SAFMC Citizen Science (CitSci) Projects AP
Webinar Meeting Summary
3/11/2025

Welcome and Meeting Overview
- Staff gave a short welcome; AP members introduced themselves to one another
- Staff reviewed the webinar goals:
    - Provide update on Citizen Science Program activities
    - Share information on Citizen Science Project Idea Portal & discuss promotion strategies
    - Researchers share findings from Citizen Science Program evaluation work. Discuss findings and ideas on how the Citizen Science Program can be refined based on findings

Citizen Science Program Update
- Staff provided a brief update on the Citizen Science Program highlighting recent activities for the SMILE, SAFMC Release, FISHstory projects, as well as the SciFish platform.
- AP members were supportive of Program activities; one said it was refreshing to see outreach and data collection efforts working with community members as part of the solution
- Suggestion to reach out to libraries as a potential resource for FISHstory photos; staff have been connected with Key West Library's historian, and he may be able to help connect staff with other libraries in the Keys

Citizen Science Project Idea Portal
- Staff shared information on the process used to update the Citizen Science research priorities that are used to guide the type of projects the Program support; in the past there wasn't a mechanism for members of the public to share their project ideas with the Program; to help address this the Council launched the Citizen Science Project Idea Portal – an online tool to gather citizen science ideas from stakeholders
- Citizen Science Project Idea Portal launched in summer 2024; staff have done limited promotion and there have been limited submissions thus far; Council will be updating CitSci Research Priorities in late 2025 – so would like to encourage stakeholders to submit ideas in the upcoming months
- Staff gave a quick walk through of the CitSci Project Idea Portal and asked AP members on ideas for strategies to promote the tool to fishermen
- Key points from the AP's discussion are highlighted below.
    - AP member asked what the staff mechanism is to respond to submissions; staff noted ideas are reviewed twice per year in May and October; staff will respond to submitter's individually thanking them for idea; sharing that the idea will be considered when updating the citsci research priorities; and providing additional info as appropriate
    - Expectation management is critical; important to ensure stakeholders who submit ideas feel heard; staff agreed and acknowledged it can be challenging to balance getting new ideas for the program and managing expectations – just because an idea comes through the portal doesn't mean it will be implemented immediately; however, if multiple stakeholders submit similar ideas it can serve as a signal for projects the Program should strive to pursue

- o Need to have a mechanism to share ideas submitted through the Portal with relevant partners / collaborators (e.g., if project idea is submitted for a state managed species it is shared with state agency) and vice versa
- o As this is scaled up – will be helpful to develop an overview summarizing project ideas that have been submitted that could allow stakeholders to provide comments (e.g., folks can 'like' an idea); this could provide a way for folks to note their interest in an idea without making a separate submission; could also incorporate a status bar showing whether ideas have been reviewed, etc.
- o Staff noted as work is done to scale up the Project Idea Portal – need to be cognizant to scale up in a way that is manageable for our capacity (limited staff and resources); need to scale up in a way that is manageable for workload and is also worthwhile for stakeholders to submit ideas
- o May be helpful to open portal to state partners and other collaborators; fishermen may pitch ideas to other partners who could submit those ideas on behalf of fishermen; could help broader the ideas submitted through the portal
- o Portal may be intimidating to some fishermen; could incorporate messaging that notes this is brainstorming – there aren't any bad ideas; partial ideas are okay; that staff can help further idea; having feedback loop may help make portal less intimidating
- o Could promote via National Fisherman Magazine (trusted source) and/or through fishermen organizations which have representatives that may be more comfortable completing online forms and could share ideas for their broader membership; suggestions for Keys organizations include OFF - Organized Fishermen of FL and FL Keys Commercial Fishing Association
- o Could promote via fishing clubs and/or guide associations; members noted sharing info on the Portal would be complementary with presentations Program is already doing on projects like Release
- o May currently be more productive to share info on the portal while doing other outreach activities (seminars, etc.) as opposed to creating an outreach product (e.g., handout) to share more broadly
- o May be helpful to share info on Portal during Council related outreach, webinars, info sessions – research ideas often pop up when hearing about management issues – so sharing a link in a webinar chat may provide a good opportunity for submissions
- o CitSci Program and other outreach efforts are trying to engage fishermen to participate in a variety of ways; need to be cognizant of issue overload; staff noted this is something discussed internally, currently have focused more on getting people involved with projects vs submitting project ideas; want to make sure we're sharing info on the Portal in way that doesn't hinder participation in other projects
- o Much of this engagement work is focused on building relationships which takes time; CitSci Program and broader Council are working to do a better job getting out in fishing communities, meeting people where they are; group supported continuation of this work

Citizen Science Program Initial Evaluation
- Staff provided background on the initial CitSci Program evaluation efforts

- Rick Bonney presented findings from scientist/manager online survey (see Table 1 in Attachment 3f for a summary of findings)
- Jennifer Sweeney Tookes presented findings from fishermen interviews; interviews were conducted with all sectors – commercial, for-hire, and recreational fishermen (see Table 1 in Attachment 3f for a summary of findings)
- During the webinar, there was limited time for discussion of Bonney and Sweeney Tookes et al.'s research findings and how the CitSci Program can be refined based on those efforts; AP members provided initial feedback during the meeting and could provide additional feedback via email; key points from the group's discussion are highlighted below
    - o Research/presentations were very well done and informative for the Program and broader Council; felt findings were spot on highlighting the frustration and trust issues between fishermen and the science/management community and in documenting that fisheries management feels like a black box to many fishermen
    - o Several members noted trust is becoming an increasingly challenging issue in fisheries; highlighted that this dynamic makes citsci in the ornithological community different than in the fisheries community; noted the need to improve or increase transparency in fisheries management
    - o Important to think about next steps in getting citsci data incorporated into assessment and management; scientists often worry about citsci data having biases and not being representative of the fishing population; need to work towards measuring source and direction of biases so these types of data can be used for decision making more frequently; fishermen would likely be more willing to participate in projects when can demonstrate data use
    - o Fisheries management literacy is a big issue and may drive some of the trust issues; folks seem to be more familiar with state agencies than federal agencies; supportive of recommendations to address this issue
    - o Noted uncertainty in some recreational data sources used for management and were supportive of citsci projects being used to help supplement or validate data in this sector
    - o Need to be cognizant of how data are discussed as this may impact trust issues and willingness to participate in citsci projects; AP member provided example of the SEFIER program, the discussion about how the data currently can't be used for management, and how that has impacted trust with the fishermen
    - o Members supportive of doing small citsci projects in localized communities to help supplement and/or validate data sources; noted efforts like this would likely help trust issues
    - o Noted importance of identifying data gaps that would work well with a CitSci approach and in working with Design Teams (diverse group of stakeholders – including data end user and fishermen) to help identify data daps and assist with project development

Next Meeting
- Staff will send out doodle poll to select fall meeting dates; meeting will likely be held in late Sept/Oct timeframe

Webinar Attendance:

Committee Members: Bryan Fluech, David Moss, Thomas Newman, Matt Perkinson, Justin Smith, Mimi Stafford

Council Members: Amy Dukes, Kerry Marhefka, Trish Murphey

Other attendees: Rick Bonney, Jennifer Sweeney-Tookes, Matt Seeley

Council Staff: Julia Byrd, Chip Collier, Ashley Oliver, Greyson Webb