



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 Operations Committees

Thursday, Oct 16, 2025 from 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. – meeting via webinar

Webinar Registration Link: <https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/6773039354923040860>

1. Welcome & Meeting Overview
2. Citizen Science Program Indicators (*Attachments 1a and 1b*)
3. Citizen Science Research Priorities Update (*Attachment 2a, 2b, 2c*)
4. Citizen Science Program & Project Update (*Attachment 3*)
5. Citizen Science Program Growth

Other Business

Adjourn

Operations Committee Members

Scott Baker, NC Sea Grant

Wally Bublely, SSC representative / SCDNR

Rob Cheshire, SEFSC representative

Michelle Duval, Fisheries Consultant

Will Heyman, LGL Consulting

Kathy Knowlton, GADNR

Nikhil Mehta, SERO representative

Bob Zales, Fisherman / SFA

Attachments

Attachment 1a: Citizen Science Program Indicators Updated Document

Attachment 1b: Citizen Science Program Indicators Presentation

Attachment 2a: Citizen Science Program Research Priorities (2023-2025)

Attachment 2b: Citizen Science Research Priorities Presentation

Attachment 2c: SAFMC Research & Monitoring Plan 2025-2029

Attachment 3: Citizen Science Program Update Presentation

Staff Lead: Julia Byrd

OVERVIEW

Citizen Science Operations Committee

1. Welcome & Meeting Overview

Overview of webinar agenda, materials, and goals for the meeting

Meeting Goals:

- *Committee member welcome and introductions.*
- *Discussion of Citizen Science Program indicators and recommendations for key indicators to monitor under each goal*
- *Review and recommend updates to citizen science research priorities*
- *Provide update on Citizen Science Program activities.*
- *Discuss Citizen Science Program growth and ways to increase capacity*

2. Citizen Science Program Indicators (*Attachments 1a and 1b*)

During 2020 the Citizen Science Operations Committee developed and/or refined the Citizen Science Program's Planning document which included a 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.

At the Citizen Science Operations AP fall 2024 meeting, members reviewed the Program's activities under each goal, objective, and strategy from 2019-2024. The AP supported a continued focus on the objectives and strategies Program staff have concentrated on over the past five years and recommended additional strategies to prioritize in the upcoming years.

At the spring 2025 meeting, the AP reviewed and provided input on the Program's draft indicators – metrics that help assess whether objectives are being met. Indicators can generally be divided into outputs (direct products of activities; typically, easier to measure) and outcomes (changes to individuals, groups, and/or communities because of participation or experience; can be more challenging to measure).

Using the input provided by the Citizen Science APs, Council staff are working to narrow down the list of 'output' indicators into 1–3 key indicators per Program goal that can be reliably tracked on a regular basis (e.g., annually or biennially). These indicators will help assess progress toward both goals and objectives, identify areas for improvement, while also offering a way to help measure the Program's impact.

Attachment 1a is an updated draft indicators document incorporating feedback from the AP's May 2025 meeting. Attachment 1b is an overview presentation highlighting staff's initial thoughts on key indicators to monitor under each Program goal.

Requested Action:

AP members are asked to provide input on the indicators they think would be important for staff to measure under each goal, keeping in mind indicators will need to be feasible for staff to measure given current resources.

The following questions may be helpful to consider when providing feedback.

- Are the indicators relevant to the Program goal they're tied to?
- Are there any indicators that are confusing or not clear?
- Are there important gaps in what the indicators are currently measuring? Could staff reasonably track the information needed to fill that gap?
- Are there indicators that aren't needed or are duplicative?
- 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?

3. Review and Update Citizen Science Research Priorities (*Attachments 1a, 1b, and 1c*)

The Citizen Science Operations Advisory Panel (AP) will review and provide feedback to help update the Citizen Science Research Priorities. Recommendations from both the Citizen Science Operations AP and the Citizen Science Projects AP will be incorporated into a revised version, which will be presented to the Council for their review and potential adoption at their December 2025 meeting.

The Citizen Science Research Priorities are updated every two years in conjunction with the Council updating their overall Research and Monitoring Plan. The Council finalized their 2025-2029 Research and Monitoring Plan at their September 2025 meeting.

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 Citizen Science Research Priorities are organized by topical area (*Attachment 1a*). Staff will guide the AP through the current priorities, providing examples of potential projects and sharing feedback received during the 2023 update (*Attachment 1b*) as well as feedback provided by the Citizen Science Projects AP during their October 6, 2025 webinar. Additionally, staff will share new ideas that were submitted through the Citizen Science Project Idea Portal and/or came up during other Council-related meetings. The updated SAFMC Research and Monitoring Plan for 2025-2029 (*Attachment 1c*) is provided as additional resource to help inform the discussion.

Requested Action:

AP members are asked to review the current Citizen Science Research Priorities and recommend updates as appropriate. Members are also asked to help identify additional research and data needs across Council fishery management plans that could potentially be addressed through citizen science.

The following questions may be helpful to consider when providing feedback on the research priorities. Since members from the Citizen Science APs include fishermen, scientists, and managers – there are some questions that target specific areas of expertise and others that are

more general. However, we are eager to hear your thoughts, so please share your perspectives on any of the questions below and/or provide additional feedback to the discussion.

- For each priority:
 - Is this type of data feasible for fishermen or other volunteers to collect? If not, what type of data may be reasonable to collect?
 - Is this type of data collection more appropriate for a smaller, more targeted project and group of participants or a larger, broader project and group of participants?
- Do you think projects that require learning new skills (e.g. otolith removal) are of interest to volunteers? Would volunteers be more interested in participating in projects using existing skill sets and minimal training?
- Are there any priorities that should be removed or added to this list?
- Are there any additions/deletions to the species under the applicable priorities?
- Which of the priorities may help address the most immediate needs for fishermen and/or science and management?
- For brainstorming new research and data needs:
 - Are there changes in your fishery that would be helpful for scientists or managers to know? Would you and others be willing to help collect data on these issues?
 - What information could be collected or observed through typical fishing activities that would be helpful for scientists or managers to know?
 - Are there any issues that citizen science research projects could help address?
 - If you have specific citizen science project ideas, do they fit under the current research priorities? If not, what priority could be added to capture your project idea?

4. Citizen Science Program Update (*Attachment 3*)

Staff will provide a brief update on the Citizen Science Program highlighting recent programmatic and project activities that have occurred since the Committee's last meeting.

5. Citizen Science Program Growth

The Citizen Science Program has made significant progress over the past five years. Staff are currently working to balance overall Program management and maintenance; individual project management and/or oversight; outreach and communications; development of new systems or initiatives (e.g., Sea Grant South Atlantic Release Rodeo); new project and partnership development; and grant writing. As we continue to grow, the volume of work is beginning to exceed the capacity of our current staff. To help address this, we have submitted grant proposals to support the addition of part-time staff and are actively exploring internship opportunities for students. We're also trying to think creatively about how to expand our capacity—potentially by engaging volunteers or members of our Citizen Science pool to assist with programmatic or project support tasks. We are interested in brainstorming with the AP on how we might creatively and sustainably grow our capacity to help us meet the demands of this next phase of the Program.

The following questions may be helpful to consider when brainstorming.

- What creative approaches could help us grow capacity?
- What are key areas and tasks that lend themselves to being outsourced or supported by others?
- In what ways could we more effectively engage volunteer or Citizen Science pool members in Programmatic or project support roles? If we rely on volunteers – what tasks would be realistic with minimal supervision?
- What kinds of partnerships might help us extend our reach and capacity?
- What tools or systems could improve efficiency?

Other Business

Adjourn