

SOUTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL VISIONING WORKSHOP

SUMMARY REPORT

MARCH 2013

After some introductory remarks from Snapper Grouper Committee Chair, the Council received a brief presentation from Council staff on the process and elements of strategic planning. Council staff then presented the Decision Document that was prepared to guide the Council's discussions during this second visioning workshop. Below are listed the decisions that the Council addressed, rationale presented during the discussion, and the outcome of each decision.

Decision #1: What fisheries will be included?

Council members offered the following statements during the discussion:

- If the Council has chosen to engage in a strategic planning process, then all the managed fisheries should be included. This would ensure that linkages among fisheries are acknowledged and the planning process takes these linkages into consideration.
- The Council should address multiple fisheries and seek to find balance among them.
- A focused problem statement would aid in determining which fisheries the Council should include in its strategic plan.
- The Council should focus on the snapper grouper fishery because the fishery is of equal concern to all the South Atlantic states and addressing problems in the snapper grouper fishery would be beneficial to other fisheries in the region.
- The Council should be conscious of the close interaction between the snapper grouper and mackerel fisheries.
- Lack of public trust is something to consider. However, addressing the issue of reinstating buy-in from stakeholders is not the purpose of this planning process. The Marine Recreational Education Program, on the other hand, is aimed at addressing public trust.
- The snapper grouper fishery is the only South Atlantic managed fishery that has the most balanced commercial and recreational components.
- Federal management of the mackerel fishery is complicated and there are a number of issues at the state level that further complicate management. In addition, the fishery is managed jointly with the Gulf of Mexico and implementing a strategic plan for that fishery would necessitate inclusion of the Gulf Council regarding the specific strategies utilized.
- Developing a vision and strategic plan for the snapper grouper fishery alone is going to be challenging. The Council should, therefore, focus solely on this fishery.
- Expanding a visioning and strategic planning process beyond the snapper grouper fishery will inevitably increase inefficiency. If the Council tries to accomplish too much, it will not do anything well.

DECISION: The Council will develop a vision and strategic plan for the snapper grouper fishery only at this time.

Decision #2: How does the Council want to refer to this process?

- The visioning process should be shared equally between managers and stakeholders. Hence it should be referred to as a “shared” process.
- Development of a “Shared Vision” including vision from stakeholders and managers
- “Shared Vision and Strategic Review of the Snapper Grouper Fishery”
- “Visioning and Strategic Planning for the SG Fishery: Finding a Way Forward”
- Include “sustainability”, “profitability” and “year-round fishery”

DECISION: “Finding a Way Forward: Shared Vision and Strategic Planning for the Snapper Grouper Fishery”

Decision # 3: How does the Council want to approach evaluating existing objectives?

- The Council expressed interest in engaging the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel to evaluate the existing objectives under the Snapper Grouper FMP.
- The Council agreed that stakeholders should provide input on strategies to attain objectives and not so much the objectives themselves.
- The Council wants to differentiate between objectives that are required by law, and those that are not.
- The Council should clearly articulate what it expects to obtain from stakeholders
- The Snapper Grouper AP will review existing FMP objectives at their upcoming April 2013 meeting and provide their input and recommendations for the Council to consider at their June meeting.
- Council needs to be conscious not to stifle stakeholder input. The public should not feel that the Council already has settled on objectives and how to accomplish them. Stakeholders should feel free to propose additional objectives or changes to existing ones.

DECISION: The Council will undertake evaluation of objectives before soliciting input from stakeholders

Decision #4: Which stakeholders would be involved?

- It is important to engage both the snapper grouper advisory panel and specific groups of stakeholders
- The Council would request that AP members submit recommendations for key stakeholders that should be engaged.
- Names and contact information of members of the public that have previously submitted useful input to the Council could be assembled to develop a list of potential “key stakeholders”

DECISION: Invite involvement of Snapper Grouper AP members as well as “key stakeholders”

Decision #5: How would the stakeholders be involved?

- Stakeholders should provide input on the appropriateness of objectives, and not be involved in drafting those objectives.
- Could a survey be used to reach out to those who may not be comfortable providing input in a public forum
- Council staff and NOAA GC will bring information back to the Council on the process the Council would need to follow to utilize a survey and comply with the mandates of the Paperwork Reduction Act
- Councils may be exempt from PRA restrictions on surveys to improve customer service. This is the approach the MAFMC used.
- Written comments can also be used, similar to what the Council already does to solicit input on FMP amendments.
- Survey work may take up a lot of staff time and may be a component that needs to be contracted out.
- Look at results of the MAFMC stakeholder involvement process to inform the type of input the Council should seek.
- Port meetings could be divided into 4 focus groups: 1) fishermen with commercial snapper grouper permits and those with both commercial and for-hire permits; 2) fishermen with for-hire permits and private recreational anglers; 3) restaurant associations, tourism boards, etc.; and 4) conservation organizations and other NGOs.
- The Council discussed the proposed plan below and concurred that it would be a good initial approach:

Proposed Plan for Stakeholder Involvement

- An initial round of meetings could be held in conjunction with public hearings in August 2013. They would be intended to inform the public of the process and their role. In addition, other means to disseminate information, such as video clips, could be used and distributed prior to the meetings. Stakeholders could submit suggestions for broad goals and/or objectives at public meetings in addition to social media/online comment collection.
- The Advisory Panel(s) would provide specific comments on a vision for the fishery and management goals during their scheduled meetings in 2013 as appropriate. AP members would be encouraged to speak with other fishermen in their community and sector, and provide input that represents broad groups of stakeholders.
- In June 2013, the Council would develop a vision statement and revise the goals and some of the objectives under each goal, as time allows.
- In September 2013, the Council would continue to revise and develop objectives as appropriate.
- Smaller focused port meetings would be held in fall 2013 to discuss objectives in a strategic plan to meet management goals. Council members would be strongly encouraged to attend all meetings or at least those in their state.
- In spring of 2014, the AP(s) would provide specific comments on the draft strategic plan and objectives. As with the first round of AP involvement, AP members would be encouraged to discuss items with other fishermen in their community/sector and provide input that represents a broad stakeholder group.

DECISION: Proceed with proposed plan above, with the understanding that the timeline may shift and the number of meetings to be held will depend on funding availability.

Decision #6: Does the Council want meetings to be facilitated?

- The Council would prefer to utilize a facilitator for both the Council workshops and future port meetings.
- Council staff could facilitate the June and September Council workshops.
- A team consisting of Council members and key stakeholders could be used to facilitate port meetings
- The Council agrees that reaching out to stakeholders to organize port meetings is a good approach. This would cut the cost and impart a sense of ownership on stakeholders.

DECISION: The options for facilitators will be further explored. Council staff will be responsible for providing facilitation for the June and September 2013 Council workshops.