

Meeting Report
Outreach and Communications Advisory Panel
South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
October 8, 2020

The Outreach and Communications Advisory Panel (AP) met October 8, 2020 via webinar to discuss outreach and communication topics relevant to Council programs, projects, and products. The following AP Members attended the meeting:

Scott Baker, Chair	Katie Latanich
Shelly Krueger, Vice Chair	Jennifer Koches
Diana Martino	Emily Muehlstein
Michelle Riley	Doug Kelly
Tyler Jones	Patricia Smith
Sean Meehan	Lt. James Bruce
Mark Phelps	Cinthia Sandoval
Melissa Crouch	Erin Weeks

The AP received presentations, provided recommendations, and offered updates on current outreach programs, to include:

- 1) Best Fishing Practices Campaign
- 2) Citizen Science Program
- 3) MyFishCount
- 4) Commercial Fish Rules App
- 5) For-Hire Electronic Reporting Outreach
- 6) Updates from Advisory Panel Members

1) Best Fishing Practices Campaign

Council staff provided an update on the Council's Best Fishing Practices campaign following the July implementation of Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 29, which established requirements for descending devices and hooks when fishing for snapper and grouper species in federal waters of the South Atlantic. The presentation addressed the following examples of products, progress, and future plans relevant to the Council's dedicated Best Fishing Practices campaign:

- [Best Fishing Practices Webpage](#)
- Best Fishing Practices Wallet Cards
 - Design
 - Distribution
 - Tackle Shops/Marinas
 - State Agencies
 - NOAA Fisheries Office of Law Enforcement
 - United States Coast Guard

- Partnerships with Tackle and Fishing Product Manufacturers and Companies
- Best Fishing Practices Swag
- How-to Videos
- Social Media Content
- News about Best Fishing Practices
- Live Podcasts and Radio Shows
- In-Person Outreach Events

AP Feedback: The AP was asked if they had seen any of these products and outreach efforts and to provide feedback on what worked well and what could be improved. AP Members provided the following suggestions and comments on the Council’s Best Fishing Practices campaign:

- Some AP Members confirmed that they saw information about best fishing practices circulating on social media platforms and in tackle shops.
- AP Members noted that many tackle shops did not have descending devices or non-stainless steel, non-offset circle hooks in stock after the new regulations were implemented in July and during the 2020 recreational Red Snapper season. Since then, it appears that tackle shops have been able to stock the descending devices and hooks.
- Some AP Members commented on the collaboration of the Best Fishing Practices effort by federal and state agencies, noting positive feedback and support from stakeholders.
- AP Members encouraged Council staff to host or attend seminars and in-person meetings to explain the recent requirements to fishermen (with the understanding of current restrictions in place due to COVID-19).

2) Citizen Science Program

Council staff provided a presentation with updates on the Citizen Science Program and its current and developing projects. Since April, the Council’s Citizen Science Program staff have held multiple Advisory Panel Meetings, organized and presented during symposiums, and continued work on program evaluation. The AP received brief updates on citizen science projects still under development, such as Rare Species Observations, Diver Observations, Dolphin Wahoo Participatory Workshops, and a newly established partnership with SciStarter.

Following those updates, the AP was briefed on the following ongoing Citizen Science Projects:

- Promoting Gray’s Reef through Engaging Georgia Anglers
- FISHstory
- SAFMC Scamp Release

Promoting Gray’s Reef

The project, led by The Nature Conservancy, in collaboration with the Gray’s Reef National Marine Sanctuary, the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, Georgia Sea

Grant, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, FishSmart, and the Council, was delayed due to COVID-19. Council staff explained that since in-person workshops are not possible at this time, the project team is currently developing new strategies for engaging Georgia's recreational anglers. The project aims to increase awareness of Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary, encourage the use of best fishing practices when releasing deep-water species, and promote collaboration through citizen science to help fill data gaps.

FISHstory

Council staff provided an update on the [FISHstory](#) Project following its launch in May. FISHstory, a pilot project to document historic for-hire catch and length estimates using historic photos, has garnered immense interest from the public, partners, and educators. Via Zooniverse, an online crowdsourcing platform, the project has over 1300 volunteers who have made over 23,000 classifications in photographs. Council staff have been thrilled by the incredible engagement from volunteers, particularly since over 1600 historic photographs have already been retired from the project due to volunteer work. The AP asked questions about the volunteers and staff explained that the Citizen Science Program plans to conduct a survey through the College of Charleston to identify volunteers and to learn more about why they are participating in the project. Following updates on FISHstory statistics, the AP was briefed on ongoing data analyses, including for-hire catch composition and length analysis. Council staff have dedicated considerable time and effort to promote the project through outreach and communication. As a result, FISHstory has been featured in numerous articles and blogs.

SAFMC Scamp Release

The pilot project collects information on released Scamp Grouper through a mobile application called SAFMC Release. Since the AP's April Meeting, Council staff have continued to encourage the use of the app, reaching out to commercial, for-hire, and recreational fishermen to participate in the project. The data collected through the app were provided for review during the Data Workshop for SEDAR 68, the stock assessment for Gulf and South Atlantic Scamp Grouper.

SAFMC Release Customization & Expansion

The Council, the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP), and the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries are also working together to develop a customizable version of the SAFMC Release App for use in citizen science fisheries projects. In addition, the AP was informed that College of Charleston graduate student Nick Smillie will evaluate user perceptions of the mobile app to identify ways to improve user recruitment and retention. The project team will hold scoping meetings early next year to identify data needs when developing the customizable app.

The AP also received updates on the expansion of the SAFMC Release App to include all shallow water grouper rather than just Scamp Grouper. Following that expansion, Council staff will turn to AP Members to help promote the app and recruit users. Council staff will rely on news releases, one-on-one contact via phone, email, and in-person

events, newsletters, magazines, fishing clubs, social media, and partners in addition to AP Members when sharing information about the app's expansion.

AP Feedback:

AP Members were asked to identify other resources to spread awareness of the SAFMC Release App and its eventual expansion. AP Members provided the following comments.

- Some AP Members volunteered to help spread the word with peers and through agency/organization channels.
- Some AP Members noted that since the app currently only allows users to provide data on Scamp Grouper, it is easy to forget it about using it. The expansion will help to address this issue, likely improving retention of users. AP Members were reminded that it is possible to submit a "No Release Report" for days when Scamp Grouper are either kept or not caught at all.
- AP Members encouraged staff to use fish pictures when promoting the app, highlighting images that were submitted by app users.
- AP Members commented on the differences between the MyFishCount app and SAFMC Release App, and noted the importance of continued efforts to show how these apps benefit management.
- AP Members also suggested that staff reach out to tackle manufacturers and the American Sportfishing Association (ASA) to encourage the use of the SAFMC Release app among fishermen.

Citizen Science Social Media Strategy

Following those discussions, the AP received a presentation on recent updates to the Citizen Science Program's social media strategy to establish recognizable branding and increase engagement. The AP reviewed the three templates used for citizen science posts on the Council's social media platforms every Friday. Staff then provided examples of different posts that have been published on the Council's Facebook page and noted analytics for reach and engagement. Most metrics indicate an increase in engagement following the introduction of the branded posts, especially for content related to fish identification.

AP Feedback

The AP was asked to provide guidance and feedback on the Citizen Science Program's newly established social media strategy, weighing-in on other tools and metrics used to increase and monitor engagement on social media platforms. The following recommendations were made:

- AP Members suggested that staff include a share button in every email blast distributed about the Council's citizen science efforts, allowing for others to more readily share information across their own channels.
- AP Members suggested that staff consider looking into ways to get around EdgeRank, Facebook's newsfeed algorithm.
- AP Members encouraged the use of videos posted directly to the Facebook page rather than through YouTube.

- Given the Council’s use of Instagram, AP Members encouraged the use of Stories, especially to highlight fish identification quizzes and polls.
- Some AP Members suggested that staff consider establishing a LinkedIn account for the Council.
- AP Members strongly encouraged staff to consider Hootsuite, a tool for scheduling and managing social media content across multiple platforms.
- AP Members noted that they have also seen increased engagement with social media posts that highlight fish identification.

3) MyFishCount

Council staff provided an update on MyFishCount, the pilot project evaluating the use of a mobile application as a potential reporting platform for private recreational anglers. Updates included additional improvements based on user feedback, outreach and communication strategies used to recruit new users and retain current users, use of social media, video development, partnerships with industry, and monthly incentives. The AP also received an update on the MyFishCount 2020 User Survey and transition of the MyFishCount pilot project from the Council to the Angler Action Foundation later this year. AP Members will help spread the word about the transition and to encourage anglers to continue to use and promote MyFishCount following its transition to the Angler Action Foundation.

AP Feedback

- AP Members reiterated that anglers appreciate seeing their fish pictures highlighted through print, digital, and social media, and encouraged staff to continue to promote the app using those images.

4) Commercial Fish Rules App

Staff provided a brief update on the Council’s partnership with the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council and the Fish Rules App to develop a commercial version of the popular mobile application. Commercial Fish Rules is scheduled to be ready for beta testing by December 31, 2020 and then available for download from the Apple and Google Play stores by March 2021.

AP Feedback

- One AP Member commented that the Commercial Fish Rules App should be very useful to fishermen in the Florida Keys given the complicated jurisdictional boundaries in the area.

5) For-Hire Electronic Reporting Outreach

Carly Somerset, staff with the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, provided a brief overview of past outreach efforts to notify for-hire permit holders of pending

reporting requirements for the South Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico. Afterward, the AP was updated on the Southeast For-Hire Electronic Reporting Program's ongoing efforts to develop outreach and communication resources relevant to those reporting requirements, which go into effect early next year. With the help of staff from both Councils, the Program has developed informational toolkits that will be distributed to all Gulf and South Atlantic charter/headboat permit holders, as well as instructional videos that will be available from NOAA Fisheries' website.

AP Feedback

The AP was asked to provide feedback on the best ways to reach the target audience.

- AP Members from state agencies noted that they would like to be involved to help share this information with stakeholders when possible.

6) AP Member Updates

AP Members were asked to provide outreach and communication updates ahead of the meeting so information could be included in the Briefing Book. Representatives from North Carolina Sea Grant, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, and the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries each shared information on ongoing outreach and communication efforts ahead of the meeting and provided a brief review of that work during the webinar. Others provided additional updates afterward.

AP Updates in Briefing Book

- Scott Baker, [North Carolina Sea Grant](#)
- Melissa Crouch, [Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission](#)
- Erin Weeks, [South Carolina Department of Natural Resources](#)
- Patricia Smith, [North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries](#)

Additional Updates from AP Members

- Erin Weeks with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources mentioned an interest in learning more about creating short video content. Tools and resources will be shared among the group as available.
- Tyler Jones with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources discussed CoastFest, a large event that is typically held in-person in Brunswick, Georgia. Due to COVID-19, the event was held virtually this year. Nine live-stream events were hosted over three days to showcase Georgia's marine resources. Live sessions were successfully held via Facebook and YouTube.
- Shelly Krueger with Florida Sea Grant updated the AP on the start of the Greater Amberjack Visioning Project, a project to evaluate the Greater Amberjack fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico and the South Atlantic.

- Michelle Riley of the Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary noted that the Sanctuary has been overhauling its website for the first time in 20 years. The Sanctuary will also be collaborating with the Coastal Heritage Society to develop an exhibit space in downtown Savannah.

7) Election of Chair

The AP again elected Scott Baker as the Chair of the Outreach and Communications Advisory Panel.

8) Other Business

Council staff and Scott Baker of North Carolina Sea Grant provided a brief update on the Great Red Snapper Count in the South Atlantic, which will be led by South Carolina Sea Grant in conjunction with National Sea Grant and the Southeast Fisheries Science Center. It was noted that AP Members and Council staff will have to work together to develop consistent messaging on this future effort, especially given the ongoing Red Snapper stock assessment and stakeholder frustrations.

In addition, Council staff notified the AP that the Council would be redesigning its website through 2021 and will need the AP's guidance and input in the future.