

EAFM Summer Flounder Management Strategy Evaluation

Core Stakeholder Group Participant Analysis and Selection Process

May 2021

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) is embarking on a management strategy evaluation (MSE) to evaluate the biological and economic benefits of different management alternatives designed to minimize discards (dead and alive) in the recreational summer flounder fishery (<https://www.mafmc.org/actions/summer-flounder-mse>). To help solicit feedback from interested parties, both known stakeholders and the public were asked to supply input via an on-line scoping questionnaire¹. The scoping questionnaire solicited input on management objectives and strategies to address recreational summer flounder discards. The questionnaire received 817 distinct responses.

The scoping questionnaire also included questions designed to help the MAFMC identify potential participants for the management strategy evaluation's Core Stakeholder Group. The Core Stakeholder Group, to be comprised of approximately 15 stakeholders representing the range of fishery perspectives, will function as the main source of input to a technical work group and management to progress through the management strategy evaluation. This core group of stakeholders will provide their feedback through a series of workshops designed to elicit their input on management outcomes and review model simulation results.

A sub-group of five MSE technical work group members developed an approach to evaluate, refine, and identify potential core stakeholder group participants. The full technical work group then reviewed, provided feedback, and approved the process and resulting core stakeholder group membership. This document summarizes the responses to the questionnaire regarding Core Stakeholder Group participation, the selection criteria used to reduce the set of nominated and interested participants to a manageable size for core group consideration, and the process to develop a regionally balanced and diverse core stakeholder membership list.

Potential Core Stakeholder Group Participants

The technical work group obtained potential Core Stakeholder Group participants from four sources: those who self-identified as being interested in the scoping questionnaire, those who were nominated for participation in the scoping questionnaire, those who

¹ For more information about the MSE scoping questionnaire, please see <https://www.mafmc.org/newsfeed/2021/summer-flounder-mse-comment-opportunity>

participated in the Advisory Panel (AP) kickoff workshop, and those who participated in one of the three regional workshops².

Core Stakeholder Group Interest from the Scoping Questionnaire

256 individuals, of the 817 total respondents, expressed interest in participating in the Core Stakeholder Group. If a respondent expressed interest in participating in the core group, a series of additional questions were answered regarding their primary stakeholder role, state of representation, reason for interest in the core group, and fishing background and experience.

Core Stakeholder Group Nominations

342 individuals were nominated by a peer to participate in the Core Stakeholder Group. These nominees were produced by the 185, out of 817, individuals who responded to the nomination question in the scoping questionnaire. The questionnaire asked respondents to nominate up to five individuals to participate in the Core Stakeholder Group for this management strategy evaluation. All responses such as “NA”, “no one”, “unsure”, “uncertain” and similar responses were removed to produce the list of nominees. While the full list of nominees was quite long, repeat nominations were less frequent, with 44 individuals nominated in responses by two, 15 nominated in responses by three, and 9 nominated in responses by four or more individuals.

AP Member Kick-Off and Regional Workshop Participants

The technical work group also considered workshop participants and solicited interest following the AP kick-off webinar and the three regional workshops for potential core stakeholder group members. 65 potential core group participants attended the regional workshop and the 27 attendees at the AP member kick-off workshop held prior to the scoping questionnaire were also considered as possible core group members.

Refining List of Potential Core Group Participants

When individuals from all four sources described above were combined into a single list, after removing duplicates, this resulted in 582 possible participants in the core group. However, in order to progress through the management strategy evaluation in an efficient and effective way, it is impossible for all possible participants to participate in the Core Stakeholder Group. This section summarizes the process of winnowing the set of potential participants to produce a workable number of Core Stakeholder Group participants.

In order to evaluate all candidates objectively and reduce the set of potential candidates for consideration, a number of criteria and characteristics about each candidate that could be

² For more information regarding the AP kick-off and regional workshops, including meeting materials and presentations, please see: [AP kick-off webinar](#) and [Summer Flounder MSE Virtual Workshops](#)

used to inform the selection process were identified. The set of characteristics collected and considered by the work group are provided in Table 1.

Table 1. List of candidate characteristics considered by the technical work group to evaluate potential participants to serve on the MSE core stakeholder group.

Characteristic	Description
Regional Workshop (RW) Registrant	The candidate registered for a regional workshop
Active RW Participant	If a candidate attended a regional workshop and were an active participant
Productive RW Participant	If a candidate was a productive participant at a regional workshop
AP Member	Candidate is an AP member (EOP or Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass)
Present AP	Candidate was present at the AP workshop
Interested	Candidate expressed interest in being core group participant
Productive	Candidate indicated they would be a productive core group participant
Nominations	The number of nominations a candidate received in scoping questionnaire
Participant Interest	The relevance and informativeness of a candidate's response describing their interest in participating as a core group member
Participant Experience	The relevance and informativeness of a candidate's response describing their experience and activity in the summer flounder fishery
Primary Role	Candidates identified primary stakeholder role
All Roles	All identified roles a candidate represents
State Represented	Candidates identified primary state represented

The Regional Workshop (RW) participant, AP member, Present AP, Interested, Productive, and Nominations are all objective characteristics obtained from candidate responses to the questionnaire or presence at a regional workshop or AP member kick-off workshop. The Active RW, Productive RW, Participant Interest, and Participant Experience are subjective characteristics. Values were then assigned to these subjective characteristics which were developed by Dr. Jonathan Cummings, the Council contracted MSE stakeholder engagement facilitator, and were based upon a candidate's participation in the regional workshops and answers open ended questions in the scoping questionnaire. Responses to the questions regarding why a candidate was interested in participating in the Core Stakeholder Group, and what experience they would bring to the Core Stakeholder Group were scored on a 0 to 10 scale (10 being best) in terms of how much the candidate addressed the question, how detailed the response was, and how likely the reason for interest or the experience listed would be to benefit the Core Stakeholder Group and the management strategy evaluation process. The scores for these characteristics were then converted to an evaluation metric and were used in the weighting process to develop a participant score, described in more detail in the next section.

Participant Score

To aid in the selection of Core Stakeholder Group members from this set of candidates, the technical sub-group developed a spreadsheet that allowed each sub-group member to evaluate and score each participant (PS) with defined metrics using the following equation:

$$PS = \beta * RW + \beta * AP + \beta * interested + \beta * productive + \beta * nominations + \beta * interest\ score + \beta * experience\ score$$

where (*RW*) is the regional workshop characteristic value, *AP* is the AP member kickoff workshop value, *interested* and *productive* are the values for those characteristics, *nominations* is the number of nominations an individual received or the nominations score, and *interest score* and *experience score* are the 0-10, or 1-3 score, from the interest and experience characteristic scores discussed in the previous section. The 1-3 versions of these scores convert the 0-10 scale into a 1-3 scale, where <5 is scored with a 1, 5-8 score receives a 2, and 9 or 10 score receives a 3. Each of these values is multiplied by beta (β) values (i.e., weights for the relative importance of each of these characteristics) selected by each member of the technical sub-group to allow for scoring the participants in an interactive core group selection decision support spreadsheet (Table 2).

The variation in the beta values supplied by the 5 technical sub-group members provided a sort of sensitivity analysis for the beta values impact on candidate scoring. This weighting and scoring process for each metric also removed some of the subjectivity in evaluating the extensive list of potential participants, a primary goal of this approach. In addition, the flexibility in weighting the different metrics allowed each sub-group member to determine which metric(s) were most more important to consider when identifying potential core stakeholder participants.

Each technical sub-group member applied their own weighting scheme to these metrics to create a prioritized list of 30 potential core group candidates. This approach was very robust to the weighting schemes applied and produced very similar candidate lists across all sub-group members. For example, 22 of the 30 individuals were found on all 5 sub-group member lists and many other individuals were found on multiple lists. This consistency and similarity in the results gave the technical work group reassurance the process used, metrics considered, and individualized weighting approach were appropriate.

THIS SPACE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

Table 2. The list of potential candidate metrics and associated weighting schemes used by the MSE technical sub-group to evaluate and rank potential participants in the Core Stakeholder Group. Only one weighting approach was used for those metrics with two potential weighting approaches (e.g., Nominations). A weighting of 0 (zero) would mean that metric would not be used in the calculation of a participant score.

Metric	Description and Weighting
Regional Workshop (RW) Registrant	Candidate registered for a regional workshop. Weighting range: 0 - 10
Active RW Participant	Candidate provided input to the decision process during regional workshop. Weighting range: 0 - 20
Productive RW Participant	Candidate provided productive input that moved the discussion forward and provided valuable and relevant input to the decision process. Weighting range: 0 - 100
Present AP	Candidate was present at the AP kick-off workshop. Weighting range: 0 - 10
Interested	Candidate expressed interest in being core group participant. Weighting range: 0 - 10
Productive	Candidate indicated they would be a productive core group participant. Weighting range: 0 - 10
Nominations	The number of peer nominations received by candidate. Weighting range: 0 - 10
<i>Nominations (0-3)</i>	The number of peer nominations received by candidate, Weighting range: 3 for 5 or more nominations, 2 for 2-4, a 1 for 1, and 0 for 0
Interest Score	Subjective (0-10) score of the relevance and informativeness of a candidate's interest response. Weighting range: 0 - 2.5
<i>Interest Score (1-3)</i>	Subjective (1-3) score of the relevance and informativeness of a candidate's interest response. Weighting range: 1 - 3
Experience Score	Subjective (0-10) score of the relevance and informativeness of a candidate's experience response. Weighting range: 0 - 2.5
<i>Experience Score</i>	Subjective (1-3) score of the relevance and informativeness of a candidate's experience response. Weighting range: 1 - 3

Selecting Candidate Participants

Following the development of the prioritized list of 30 individuals, each sub-group member then used their list to develop a list of 15 primary candidates to be considered for Core Stakeholder Group membership. To help ensure a regionally balanced and diverse composition on the core stakeholder group, the technical sub-group agreed to a set of minimum parameters necessary for core group membership described in detail below.

Representation

Regional

To ensure unique geographic considerations and perspectives were represented on the Core Stakeholder Group, the technical work group decided to use a regional representative approach. This would allow for broad coastwide input, but also provide for flexibility in selecting core group membership instead of specifying at least one representative from

each state in the management unit (Massachusetts through North Carolina). The minimum regional representation required for the Core Stakeholder Group was as follows:

- Minimum of 3 representatives from each of the following regions (each state does not need to be represented)
 - Massachusetts through Connecticut
 - New York through Delaware
 - Maryland through North Carolina

Once the minimum of requirement of 3 representatives per region are met, the remaining 6 core group members could represent any region, although as much balance across the regions was desired.

Stakeholder Type

Given the range and diversity of summer flounder fishery participants and the potential biological and sector implications if new management strategies are implemented as a result of this management strategy evaluation, the technical work group identified the minimum number of participants for the following stakeholder groups:

- For-hire representatives – minimum of 3
 - Any combination of party and charter, but striving to have both and from each region
- Private recreational representatives – minimum of 3
 - Any combination of vessel and shore, but striving to have both
- Commercial representatives – minimum of 2
 - Any combination of commercial fisherman and dealer/processor
- Recreational secondary markets – minimum of 2
 - Any combination of bait & tackle, boat rental, marine trades, tackle manufacturer etc.
- “Other” representatives – minimum of 2
 - Any combination of academia, NGO, coastwide/national organization

Satisfying these minimum stakeholder type representatives would account for 12 of 15 core group membership. The remaining 3 core group members could represent any of the stakeholder type categories. It should also be noted that many potential candidates have a broad range of experiences and can provide input from multiple roles.

Primary and Alternative List Development

Using the prioritized list of 30 potential candidates, 15 primary Core Stakeholder Group candidates that achieved the Regional and Stakeholder Type representation identified above were developed by each technical sub-group member. In addition, each sub-group member identified several alternatives (approx. 5 individuals) that could also be considered if one of the 15 primary candidates cannot participate in the core group.

In order to create one comprehensive list, each sub-group member list of 15 individuals was evaluated to find common names across each list. Similar to the outcomes observed with the prioritized list of 30 candidates, the 15 individuals proposed by each sub-group member were also very consistent and similar. If an individual was found on all sub-group member lists, that individual was recommended for consideration in the group of 15 core stakeholder members. There were a total of 6 individuals found on all 5 sub-group lists. Then, if an individual was found on 4 of the 5 sub-group member lists, that individual was also recommended for consideration in the group of 15 core stakeholder members. An additional 6 individuals were found on 4 of the 5 lists. No other individual was found on more than 2 sub-group member lists.

These 12 individuals satisfied all Regional and Stakeholder Type representation parameters, except for the minimum of 2 commercial representatives. Therefore, to determine the 3 additional individuals to complete the full core group membership, one of which needed to be a commercial representative, a review of the alternative lists developed by each sub-group member was conducted to find commonality. When including the alternative lists, there were 3 individuals found on at least 4, and in one case all 5, sub-group member lists and were recommended for consideration in the group of 15 core stakeholder members (Table 3). When including these 3 individuals as part of the core stakeholder membership, all of the Regional and Stakeholder Type representation parameters were satisfied (Table 4).

Common individuals across the primary list of 15 individuals and the alternative list from each sub-group member were then identified to develop a list of alternative members that could serve on the core group with the appropriate representation should a primary individual decide not to join the core group (Table 5).

The full technical work group reviewed and supported the approach, process, and primary and alternative lists developed by the sub-group.

Table 3. Proposed membership to the summer flounder MSE core stakeholder group, including an individual’s regional affiliation and stakeholder type, identified by the technical work group.

Stakeholder Name	Region	Stakeholder Type
Allen Jernigan	MD-NC	For-Hire (charter)
Jason Dail	MD-NC	Private Recreational (boat)
Robin Scott	NY-DE	Recreational Secondary Market
Harvey Yenkinson	NY-DE	For-Hire (charter)
Michael Plaia	MA-CT	For-Hire (charter)
Eleanor Bochenek	NY-DE	Other (academic)
Leah Barton	MA-CT	Private Recreational (shore)
John DePersenaiare	NY-DE	Other (coastwide/national org.)
Michael Waine	MD-NC	Recreational Secondary Market
Greg DiDomenico	NY-DE	Commercial
Rich Hittinger	MA-CT	Private Recreational (boat)
Rick Bellavance	MA-CT	For-Hire (charter)
Robert Bogan	NY-DE	For-Hire (party)
Paul Caruso	MA-CT	Private Recreational (boat)
Hubert Dixon Brown	MD-NC	Commercial

Table 4. Breakdown of the proposed primary MSE Core Stakeholder Group membership by region and stakeholder type.

Representation Type	# of Representatives
<i>Regional</i>	
MA-CT	5
NY-DE	6
MD-NC	4
<i>Stakeholder Type</i>	
For-Hire	5
Private Recreational	4
Commercial	2
Recreational Secondary Market	2
Other	2

Table 5. Proposed list of alternative members to the summer flounder MSE core stakeholder group, including an individual’s regional affiliation and stakeholder type, identified by the technical work group.

Stakeholder Name	Region	Stakeholder Type
Bob Rush	NY-DE	For-Hire (party)
Neil Delanoy	NY-DE	For-Hire (party)
Mike Shepherd	NY-DE	Private Recreational (shore)
Paul Haertel	NY-DE	Private Recreational (boat)
Charles Witek	NY-DE	Private Recreational (boat)
Reed Reimer	NY-DE	Private Recreational (boat)
Jot Owens	MD-NC	For-Hire (charter)
Mike Oppegaard	MD-NC	For-Hire (charter)
Megan Lapp	MA-CT	Commercial
Gary Grunseich	NY-DE	Other (academic)

Final Core Stakeholder Group Membership

On May 18, 2021, all individuals identified on the primary list of candidates (Table 3) were contacted via email to notify them of their selection to serve on the Core Stakeholder Group. Individuals were given a few days to ask any questions, obtain more information, and respond as to whether they were interested, or not, in joining the core group. If an individual declined to participate or did not respond, an individual on the alternate list (Table 5) was contacted to notify them of their selection and given a few days to respond if interested. The alternate contacted was of the same stakeholder type as the individual that declined, and the same regional representation was also considered but not always feasible. If an alternate declined or did not respond, the same process and approach was considered for the next alternate contacted.

The final summer flounder MSE Core Stakeholder Group membership can be found in Table 6. The final membership only includes 13 members, but all regions and stakeholder types are represented (Table 7) and is a very diverse group with a broad range of expertise and experiences.

Table 6. Final membership to the summer flounder MSE core stakeholder group, including an individual’s regional affiliation and stakeholder type.

Stakeholder Name	Region	Stakeholder Type
Mike Oppegaard	MD-NC	For-Hire (charter)
Robin Scott	NY-DE	Recreational Secondary Market
Harvey Yenkinson	NY-DE	For-Hire (charter)
Michael Plaia	MA-CT	For-Hire (charter)
Eleanor Bochenek	NY-DE	Other (academic)
Leah Barton	MA-CT	Private Recreational (shore)
John DePersenaiare	NY-DE	Other (coastwide/national org.)
Michael Waine	MD-NC	Recreational Secondary Market
Greg DiDomenico	NY-DE	Commercial
Rich Hittinger	MA-CT	Private Recreational (boat)
Rick Bellavance	MA-CT	For-Hire (charter)
Neil Delanoy	NY-DE	For-Hire (party)
Paul Caruso	MA-CT	Private Recreational (boat)

Table 7. Breakdown of the final MSE Core Stakeholder Group membership by region and stakeholder type.

Representation Type	# of Representatives
<i>Regional</i>	
MA-CT	5
NY-DE	6
MD-NC	2
<i>Stakeholder Type</i>	
For-Hire (4 charter, 1 party)	5
Private Recreational (1 shore, 2 boat)	3
Commercial	1
Recreational Secondary Market	2
Other	2