

Meeting Report
Outreach and Communications Advisory Panel
South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
October 4-5, 2023

The Outreach and Communications Advisory Panel (AP) met October 4-5, 2023 in Charleston, SC to discuss outreach and communications topics relevant to Council programs, projects, and products.

The AP approved the agenda for the October 2023 meeting. Opportunities for public comment were provided and no verbal or written public comments received.

Following introductions and welcome by Spud Woodward, Chair of the Council's Outreach and Communication Committee, and Scott Baker, AP Chair, the OC AP received presentations and provided recommendations on the following topics:

1. AP Members Share

Three AP members were asked to share their recent experiences and information relative to outreach efforts related to federal fisheries in the region.

- a. *Florida's Coral Reef Resilience Program (Shelly Krueger – FL Sea Grant)* - Shelly shared the program's communications strategy in dealing with coral bleaching earlier this summer as the topic was covered by national and international news media.
- b. *USCG Fisheries Training Center – Charleston (LT Andrew Loeffler)* – An overview of the training program and facilities use for training USCG LMR (Living Marine Resources) boarding officers was provided to the AP. LT Loeffler led discussion of outreach and communication needs to raise awareness of the training centers and the challenges faced by boarding officers in fisheries enforcement. Fisheries training is completed within a single week, numbers of boarding officers are limited, and fisheries is only one of many missions – including illegal immigration and drug enforcement.
- c. *Descending Device Outreach Coordination Team Update – (Nichole Nichols - FWC)*

Created in 2022 by FWC, the DD Coordination Team includes representatives from the regional councils, state agencies, and NGOs to coordinate messaging relative to the use of descending devices and streamline outreach and education efforts. Nicole provided an overview of efforts at ICAST 2023 and the successful “Donuts and Descending Devices” promotional event. She noted new bi-monthly meetings of core team members to discuss strategies for continued coordination in 2024.

AP Feedback

- The Coral Reef Resilience Program provides a good example of the importance of networking with partners, consistent internal messaging, and having good relationships with key spokespersons.

- AP members found the USCG Fisheries Training Center brief interesting, and some offered to coordinate with LT Loeffler in promoting the program, explore the use of grant funding for fisheries ID for law enforcement, and to coordinate with fishing tournaments and other events where fisheries enforcement efforts may be targeted.
- Support for the Descending Device Outreach Coordination Team continues.
- Partnerships with agency messaging may be a bonus for social media influencers and a cost-effective way to increase program awareness (e.g., Return ‘Em Right)
- Suggested including hashtags with news releases and announcements (similar to the FWC approach).

2. Best Fishing Practices

Staff provided the AP an update on the expansion of the Council’s Best Fishing Practices (BFP) campaign, including the addition of the BFP Outreach Specialist (Ashley Oliver) and the new Sea Grant Reef Fish Extension/Communications Fellow (David Hugo). David Hugo gave an overview of extension activities since assuming his new role in June 2023 that include tackle shop outreach efforts and observations, media charter trips, fishing club events, and recent participation in fishery independent sampling (MARMAP).

Ashley Oliver provided an update on the new BFP Master Volunteer Program, the new “What It Means to Me” video project, and other BFP-targeted outreach activities.

The AP was asked to provide recommendations for the Best Fishing Practices Campaign and provided specific discussion points for Sea Grant Extension efforts, the “What it Means to Me” project, and the BFP MVP project and upcoming workshops. The AP provided the following:

AP Feedback:

- Possible industry events for the Reef Fish Extension Program:
 - SC Boat Show in January 2024 in Charleston
 - Palm Beach Boat Show – noting seminar series
 - Miami Boat Show
 - AP members noted limited interest in fisheries by attendees at boat shows.
 - FL Outdoor Expo – Palm Beach area in May
 - Southeastern Wildlife Expo – February in Charleston, SC
- Expansion of Reef Fish Extension to younger demographics
 - May be beneficial but challenging. Consider program goals and what partners may be available.
 - Identify what is currently available. Educator alliances.
 - Consider capacity for such an expansion – noted FWC school fishing program and staff needs. Lots of schools.

- Consider teacher requirements and work with teachers to meet certain curriculum requirements.
- An invite was extended to participate in the annual West Palm Beach Fishing Club Kids Event in late June/early July.
- Reach kids via social media and video. Work with influencers with younger audiences.
- “What it Means to Me” Video Project
 - General support from AP
 - Project goal is lofty and needs to have more specific objectives for evaluation.
 - Keep videos shorter and use YouTube Reels
 - Ask a range of questions and get multiple videos from a single interview
 - GADNR has used similar approach – use for website and social media
 - NC Wildlife has a similar project focusing on tackle shops
 - Use a clip-on mic for interviews. Tyler Jones with GADNR offered to help with additional technical advice.
 - Share b-roll
 - Include interviews with persons from diverse backgrounds, including commercial fishermen and non-AP members.
 - Use hashtags to encourage others to participate.
 - Media interest in b-roll that may be provided from the project – ensure species identification (e.g., American lobster versus spiny lobster)
 - Encourage sharing of personal stories – similar to NPR’s StoryCorps
 - FishBrain may be an optional platform for sharing video
- BFP Master Volunteer Program (MVP)
 - Targeted audience?
 - Create a logo and provide a “carrot” for participants at workshops – SWAG is good.
 - Florida Sea Grant is doing similar series of workshops – Shelly Krueger will share information with Council staff.

3. Citizen Science Program and Projects Update

Council staff provided an update on the Council’s Citizen Science Program and projects. The AP was asked to provide recommendations for FISHstory specific to scanning events and obtaining historic fishing photos, and the SAFMC Release Participant Recognition Program (PRP). The AP provided the following:

AP Feedback:

FISHstory Photo Gathering

- Group recommended specific museums (e.g., Beaufort Maritime Museum) and libraries (e.g., Key West Library, UNC Wilson Library) to contact about historic fishing photos

- Recommended promoting FISHstory photo scanning at/through various locations (e.g. science centers, aquariums, ‘friends of’ organizations, scrap booking organizations) by sharing banners/flyers with QR code with additional information
- In addition to holding ‘one off’ scanning events, it may be helpful to partner with organizations to serve as ‘scanning locations’ where members of the public could bring in photos over a longer time period; several AP members noted their agency would be willing to act as a ‘scanning locale’ (e.g., GADNR, SCDNR, FL Sea Grant)
- Explore fishing clubs and King Mackerel tournaments as other avenues to gather photos
- To gather photos from the time period needed (1940s-1980s), senior centers or retirement communities could be relevant audiences
- Some AP members provided historic fishing photos (FL FWC) or noted they will be able to provide photos (NCDMF, West Palm Beach Fishing Club)

SAFMC Release

- AP members suggested a new PRP milestone for 2024 could include logging of ‘rare occurrence species’
- Group noted it may be helpful to provide more specifics on the type of photos for the ‘best photo’ milestone (e.g., released using a descending device) Suggested putting the selected ‘best photo’ on the webpage or as a banner on the SAFMC Release newsletter
- As submissions grow over time, it could be helpful to have a dashboard on the project webpage with metrics, such as the percent of participants who have reached each milestone
- Could be helpful to think about other ways photos submitted through the app could be used to help with recruitment and retention
- Overall, AP suggested that staff continue to mention when and how the data submitted are being used

Additional Feedback

- AP member noted in the future Grays Reef National Marine Sanctuary may be interested in SMILE project

4. **Habitat Blueprint**

Council staff provided an update on development of the Council’s Habitat Program Evaluation and Blueprint, including goals to provide information to support Council communication on habitat issues. The AP reviewed a list of earlier recommendations provided in 2021 and had little to add. One AP member suggested including information on water quality and suggested using videos as an outreach tool. The AP suggested starting communication with a focus on public concerns related to habitat, what the Council can and cannot do legally, and sharing ways the public can make an active impact.

5. Mackerel Port Meetings

The AP received an overview of port meetings scheduled for 2024 and provided the following recommendations:

AP Feedback:

- Recommendation to rope port meetings in with other events, similar to what has been done with best fishing practices seminars.
- Encourage participation by sending personal invitations and noting that the Council is seeking “knowledgeable attendees” to provide needed information.
 - FWC has used a similar approach for in-person meetings using a focus-group method with 7-10 attendees.
 - Meetings don’t have to be large to be impactful.
- Target key fishermen in local communities and consider unconventional meeting locations such as community centers, state parks, and tackle shops or fish houses.
 - Work with mackerel fishing tournaments to get information on port meetings out to stakeholders.
- Messaging should note that port meetings are responding to a request from fishery stakeholders and should acknowledge that information is needed because the king and Spanish mackerel fisheries are changing.
- Facilitation:
 - Consider room seating and ensure it is set up in a way that encourages discussion amongst attendees.
 - BlueWorld/Green World approach has worked well in other stakeholder meetings as a way to set guidelines and conceptualize boundaries
 - Allow attendees to use sticky notes to place information on an interactive timeline, asking questions such as “when did you get into the fishery?” or “please identify good years and bad years in the fishery.”
 - Provide food.

6. Education Component for Snapper Grouper Amendment 46 (Private Recreational Permitting)

Staff provided an overview of the amendment with a focus on the educational components. AP members were asked to provide recommendations on the following topics:

AP Feedback:

- Program Content and Structure
 - Use short video to explain why the permit is being proposed, including fishermen want better data – “ya’ll asked for it.”
 - Too many anglers need to be reached – in-person outreach is limited and takes notable resources.
 - Online availability is essential.
 - Consider a 15-20-minute online education course with an interactive quiz component.
 - If a vessel permit, emphasize the owner is responsible for messaging to his/her “crew”.

- Have a condensed version of the online course for recertification (FWC has a similar beach shark fishing course).
- Emphasized the need to pre-test and pilot study any course with anglers.
- Keep education requirement concise.
- Design for phone and mobile device use.
- Consider making education materials available in Spanish.
- Existing Programs
 - FL Sea Grant
 - FWC Skyway Course (example)
 - Return ‘Em Right – interactive and includes free gear.
 - Good example for content, structure, and evaluation.
 - Earlier online course via FishSmart
 - GADNR Shellfish Harvesters (available online with tech support)
- Who Leads the Effort?
 - This is a large effort – Council cannot do this alone.
 - Involve NMFS, Council, and outside contractor for content and testing.
 - NMFS should lead effort – Council doesn’t collect data.
 - Use Return ‘Em Right as a model.
- Delay education component with permit requirement?
 - General support for immediate implementation – “rip the band aid off”
 - Start with a short course – can always expand.
 - Delaying may dilute the messaging that the education component is important.
 - Implement on a state-by-state basis to test.
- Other Comments/Recommendations
 - Clarify this is a NOAA/Federal permit.
 - If a vessel permit, could others take the course?
 - It would be helpful to allow as many anglers as possible to take the education course. Data focused improvements on vessel and permit related measures may be separated from the education requirement.
 - Need stakeholder meetings or forums to address concerns (staff noted the ad-hoc AP being formed with recreational anglers).
 - Share recreational permit information on social media and request feedback.

7. Digital Communications Update

Staff provided an update and analytics on the Council’s website and social media use and asked for recommendations. AP members were also asked to provide feedback on the Council’s SA Bite newsletter and topics for upcoming feature articles.

AP Feedback:

- Analytics are helpful and provide trends in website and social media use.
 - Great to have a record of website analytics and social media over time. The longer that we have these summaries, the more insightful they will become in the future.

- Discussed targeted demographic groups: Facebook is the most popular for our target audience of older males
- Videos in the form of reels and posts would drive a lot more engagement
- Recruiting AP members is a challenge and could be mitigated by increased advertisements
 - Might be able to use “What It Means to Me” videos to recruit more AP members
- Feature Article suggestions:
 - Ropeless gear
 - Red Snapper management overview
 - Stock assessments
 - Protected species
 - Offshore wind energy
 - Follow up from coral bleaching event
 - Use NC Sea Grant “Hook, Line & Science” as an example.

AP Members in Attendance (via webinar*)

Scott Baker, Jr., Chair

Shelly Krueger, Vice Chair

Steve Dougherty*

Bryan Fluech

Tyler Jones

Katie Latanich

LT Andrew Loeffler

Diana Martino

Sean Meehan*

Nicole Nichols

George Patane

Matt Perkinson

Mark Phelps

Cynthia Sandoval*

Erin Weeks