



2020 Implementation Plan

Approved February 11, 2020

This Implementation Plan is a companion document to the Council's 2020-2024 Strategic Plan. The 2020-2024 Strategic Plan identifies five goals, 21 objectives, and 87 strategies. Implementation of the strategic plan will be a long-term process supported through the annual development of one-year implementation plans that identify specific tasks necessary for achieving the Council's goals and objectives. Annual implementation plans are used as a planning tool by the Council and staff and as a way to update the public on progress toward achieving the goals and objectives of the strategic plan. Each year's plan is designed to provide a comprehensive and realistic framework for merging the Council's ongoing projects with new initiatives.

The 2020 Implementation Plan identifies specific activities the Council expects to undertake in 2020 to make progress toward achieving the goals and objectives of the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan. The document is organized into two sections:

1. The **2020 Proposed Actions and Deliverables** section provides a high-level overview of the activities, amendments, frameworks, specifications, and other projects the Council expects to initiate, continue, or complete during the year. This section is organized by Fishery Management Plan (FMP) and topic areas.
2. The **Strategic Plan Framework and 2020 Priority Activities** section organizes the Council's planned activities for the upcoming year under the five goal areas and 21 objectives defined in the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan. This section provides information about the anticipated timeframe for each item.

STRATEGIC PLAN OVERVIEW

Vision

Healthy marine ecosystems and thriving, sustainable fisheries and fishing communities that provide the greatest overall benefit to the nation.

Mission

The Council manages fisheries in federal waters of the Mid-Atlantic region for their long-term sustainability and productivity consistent with the national standards of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. The Council is committed to the stewardship of these fisheries, and associated ecosystems and fishing communities, through the collaborative development of effective, science-based fishery management plans and policies.

Core Values

The Council's activities, operations, and decisions are guided by the following core values:

- Stewardship
- Integrity
- Effectiveness
- Fairness
- Competence
- Transparency

The complete 2020-2024 Strategic Plan and other related documents are available at www.mafmc.org/strategic-plan.

2020 Proposed Actions and Deliverables

SUMMER FLOUNDER, SCUP, BLACK SEA BASS

1. Review 2021 specifications for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass
2. Develop and approve 2021 recreational management measures for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass
3. Develop advisory panel fishery performance reports
4. Initiate action to revise recreational management system for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass to allow for greater stability and flexibility
5. Evaluate commercial scup discards and gear restricted areas
6. Conduct scoping and develop alternatives for Recreational/Commercial Allocation Amendment
7. Continue development of Black Sea Bass Commercial State Allocation Amendment
8. Initiate Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM) management strategy evaluation (MSE) for summer flounder

BLUEFISH

9. Review 2021 bluefish specifications
10. Develop and approve 2021 bluefish recreational measures
11. Develop advisory panel fishery performance report
12. Continue development of Bluefish Allocation and Rebuilding Amendment

GOLDEN AND BLUELINE TILEFISH

13. Develop and approve 2021-2022 golden tilefish specifications
14. Review 2021 blueline tilefish specifications
15. Develop advisory panel fishery performance reports
16. Support efforts to address private recreational permitting and reporting issues (NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Fisheries Regional Office (GARFO) lead)
17. Tilefish survey (ongoing)

MACKEREL, SQUID, BUTTERFISH (MSB)

18. Develop and approve 2021-2022 specifications for Atlantic mackerel and butterfish
19. Develop and approve 2021-2023 specifications for longfin and *Illex* squids
20. Develop advisory panel fishery performance reports
21. Review butterfish cap performance report
22. Take final action on *Illex* Permit and MSB Goals and Objectives Amendment
23. Review recommendations of *Illex* Working Group regarding real time *Illex* squid management and/or quota adjustments
24. *Illex* growth and maturity data project
25. Review 2020-2021 chub mackerel specifications
26. HMS/chub mackerel diet study (final report)

RIVER HERRING AND SHAD (RH/S)

27. Develop and approve RH/S cap for Atlantic mackerel fishery for 2021-2022
28. Develop RH/S discussion papers (e.g. biological caps, New England alignment, hotspots)

SPINY DOGFISH

29. Review 2021 spiny dogfish specifications
30. Develop advisory panel fishery performance report

SURFCLAMS AND OCEAN QUAHOGS

31. Develop and approve 2021-2026 specifications for surfclams and ocean quahogs
32. Develop advisory panel fishery performance reports
33. Initiate Commingling/Discarding Issues Action
34. Surfclam genetic study (contract; ongoing)

SCIENCE AND RESEARCH

35. Initiate a workshop to review and consider redevelopment of the Research Set-Aside (RSA) program
36. Continue to support the Fishery Dependent Data Initiative (GARFO lead)
37. Identify new Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) membership
38. Convene joint Council-SSC meeting
39. Maryland Recreational Ocean Effort Video Estimation project (contract)
40. Develop a process to track progress toward addressing the Council's research priorities.

ECOSYSTEM AND OCEAN PLANNING/HABITAT

41. Coordinate Northeast Regional Habitat Assessment (NRHA)
42. Continue work on Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Redo
43. Update the EAFM risk assessment
44. Develop habitat- and fishery-related comments on offshore energy development
45. Maintain joint MAFMC and New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) Offshore Wind web page and Offshore Wind Notices to Mariners web page
46. Initiate climate change and distribution shift scenario planning

GENERAL

47. Complete the Commercial Fisheries Electronic Vessel Trip Report (eVTR) Framework
48. Track relevant fisheries legislation, including Magnuson-Stevens Act reauthorization, and develop comments as requested

COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH

49. Continue to implement the Council communication and outreach plan
50. Develop and maintain Council action web pages
51. Develop fact sheets and outreach materials as needed
52. Complete the website update and improvement project
53. Establish a Communication/Outreach Advisory Panel

POSSIBLE ADDITIONS

To be considered for addition to the 2020 implementation plan if time and resources allow:

54. Expand summer flounder recreational management strategy evaluation to include scup and black sea bass (contract)
55. Review red crab and lobster fishery exemptions for discrete deep sea coral protected zones
56. Develop a white paper on fixed/variable costs and employment information (all Northeast fisheries)^{Error! Bookmark not defined.}
57. Initiate action to address right whale issues
58. Modify list of ecosystem component species from Unmanaged Forage Amendment (e.g., addition of cancer crabs)
59. Review RH/S annual progress update
60. Convene a workshop to discuss the impacts of pollutants on Mid-Atlantic fisheries
61. Review eVTR submission timeframe
62. Aquaculture (address as needed)

2020 Priority Activities

COMMUNICATION

Goal: Engage stakeholders and the public through education and outreach that foster sustained participation in, and awareness of, the Council process.

Objective	Priority Activities for 2020	Timeframe
1. Use a wide range of communication tools and methods tailored to engage target audiences.	Continue to employ a variety of traditional, web-based, and social media tools to disseminate relevant information, updates, and communication materials (as outlined in the Council’s communication and outreach plan).	Ongoing
	Complete the website update and improvement project: (1) update the look and feel of the Council website; (2) upgrade web analytics tools to provide more detailed information about page visits, downloads, traffic, etc.	2020
	Expand the use of “interested-parties” email lists to deliver fishery- and action-specific information and updates to interested stakeholders.	Ongoing
	Establish a Communication/Outreach Advisory Panel.	2020
2. Increase stakeholder participation in the Council process.	Review and potentially revise organization of action pages for Council amendments and frameworks to improve consistency across pages.	2020
	Evaluate the current online commenting system and identify potential new public comment opportunities (or ways to improve the utility of existing comment forms).	2020
	Utilize webinars, conference lines, and other technology to expand remote access to and/or participation in Council and advisory body meetings.	Ongoing
	Evaluate the Council’s webinar policy and update if needed.	2020
	Develop new “Council process” outreach materials and web page.	2020
	Develop outreach materials to facilitate constructive stakeholder input on proposed management actions (e.g. scoping guides, video presentations, fact sheets, etc.).	Ongoing
3. Broaden the public’s understanding and awareness of the Council and its managed fisheries.	Develop fact sheets and outreach materials to provide information on current fisheries issues and topics of public interest.	Ongoing
	Continue to promote relevant educational opportunities, such as MREP and the Rutgers IFISSH course.	Ongoing
	Collaborate with science partners to develop outreach materials related to stock assessments for Council-managed species.	Ongoing
	Ensure that Council documents use plain language and minimize the use of acronyms to the extent possible.	Ongoing

SCIENCE

Goal: Ensure that the Council's management decisions are based on timely and accurate scientific information and methods.

Objective	Priority Activities for 2020	Timeframe
4. Collaborate with science partners and research institutions to ensure that the Council's science priorities are addressed.	Review <i>Illex</i> Working Group recommendations regarding real time <i>Illex</i> squid management and/or quota adjustments	2020 - 2021
	Surfclam genetic study (contract)	2020 - 2021
	HMS/chub mackerel diet study	2020
	Maryland Recreational Ocean Effort Video Estimation project (contract)	2020 - 2021
5. Support the use of collaborative research to meet the Council's science, data, and information needs.	<i>Illex</i> growth and maturity data project	2020
	Tilefish survey	2020 - 2021
	RSA program review workshop	2020
	Identify research needs that can be addressed using collaborative approaches with commercial, for-hire, and recreational fishery participants.	Ongoing
6. Promote efficient and accurate data collection, monitoring, and reporting systems.	Continue to support the Fishery Dependent Data Initiative (GARFO lead)	2020 - TBD
	Support efforts to address private recreational permitting and reporting issues (GARFO lead)	2020
	Complete the Commercial Fisheries eVTR Framework	2020
7. Promote the collection of relevant social and economic data and on-the-water observations.	Collaborate with the Northeast Regional Coordinating Council (NRCC) Stock Assessment Communications Group to facilitate increased stakeholder involvement in (and awareness of) the stock assessment process.	Ongoing
	Engage the Council's SSC to identify existing studies or other sources of social and economic information that could be used to inform management decisions.	Ongoing
8. Identify and prioritize the Council's research needs.	Develop a process to track progress toward addressing the Council's research priorities.	2020

MANAGEMENT

Goal: Develop effective management strategies that provide for sustainable fisheries and healthy marine ecosystems while considering the needs of fishing communities and other resource users.

Objective	Priority Activities for 2020	Timeframe
9. Strengthen state, federal, and interstate partnerships to promote coordinated, efficient management of fishery resources.	Participate on the Northeast Regional Coordinating Council.	Ongoing
	Black Sea Bass Commercial State Allocation Amendment (joint MAFMC/Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) action).	2020
	RH/S discussion papers (e.g. biological caps, New England alignment, hotspots).	2020
10. Adapt management approaches and priorities to address emerging issues and changing fishery conditions.	Develop fishery performance reports for each Council FMP.	Annually
	Initiate action to revise recreational management system for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass to allow for greater stability and flexibility (joint MAFMC/ASMFC action).	2020 - TBD
	Evaluate commercial scup discards and gear restricted areas.	2020
	Bluefish Allocation and Rebuilding Amendment (joint MAFMC/ASMFC action)	2020 - 2021
	Illex Permit and MSB Goals and Objectives Amendment	2020
	Surfclam and Ocean Quahog Commingling/Discarding Issues Action	2020 - TBD
	Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Recreational/Commercial Allocation Amendment (joint MAFMC/ASMFC action)	2020 - 2021
11. Ensure that management decisions consider social, economic, and community impacts and opportunities.	Develop EAFM management strategy evaluation for summer flounder.	2020 - 2021
	Continue to utilize multi-year management approaches.	Ongoing

Continued on the following page

Specification-Setting Activities

In addition to the activities associated with specific management objectives, the Council will also develop new or review existing specifications for each of its managed species. These activities are listed below.

<p>Develop and approve new specifications:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2021 summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass recreational management measures • 2021 bluefish recreational measures • 2021-2022 golden tilefish specifications • 2021-2022 specifications for Atlantic mackerel and butterfish • 2021-2023 specifications for longfin and <i>Illex</i> squids • 2021-2023 RH/S cap for Atlantic mackerel fishery • 2021-2026 surfclam and ocean quahog specifications
<p>Review specifications and recommend changes if needed:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2021 specifications for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass • 2021 bluefish specifications • 2021 blueline tilefish specifications • butterfish cap performance report • 2020-2021 chub mackerel specifications • 2021 spiny dogfish specifications

ECOSYSTEM

Goal: Support the ecologically sustainable utilization of living marine resources in a manner that maintains ecosystem productivity, structure, and function.

Objective	Priority Activities for 2020	Timeframe
12. Implement the Council's Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM) as described in the EAFM Guidance Document.	Update the EAFM risk assessment.	2020
	Establish a process to track implementation of the Council's EAFM Guidance Document.	2020 - Ongoing
13. Collaborate with management partners to develop ecosystem approaches that are responsive to the impacts of climate change.	Initiate East Coast/Mid-Atlantic climate change and distribution shift scenario planning exercise.	2020
14. Identify, designate, and protect habitat using an ecosystem approach.	Participate in the Northeast Regional Marine Fish Habitat Assessment Project (in partnership with Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership and other regional partners)	2020 - 2021
	EFH Redo	Ongoing
15. Engage in the offshore energy development process to address impacts to Council-managed species and associated habitats.	Develop habitat- and fishery-related comments on offshore energy development.	Ongoing
	Maintain joint MAFMC-NEFMC Offshore Wind web page and Offshore Wind Notices to Mariners web page.	Ongoing
	Engage offshore wind developers to support effective communication and outreach with the fishing industry.	Ongoing
16. Support the maintenance of an adequate forage base to ensure ecosystem productivity, structure, and function.	Consider and account for, to the extent practicable, the role of Council-managed species in the ecosystem, including roles as prey, predator, and food for humans.	Ongoing
	Consider and account for, to the extent practicable, the impact of Council-managed fisheries on the forage base.	Ongoing
	Review report on unmanaged species landings and respond to changes if necessary.	Annually
17. Develop management approaches that minimize adverse ecosystem impacts.	Review State of the Ecosystem Report	Annually
	Develop management measures that consider ecological interactions to reduce regulatory discards, promote greater utilization of catch, and minimize impacts to habitat.	Ongoing
	Consider fishery management approaches that avoid or reduce negative impacts on protected resources.	Ongoing

GOVERNANCE

Goal: Ensure that the Council's practices accurately represent and consider the interests of fisheries, fishing communities, and the public through a transparent and inclusive decision-making process.

Objective	Priority Activities for 2020	Timeframe
18. Maintain an open, accessible, and clearly defined process.	Convene joint Council-SSC meeting	2020
	Provide an update on Council activities and a summary of implementation Plan progress.	Annually
	Provide conference lines or Webinar access to Council and advisory body meetings whenever feasible.	Ongoing
19. Engage management partners to promote effective collaboration and coordination.	Track relevant MSA/fisheries legislation and develop comments as requested.	Ongoing
	Review the composition and operation of Council committees.	Annually
	Evaluate the need for (1) revisions to existing operating agreement with GARFO/NEFSC/OLE and (2) development of new agreements with ASMFC, NEFMC, or SAFMC.	2020
20. Ensure that stakeholder interests are understood and addressed.	Identify additional opportunities for general public comment during Council meetings.	2020
	Provide additional opportunities for public input during development of Implementation Plans.	Annually
	Explore options to improve communication regarding the use of public input in management decisions.	2020
21. Provide training and development opportunities for Council members and staff to enhance organizational performance.	Provide Council member training on Robert's Rules of Order.	2020
	Support the ongoing professional development of Council staff.	Ongoing
	Continue to participate in staff-to-staff meetings and collaboration with GARFO, NEFSC, and ASMFC.	Ongoing