

SAFMC Staff Report December 2024

Best Fishing Practices

The North Carolina series of the Best Fishing Practices Master Volunteer Program was hosted in Wilmington, Morehead City, and Cary. Thank you to North Carolina Council members, advisory panel members, and North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries staff for assistance in planning, outreach, and discussions.

Best Fishing Practices and Citizen Science staff have continued sharing information through presentations at fishing clubs and Pitman Creek mailings. Staff have also been planning outreach events for 2025. This includes the Saltwater Sportsman Seminar Series featuring George Poveromo, Haddrell's Tackle Fishing Expo, ICAST, and additional seminars.

Staff are working on scheduling charter trips with fishing and media professionals this coming spring through the Sea Grant Reef Fish Fellowship in order to illustrate best fishing practices in action. Additionally, the Sea Grant Fellow is working on an audience analysis and publication of several articles in fishing media outlets.

Website and Digital Communications Updates

- Commenced work as a project lead on the 50th Anniversary of MSA Documentary.
 - Completed Request for Proposals and sent out for distribution.
- Commenced work on Regulations FAQ webpage that provides a one-stop-shop for users looking for broad regulation information.
- Presented at the October Outreach and Communications Meeting
- Website development:
- “What It Means To Me” project development and editing.
 - Completed Mark Phelps Project and working on Chris Kimrey Project.
- Continued general website maintenance, posting meetings, pages, and news.
- Continued public comment upkeep.
- Continued social media management.
- Continued FishRules updates and management including regulations review and overhaul.

Mackerel Port Meetings

At the urging of the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel, the Council is hosting a series of port meetings along the Atlantic coast throughout 2024 aimed at taking a focused look at the Atlantic king and Spanish mackerel fisheries. Port meetings are more than a public comment opportunity. Attendees will have the chance to actively discuss their perspectives with other fishery participants and local Council members. In-person port meetings have been held in North Carolina (April), New England (May), New York (June), Georgia (July), Florida (September), South Carolina (October), and Virginia, Maryland, and New Jersey (November). Staff have started planning for a webinar opportunity to gather input from those unable to attend the in-

person meetings this winter. A draft report from the port meetings initiative will be presented to the Council in March 2025.

Marine Resources Education Program (MREP) Southeast

The MREP Southeast Workshop scheduled for October 21-25, 2024 in St. Petersburg, FL was canceled due to Hurricanes Helene and Milton. The workshop has now been rescheduled for February 10-14, 2025, and will be held in St. Petersburg in collaboration with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute, NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office and the Southeast Fisheries Science Center. Many of the 30 participants scheduled to attend the October workshop plan to attend the rescheduled workshop in February. Staff continue to serve on the MREP Southeast Plan Team and the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee will meet December 11-12, 2024 and another MREP Southeast Workshop will likely be scheduled for fall of 2025.

Seminar Series

The SAFMC Series started in 2020 with webinars being scheduled on a regular basis after April 2021. In 2024, eight webinars were held discussing a variety of topics covering social science, communication, climate change, and reproductive biology. The number of attendees ranged between 28 to 67 attendees with an average of 48 attendees. Most of the attendees continue to be state agency, federal agency, and council staffs. In addition to the meetings, each webinar is posted online on the [seminar series webpage](#). Views of the posted webinars ranged from 17 to over 600.

Seminar series webinars are being planned in 2025 with the first one discussing stock structure on January 14, 2025. Contact staff with any recommendations for a seminar series topic.

Inflation Reduction Act Projects

The SAFMC has submitted four projects for funding through the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), which included funds dedicated to the regional fishery management councils. The IRA and Climate Response Coordinator developed a request for proposals to revise essential fish habitat and describe fishery distributions for species managed by the SAFMC focused on potential impacts of climate change. The closing date for projects ended November 15, 2024. Another request for proposals will be developed for evaluating data-limited species fisheries focused on either rock shrimp or wreckfish. The request for proposal should be released before the end of 2024. Two other projects have been submitted to the NOAA Fisheries and we are waiting to hear if the projects will be funded.