



## **SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**

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Trish Murphey, Chair | Jessica McCawley, Vice Chair  
John Carmichael, Executive Director

### **SAFMC Multi-Phase Communities Project Phase I and Phase II**

#### **Background**

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) is committed to enhancing its understanding and communication with fishing communities throughout the South Atlantic region. The effects of changing ecosystems have necessitated a deeper exploration into the vulnerabilities and challenges facing these communities. To address these needs, the Council is launching a multi-phase Communities Project aimed at identifying place-based fishing communities and developing effective communication strategies to ensure their needs and perspectives are integrated into fishery management decisions. This initiative addresses prioritized actions identified during the stakeholder-informed East Coast Scenario Planning<sup>1</sup> effort and supports the fulfillment of mandates such as National Standard 8 of the Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries and Conservation Act, which emphasizes continued community access to fishery resources and minimizing adverse economic impacts.

Phase I of the Communities Project is focused on the place-based identification and characterization of fishing communities in the South Atlantic region. This phase involves gathering and analyzing existing data to map the geographical locations of these communities, assess their economic and cultural dependencies on fishing activities, and evaluate their vulnerabilities to environmental changes such as sea level rise, storms, and shifts in fish distribution and productivity. The outcomes of Phase I are intended to provide comprehensive information to the Council and support work being conducted for Phase II. Additionally, the work will inform scenario planning discussions in subsequent Phase III, ensuring that management measures are informed by robust social and ecological data and stakeholder input.

Guided by the ongoing work in Phase I, Phase II is designed to integrate the information gathered about fishing communities into a targeted stakeholder outreach and communication assessment. The goal of Phase II is to develop a strategic Outreach and Communication Plan that strengthens the integration of community perspectives into Council management decisions. This phase involves working closely with community stakeholders to understand their communication preferences, identifying the most effective methods to encourage engagement, and developing implementation tools. The outcomes of Phase II will support adaptive management and the Council's goals to improve engagement with underrepresented stakeholders, incorporate local ecological knowledge and community vulnerability assessments into management decision-making, and work to rebuild trust with communities affected by management actions. By building trust, fostering participation, and making qualitative data actionable, the project will

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.mafmc.org/climate-change-scenario-planning>

support management that is both scientifically robust and grounded in the realities of those most affected by ecosystem change.

**Request for Proposals**  
**South Atlantic Fishery Management Council**  
**Communities Project Phase I: Place-Based Identification and Characterization of**  
**South Atlantic Fishing Communities**

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) invites proposals from qualified contractors to conduct place-based identification and characterization of fishing communities impacted by SAFMC management. This project will enhance the Council's capacity to understand and engage these communities and provide information to help inform Phase II of this multi-phase project to develop a comprehensive Outreach and Communication Plan.

**Proposal Submission Deadline:** ~~January 12, 2026~~ Extended to January 16, 2026

**Project Budget: \$250,000**

**Background**

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) Communities Project is a multi-phase initiative designed to enhance the Council's understanding and engagement with fishing communities across the South Atlantic region. In response to the increasing challenges posed by changing ecosystems, evolving social and economic dynamics, and uncertainty in fisheries management, the project aims to identify and characterize place-based fishing communities, assess their vulnerabilities, and develop effective communication strategies to ensure that community perspectives are fully integrated into management decisions.

**Project Scope**

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) seeks a contractor to undertake Phase I of its Communities Project to conduct place-based identification and characterization of fishing communities in the South Atlantic region. This project will enhance the Council's capacity to understand and engage these communities and provide the information to inform work on the next phase of the Communities Project that will include a stakeholder assessment and the development of a comprehensive Outreach and Communication Plan. The outcomes of Phase I and Phase II will also inform scenario planning discussions in Phase III of this multi-phase project.

In this phase the contractor will gather and analyze existing data to identify place-based fishing communities within the South Atlantic region at a higher resolution than is currently available through census designated place. This will be used to develop a comprehensive report and corresponding outreach products detailing the extent to which these communities interact with species managed by the SAFMC and assess their vulnerabilities to environmental changes, such as sea level rise, increasing storm impacts on fishing infrastructure, and shifts in fish distribution and productivity. By understanding these dynamics, the Council can better tailor its management measures to support the resilience of these communities. This initiative will require the identification, gathering, and analysis of existing data to map out the geographical locations of these communities, their economic and cultural dependencies on fishing activities, and the specific environmental challenges they face. The goal is to ensure that these

communities are recognized and supported through adaptive management strategies that mitigate the impacts of ongoing ecosystem change.

### *Project Oversight*

Phases I and II of the Communities Project will be overseen by a single project oversight team (OT). The OT will provide support and guidance to contractors, ensure project expectations are met, and assist with implementation and communication of project outcomes. The OT will have 3-8 members and will include SAFMC staff and other subject matter experts.

### *Timeline*

The SAFMC external grant process will be used to develop contract details once a proposal is selected; however, the project timeline is expected to begin in February 2026 and to be completed by May 2027. The timeline will include regular check-in meetings with the Council's Project Oversight Team. The draft report will be presented to the Council's Social and Economic Panel in April 2027, and the final report will be submitted by June 2027.

### *Deliverables*

- Comprehensive report on place-based fishing communities impacted by SAFMC management decisions. The report will use existing data to identify and characterize the following:
  - Place-based fishing communities within the South Atlantic region and other communities impacted by SAFMC management at a higher resolution than is currently available through census designated place,
  - Interactions with Council-managed species, including information on changes in the interactions such as seasonality of species availability and new species encounters,
  - Community vulnerabilities (i.e. sea level rise, fishing infrastructure) to ecosystem and social and economic changes.
- Establish a database of information necessary to support a stakeholder assessment and the development of an Outreach and Communication Plan.
- Produce outreach products providing visual representation of projects findings, such as maps, storymaps, brochures, and infographics that can be used to communicate findings with different audiences, including the identified communities, the Council, advisory bodies and the public at large.
- Assess how the Council currently incorporates social data into its deliberations and identify on ramps where the new community-level information can support more informed decisions.
  - Develop training material on community analysis so that managers better understand social impact analysis.
  - Provide specific training to Council members and include in orientation for new members.

- Presentation of Final Report to the SAFMC Social and Economic Panel and the Council.

### **Applicant Qualifications:**

The successful candidate should have:

- Experience with both quantitative and qualitative social science methodologies, including identification and analysis of fishing communities with a focus on communities of place and of practice (e.g. National Marine Fisheries Service social indicators)
- Demonstrated experience building relationships with communities resulting in conversations that lead to information that is relevant and in a form that is actionable to guide decision making.
- Strong communication and interpersonal skills. Specifically, the ability to communicate effectively and collaborate with stakeholders from a range of cultures and capacities with respect toward individual experience and history.
- Knowledge of and familiarity with South Atlantic fisheries and fishing communities preferred.
- Experience managing research projects, including planning, coordinating, and executing project tasks. The applicant should be able to meet deadlines, manage resources, and ensure the successful completion of the project.

### **How to Apply:**

Applicants may apply for both phases of the Communities Project, however, a separate application must be submitted for each phase. Applicants should submit completed proposals to [Chip.Collier@safmc.net](mailto:Chip.Collier@safmc.net) or mailed to Chip Collier, Deputy Director for Science, South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, 4055 Faber Place Dr, Suite 201, North Charleston, SC, 29405. Please include the project title in the subject line by 11:59 pm on ~~Monday, January 12, 2026~~. extended to Friday, January 16, 2026

### **Proposals should not exceed 12 pages and should include the following elements:**

- Executive Summary: A summary of the proposed scope of work not to exceed 1 page.
- Description of Work: A detailed plan for addressing the scope of work and deliverables described above. This should include proposed analytical approaches, a project schedule, project management, and dissemination of results.
- Proposed Budget: A detailed budget for each year of the project, not to exceed a total of \$250,000 for the full project term. The budget must include the basis for the charges (e.g., hourly rates, fixed fees) and a breakdown of expenses by category: Salary, Fringe, Travel, Supplies, Sub-Contract, and Indirect.
- Qualifications of Applicant: A summary of the qualifications of the applicant, and other team members, if applicable.
- Outside of the 12 page limit, please include up to a two-page CV for each PI and Collaborator.

### **Proposal Evaluation Criteria:**

Proposals will be evaluated based on relevance to the request for proposal, technical merit of the project, qualifications of applicants, budget, and outreach and communication of results. Phase I and II proposals will be evaluated independently; however, strong coordination between the two phases is considered important and will be given particular attention during the evaluation process. The Council may request additional information as deemed necessary or negotiate modifications to an accepted proposal.

**Requests for Further Information:**

Any questions regarding the RFP, please contact:

Lara Klibansky  
Resilient Fisheries Project Coordinator  
Independent Contractor in support of the  
South Atlantic Fishery Management Council  
[LaraJKlibansky@gmail.com](mailto:LaraJKlibansky@gmail.com)  
252-324-9954

**Disclaimer:**

1. All costs associated with the preparation and presentation of the proposal will be borne by applicants.
2. Proposals and their accompanying documentation will not be returned.
3. Respondents must disclose any relevant conflicts of interest and/or pending civil/criminal legal actions.
4. The Council reserves the right to accept or reject any or all applications received, negotiate with all qualified applicants, cancel, or modify this request for proposals in part or in its entirety, or change the application guidelines, when it is in its best interests.

**Request for Proposals**  
**South Atlantic Fishery Management Council**  
**Communities Project Phase II: Stakeholder Outreach and Communication**  
**Assessment and Strategic Plan**

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) invites proposals from qualified contractors to conduct a stakeholder outreach and communication assessment and development of a strategic Outreach and Communication Plan for fishing communities impacted by SAFMC management. This project will be informed by Phase I of this multi-phase project.

**Proposal Submission Deadline:** ~~January 12, 2026~~ extended to Friday, January 16, 2026

**Project Budget: \$400,000**

### **Background**

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) Communities Project is a multi-phase initiative designed to enhance the Council's understanding and engagement with fishing communities across the South Atlantic region. In response to the increasing challenges posed by changing ecosystems, evolving social and economic dynamics, and uncertainty in fisheries management, the project aims to identify and characterize place-based fishing communities, assess their vulnerabilities, and develop effective communication strategies. By building trust, fostering participation, and making qualitative data actionable, the project outcomes will support management that is both scientifically robust and grounded in the realities of those most affected by ecosystem change.

### **Project Scope**

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) invites proposals from qualified contractors to conduct a stakeholder assessment to inform development of a strategic Outreach and Communication Plan for fishing communities impacted by SAFMC management. This project will use fishing community information gathered through Phase I and will be designed to ensure that the needs and perspectives of these communities are actively incorporated into Council management decisions. The outcomes of Phase I and Phase II will also inform scenario planning discussions in Phase III of this multi-phase project. The contractor will work closely with community stakeholders to understand their communication preferences and identify the best methods to encourage engagement in the Council's decision-making process. This collaborative approach aims to build trust and foster a sense of ownership among fishing communities, ensuring that stakeholder voices are heard and their concerns addressed. By doing so, the Council hopes to improve the effectiveness of its management measures and promote sustainable fishing practices that benefit both the fisheries and the communities that depend on them.

### *Project Oversight*

Phases I and II of the Communities Project will be overseen by a single project oversight team (OT). The OT will provide support and guidance to contractors, ensure project expectations are met, and assist

with implementation and communication of project outcomes. The OT will have 3-8 members and will include SAFMC staff and other subject matter experts.

### *Timeline*

The SAFMC external grant process will be used to develop contract details once a proposal is selected; however, the project timeline is expected to begin in February 2026 and to be completed by September 2027. The timeline will include regular check-in meetings with the Council's Project Oversight Team, and review by the Council's Social and Economic Panel and Outreach and Communication Advisory Panel. The final report will be submitted to the Council in August 2027 and presented during the SAFMC September 2027 meeting.

### *Deliverables*

- Assessment of the Council's communication and outreach activities and provide recommendations to enhance and support ongoing efforts.
- Comprehensive communication plan that includes:
  - Description of communication goals, objectives, strategies and performance measures,
  - Identification and description of key audiences and stakeholders, including community leaders and social networks within fishing communities,
  - Analysis of outreach channels within the communities, highlighting trusted resources, community leaders, and descriptions of social networks,
  - Recommendations for effective methods and core messaging to promote meaningful engagement in the Council's decision-making process,
  - Tailored communication strategies, including preferred channels, methods, and tools for each audience and community.
- Online communication hub, accessible to Council and SERO staff, that includes:
  - Talking points by common topics (allocations, data collection, ways to get involved),
  - Interactive stakeholder map that builds on the tool requested in Phase I to include key contacts, networks, leaders etc. by fishery and area,
  - Template generator with ready-to-go email drafts, meeting announcements, etc.,
  - Built-in metrics dashboard to log communication activities, track engagement, etc.,
  - Online storage for quick reference guides that can be easily pulled up when doing in-person outreach.
- Guidance materials and training sessions for Council staff, SERO staff, and Council members on the communication plan and hub with emphasis on:
  - The best communication channels and tools for different communities,
  - Performance measures for continuous improvement,
  - How to effectively utilize the developed communication hub.
- Introduction of key members of the identified fishing communities to Council members using recommended approaches to build relationships and better incorporate local ecological knowledge into the Council decision-making process.

- Presentation of draft Stakeholder Assessment report to the SAFMC Social and Economic Panel for review;
- Presentation of draft Outreach and Communication Plan to Outreach and Communication Advisory Panel.
- Presentation of final Stakeholder Assessment report and Outreach and Communication Plan to the Council;

### **Applicant Qualifications:**

The successful candidate should have:

- Experience with both quantitative and qualitative social science methodologies, including identification and analysis of fishing communities with a focus on communities of place and of practice.
- Demonstrated experience in community engagement and expertise in developing outreach and communication plans.
- Demonstrated experience building relationships with communities resulting in conversations that lead to information that is relevant and in the form that is actionable to guide decision-making.
- Strong communication and interpersonal skills. Specifically, the ability to communicate effectively and collaborate with stakeholders from a range of cultures and capacities with respect toward individual experience and history.
- Knowledge of and familiarity with South Atlantic fisheries and fishing communities preferred.
- Experience managing research projects, including planning, coordinating, and executing project tasks. The applicant should be able to meet deadlines, manage resources, and ensure the successful completion of the project.

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