



MID-ATLANTIC
FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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Mid-Atlantic Council Approves Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM) Guidance Document

VIRGINIA BEACH, VA – Today the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council unanimously approved a guidance document to facilitate the transition to an ecosystem approach to fisheries management (EAFM) in the Mid-Atlantic. The EAFM Guidance Document is designed to serve as an umbrella document that will enable the Council to coordinate ecosystem considerations across fishery management plans (FMPs).

The Council has been considering mechanisms to introduce ecosystem considerations into the fishery management process since the late-1990s. After a review of the various approaches used around the U.S., and extensive input from fisheries stakeholders through its visioning project, the Council decided in 2011 to pursue a transitional approach which would introduce ecosystem considerations into fishery management actions in a step-wise, evolutionary fashion. This approach is intended to allow the Council to meet its current requirements for the management of individual stocks while moving towards an approach that takes into account interactions at multiple dimensions of the environment and ecosystem.

“The EAFM Guidance Document responds to broad public interest in incorporating ecosystem considerations in the management of marine fisheries and will be a critical tool for the Council as it transitions from single-species management to a more comprehensive, ecosystem-based approach,” said Council Chairman Rick Robins. “One of the most important aspects of this approach is that it will allow for the evolution of our EAFM policy at a rate commensurate with the availability of the science to support it.”

The Council’s EAFM approach is organized around four major ecosystem-related issues: forage species, habitat, climate change and variability, and interactions. Development of the document was informed by a series of four workshops which brought together scientists, managers and stakeholders to discuss each issue and associated best management practices.

The EAFM Guidance Document and supporting documents are available at www.mafmc.org/eafm.