

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

INFORMATION AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

**DoubleTree by Hilton Atlantic Beach Oceanfront
Atlantic Beach, NC**

December 7, 2017

SUMMARY MINUTES

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Dr. Jack McGovern
Dr. Bonnie Ponwith
Dale Diaz
Erika Burgess
Scott Baker
Rick DeVictor

Other observers and participants attached.

The Information and Education Committee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened at the DoubleTree by Hilton Atlantic Beach Oceanfront, Atlantic Beach, North Carolina, Thursday afternoon, December 7, 2017, and was called to order by Chairman Mark Brown.

MR. BROWN: We're going to call the Information and Education Committee to order. As a reminder, the members of the committee are myself, Charlie Phillips, Chester Brewer, Michelle Duval, and the Coast Guard representative, Trish. Next, we'll approve the agenda. Is there any modifications to the agenda? Seeing none, the agenda stands approved.

The next item of business is Approval of the December 2016 Committee Minutes. Were there any modifications to the minutes? Seeing none, the minutes stand approved, and the first agenda item, the next item of business, is Attachment 1, which is a Summary Report from the October 2017 Information and Education Advisory Panel Meeting. Scott Baker from North Carolina Sea Grant and Chair of the I&E AP will walk us through the report via webinar. Go ahead, Scott.

MR. BAKER: This is Scott Baker, Chair of the I&E Advisory Panel. Thanks for allowing me to speak today about the summary report. The first item that I would like to mention is that we had a new AP member attend this last meeting, Doug Kelly from Clearwater, Florida. He has served previously as the Editor of *Florida Sportsman* and *Sport Fishing Magazine*, and he has produced fishing videos and TV shows and also served as Executive Director of the Bonefish and Tarpon Limited Trust, and so that was great for him to attend.

In terms of the business we conducted on October 10 and 11 in Charleston, staff let us comment on about seven different things, and they're all profiled in the brief summary report. I will just walk through this very quickly. The first thing we talked about was the mobile app transition and moving to the Fish Rules app and what that would possibly entail with regard to stakeholders. The AP pretty much suggested that we should include a combination of both digital and mail-outs, to make people aware of that transition, just because it might not be as smooth as anticipated. Folks might not know about it, and particularly those folks that are really relying on that for the rules and regulations.

With regard to Item 2, the Fishermen's Forum, we got a tour of that application, and Cameron kind of walked us through some of the things they have done. The AP kind of suggested that we try to figure out ways to boost the use of the tool. It's a relatively new tool, and so it hasn't had a lot of users yet. One thing that was pretty interesting was that you could see the number of people that had eyeballs on the particular comment, and so that was kind of interesting to see that. While the comments are relatively few at this point, there is apparently a lot of unique people viewing those comments. We also encouraged staff to reach other to other forum owners and forum participants to see what would be good ways to help publicize the forum.

Moving to the third item, we had a series of presentations about the MyFishCount reporting app project, and we basically kind of reviewed a lot of documentation related to that, and, of course, some of that was presented earlier in the meeting, on Monday. With regards to a survey that staff is going to conduct, the AP walked through that line-by-line and basically came up with some suggestions on survey design and wording, to make the survey a little smoother. We also kind of advised that they really be careful with regards to the language, because it really is an optional tool at this point and making them aware that, just because the data is collected -- It would serve as a complementary data source relative to MRIP.

With regards to the MyFishCount webpage content, I think that looked really good, and the AP was very pleased with that. We commented that perhaps the prospect of using minimal text and more infographics was good, and the next item we looked at was the best practices webpage content, and everybody that attended the meeting was pretty excited about this content. In fact, most of the people that were in the room expressed interest in partnering with the council on helping with the content of this.

One of the comments that some people brought up was that it's great that we're providing education on a lot of these tools but that there was also some feedback that people were getting that it was even hard to kind of find some of these tools in the stores, and so, if there was the ability to even point people towards where they might be able to purchase things, like descending devices, it might be a good step as well.

The next item was the for-hire electronic reporting outreach project, and we received an overview of how that is proceeding. That seemed to be going pretty well, and we had -- One of the major comments that came from that was trying to figure out how some of this data that would be collected could be used also for charter business purposes, and so not simply as a data source for the council, but data that could also be used for fishermen.

The last three items on the agenda, we simply received presentations on those things. We had the red snapper mini-season opportunity, and we received an update on the Citizen Science Program from Amber, and we received an update on the Marine Resources Education Program Southeast. As far as I know, that basically concludes my report. Thank you, and I can take any questions.

MR. BROWN: Is there any questions for Scott?

MR. HARTIG: Hi, Scott. I'm not on the committee, but I'm glad to hear you, and it was great to see you earlier this week. I have talked to the council, or at least mentioned, that I thought that that fishery performance report should probably be broadened, but I was thinking in the context of actually more fishermen.

I mean, we went through the visioning process, and we identified people up and down the coast as sort of hosts for that. You could use the same kind of concept for areas up and down the coast where fishermen may be able to give insight into this, because our AP coverage is not 100 percent, for sure, and even you have a difference between inlets, believe it or not, and so some way, in the future, you guys could possibly think about broadening this to a broader number of participants.

MR. BAKER: You're talking about the forum, correct?

MR. HARTIG: Yes, or for the fishery performance reports, actually. Did you guys discuss that, or did I mix that up with the forum?

MR. BAKER: I don't remember discussing that.

MR. HARTIG: Sorry about that. My bad.

MS. RHODES: No, the AP did not receive those fishery performance reports, but that's definitely something that I would be interested in pursuing, Ben, if that's what you want to have the AP look at, and we could even send that information out to them through email and just have a brief discussion about that, and not necessarily within the context of a formal AP, if that's something you would be interested in having happen.

MR. HARTIG: Yes, thanks. I think we have to have a discussion about whether that's appropriate or not, but yes.

MR. BROWN: Okay. Is there any other business to come before the I&E Committee? I think we have something from Kim.

MS. RHODES: Not yet, Kim. You can come on up if you want, but we've got a couple other things.

DR. DUVAL: I just had -- Ben mentioned the fishery performance reports, and Scott gave the review of the AP's input on the Fishermen's Forum, which I think is awesome, and I think we need to -- We as a council need to think about how we can more effectively gather input from that forum, and so I think if there is a question that we want to pose to the forum about an upcoming issue, I would love to see us brainstorm, and maybe not at this meeting, or even individually provide some input to Cameron for questions that could be posed to the forum to kind of gather some of that input from permit holders, but I am wondering if something akin to the fishery performance report could be put out to the forum to try to reach a broader group of people.

Obviously, we bring these before the advisory panels, but that might -- I think some of those key questions might be things that we could pose to forum participants to get their input on how they feel the fishery is performing, and we could include that input into the fishery performance reports themselves.

LCDR BENNETT: Under the best practices webpage content, there is a bullet about NOAA Fisheries re-working their website to be one website for the entire agency, and can you kind of expound on that? Are they trying to merge all the Regional Offices into one website and have it broken down and actually have it line up to where they look similar?

MS. RHODES: Yes, and we had Kim Amendola with us, and she's one of our advisory panel members, and she did note that they are working on that now, and I believe they already have some stuff available to the public at this time. It's a more updated website, and it will be more streamlined. It's a lot easier to navigate. She gave us a brief overview of some of the things that they're going to be implementing on the code side of the website, and it's certainly going to be a much more user-friendly platform for people.

LCDR BENNETT: Does that include permit lookups? It's very difficult both for the Southeast, looking at the Southeast, and also GARFO. They are completely two different ways of looking up permits.

MS. RHODES: I don't know the answer to that specifically. Based on the conversations that we had with Kim, I would assume that they're definitely working to make that easier and more of a standard, like you're talking about, so it's no longer such a navigation issue, but I don't know

exactly how they're adjusting the way that the permit searching will be set up on the website, but I do feel confident that it's going to be a lot easier than it is now.

LCDR BENNETT: Timeline-wise, when do they hope to have it kind of put out?

MS. RHODES: I don't know when the site is supposed to go live. I don't know if Dr. Crabtree knows that information.

DR. CRABTREE: I don't, off the top of my head. It's being phased in gradually, but I don't have the timeline in front of me.

MS. RHODES: Trish, I think if you actually go to look up the old sites, and I did this yesterday. If you look up any kind of link you have saved on your computer in your favorites, and it will take you to the main NOAA page, and, on that page, it says that we've moved to a different site, and I went ahead and clicked on that new link, and it looks quite different, and a lot cleaner, to me, and so I think they are slowly moving in that direction, but I don't know when it will finally all be live.

DR. PONWITH: What I would say is, if it's generic questions about the look and feel of the website, they are transitioning to that new approach that Kim rolled out right now, even as we speak, and we're doing that within the Center, to kind of comport to a different way of looking at things, where, rather than being geographically oriented, it's thematically. If you want to read something about bottlenose dolphin, you don't have to go to twelve different websites to learn about them. There is one spot, and everybody feeds into that.

If your question is very specifically about permits, that's more of a technical issue than a website issue, and, if there are issues you have with the way the permit websites are set up and have input on what would make it easier for you, as someone from outside of the system, to be able to look more broadly at permits, I think that I would handle that as a technical issue, as opposed to the more generic what is the visual accessibility of the content, because that really is a technical issue, because there is so much underpinning those permits.

MR. BROWN: All right. Then Kim has got something for us.

MS. IVERSON: I just wanted to briefly, since Scott had mentioned MREP and the MREP updates, I would like to give the committee the 2018 dates for the Marine Resource Education Program workshops. The science workshop will be held April 24 through 26 in St. Pete. Then the management workshop will be November 14 through 16 in Tampa, and we are having -- Like many meetings, because of the hurricanes, they have been delayed, and so the steering committee will meet in January, which is unusual. We were scheduled to meet in Key West in November, but that had to be pushed back, and so we're hoping to have a full update to the council, or to the committee, at the March meeting, an MREP update.

We're in the fifth year of the program, and moving into our sixth year, and there are some evaluations that are underway, and so we'll have some more details with that, but I did want to put those dates out there and encourage the council members to get with Gregg. Each council, the Gulf and the South Atlantic, has one representative to attend the workshop, and so, in spite of having our management workshop delayed and moved back, we had a really good and successful

workshop, management workshop, in Tampa back in November. If you have any questions, please get with me, but I did want to put those dates out. Thank you.

MR. BROWN: Go ahead, Ben.

MR. HARTIG: I will wait until after people have questions of Kim. If they don't have questions of Kim, I will move on.

MR. BROWN: Are there any more questions for Kim? All right. Cameron, do you have something else?

MS. RHODES: I do, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to walk the council through some of these new things that are going on, and I will keep it brief, so that we can move on to some of our other committees today, but this fishermen's forum is definitely something that at some point, whether we talk about it at this meeting or a following meeting, I would like to get some input from all of you in what you would like to see happen on that site.

Chris McCaffity has been absolutely instrumental in making this happen, and he's been working alongside me to try and make this more of a user-friendly site for them and really meet their needs, and so I extend my thanks to him. He's really been great in helping me through this, but I just wanted to give you a brief overview of what this is, what people are capable of doing.

It's only available to the commercial sector at this time, and it's snapper-grouper-specific. They send me a request to participate, and I activate their accounts, after having looked up their permit to confirm that it is who they're saying they are, and we do have some participation. It's relatively slow at the moment. It's just kick-starting, but we have had some people jump on in there, and many of those folks are our advisory panel members. Jimmy Hull has participated in the conversation, and so what people do is they just come on in, and they can post to any one of these forums that has one of these blue titles here, and so Descending Devices, Venting Tools, or Neither.

They can go ahead and start posting threads in here, and that is totally up to the user, but, right now, the only way that I can create these sub-forums is by my own doing, and so I'm the one proposing the questions at this time, and Chris has helped come up with some of these questions, but I would like some of your feedback on what kind of information you would like to gather from this platform and what kind of questions you would like to pose.

We have received a number of questions about whether or not this is considered to be an on-record public comment, and we have told them repeatedly that it's not, and that has been met with some frustration, but we're also getting those kinds of comments on our Facebook page. People want these platforms to be considered public comment resources, and, right now, we're just not ready to make that happen, but, if you would like to engage with the commercial snapper grouper fleet in a certain way by asking particular questions, this is a great way to do so. If there's something of interest that you guys would like to be proposing to them now, we can absolutely facilitate that, and so I just open the floor to you if you have any thoughts on how you would like to proceed with some of these back-and-forth conversations that we're now able to have through this forum.

MR. GRINER: On the forum, when a question is asked on the forum of the council or the council's position on something, who actually answer that?

MS. RHODES: That's been a challenge, and most of those questions have been asked by Chris, and they've been asking about specific policies, and so I have forwarded some of those questions on to Roger, and we have had conversations outside of the forum for those. That wasn't the initial intent of this forum. It wasn't supposed to be a direct interaction with council members and thoughts that the council might have on certain issues. This is actually supposed to be just a way for us to gauge any kind of community issues that fishermen might be experiencing amongst themselves, and it's really just a way for them to communicate and discuss these issues thoroughly in a space that they feel safe, but they know that the South Atlantic Council is monitoring.

We have had a little bit of difficulty explaining what the real purpose and need of this was, but I think people are starting to come around to it, and it's just trying to get everybody to participate in it without it being considered a public comment has been a little bit of a challenge, because I think they do want that, to some degree.

MR. BROWN: Follow-up?

MR. GRINER: Yes, and, as a follow-up, how many permit holders have signed up for it?

MS. RHODES: We're in the range of somewhere between twenty to thirty permit holders, and we sent out a mailing initially, and it did reach quite a number of people, and we only had two envelopes come back to us, and so we felt pretty good about that, but we still haven't received the kind of engagement that we had hoped for, and we do acknowledge that it's still in its very early stages, but, right now, the commercial sector has really shown all the much interest in this initial stage, but the charter fleet caught wind of it, and they are very interested in having something like this made for them, and we do have the intent to expand it eventually, but, right now, we're still working out the kinks of how this code works and how we keep it safe and how this doesn't become something that gets spammed repeatedly, and so we're still working all of that out.

DR. DUVAL: I guess I would be interested to hear what others think about putting out, I think, some of the more pertinent questions on the fishery performance reports as a way of getting a sense of how permit holders feel the fishery is working, particularly because it's hard to cover the geographic range of all of our fisheries on the advisory panel, and so that seems like it might be a good way to expand that.

I know Chris, when he talked to me about this, both during and after the vision blueprint meetings, he wanted this space to be where fishermen themselves could have a debate amongst themselves about management changes that they might want to see or how do we feel that trip limits should be set for the b-liner fishery, things like that, and I think, if we had some kind of annual spec-setting process, where we reviewed what our landings were on an annual basis, in the sense of what was the intent of what we put in place and how did it match up with what we expected and being able to sort of put that out to the fishermen and ask them how do they think that things might need to be tweaked to meet the various regional geographic needs, and those are just a few things that I would throw out there about things like that.

MR. CONKLIN: How do we police bad or misinformation or how often are we going to monitor stuff that's on there that is misnomers or before we fix it, before too many people get ahold of wrong information?

MS. RHODES: I get a notification every single time that someone posts to it, and I monitor it by hand at this point. If this were to become a much larger -- If this were to become something that was reaching a larger group of people, that's something that we would have to discuss at the staff level, and also the council level too, on how we want to handle that.

Our Facebook is operated in much the same way, but we do have code written into the Facebook, through their software, that gets rid of any curse words, and it wipes out any mention of names, things of that nature that we don't want to have the public see, and so we do have that built-in, and forums do have that capability as well, but it will require a bit of staff time to make sure that this is monitored appropriately, and that's true of our Facebook, too. In this era, people are now using images and GIFs and memes on Facebook, which aren't wiped out in the way that words are, and so we're having to adapt to some of that as well.

MR. PHILLIPS: I have a question. You said that some of them wanted to have their comments as part of the public record. Is there a link, either on this site or on our Facebook site, so they know, if they want it to be public and part of the record, they just click on that link and it takes it to where it is, so it's fairly easy to do?

MS. RHODES: Yes, we have it when you initially sign up for the forum. You have to create a user name and a password. On those initial sign-in pages that do pop up for the forum, it does direct you to the public comments, if you do want to provide public comment. On our Facebook, I can't recall if we actually host a link embedded in our About Section on the page. Most people will never visit that when they go to our Facebook, but we actively, as an outreach team, make sure to pose directly to their comments requesting for this to become a public comment, and we direct them where they need to go in order to do that. Our outreach team is working on ways to make sure that people are properly notified, but there has been a little bit of unrest about this, but it's been from a select group of users. I wouldn't say that it's widespread.

MR. BROWN: Have you directed Leaky Waders where to go yet?

MS. RHODES: We do have someone on our Facebook by the name of Leaky Waders, and he is actively involved in a lot of our posts, and Mark has been made well aware of that.

MR. BROWN: Is there any more questions?

MR. GRINER: On the forum, once someone is logged in and has an account, can they see a list of all the account holders, and can they contact each other, like through private conversations?

MS. RHODES: Yes, they should be able to do that, and you can personalize it, too. You can make this more of like an informal platform, where people have pictures up for their user name, and that is available to the users now, and so they can see who else is on there, and they can communicate amongst themselves outside of the formal forum setup that we have here.

MR. GRINER: But can they see a list of everybody who is currently a member of that forum, whether they're online or not?

MS. RHODES: Yes, and it won't be related. It will probably tell them that that person is online, much the way that our Facebook does, but, yes, it should provide them with a full list of other users, or at least that's my understanding at this point.

MR. BROWN: Is there any more questions? Is there any other business to come before the Information and Education Committee? Seeing none, the Information and Education Committee is adjourned.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on December 7, 2017.)

Certified By: _____ Date: _____

Transcribed By:
Amanda Thomas
January 5, 2018

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Attendee Report: SAFMC Council Meeting - Day 4

(Thursday 12/7/17)

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