



THE SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Introduction to Social Science and Economics for Fisheries Management

Presentation Outline

Social and Economic Panel Discussion Document

April 2026

Background

Council staff are developing a presentation that will serve as an introduction to the social science and economic work conducted as part of the fishery management process. The presentation is intended to be used as orientation material in a variety of settings but is generally aimed at a fishermen audience. The intent is to provide a clear, practical understanding of how social and economic information is gathered and used to inform management decisions.

Presentation Outline

Why Social Science and Economics Matter to Fishermen

Goal: Engage the audience from the start of the presentation by explaining why understanding the social and economic information used in fisheries management is important not just for managers, but also for fishermen.

Key Message: Fisheries management is not just about fish biology, it is about people, businesses, and communities.

Presentation Content:

- When fishermen understand how their experiences and knowledge are considered in management, they are better able to provide meaningful input to fisheries managers and advocate for regulations that will support their businesses and communities.

What Are Social Science and Economics

Goal: Define what social science and economics are *and are not* within a fisheries context.

Key Message: Social science works to understand the role a fishery plays within a fishing community including traditions, culture, and dependance. Economics works to understand the cost, revenue, value, and market effects of fishing. Social science and economics are *not* about telling fishermen how to fish but are about understanding the real-world effects of fisheries management on fishery participants and communities.

Presentation Content:

- Definitions and examples of how social science and economics can be interpreted in a fisheries context.

Why Do Fisheries Managers Need Social and Economic Information

Goal: Explain the legal requirements related to social and economic considerations.

Key Message: Consideration of social and economic effects is mandated by the Magnuson-Stevens Act, the federal legislation that governs fisheries management through the Council process.

Presentation Content:

- National Standards
- Optimum Yield definition

What Types of Social and Economic Information Are Collected

Goal: Understand the different types of information that inform social and economic analyses.

Key Message: Fisheries management relies on a range of social and economic data to better understand the human dimensions of fisheries.

Presentation Content:

- Business Information (trip costs, landings, revenue, ex-vessel value, permit cost).
- Economic value (consumer and producer surplus).
- Fishermen Behavior (where/when fishing occurs, gear choices, entry and exit).
- Community Information (dependance on fisheries, cultural importance, well-being, safety at sea, shoreside businesses and job support).

How Is Social and Economic Information Collected?

Goal: Explain the different mechanisms in place to gather social and economic information.

Key Message: Social and economic information is gathered in multiple ways (qualitative and quantitative) and through multiple channels to try and capture a complete picture of fishing communities and businesses.

Presentation Content:

- Surveys and Interviews
- Logbooks
- Dealer Reports
- Public Comment
- Advisory Panels
- Focused Workshops
 - Lines of Communications
 - Mackerel Port Meetings
 - Dolphin Wahoo Participatory Workshops
 - Snapper Grouper Visioning

What Social and Economic Analyses Are Presented to the Council

Goal: Understand how the social and economic data collected is analyzed to inform fisheries management decisions.

Key Message: The Council uses social and economic analyses to understand how different management options affect fishing businesses, participants, and communities and how to compare different trade-offs to ensure human environment needs are considered alongside biological needs.

Presentation Content:

- Characterization of the Social and Economic Environments
- Economic Effects Analyses: how regulations might affect business operations such as costs and revenues or net benefits to fishery participants.
- Social Impact Analyses: how regulations might change community well-being, safety at sea, or infrastructure stability.
- Distributional Analysis: how regulatory effects may vary between sectors, communities, or regions.

How Does This Information Influence Management Decisions (Real World Example)

Goal: Use a real-life example to drive home how important social and economic data can be to the decision-making process.

Key Message: Social and economic information is a critical part of the decision-making process. It can directly shape management decisions by highlighting the effects on fishermen, businesses, and communities.

Presentation Content:

- King mackerel minimum size limit (not changed due to input from fishermen that it would negatively affect the market).
- Dolphin recreational bag limit (balancing the needs of different communities in North Carolina vs. Florida).

How Fishermen Can Provide Social and Economic Information

Goal: Explain that fishermen play a critical role in the collection of social and economic information.

Key Message: The social and economic information used in management often comes directly from fishermen, their businesses, and their experiences. Participation in the process is critical to ensure that information is as accurate and complete as possible.

Presentation Content:

- Advisory Panels
- Lines of Communication
- Public Comment
- Participate in Surveys
- Logbooks

Big Picture Takeaway

Goal: End the presentation by again highlighting the importance of social and economic information in the fisheries management process.

Key Message: Robust and accurate social and economic information ensures that management decisions don't just address the biological needs of the fishery but are responsive to the fishermen and communities that rely on them.

Questions for the Social and Economic Panel

- Given the intended lay audience and limited presentation time, does the SEP suggest any additional topics or concepts that should be included in the presentation?
- Is the material appropriate and accessible for fishermen? Does it properly convey why understanding social and economic analyses is important for fishermen? Does the SEP have any pointers on how to present complex topics?
- Does it properly convey the value of social and economic information to the process and motivate participation in data collection efforts?
- Are there any management examples or visuals that could strengthen this presentation?