



THE SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

# Stakeholder Engagement Meetings

Socioeconomic Panel Discussion Document

April 2024

### Background

Stakeholder input has always been a fundamental component of the Magnuson Act and council system. However, fisheries stakeholders increasingly express declining confidence in management institutions and often state that they feel their concerns are not heard or addressed. This is occurring against a backdrop of increasing demands on everyone’s time and a shift from traditional ways of interacting with the public. Moreover, climate change imposes challenges to ecosystems, stocks, and fisheries on scales of both time and space that may be incompatible with established fishery information systems. While Participatory Science or Citizen Science, and local ecological knowledge are used as ways of improving the resolution and timeliness of the decision-making information available to the Council, stakeholders must be willing to get involved for these techniques to succeed. New ways of interacting with stakeholders are needed to address declining confidence and improve the ability of the Council to address developing challenges. Ultimately, the Council is designed to represent fishing communities and new methods of stakeholder engagement can help provide Council members with information that allows them to accurately represent their constituents at the table.

To that end, Council staff has begun work to develop a plan for holding stakeholder engagement meetings along the south Atlantic coast, meeting fishermen in their communities. The traditional public comment format does not always allow for two-way discourse between Council members and fisheries stakeholders. These stakeholder engagement meetings will provide an opportunity

for Council members to have productive dialogues with fisheries participants. By engaging stakeholders in this more informal setting, Council members will be able to build relationships and increase engagement in the management process. Building relationships and momentum for participation in the management process requires consistent interaction with stakeholders over time, so staff intend for these types of meetings to become a regular part of the Council’s engagement efforts.

<b>Staff Planning Team</b>	<b>Position</b>
Christina Wiegand	Fishery Social Scientist
John Carmichael	Executive Director
Myra Brouwer	Deputy Director for Management
Allie Iberle	Fishery Scientist
Mike Schmidtke	Fishery Scientist
John Hadley	Fishery Economist and FMP Coordinator
Nick Smillie	Digital Media & Communications Specialist
Julia Byrd	Citizen Science Program Manager

<b>Council Planning Team (Primary (Secondary))</b>	<b>State Represented</b>
Tom Roller ( <i>Trish Murphey</i> )	North Carolina
Kerry Marhefka ( <i>Gary Borland</i> )	South Carolina
Judy Helmey	Georgia
Jessica McCawley ( <i>Laurilee Thompson</i> )	Florida

	<b>Date</b>	<b>Development of Stakeholder Meetings</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	March 2023	Senior staff discusses the development of port meetings with Council leadership and gets approval for staff to begin developing a plan.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	August 2023	Staff planning team meets and begins to discuss goals and objectives, and timing for stakeholder meetings.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	September 2023	Stakeholder meetings are noted during the September Council meeting staff report with more information to come in December.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Fall 2023	Staff discusses goals and objectives for Stakeholder Meetings and drafts a document for review at the December 2023 Council meeting.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	December 2023	Council reviews/discusses their goals and objectives for Stakeholder Meetings and provides input on draft document. Volunteers for a Council planning team.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Winter 2024	Staff begin drafting a structure for Stakeholder Meetings.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	March 2024	Council provides comments on proposed alternating state scheduling for Stakeholder Meeting structure.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Spring 2024	Council planning team meets to discuss the structure for stakeholder meetings and tentative 2025 meeting locations.
<input type="checkbox"/>	June 2024	Council reviews structure and locations developed by staff and the planning team.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Summer 2024	Council planning team meetings to discuss outreach and evaluation methods for stakeholder meetings.

□	September 2024	Fully drafted plan (structure, schedule, evaluation, etc.) presented to the Council.
□	Fall 2024	Stakeholder Meetings discussed with scheduled fall advisory panels.
□	December 2024	Council approves the final Stakeholder Meeting plan for implementation in Winter 2025 and discusses meeting topics.
□	Winter 2025	<b>Stakeholder Meetings Begin.</b>

## Stakeholder Meeting Goals and Objectives

**Overall Goal: Build relationships with fishery stakeholders by engaging them in an informal setting that allows for two-way conversations.**

- **Objective One:** Provide an opportunity for an open dialogue and mutual learning between Council members and stakeholders.
  - Building trust, improving communication, and fostering mutual respect.
- **Objective Two:** Increase knowledge of the fisheries management process to encourage stakeholder engagement in Council initiatives.
  - Provide stakeholders tools to help them confidently participate in the management process.
  - Increase involvement in public comment, advisory panels, the Citizen Science Program, and other Council initiatives.
- **Objective Three:** Provide a mechanism for stakeholders to bring their concerns and observations forward, directly to Council members.
  - Gather input to potentially inform proactive management action.
  - Provide Council members with information helpful for setting their workload priorities.
- **Objective Four:** Provide an opportunity for Council members to share information on salient management issues with stakeholders.
  - Allow Council members to discuss challenging management topics with stakeholders.

## Stakeholder Meeting Structure

### Pre-Meeting Logistics:

- Five Council staff members would attend each meeting along with all three of the Council members that represent each state.
- Specific topics to be discussed will be decided upon by meeting with state specific Council members and agency staff to determine which topics are most salient for a given state or city and for each sector. Topics for the structured breakout group session will remain the same for all cities within a given state, topics for the unstructured tabling session may change from city to city.
- Information will be provided to attendees in a variety of formats, possibly including flyers, looping PowerPoints or posters). Topics covered may include:
  - General flyer with information on the Council (same at each meeting).
  - Management 101 and upcoming meetings and opportunities to participate (same at each meeting with updated participation opportunities).
  - Citizen Science and BFP outreach materials (same at each meeting).

- Information on the topics to be discussed (different for each state).
- Meeting room set up would include two sets of tables for discussion as opposed to the traditional chairs and a stage set up. Each table set would host one topic during the structured breakout sessions. During the unstructured stations, tables could have different topics – but stations would also be set up in the corners of the room (no table, but poster or looping PowerPoint) to encourage movement between stations.
- There will be a pre-meeting training session so that all staff and Council members are comfortable with their role and responsibilities during each stakeholder engagement meeting.

### **Prologue:**

- **Objective:** Greet attendees and learn about why they decided to attend and what they hope to get out of the night’s stakeholder meeting.
- **Activities/Interactions:** Welcome table near entrance to meeting room. At least two staff members and one Council member will sign individuals in (paper forms) as they arrive, provide them a fish group for the evening, and direct them to flip charts. There will be two flip charts and markers available for attendees to answer the following questions:
  - “Why did you choose to attend the stakeholder meeting tonight?”
  - “What is one topic you hope to discuss or learn about tonight?”
 At least two staff members will monitor the flip charts and be available for questions. Remaining staff and Council members will be available for informal meet and greets and helping out where needed.

### **Introduction:**

- **Objective:** Formally welcome attendees, review the flip chart answers and how they will be used, explain the Council’s goals and objectives for stakeholder engagement meetings, ground rules, and detail how the night will operate.
- **Activities/Interactions:** One Council member will be giving the presentation; the other two Council members will be standing at the front of the room to help with questions. Two staff members will be helping any attendees that arrive late get signed in. One staff member will be watching the presentation and monitoring the time. Two staff members will be reviewing answers to the intro flip chart questions and resetting for breakout groups.

### **Chapter I: Structured Breakout Groups:**

- **Objective:** Provide and gather information on the most salient issues as identified in collaboration with state specific Council members.
- **Activities/Interactions:** There will be three different breakout groups, attendees are separated into groups based on the fish they are handed when signing in. One Council member will facilitate the discussion and one staff member will take notes for each group. The remaining staff will monitor time and move between groups to assist, as needed. The facilitator of each group will provide a brief synopsis of the topic and ask one or two pre-prepared questions to get conversation flowing, allowing for modification

as needed based on flip-chart answers at the beginning of the evening. Attendees will rotate between all three groups so that everyone has an opportunity to discuss each topic.

### **Intermission:**

- **Objective:** A quick break for casual conversations and to allow staff to reset the room for the next part of the evening.
- **Activities/Interactions:** Council members will be available to chat with attendees while staff resets the room for the next section of the meeting and summarizes key points from the structured breakout group discussions.

### **Chapter II: Unstructured Breakout Groups:**

\*\*Prior to the start of this session, staff will note the key points from each of the structured breakout groups and that should attendees want to stick around for more discussion after the meeting ends at 8p, staff and Council members will stick around to chat. \*\*

- **Objective:** Allow attendees to have more informal conversations with staff and Council members on a variety of topics that may be of interest to attendees.
- **Activities/Interactions:** There will be a maximum of four stations set up around the room. There will be a lead at each station that is prepared to provide information and answer questions about the station topic. Who is leading each station will depend on individual staff and Council member knowledge and comfort. Remaining staff and Council members not leading a specific station will be floaters, moving around the room to assist where needed. There will always be a “Management 101” and a “Best Fishing Practices and Citizen Science” station along with two other topics that will be decided in advance of each meeting. Depending on the state and availability, state agency staff may be able to help work stations during this session.

### **Conclusion:**

- **Objective:** Thank attendees, recap the Council’s goals and objectives for stakeholder engagement meetings, and note where the information goes next. Remind attendees that staff and Council members will be sticking around if attendees are interested in having more conversations.
- **Activities/Interactions:** One Council member will give the presentation; the other two Council members will stand at the front of the room to help with questions. Council staff will monitor time and help answer questions, as needed.

### **Post Meeting Logistics:**

- Council members and staff that attended the meeting will hold a debrief the following morning to discuss what was learned during the meeting, key takeaways, and ways to improve future meetings.
- A summary report of the meeting will be prepared and presented to the Council at their next meeting for discussion.
- Staff will follow up with meeting attendees in the following ways:

- Thank you email to all attendees, a bullet point list of some things learned, and information on upcoming Council meetings and opportunities for participation.
- Once prepared the summary report will be sent to attendees to allow them the opportunity to review.
- Photos of the evening will be posted to social media along with a list of future stakeholder engagement meetings scheduled.

### **Adjustments Based on Attendance**

Some stakeholder engagement meetings may have higher or lower attendance, the following adjustments to the above agenda can be made based on the number of attendees. Staff and Council members present at each meeting will discuss, prior to the start of the meeting, whether or not it is necessary to switch to the low attendance or high attendance scenario.

#### *Low attendance (less than 10 attendees):*

Breakout groups no longer occur, instead each topic is discussed with the entire group one at a time. Each Council member and staff notetaker will remain the same. Unstructured session switched to a town hall/fireside chat format. All Council members will sit at the front of the room with Council staff along the side and prepared to help with questions as needed.

#### *High attendance (more than 30 attendees):*

Breakout groups no longer rotate throughout the room and intermission will be shortened to five minutes. Each group will walk through all three of the topics. Unstructured session still occurs, but all secondaries operate as floaters and move to any areas with “log jams.”

## **Stakeholder Meeting Schedule**

- Meetings will be held during the winter months when fishing levels tend to be lower.
- North Carolina and Georgia will be held one year, and South Carolina and Florida will be held the subsequent year.
- Stakeholder engagement meetings will be held every year, rotating between the two sets of states.

## **Questions for the Socioeconomic Panel**

1. Stakeholder engagement meetings are different from traditional opportunities for public input because they are not tied to a specific management action. The Council will need to communicate to stakeholders how the input gathered will be used, the benefits of attending these meetings, and the opportunities they provide that traditional meeting processes may not provide. Does the SEP have suggestions for how to help the Council have these discussions?
2. Is two hours an appropriate amount of time to ask stakeholders to attend a meeting? Should staff prioritize time for the structured breakout groups or the unstructured breakout groups session?
3. Should staff change structured and unstructured topics by city and state or try to maintain some consistency each year.
4. Considering staff workload, does the SEP have suggestions on how information could be presented during the unstructured session (looping PowerPoint, informational flyers, etc.)

5. Does the SEP have suggestions for how to adjust the proposed structure for low or high attendance scenarios?
6. Are there other methods that staff should consider for facilitating the meeting to better meet the objective of providing an opportunity for an open dialogue and mutual learning between Council members and stakeholders?
7. Are there novel or creative ways to summarize the information gathered during these meetings for Council members and the public?
8. Discussion questions will be developed to help begin conversation during the structured breakout groups. Are there best practices for developing discussion questions? Would any SEP members be willing to volunteer to review discussion questions developed by staff?
9. Staff has not begun development of evaluation methods yet, but does the SEP have any ideas for how the success of these stakeholder engagement meetings could be measured?