

SAFMC Staff Report March 2023

2023 Planning Meeting

Staff gathered in person at the Council office on December 15, 2022, to discuss activities for the coming year. Staff intend to continue planning meetings after the December Council meeting each year.

Citizen Science

- SAFMC Release
 - The SAFMC Release 2022 Data Summary was shared with participants and is available online at the following link:
<https://safmc.net/documents/2023/02/safmc-release-2022-data-summary-final.pdf/>.
 - Data collection, recruitment, and retention efforts continued for the SAFMC Release project. Outreach activities have included monthly newsletters, social media posts, and participation in the Haddrell's Fishing Expo in Charleston, SC in January 2023. The Council had a booth which focused on best fishing practices and SAFMC Release. In addition to helping develop and man the booth, citizen science and best fishing practices staff partnered with local captains on two bottom fishing seminars during the event.
 - Staff are developing a participant recognition program with plans to launch it this year.
- SciFish
 - Work continues on the SciFish project builder and customizable app platform, as well as the SciFish policies and procedures which will help guide development of new ACCSP partner projects within the application.
- FISHstory
 - Staff have begun to identify and gather additional photos for the FISHstory project. Thus far, captains from Atlantic Beach, NC, the Daytona Beach area in FL, and the FL Keys have shared photos from their personal archives for potential use in the project. Additionally, staff visited the Outer Banks History Center in Manteo, NC which has archives of historic fishing photos and negatives from the Hatteras and Oregon Inlet areas for potential project use.
- SMILE
 - SMILE project partners developed and distributed a joint press release sharing information on the project launch.
 - The Council developed a SMILE web page available at the following link:
<https://safmc.net/citizen-science/smile-project/>.

- Staff held a meeting with project partners in January 2023 and held an initial meeting with the SMILE Stakeholder Panel, who will provide guidance during project development, in December 2022.
- Staff continued to work with Rick Bonney on the Citizen Science Program initial evaluation. A request for proposals went out in December 2022 to hire another contractor to work with Rick Bonney on Phase 2 and 3 of the evaluation. Proposals have been reviewed and a new contractor will be selected in the upcoming weeks. Rick will lead efforts to collect information from a broader group of managers and scientists. The new contractor will lead efforts to gather information from a broader group of fishermen.
- Staff helped coordinate the series of Dolphin MSE Stakeholder meetings held in SC, NC, and VA in January 2023.

Website and Digital Communications Updates

- Bulk upload tool completed.
 - Will begin archiving meeting briefing books and other materials in the coming months.
- New Public Comment Tool officially up and running.
 - Old Wufoo comments being archived and transferred to new system.
 - Easier for Council members to access and read comments.
 - Saves time for technical staff when sorting through and analyzing comments.
 - Is more aesthetically pleasing, organized, and user friendly for public accessibility.
 - Comment forms are displayed as Google Forms and responses will be displayed on a custom and web accessible Google Sheet.
 - Communications staff are using a web-based application to create and manage forms and responses.
- Completed [Management Strategy Evaluation](#) page.
- Developed more extensive amendment page descriptions for all amendments.
- Continued general website maintenance.
- Continued FishRules updates and management.
- Increased emphasis on graphic design work to reinforce consistent branding among Council materials.

CCC Communications Workgroup

Council staff participated in the Council Coordinating Committee Communications Workgroup meeting held February 15-17, 2023 in Clearwater Beach, FL. The CCC Communications Workgroup includes the public affairs and communications staff from each of the regional councils and meets every 3-4 years in person. Agenda topics include:

- Communications tools, technologies, and approaches
- Engaging the public on complex management actions
- Advisory panel issues including recruitment, orientation, and engagement
- Communicating Council success and challenges

A report from the CCC Communications Workgroup meeting will be shared with Council members and staff once it becomes available

Marine Resource Education Program (MREP) Update

The [MREP Southeast](#) Management Workshop was held February 21-21, 2023 in Tampa, Florida. Council members Judy Helmeley and Laurilee Thompson completed the workshop series along MREP participants from the South Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean. Staff from the South Atlantic Council, Gulf Council, and NOAA Fisheries, along with program facilitators, were also involved. An additional day was added to the February workshop to cover the materials missed in November due to hurricane forecasts. Council staff also participated in the MREP Steering Committee meeting in December 2022 to address scheduling, program evaluation, curriculum, and other program-related topics.

ICAST 2023

Council staff continues planning and preparation for participation in [ICAST 2023](#) scheduled for July 12-14, 2023 in Orlando, FL. The event is billed as the world's largest sportfishing trade show. The Council will have a 10 X 20' exhibit as part of the Conservation Corner and working collaboratively with other state agencies and NGOs to promote best fishing practices and the Council's Citizen Science Program.

Other Items

NOAA Fisheries has released the [draft National Seafood Strategy](#) and encourages all interested members of the public to review and submit comments. This strategy underscores NOAA's strong commitment to seafood sector resilience. It aligns with the Biden-Harris Administration's goals for economic recovery, environmental sustainability, and climate resilience. Further, the White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health points to the need for increased seafood consumption in the United States, which this strategy aims to address. The strategy also responds to the unprecedented challenges facing the U.S. seafood industry, including climate change, the coronavirus pandemic, new technologies and other ocean uses, and significant labor shortages and aging infrastructure.

Written comments may be [submitted online](#) until March 16.