

Meeting Report
Information and Education Advisory Panel
South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
Charleston, South Carolina
April 14 - 15, 2020

The Information and Education Advisory Panel (AP) met April 14th and 15th, 2020 via webinar to discuss outreach and communication topics relevant to Council programs, projects, and products. The AP received presentations, provided recommendations, and offered updates on current outreach programs, to include:

- 1) Best Fishing Practices Campaign
- 2) MyFishCount
- 3) Citizen Science
- 4) AP Member/Agency Outreach Projects & Campaigns

1) Best Fishing Practices Campaign

Council staff asked the AP to discuss Best Fishing Practices since Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 29, which will require that a descending device be readily available for use aboard a vessel fishing for snapper grouper species in federal waters of the South Atlantic as well as other best practices related requirements, was approved late in 2019. Based on input from previous AP Meetings, the Council is working on developing a campaign to increase awareness of best fishing practices while also relying on resources already developed by partner agencies.

Best Practices Campaigns & Resources

FishSmart: To kick-off the discussion, the AP received a presentation from [FishSmart](#), a long standing campaign promoting best fishing practices. Andy Loftus presented information about the history of FishSmart, highlighting it's foundation in best available science when encouraging best fishing practices among anglers. Loftus also presented information on an ongoing project in the South Atlantic, where anglers are provided outreach materials about best fishing practices, like the use of descending devices to release fish showing signs of barotrauma. Participants are given a descending device for their use. Results of the first survey of project participants aligned well with results from previous projects in Florida and the Gulf of Mexico. Respondents indicated that they had little or no knowledge of descending devices before participating in the project. A second survey will be issued to project participants to gauge whether they are still using their descending device when needed.

Tuna Champions: Following the presentation from FishSmart, AP Members watched a video of Dr. Sean Tracey giving a talk about [Tuna Champions](#), a program which encourages best fishing practices in the bluefin tuna fishery in Australia. Anglers and researches had noted that there was a lot of waste in the recreational tuna fishery, both

when catch and release fishing and when harvesting fish. The program, which has been highly popular in the angling community in Australia, has benefitted from partnerships with influential members of the fishing community. Tuna Champions using local, national, and international identities to help promote best practices for releasing bluefin tuna, as well as information on how to best preserve and prep the meat after harvest. AP Members noted the importance of partnerships with powerful and influential anglers, TV shows, and companies, particularly those who have a large follower base on social media. Realizing the scale of this project, the AP asked Dr. Tracey about the overall cost of Tuna Champions, which turns out to be roughly \$400,000 to cover three years of effort.

Best Practices Resources: Keeping in mind the information and approaches discussed during the presentations from both FishSmart and Tuna Champions, the AP received a presentation from Council staff showcasing different best practices related resources produced by state agencies, state Sea Grants in the region, FishSmart, the South Carolina Wildlife Federation, and others. All resources are readily available online. Earlier in the year, AP Members shared analytics for relevant best practices resources with Council staff. Based on those analytics, it appears that interactive formats seem to do well online, especially videos, blogs, and dedicated webpages. The Council and the AP had both indicated in the past that if the Council were to issue its own campaign promoting best practices, it ought to rely on many of the resources already developed. As a result, staff determined that it would be best to use highly interactive media to engage stakeholders. In addition, it would be beneficial to develop partnerships with influential members of the fishing community. Staff briefed AP Members on a developing partnership with Fly Navarro, who has a large presence across multiple social media platforms. Navarro was scheduled to shoot a series of best fishing practices videos in May 2020, however the risk of travel due to the spread of COVID-19 has postponed the trip.

AP Feedback:

Staff asked the AP for suggestions on other potential partnerships for the Council's best fishing practices campaign.

- AP Members recommended that staff reach out to the International Game Fish Association (IGFA), Bass Pro Shops, and Guy Harvey to help promote best fishing practices among fishermen.
- AP Members also suggested that staff look into offering incentives to those who do showcase that they are using best fishing practices. Shimano and the Coastal Conservation Association were acknowledged as possible partners for such efforts.
- The AP noted that importance of consistency in messaging between all partners.
- In addition, members suggested that Council staff reach out to tackle shops and other organized groups to start spreading best practices related messages, relying on the evidence that behavioral change is spurred through social pressures.

Best Practices Draft Webpage Review

The AP then reviewed a recently developed draft webpage for the Council's website which focuses on best fishing practices. The page, which features an embedded Articulate Storyline, a digital platform used to design tutorials and other "pick your path" styles of learning, and a series of tabs, uses icons, videos, and graphics to engage visitors. The Articulate Storyline includes information about FishSmart, state resources, the best practices tutorial, and ways to get involved.

AP Feedback:

AP Members were given three versions of the Articulate Storyline to choose from, each option set up to display the information differently.

- Some AP Members preferred the first option, while others liked options 2 and 3 because of how they looked on mobile devices.
- AP Members also mentioned that it might be helpful to make the buttons in the Articulate Storyline more prominent and more obviously clickable.
- In order to engage visitors on the page, AP Members felt it would be helpful to have a "call to action" in the Articulate Storyline, urging them to pursue additional information within the platform by clicking the associated buttons.
- AP Members liked the overall design of the page and the content, suggesting that the icons used to showcase the different best practices for releasing fish also be highlighted at the very top of the page.
- Staff had initially expressed concerns about the state resources listed in the Articulate Storyline, noting that it would be difficult to keep that information up-to-date over time. That being said, the AP felt that it would be best to include all available resources rather than a single link to a webpage, to reduce the number of clicks necessary for a user to get to the correct information.
- When asked whether this information still felt relevant to commercial stakeholders, AP Members felt it would be important to include links to the page on the regulations by species page on the Council's website, as well as to include images representing commercial fisheries.

2) MyFishCount

The AP received an update on MyFishCount, an ongoing pilot project evaluating the effectiveness of private recreational reporting using a mobile application. The MyFishCount pilot project, which is available as both a web portal and mobile app, will be transferred to the Angler Action Foundation later this year. A user survey is currently underway to gather input on recruitment and retention, and the results of the survey will be shared with the Angler Action Foundation.

Council staff provided an update on the many communication and outreach initiatives currently underway to promote the app to anglers and potential partners. Through the Angler Action Foundation, monthly incentives are offered to app users courtesy of partners like Salt Water Sportsman, the George Povoromo Seminar Series, Z-Man, and many others. MyFishCount has its own Facebook and Instagram accounts, both of which post content multiple times a week, encouraging the use of the app as both a personal

logbook and an opportunity to provide helpful data to managers. Staff have attended multiple in-person events, highlighting modifications made to the app based on feedback from users. Recent updates, which include a new weather feature as well as an expansion to freshwater fisheries, and continued in-person and electronic communication with anglers, seem to have improved recruitment and retention over the past year.

Following those updates, AP Members asked what hashtags ought to be used when sharing information about MyFishCount across their platforms. Staff listed #MyFishCount, #MyFishCountAndSoDoYours, #LogYourCatch, and #MakeYourCatchCount, encouraging AP Members to use the hashtags when communicating information about the app via social media, newsletters, or other methods. Concerns about charter captains using the app arose during the discussion, highlighting the possibility of duplication since for-hire operators in South Carolina are already required to report information about their fishing trips and other federally permitted for-hire fishermen in the South Atlantic will be required to report beginning later this year. Staff explained that there is little risk of that causing an issue since there are safeguards in place to address such duplication. However, the AP was reminded that MyFishCount was designed to target private recreational anglers rather than charter or headboat operations.

3) Citizen Science Program

The AP received an update on the [Council's Citizen Science Program](#), including the program's two pilot projects, SAFMC Release and FISHstory. The AP reviewed what the Citizen Science Program has accomplished this past year (the official launch of SAFMC Release, the further development of the FISHstory project, which is scheduled to launch in May 2020, and an ongoing partnership with the Nature Conservancy engaging Georgia anglers while promoting Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary).

In addition, staff mentioned other projects currently under development with the Citizen Science Program, including a project to gather information on rare species observations and a project to collect diver observations of data limited species. Citizen Science staff also updated the AP on Dolphin Wahoo Participatory Workshops that were held in NC and VA in March 2020 in collaboration with the Southeast Fisheries Science Center. Florida workshops will likely be held in the summer or fall of 2020, depending on the evolving situation with COVID-19.

Following those updates, staff provided a demo of the FISHstory project, which will use the online crowdsourcing platform Zooniverse to mine species data from historic fishing photos of a headboat fleet in Daytona Beach, Florida from the 1940s-1970s.

AP Feedback:

The AP was asked questions about appropriate audience and volunteer engagement to help facilitate discussion on how to best promote the FISHstory project and recruit citizen scientist participants.

- AP Members suggested that staff reach out to naturalist certificate programs since individuals who participate might also be interested in getting involved in the FISHstory project. The representative from the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources offered to share information about the project with participants in the agency's naturalist programs and through other channels.
- The Center for Fisheries Electronic Monitoring at the Mote Marine Lab has a well-trained group of volunteers that helps to analyze underwater video footage by identifying fish species caught on camera. Staff were urged to reach out to them since those volunteers will likely already be proficient in identifying the species seen in the FISHstory photo set.
- The AP also recommended that staff reach out to local fishing clubs and schools. It was noted that fishing clubs and classrooms tend to turn fish identification into a competition and that marketing the FISHstory project as an opportunity to play a competitive game with peers might help grow participation when the project is launched.
- In addition, AP Members suggested that the Citizen Science Program partner with programs designed to target students in grades K-12, recommending Exploring by the Seat of Your Pants, a program designed to digitally engage students in 4th-8th grade, and SciREN, a program which works to get front line science into the hands of educators to develop course materials for classrooms. Representatives from the Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary and North Carolina Sea Grant offered to connect Council staff with these two programs.
- During the discussion, AP Members asked about the plans to expand FISHstory to other photo sets. At this time, the project will focus on the current photo set from Daytona Beach, Florida to pilot the methodology. In the future, the project hopes to expand to include other sources. AP Members recommended that if such an opportunity to expand the project arises in the future, that staff reach out to the International Game Fish Association (IGFA) as well as the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries, both of which host an extensive archive of historic fishing photos.

4) AP Member/Agency Outreach Projects

To help frame the discussion on outreach updates from AP Members, staff asked the AP the following questions. In addition, the AP was prompted to share information about the impacts of COVID-19 to their communities and, when relevant, agencies:

Projects/Campaigns/Initiatives

- What outreach/education campaigns/initiatives have you and your agency/organization been working on?
- How can other agencies help to promote/support your project?
- How can we more regularly facilitate exchanges like this among Advisory Panel Members and their agencies/organizations?

AP Members Provided the Following Updates:

Caribbean Fishery Management Council

- Ongoing campaign on sustainable seafood, encouraging harvest diversity
 - Developing videos featuring recipes for species that are not as well known to consumers (e.g. lionfish)
- Due to the outbreak of COVID-19 and remaining limitations from natural disasters in the region, the Council has not been able to attend in-person events
- Employees are working from home until further notice

Grays Reef National Marine Sanctuary

- All planned in-person outreach events have been postponed, including the Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary Expo that was planned to take place in Savannah, Georgia, as a result of COVID-19
- Shifting to a digital approach for outreach
 - Exploring software and products that might need to accomplish this more effectively
 - Looking into partnering with Exploring by the Seat of Your Pants, a program for 4th-8th graders

NC DMF

- In-person outreach efforts cancelled as a result of COVID-19
 - Waiting to see what the status will be in May before attempting to schedule events
- Pushing out interactive games and tools via social media to help provide educational materials to parents
- Annual Coastal Fishing Digest is still on schedule to publish in May
 - Focus on circle hook requirements and use
 - Promotes mobile apps MyFishCount and Fish Rules

NC Sea Grant

- Introductory Fisheries Science Class
 - 4 days of training (in-person and online)
 - Following the similar course material as MREP
- Fish Camp
 - Networking opportunity for commercial fishermen interested in learning the ins and outs of running a business
 - Currently specific to North Carolina fishermen
- Blog: Hook, Line & Science
 - Weekly posts
 - Research reports or articles (500 words or less)
 - Promote info and share news from others

- Encouraged folks to look at Sea Grant Law Center’s video which discusses how fishermen can prepare for and apply for aid under the CARES Act

FWC

- Developing tools using digital and online resources to reach anglers without boots on the ground given the ongoing situation with COVID-19
- Worked with Mark Duda to conduct a survey of anglers to identify preferences for communication
 - Some highlights from the report
 - Anglers suggested that a best fishing practices educational component be required to get a state fishing license
 - Survey participants suggested that the agency focus on apps, emails, websites, and social media when communicating
 - Fishermen recommended that FWC focus on developing a single booklet rather than multiple field guides and brochures

Florida Sea Grant

- National Sea Grant providing resources for fishermen when investigating disaster assistance
- Florida Friendly Fishing Guides Certification
 - Not promoting this as actively since many fishermen are likely not working as a result of COVID-19
- Sargassum Fact Sheet under development
 - Discussing what home-owners can do to remove sargassum

Mark Phelps (Charter Operator)

- Little business as a result of COVID-19
- Many local operators have filled out the forms for assistance under the Cares Act but have yet to hear anything

GA DNR

- Staff relying on Microsoft Teams to stay connected and collaborate while working from home as a result of COVID-19

SC DNR

- In-person outreach efforts currently on hold as a result of COVID-19, so the agency is relying on social channels only
- Oyster Recycling Project
 - Piloting community-based social marketing
 - What prevents people from recycling oyster shells
 - Conducting a survey to evaluate how social based marketing applies

- Looking into how strategy could be used in other projects
- Flounder Issues
 - Working on outreach to anglers to alert them of problem and gather information from stakeholders
 - Survey of perceptions and what's needed for future management

Wild Ocean Market

- Worked collectively against the shark fin bill in Florida and the US
 - Major effort by Wild Ocean Market
 - Bill did not pass
- Many commercial fishermen are not working as a result of COVID-19
 - Restaurant demand is down
 - Boat ramps are closed
 - Still selling product through retail markets, but can't buy as much given the reduced demand

Strategies for Staying Connected as an AP

In the past, the AP discussed strategies for keeping each other updated on ongoing projects, campaigns, and events by using a google doc to share hashtags and information. To test the effectiveness, a google doc for tracking and sharing hashtags was established. It turned out that the platform was not very helpful to the AP. During the meeting in April 2020, the AP discussed what other ways could be used to share information more regularly. Multiple AP Members suggested that the AP meet twice a year, once in-person and once via webinar. The AP was also encouraged to utilize Council staff to share information with the entire AP. Members suggested that staff reach out ahead of the publication of the Briefing Book to gather information from AP Members so that it could be distributed as part of the briefing materials.. This would allow all AP Members to have relevant links for each item discussed under the updates and ample time to prepare potential questions for fellow AP Members.

Election of Vice Chair

Following the discussion of the above topics, Shelly Krueger of Florida Sea Grant was elected as the AP's Vice Chair.

AP Members in Attendance

Scott Baker, Jr., Chair
 Shelly Krueger, Vice Chair
 Katie Latanich
 Mark Phelps
 Cinthia Sandoval
 Patricia Smith
 Doug Kelly

Melissa Crouch
Sean Meehan
Erin Weeks
Ben Prueitt
Jennifer Koches
Emily Muehlstein-Lumsden
Tyler Jones
Lt. James Bruce
Diana Martino