



Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

SSC Socioeconomic Work Group

Meeting #1 Summary

August 31, 2020

SSC Work Group Participants: G. DePiper (Workgroup Chair), P. Rago (SSC Chair), L. Anderson, J. Boreman, S. Gaichas, M. Holliday, J. Holzer, Y. Jiao

Other Participants: J. Montanez (Council staff), B. Muffley (Council staff)

Meeting Overview:

The Scientific and Statistical Committee's (SSC) Socioeconomic work group met via webinar on Monday, August 31, 2020, to begin to identify possible areas and topics of focus for the work group to address. The SSC recommended the formation of the work group at its July SSC meeting during their deliberations regarding acceptable biological catch (ABC) recommendations for Council-managed fisheries. The SSC noted a variety of topics and issues in which this workgroup could provide helpful direction and information to the Council. The concept of the workgroup and potential areas of development were presented to the Council at their August 2020 meeting. The Council was supportive of forming the work group but requested additional details on the types of topics and potential products the workgroup would work on and develop.

Council staff provided an overview of the challenges the Council and SSC have faced over the years in engaging the social science membership of the SSC and having the SSC provide timely and relevant socioeconomic information for Council consideration. This topic was the primary focus of the joint Council/SSC meeting held in August 2019¹. The SSC chair then provided additional feedback from the Council and the charge to the workgroup. Below is an overview of the general topics and issues discussed by the workgroup, followed by the work group's recommendations on areas to prioritize and begin development.

General topics and areas of consideration:

The work group felt it was important to clarify that its social science membership includes only economists, and is not representative of a broader social science perspective. As such, the expected products would focus on outputs, analyses, and approaches guided by economic theory. There was broad agreement that a programmatic approach to providing input is likely to generate the greatest

¹ The detailed meeting agenda and background information, including a white paper on the potential use of the social science membership if the SSC, from the August 2019 joint Council/SSC meeting can be found at: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/511cdc7fe4b00307a2628ac6/t/5d444321bc21630001a28b49/1564754722086/Tab03_Joint-Council-SSC-Meeting_2019-08.pdf

value to the Council, as it allows for a consistency in the information delivered to the Council across actions and deliberations. The aim of the work group is to develop a process which can be applied broadly to inform Council actions, rather than to a single decision point in the process such as a Term of Reference during ABC deliberations, or to unique analyses such as the Commercial/Recreational Allocation Model for Summer Flounder recently developed for the Council. Consistent with the broader role of the SSC, the work group's role will be to help guide and review products developed through existing Council processes, such as through FMATs, recognizing that more in-depth work is warranted but likely to be more ad hoc in nature.

Work Group Recommendations:

- Given the breadth of potential economic analyses that could be developed in support of fisheries management, the work group recommends developing a concrete example to showcase the value of delivering timely and relevant economic review, assessment, and advice for SSC and Council consideration. The work group proposes developing a case study around one of the 2021 Council priorities with the following components:
 - A rubric of general issues and questions which should be considered when undertaking any management action.
 - This should be a strategic guidance document to ensure relevant collaborations and discussions occur early in the action development process, when relevant.
 - A focused analysis of key issues likely to prove economically important (e.g. fleet behavioral responses, noncompliance, etc.) given the specific management action case study under consideration.
 - For example, area management such as the Deep Sea Corals Amendment to the Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish Fishery Management Plan will likely raise issues very different from allocation issues.
 - Considerations should include assessment of management risk and uncertainty, among other issues, on harvesters, processors, markets and consumers.
- The work group is cognizant of time and resource limitations which constrains the types of analyses that might realistically be developed in support of management actions, and will look to build these constraints into the proposed case study by working with Council Staff to:
 - Identify and prioritize the information and analyses which could realistically be developed to inform the management action case study, given existing constraints on time and resources.
 - Identify the added costs and benefits of increased resources which could be brought to bear on the issue in the near term.
 - Identify issues which cannot be addressed given existing information gaps, but could be addressed in future Council actions given a systematic data development investment, including consideration of Council research programs, NOAA Fisheries recordkeeping and reporting requirements, and cooperative industry initiatives and the relative costs of the additional investment (e.g. a gap analysis).
- Selecting a 2021 Council Priority as the focus of this case study may provide the following benefits:
 - Allow the SSC and Council to collaboratively identify a focus area.
 - Allow iteration between the SSC, Council Staff, and Council to ensure the process provides value to decision-makers through a collaborative approach.
 - Provide multiple touchpoints throughout the action development process including:

- Pre-scoping to ensure key economic issues and concerns are incorporated into scoping documents and allow for relevant stakeholder feedback.
- Management alternative development to highlight important economic considerations and integrate these into the range of alternatives proposed to the Council where possible, and document the data gaps and other issues which preclude their assessment when not possible.
- Management alternative assessment to allow the SSC to critically examine their role in the process.
- Allow time to develop a process which minimizes additional administrative burdens on Council Staff from interactions identified above.
- Minimize potential errors of omission, in which analyses, data, or alternatives are unassessed due to simple unfamiliarity with them.

Next Steps/Timeline:

- The work group report and recommendations will be provided to the SSC prior to their September 8 - 9, 2020, meeting. The SSC will provide feedback on the areas of focus and work group recommendations.
- Based on SSC feedback, the work group will refine a briefing document for Council consideration and direction.
- The Council and SSC will discuss the briefing document and the direction and charge of the socioeconomic work group at the joint Council/SSC meeting during the Council's October meeting.
- Depending upon feedback and direction from the Council in October, the work group will begin developing the identified priority topics in late 2020 and throughout 2021. The Council, SSC, and Council staff will be provided updates and opportunities for feedback and direction during various meetings throughout 2021.