other Business

The Council directed staff to change the name of the Citizen Science advisory groups from 'Committees' to 'Advisory Panels' to prevent confusion with Council committees.