SAFMC Citizen Science (CitSci) Operations Committee
Webinar Meeting Summary – DRAFT
5/14/2025

Welcome and Meeting Overview
- Staff gave a short welcome; Committee members introduced themselves to one another
- Staff reviewed the webinar goals:
  - *Provide update on Citizen Science Program activities.*
  - *Review Citizen Science Program draft indicators of success and discuss ways to measure Program impact.*
  - *Review the Citizen Science Program organizational structure and discuss the role and need for the Citizen Science Program Advisory Panel*

Citizen Science Program Update
- Staff provided a brief update on Citizen Science Program & project activities
- Several AP members noted they continue to be impressed with the Program's efforts and were excited to learn that FISHstory and SAFMC Release data were presented at the recent SEDAR 90 (South Atlantic Red Snapper) Data Workshop and Red Snapper length data from both projects were recommended for use in the assessment by the SEDAR 90 Data Workshop Panel
- AP members asked questions and provided additional feedback summarized below
  - Excited to see the high number of volunteers and classifications (individual identifications and counts) in Zooniverse since the FISHstory project re-launched in July 2024
  - Clarification on what 'retirement limit' means in Zooniverse project; retirement limit is the number of volunteers who review each photo; once a photo is 'retired' it will not appear for other volunteers to classify until all photos in that level are complete
  - Asked about participation in SMILE project; 46 divers have used the SMILE cameras; not sure how many volunteers have assisted with the AI workflow training; REEF is working to collaborate with dive shops more in the future to help expand volunteer base
  - Asked whether the FISHstory length data have been used in as assessment prior to SEDAR 90; SEDAR 90 is the first assessment where the FISHstory length data have been available; King Mackerel FISHstory length data will be presented for consideration at the upcoming assessment (tentatively scheduled to start in 2027)
  - Noted SAFMC Release Annual Data Summary is one of the best outreach products the Program has developed

Citizen Science Program DRAFT Indicators of Success
- One of the things the CitSci Program has been focusing on is evaluation – we want to make sure Program is doing what the Council wants it to do and we are making progress on Program goals and objectives; through our evaluation efforts also want to make sure we're thinking about how we can measure and communicate the Program's impact to different audiences
- At the fall 2025 Ops AP meeting, members reviewed CitSci Program's progress on Program goals objectives, and strategies and provided guidance for future activities

- At this meeting, AP members were asked to review and provide feedback on the Program's draft indicators of success (drafted in 2020 along with the goals/objectives/etc.); indicators can include both outputs (direct output of activities) and outcomes (changes to individuals, groups, communities as a result of participation or experience); the draft indicators the AP is being asked to review are focused more on outputs with the idea that the Program evaluation research by Bonney and Sweeney Tookes et al. would collect baseline information to help measure outcomes in the future
- Staff walked AP members through the draft indicators along with examples of how they could be measured (Attachment 2); AP members provided feedback on the indicators themselves as well as how they can be measured; key points from the group's discussion are summarized below; draft indicators are in italics followed by corresponding feedback; if an indicator isn't included in the notes below – it meant the AP generally supported the indicator and the examples of how it can be measured from the original [Attachment 2](#) document

- **GENERAL FEEDBACK:**
    - As work to finalize indicators and metrics – need to think about how best to present information so it is engaging and easier for audiences to digest; will be helpful to incorporate tables, figures, and other graphics to help share and visualize this information

- **INDICATOR:** *CitSci Program organizational infrastructure was developed to include the SAFMC Citizen Science Committee, Citizen Science Advisory Panels, and ad-hoc work groups and these groups met, as needed.*
    - Suggestion to include the number of people & number of organizations/partners who have participated via Committees / APs / ad-hoc groups; helps demonstrate how the Program is involving others in their efforts and trying to include many different perspectives within the Program
    - More meetings doesn't indicate Program is doing better; more important to think about quality over quantity of meetings

- **INDICATOR:** *Number of policies and procedures that have been created and have been used # times to create # of projects and # of research priorities*
    - Recommend removing this as an indicator and instead making sure the sub-bullets fit under other indicators
    - This seems like more an objective than an indicator or metric (e.g., Program created policies and procedures and they are being followed); not sure how feasible and informative it is to track the number of times they are being used
    - Other indicators may be more useful or appropriate to measure the sub-bullets under this indicator

- **INDICATOR:** *Number of visits to Program webpages; number of downloads of the SOPPS and/or other project support resources*
    - Members noted it would be helpful to provide more context for the page views (e.g., what are typical page view numbers for other Council's website and/or web pages;

action team table likely got more views on the 'old' website when Program was initially being developed)

- **INDICATOR:** *Number of external funding sources / partners*
  - o Suggest revising indicator to 'Number of external funding sources received'
  - o Like highlighting the collaborations/partners for each funding proposal
  - o Need to add funding from NOAA for CitSci Program Evaluation work
  - o Provide more context on MOU with ASMFC to highlight the impact this will have on the Program

- **INDICATOR:** *Number of citizen science proposals submitted*
  - o Suggest revising indicator to 'Efforts to support and facilitate the development of projects that address SAFMC research priorities'
  - o Helps demonstrate Program is working with partners across the region to facilitate develop of citsci projects that help address SAFMC citsci research priorities
  - o Potentially consider removing proposals listed in the 'Number of external funding sources received' – so there isn't overlap
  - o Would be interesting to break these down by year; could potentially demonstrate the growth of citsci efforts over time

- **INDICATOR:** *Number of stakeholders involved in development of citizen science projects. Stakeholders are from number of different organizations such as (list affiliations).*
  - o Group discussed possibility of making this indicator broader to include stakeholders involved in project development and project volunteers/participants; if don't combine with other 'volunteer participation' indicator, these two metrics should be close together in document

- **INDICATOR:** *Citizen science projects have contributed to (insert type of decision-making component) and used to make management decisions for # species/complex.*
  - o Suggest revising indicator language to 'CitSci projects have contributed to science necessary for management by filling # identified research gaps that have informed management decisions for #species/complex'
  - o Suggested edits to first bullet 'Opportunities for data from Council Citizen Science projects have been considered for use in management decisions to date have been limited; this is due in large part to the projects being relatively new'
  - o Suggest including SAFMC Release start date in bullet referencing SEDAR 68
  - o May be helpful to incorporate language into bullet on SEDAR 90 re: CitSci Program's intentional approach to support projects that fill identified data gaps (data holes?); FISHstory and SAFMC Release provided unique information that was not available from other data sources

- **INDICATOR:** *Number of projects have been evaluated for effectiveness. Effectiveness is shown by (insert measure showing how the project has been effective in management decisions*
  - Recommend removing this metric; effectiveness is demonstrated by previous metric (e.g., CitSci projects contributing to mgmt. decisions)
  - Noted that project evaluation will likely need to occur on different time scales for the Program and projects; project evaluation still needs to be done but doesn't need to be a separate metric

- **INDICATOR:** *Number of new partnerships that were created; Number of partners that continue to be part of the program. Partners include (list of partner organizations or types of partners).*
  - Consider revising indicator language to encompass partnerships more broadly (e.g., include new partnerships, strengthening of existing partnerships, consistency in partnerships over time)
  - Partnerships should include any organization, business, agency, individual aiding and propelling the CitSci Program in a positive direction
  - Recommend exploring ways to categorize partners (e.g., state, regional, local, industry) for this metric
  - Impact not just from number of partnerships – but also the work being done and relationships being built that help amplify the efforts of all (the sum is more than the individual parts); need to think more about how this can be measured
  - Strengthening and growing partnerships may also impact the interest and 'traction' of citizen science in marine fisheries field more broadly
  - Could update and link to the 'spiderweb – relationship building' graphic to help visualize growing network

- **INDICATOR:** *Number of times Program is approached for an endorsement letter (see SOPPS for details on endorsement program) and/or a letter of support for an outside project/grant.*
  - Recommend combining this indicator with 'Efforts to support and facilitate the development of citsci projects that address SAFMC research priorities'; letters of support could be another metric to help measure this indicator

- **INDICATORS:** *Number of new stakeholders that were engaged; Number of volunteers who were recruited for program; Number of volunteers who were trained through the program; Number of volunteers retained in the program; Number of projects volunteers participated in.*
  - Recommend combining volunteer related indicators (listed above) to make a broader Volunteer Engagement & Participation metric; could potentially incorporate Design teams into this metric
  - Suggest sharing information in a table format to easily summarize different types of engagement or participation in a more digestible way
  - When thinking about volunteer retention – consistent involvement in the Program/projects over time is impacted by the opportunities available; could develop graph with number of projects and number of volunteers – to try and tackle opportunity vs participation

- o Could explore ways to measure if participation in CitSci Program encourages or fosters involvement in Council in broader ways
- o Would be interesting to measure how many people weren't aware of the Council and/or haven't been involved in the Council (e.g., attend meeting, public comment) before becoming involved in CitSci Program; may be challenging to measure unless done through project onboarding or survey

- **INDICATOR:** *Number of people reached through communication and outreach plan. Number of people who were engaged or responded to communication and outreach plan by (list type of engagement).*
  - o Important to include an indicator like this; however there likely isn't one metric to measure this; will likely need to be a mix of multiple metrics
  - o Potentially ask for input from Outreach & Communication AP on which metrics may be most informative to measure this indicator
  - o If multiple metrics included, develop graphics to help share this information in a more digestible way
  - o Important to track Program's communication/outreach activities & number of people we have reached through these efforts

- **INDICATOR:** *Number of presentations and/or requests for presentations and/or invitations to serve on citsci related work groups*
  - o Could incorporate number of publications, invitations to serve on citsci work groups into this indicator

- **INDICATOR:** *Citizen Science Corner article included in quarterly newsletters, number of views.*
  - o Explore incorporating CitSci information in Council newsletter into metrics for 'Communication and Outreach indicator

- **INDICATOR:** *Citizen Science Program Annual Report completed and distributed, number of views/downloads.*
  - o Explore incorporating CitSci information in Council newsletter into metrics for 'Communication and Outreach' indicator
  - o Consider broadening to include project annual reports and/or other outreach products

- **INDICATOR:** *Number of ideas submitted through Project Idea Portal.*
  - o Consolidate with other project based indicators

- **INDICATOR:** *Number of matchmaking successes (e.g. connecting stakeholders/groups for project development).*
  - o Consolidate with other project based indicators

- **AP member suggested new potential indicator:** *Number of SAFMC Fishery Management Plans that have been addressed by a CitSci project*

- o Could help show breadth of work; could potentially be a stand along indicator or incorporated as a metric under another project based indicator

- **NEXT STEPS:**
  - o Staff will work to update indicators based on AP member feedback and begin work to present indicators/metrics in more engaging format
  - o Updated indicators and metrics will be shared with AP members for review and additional feedback
  - o As indicators are refined, AP members may be asked to provide input on which ones would be most important for the Program to monitor over time

Citizen Science Organizational Structure
- Staff provided an overview of the CitSci Program's organizational structure highlighting the purpose, membership and roles of the following groups: Council CitSci Committee, CitSci Program Advisory Panel (not yet formed), CitSci Operations AP, CitSci Projects AP, and CitSci Ad-hoc Committees
- Group discussed whether there was currently a need for the CitSci Program Advisory Panel; noted the way the Program has evolved there may not be a need for this group; the roles and responsibilities of this group have been absorbed by the other CitSci or Council Advisory Groups (existing CitSci APs, Project Design Teams, SSC); with limited staff capacity – makes sense to use existing advisory bodies if responsibilities being met
- **Recommend the Council consider removing the CitSci Program Advisory Panel from the CitSci SOPPS when convenient**

Other Business
- Staff shared that nominations for the SAFMC Award of Excellence are being solicited through June 30, 2025

Next Meeting
- Staff will send out doodle poll to select fall meeting dates (tentatively shooting for week of Sept 29th or Oct 13th); ideally would like to hold meeting in person if schedules will allow

Webinar Attendance:

Committee Members: Scott Baker, Wally Bubley, Rob Cheshire, Michelle Duval, Kathy Knowlton, Nikhil Mehta

Council Members: Amy Dukes & Kerry Marhefka

Other attendees: Robert Hale, Matthew Seeley

Council Staff: Julia Byrd, Meg Withers, Chip Collier, Greyson Webb, Christina Wiegand