

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201
North Charleston, SC 29405

ATTN: Amber Von Harten, Fishery Outreach Specialist
November 29, 2013

Dear Ms. Von Harten,

I am a former employee of the National Marine Fisheries Service in Beaufort, NC, and remain interested in the state of fisheries management in the southeast. I read about your visioning project when visiting the website of the South Atlantic Council. It is clear that you have made substantial progress.

The purpose of this letter is to ask if you have considered organizing the Council's strategic planning around the ten national standards in the Magnuson-Stevens Act rather than the four proposed categories of management, science, communication and governance. My alternative viewpoint is that the national standards represent broad principles of management that subsume the types of goals that appear in the draft list of strategic goals and objectives. The Council's proposed goals and objectives for the strategic plan could be redistributed among new categories defined by the national standards. Some existing goals from the draft list might be changed to fit within the new broad categories, and other goals might be added. The new list of strategic goals and objectives would guide the Council toward achievement of the broad principles of management as outlined in the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

There are advantages for this approach. First, by organizing the strategic plan around the national standards, the Council would ensure consistency between the generic principles of management that apply to all regional fishery management councils and all fishery management plans and the Council's application of these principles in a context specific to the south Atlantic region. Among other things, this consistency should assist the Council if it needs to defend its management actions in court. The Council probably would have a more difficult task in court cases if it had to defend management objectives or actions that were inconsistent with the national standards. Second, this approach would acknowledge that the Council often must consider tradeoffs among the national standards when considering how best to manage its fisheries. For example, management actions designed to conserve fish stocks (national standard 1) may entail a reduction in the efficiency of harvesting (national standard 5), and more biologically conservative management may entail additional restrictions on harvesting efficiency, at least in the short term and perhaps even in the long term. Third, the process of considering these tradeoffs while striving to balance long-term management goals provides an opportunity for the Council to prioritize its long-term goals while ensuring that all national standards are considered in its management deliberations.

Thank you for listening. Respectfully submitted,

Jim Waters
Morehead City, NC

National Standards

- (1) Conservation and management measures shall prevent overfishing while achieving, on a continuing basis, the optimum yield from each fishery for the United States fishing industry.
- (2) Conservation and management measures shall be based upon the best scientific information available.
- (3) To the extent practicable, an individual stock of fish shall be managed as a unit throughout its range, and interrelated stocks of fish shall be managed as a unit or in close coordination.
- (4) Conservation and management measures shall not discriminate between residents of different States. If it becomes necessary to allocate or assign fishing privileges among various United States fishermen, such allocation shall be (A) fair and equitable to all such fishermen; (B) reasonably calculated to promote conservation; and (C) carried out in such manner that no particular individual, corporation, or other entity acquires an excessive share of such privileges.
- (5) Conservation and management measures shall, where practicable, consider efficiency in the utilization of fishery resources; except that no such measure shall have economic allocation as its sole purpose.
- (6) Conservation and management measures shall take into account and allow for variations among, and contingencies in, fisheries, fishery resources, and catches.
- (7) Conservation and management measures shall, where practicable, minimize costs and avoid unnecessary duplication.
- (8) Conservation and management measures shall, consistent with the conservation requirements of this Act (including the prevention of overfishing and rebuilding of overfished stocks), take into account the importance of fishery resources to fishing communities by utilizing economic and social data that meet the requirements of paragraph (2), in order to (A) provide for the sustained participation of such communities, and (B) to the extent practicable, minimize adverse economic impacts on such communities.
- (9) Conservation and management measures shall, to the extent practicable, (A) minimize bycatch and (B) to the extent bycatch cannot be avoided, minimize the mortality of such bycatch.
- (10) Conservation and management measures shall, to the extent practicable, promote the safety of human life at sea.