

Workshop Overview

SUMMER FLOUNDER MANAGEMENT STRATEGY EVALUATION WORKSHOPS

Supporting the Future of the Summer Flounder Recreational Fishery

The Council is conducting a management strategy evaluation (MSE) which will evaluate different management strategies designed to minimize discards in the recreational summer flounder fishery. Development of this MSE is part of the continued implementation of the Council's Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM) structured framework process.

MSE uses simulation modeling to evaluate different management strategies within an ecosystem context to determine if the proposed strategies will produce outcomes that achieve the fishery's management goals and objectives. The objectives of this MSE are to (1) evaluate the biological and economic benefits of minimizing discards in the recreational summer flounder fishery, and (2) identify management strategies to effectively realize these benefits. The goal of this MSE is to develop clearly identified and defined objectives, performance metrics, and management strategies with input and guidance from this stakeholder process to inform Council decisions.

We will work to achieve this purpose across three workshops. Participants will work with a facilitator, scientists, and Council staff to move through a structured process, over a series of workshops, to supply the elements of the management strategy evaluation. The facilitator will endeavor to define and explain the components of the management strategy evaluation process, increasing participants' capacity to participate effectively and efficiently in this and future management strategy evaluation processes.

We aim for this management strategy evaluation to be a vehicle for participatory decision-making and co-development of management strategies. We believe the participation of individuals with a stake in the future of the fishery will increase the realism of future scenarios we evaluate, improve understanding and collaboration among interested parties, and increase the likelihood of implementing strategies that support a resilient fishery.

Roles and Expectations

Roles

Facilitator – Jonathan Cummings, assistance from Annabelle Stanley and Kaili Gregory
Guides the management strategy evaluation process by linking participant input to decision-making needs using a structured decision making process. The facilitator supports effective and efficient completion of the process as a neutral party without a stake in the decision. The facilitator will craft and amend the agenda for the workshops and the process, guiding discussions to supply the inputs needed for each component in the process. The facilitator will seek input from all voices, enabling inquiry, open dialogue, and clear communication by acting as a common point of contact and conduit between all parties.

Core Group Participant – a small core group of stakeholders (13 in total) representing the range of summer flounder fishery perspectives will function as the main source of input to a technical work group and to management. More information on the process to select core stakeholder group membership can be found at: [Summer Flounder MSE Core Stakeholder Group Selection](#). The core group will provide direct input on management goals and strategies to be considered by management and evaluated by system experts on the technical work group (see System Expert below). They will also provide feedback and input on simulation model development and results. Core group feedback and recommendations are a critical component of the process and will be presented to management for consideration. Core group members are asked to represent both your interests and those of the fishery, serve as a liaison to other stakeholders regarding the MSE project, be open minded and collaborative, and support the outcomes of the MSE process. Ultimately, final decisions regarding management objectives, strategies, and potential implementation will be made by management (see Decision Maker below).

System Expert – members of a technical work group responsible for coordinating a variety of management strategy work products including the development of simulation models (biological and economic) that will predict the outcomes of the proposed management strategies. The technical work group is an interdisciplinary and inter-agency group with science and management expertise in economics, population dynamics, ecosystem dynamics, MSE development, and ecology with representation across state, federal, and academic institutions. Technical work group membership: <https://www.mafmc.org/actions/summer-flounder-mse>.

Analyst – Jonathan Cummings, assistance from technical work group (see system expert)
The analyst will use the input of the core group participants and the outcomes of the simulation models to help evaluate and rate management strategies, assessing their performance in terms of the management objectives provided. This includes diagnosing what form of analysis to use, structuring the process to inform the analysis, using simulation results and core group input to inform the analysis, and clearly communicating and documenting the results of the analysis.

Decision Maker – Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) and Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Board members. Take input and feedback from the core group and technical work group throughout the process. Make final determinations on management objectives and strategies to be considered and evaluated. At the end of the process, will select which strategy/strategies, or none at all, to implement based on the management strategy evaluation results.

Roles and Expectations

Expectations

Treat it as it is and it will remain the same. Treat it as it can and should be, then it will become so.¹

Management strategy evaluation is more of an inquiry-based process, one of imagining the world as we would like it to be and exploring ways to get there. This is intentionally a process of first identifying values and then exploring the means to achieve them. This can feel counter intuitive. As humans tend to identify possible means, and only then evaluate those means based on what we value. Flipping this typical process around, informing decision making prior to the selection of alternatives, can help us to better identify our values, and create better means of achieving them.

Doing so is best achieved in an inquiry based process focused on asking what if questions? What if I value..., how can that be achieved? What if we do this, what will happen? What if the system works this way, then what? The process will be more effective if we all come into it with an open mind to exploring the set of possibilities, helping each other to ask and answer these what if questions and letting the model of the system we create together inform the outcomes of those possibilities.

“Simple things become complicated when you expect too much.”— Wilson Kanadi

While the results of a management strategy evaluation may be directly adopted for implementation, the intent of the process is to inform decision making rather than to produce a decision. Decisions, especially the complicated, multiple stakeholder, complex system, and complex management structure decisions that take place in settings in which we have less experience, are difficult. Management strategy evaluation doesn't eliminate the difficulty, but it helps to address it, separating the components of decision making into more manageable pieces to improve our thinking and the quality of our decisions. The decomposition of the decision process, especially for complicated decisions in complex systems, helps to bring clarity to one's thinking and to aid communication.

It is possible that a management strategy evaluation will identify an optimal, a best, action. However, identifying an optimal action is difficult, and may not be tractable. The analysis necessary may not be possible in the time available, or it may be there is no best path to success because either success as defined in the process is unattainable or there are multiple definitions of success. Stakeholders may value trade-offs and therefore the proposed strategies differently.

In the end the decision may still be difficult or contentious, but this process helps. Management strategy evaluation can identify and help to eliminate strategies that are unacceptable, those that fail to achieve anyones definition of success. Often, when there is no single strategy that is best, given compromise and trade-off a satisfactory option, or set of options, can be identified.

Typically the process will provide alternatives that improve upon the status quo, but even when the status quo is maintained, the process will help to demonstrate the rationale for this selection.

¹ A rephrasing of “Treat a man as he is and he will remain as he is. Treat a man as he can and should be and he will become as he can and should be.”— Stephen R. Covey

Roles and Expectations

Generous Dialogue: We will ask open questions, offer our own stories and ideas, and listen to one another with generosity.

Open Dialogue: We will maintain a public agenda, convening the group to engage in authentic open communication.

Impartial Dialogue: We will not pursue a preconceived outcome. At the outset all outcomes are on the table. We will explore possible outcomes or decisions without advocacy, letting the process reveal the strategies that achieve our objectives.

Equitable Dialogue: We will have a single conversation — one voice at a time, with roughly equal time to share. We will each step up or step back as needed. Each person has an equal opportunity for their voice to be heard, valued, and considered.

Growing Dialogue: We will lean into learning and exploration, welcome diverse opinions and perspectives, and support mutual growth and understanding.

Courageous Dialogue: We will bring our heads and hearts to this space, holding hard truths while looking towards what is possible and how we can best contribute.

Workshop Highlights

The facilitated process will include three workshops that enable participants to supply their input to the process, helping to:

- define the goal of the process and the management decisions to be made,
- identify the objectives to consider,
- suggest alternative management strategies,
- specify important components of the system to include in the predictive models, and
- evaluate trade-offs between objectives.

Workshop 1 (two sessions): Participating in Management Strategy Evaluation: objectives, alternative management procedures, and simulation models

During the first workshop we will:

- Introduce participants to management strategy evaluation and structured decision making, the approaches we will take to work through this decision process
- Develop a shared definition of what is being decided
- Develop objectives and elicit performance metrics to evaluate fishery performance
- Review planned biological and economic model development
- Examine how simulation results inform harvest policy and management
- Develop alternative management procedures for evaluation

Workshop 2: Perspectives on the application of Management Strategy Evaluation to the summer flounder recreational fishery

During the second workshop we will:

- Review results from previous workshops
- Develop weights to evaluate tradeoffs between objectives
- Understand how to use the interactive application to evaluate and visualize results
- Review and adjust prior inputs to the management strategy evaluation process

Workshop 3: Bringing it all together: results, implications, and next steps.

During the third workshop we will:

- Interpret the final groundfish MSE results: What are the implications?
- Interpret the final groundfish MSE results: What do they tell us about tradeoffs?
- Document lessons learned through this management strategy evaluation process
- Determine next steps: Where do we go from here?

Agenda – subject to change

Workshop 1 – Participating in Management Strategy Evaluation: objectives, alternative management strategies, and simulation models

Goals:

Session 1

Understand the structure of the management strategy evaluation process.

Develop a common understanding of the decision

Understand how to provide objectives and alternatives

Session 2

Develop prototype objectives and alternatives

Examine how simulation results inform fishery management

Participant Preparation

Session 1:

- Watch the video from the regional workshop presentations on EAFM and MSE
- Submit your decision statement
- Prepare a 3-minute introduction including
 - Your name
 - Your decision statement
 - Your summer flounder and decision statement story

Session 2:

- Draft your objectives and proposed alternatives
- Review proposed objectives and proposed alternatives
- Revise your objectives and proposed alternatives
- Draft performance metrics for your objectives

Agenda – subject to change

Session 1 – Monday, June 14th 5:30-8:30pm

- 5:30 - 5:45 Welcome – Jonathan and Brandon
- Vision
 - Brief Process Introduction
- 5:45 - 6:30 Introductions – All
- Introductions
 - Name, decide..., why that decision statement (based on your experience, perspective, and expertise), name again
 - Me, core group, Modeling Team, Brandon
- 6:30 - 6:35 BREAK
- 6:35 - 6:45 Decision Statement Overview - Jonathan
- What is a decision statement?
- 6:45 - 7:15 Decision Statement Development - Jonathan
- Establish the decision – group leads
 - Small group discussions (3); Full team discussion
- 7:15 – 7:30 PrOACT, Prototyping, and Iteration – Jonathan
- Review why decision process steps
 - Describe prototyping and iteration
 - Demonstrate decision support tool
- 7:30 - 7:35 BREAK
- 7:35 – 7:50 Objective Elicitation – Jonathan
- What are objectives?
 - How are objectives stated?
 - What are performance measures?
- 7:50 – 8:10 Objective Elicitation Practice – Jonathan
- Small group discussions (x3); Full team discussion
- 8:10 – 8:20 Alternative Elicitation – Jonathan
- What are alternatives?
 - Proposing strategies
- 8:20 – 8:30 Prep for Session 2 – Jonathan
- Your tasks

Agenda – subject to change

Session 2 – Wednesday, July 14th from 2:30 - 5:30 p.m.

- 5:30 – 6:15 Objectives – Jonathan
- Refine objective set
 - Develop objectives hierarchy
- 6:15 – 7:00 Performance Measures – Jonathan
- Refine performance measures
- 7:00 - 7:10 BREAK
- 7:10 – 7:40 Alternatives - Jonathan
- Refine alternative set
- 7:40 - 8:00 Portfolio Development - Jonathan
- Identify strategies (combinations of alternative components)
- 8:00 – 8:20 Simulation overview – Lou
- How the simulation model may account for these objectives and alternatives
- 8:20 – 8:30 Next Steps – Jonathan and Brandon

Agenda – subject to change

Workshop 2 – Perspectives on the application of Management Strategy Evaluation to the summer flounder recreational fishery

Goals:

Develop weights to evaluate tradeoffs between objectives

Understand how to use results to evaluate and visualize management strategy outcomes

Review and adjust prior inputs to the management strategy evaluation process.

Participant Preparation

TBD

October (Date TBD)

9:00 - 9:30 Welcome & Reflection – Facilitation Team

- Restate our vision
- Workshop 2 overview

9:30 - 11:15 Weighting Tradeoffs – Jonathan

- Explanation
- Demonstration
- Elicitation

11:15 - 11:25 BREAK

11:25 - 12:00 Review workshop products – Jonathan

- Problem definition
- Objectives and performance measures
- Alternative management strategies

12:00 - 12:45 Management Strategy Evaluation model – Gavin and Lou

- Ecosystem model
- Management model
- Fishing model

12:45 - 1:30 LUNCH

1:30 - 2:30 Simulation Results – Jonathan

- Exploration

2:30 - 3:00 Feedback and adjustment – Jonathan

- Objectives and performance measures

3:00 - 3:15 BREAK

3:15 - 5:00 Feedback and adjustment – Jonathan

- Alternative management procedures
- Simulation model

4:15 - 5:00 Feedback and adjustment – Jonathan

- Trade-off weights
- Visualization of results

Agenda – subject to change

Workshop 3 – Bringing it all together: results, implications, and next steps.

Goals:

Interpret the MSE results: What are the ecosystem and fishery implications?

Interpret the MSE results: What do they tell us about tradeoffs?

Document lessons learned through this management strategy evaluation process

Determine next steps: Where do we go from here?

Participant Preparation

TBD

February (Date TBD)

9:00 - 9:30 Welcome – Jonathan

- Restate our vision
- Workshop 4 overview

9:30 - 10:15 Review management strategy evaluation products – Jonathan

- Management tradeoffs

10:15 - 11:00 Review management strategy evaluation products – Brandon

- System understanding and implications

11:00 - 11:15 BREAK

11:15 - 12:45 Simulation Results and Feedback – Jonathan

- Exploration

12:45 - 1:30 LUNCH

1:30 - 2:30 Next steps – Modelers

- Future Research and Analysis

2:30 - 3:00 Next steps – Brandon

- Management

3:00 - 3:15 BREAK

3:15 - 4:00 Lessons learned