

2021 Deliverables – Supplemental Project Descriptions

This document contains descriptions of some of the projects and activities included in the “DRAFT 2021 Proposed Actions and Deliverables” (see Tab 1 on the October 2020 meeting page - <https://www.mafmc.org/briefing/october-2020>). Descriptions and timelines are subject to change. Item numbers in the table below are associated with the deliverable numbers on the draft 2021 Actions and Deliverables.

	Action/Project	Staff	Description
3	Commercial minimum mesh size review for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass	Dancy, Beaty, Coutré	In 2018, the Council and Board reviewed results of a study on minimum mesh size effectiveness for these three species. The Monitoring Committee recommended additional analyses and industry input before considering modifications, and the Council and Board recommended continuing to pursue this issue as a lower-tier priority at the time given other ongoing actions for this FMP. Current regulations require three different minimum mesh size regulations for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass, which are targeted by an overlapping group of vessels fishing in similar areas. Industry members have requested analysis of a uniform mesh size for these three species. This review would build on the previous research and consider revisions to the commercial minimum mesh sizes and exemptions for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass.
5	Recreational Reform Initiative	Beaty	This joint initiative with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) addresses all four jointly managed recreational species (i.e., summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish). It considers ways to achieve greater stability in the recreational management measures (bag/size/season), greater flexibility in the management process, and accessibility aligned with availability/stock status. This initiative is not yet associated with a management action such as an FMP framework/addendum or amendment. The Council and Board may initiate a management action to address priority topics in October 2020. https://www.mafmc.org/actions/recreational-reform-initiative
6	Scup discards and gear restricted areas (GRA) review	Coutré	In recent years, scup discards in the commercial trawl fishery have been well above average, including record breaking high discards in 2017. This review will summarize trends in scup discards, evaluate the effectiveness of gear restricted areas, and consider options to address this issue.
7	Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass Commercial/Recreational Allocation Amendment	Dancy, Beaty, Coutré	This joint MAFMC/ASMFC amendment will reevaluate and potentially revise the commercial and recreational sector allocations for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass. This action was initiated in part to address the allocation-related impacts of the revised recreational data from MRIP. The Council and Board expect to approve a public hearing document during the December 2020 Council Meeting. Public hearings are expected to occur in early 2021 and amendment development is expected to be completed in 2021. http://www.mafmc.org/actions/sfsbsb-allocation-amendment

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8	Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM) management strategy evaluation for summer flounder	Muffley	In 2020, the Council initiated the development of a management strategy evaluation (MSE) to identify and evaluate the biological and management implications of alternative strategies to minimize recreational summer flounder discards. The recreational discards MSE, the third step in the EAFM decision framework, will involve extensive science, management, and stakeholder engagement. Simulation model(s) development and testing and a series of stakeholder and management workshops identifying and evaluating objectives and performance metrics are anticipated activities in 2021.
13	Bluefish Allocation and Rebuilding Amendment	Seeley	This joint MAFMC/ASMFC amendment considers potential revisions to the allocation of Atlantic bluefish between the commercial and recreational fisheries and the commercial allocations to the states. This action will also review the goals and objectives of the bluefish FMP and the quota transfer processes and establish a rebuilding plan for bluefish. The Council and Board will approve a public hearing document in February and will hold public hearings in early Spring 2021. Final action is anticipated in the summer of 2021. http://www.mafmc.org/actions/bluefish-allocation-amendment
18	Review performance of private recreational tilefish permitting and reporting	Seeley	Private recreational tilefish permitting and reporting was implemented in August 2020. The Council will continue to review the performance and progress leading up to the next specification cycle and assessment. Council staff remains in contact with GARFO (lead) on all outreach developments.
23	Illex Working Group report (review)	Didden	The <i>Illex</i> Working Group is focused on the challenge of identifying appropriate catch limits for a dynamic, short-lived species whose survival, growth and abundance on the US shelf are driven by a complex interplay of environmental conditions. http://www.mafmc.org/actions/illex-working-group
24	HMS/chub mackerel diet study	Beaty	In 2018, the Council funded Walt Golet (UMaine/GMRI) and three co-PIs to assess the diets of highly migratory species caught in recreational and commercial fisheries off New Jersey through South Carolina. This is intended to address a data gap identified through the Chub Mackerel Amendment. A final report is expected in the summer of 2021.
32	Surfclam and Ocean Quahog Commingling/Discarding Issues Action	Coakley	As surfclams have shifted toward deeper water in recent years, catches including both surfclams and ocean quahogs (“commingling”) have become more common, resulting in increased discards of surfclams on quahog trips and vice versa. Current regulations do not allow surfclams and ocean quahogs to be landed on the same trip. The Council is exploring options to address this issue.
33	Surfclam genetic study	Coakley	This study, contracted with Cornell University, will document the distributions of <i>Spisula solidissima similis</i> and <i>Spisula solidissima solidissima</i> in the nearshore waters of the US Northwest Atlantic.
34	Research Set-Aside (RSA) program review workshop	Seeley	The Research Steering Committee will initiate a workshop to discuss re-development of the Mid-Atlantic RSA program. A workshop is anticipated to take place in 2021.

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35	2020-2024 research priorities document – biennial review	Muffley	As outlined in the 2020-2024 Research Priorities document, a comprehensive biennial review of all Council research priorities will occur in 2021. Feedback and input from all APs, Monitoring Committees, NEFSC staff, and the SSC on existing and new priorities will take place throughout the year. A review of Council-funded projects and an evaluation of all species-specific priorities will occur to track progress and implementation of the document.
36	Joint Council-SSC meeting	Muffley	The Council will convene a joint meeting with its SSC during one of its regularly scheduled meetings. The goal of the joint meeting is to provide an opportunity for Council and SSC members to meet and interact, have an open discussion on a variety of Council priorities and topics of mutual interest.
37	SSC Economic Work Group	Muffley	Depending upon direction from the Council later in 2020, the SSC Economic Work Group will provide periodic check-ins with the Council throughout 2021 for feedback and direction on the development and implementation of the management priority case study. The case study will highlight the process for input and potential economic products and information the Work Group could provide to the Council in the future.
38	Fishery Dependent Data Initiative (FDDI) (GARFO lead)	n/a	The FDDI is an ongoing GARFO/NEFSC initiative intended to modernize fishery dependent data collection programs that will result in: (1) The development of a modernized data system capable of supporting current and future data collection needs; (2) automated integration of multiple fisheries dependent data sets that will result in a single comprehensive fisheries dependent data set; and (3) consolidation of industry reporting requirements that will minimize the number of systems needed to fulfil reporting requirements while also eliminating redundancy wherever possible.
39	2021 EAFM risk assessment report	Muffley	The Council completed the first EAFM risk assessment in 2017. The risk assessment is updated annually to provide the Council with a synopsis of ecosystem considerations of highest priority and greatest risk to meeting Council management objectives. Staff from the NEFSC and Council will review and update the risk levels for the different risk elements in 2021 using updated stock assessment information, new data analyses, and any other appropriate and relevant information available. The updated risk assessment will be provided to the SSC in March and the Council in April in conjunction with the 2021 State of the Ecosystem Report.
40	Northeast Regional Habitat Assessment (NRHA)	Coakley	The NRHA is a collaborative effort to describe and characterize estuarine, coastal, and offshore fish habitat distribution, abundance, and quality in the Northeast. Work associated with the NRHA began in 2019 and is expected to continue through July 2022. The project is being led by a Steering Committee composed of leadership from the major habitat conservation, restoration, and science organizations in the region. Council staff serves as the overall project coordinator and inshore team co-lead. http://www.mafmc.org/nrha

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41	Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Redo	Coakley	Once improved habitat science products are available from NRHA, the Council can consider an action to complete this review and update/revise its essential fish habitat descriptions.
42	Offshore wind web pages	Beaty/Sabo	The Council maintains three webpages and an email list to communicate updates on offshore wind energy development with interested stakeholders. The webpages are maintained jointly with the New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) and NOAA Fisheries: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • http://www.mafmc.org/northeast-offshore-wind • http://www.mafmc.org/offshore-wind-notices • http://www.mafmc.org/offshore-wind-comment-opportunities
44	Climate change and distribution shift scenario planning	Dancy	In coordination with participating Northeast Regional Coordinating Council (NRCC) member organizations as well as the South Atlantic Council, the Council will begin an East Coast scenario planning process to consider future management strategies in the face of climate change and species distribution shifts. Scenario planning is a tool that managers can use to develop planning and adaptation strategies in the context of uncertain and uncontrollable external forces. This process would involve one or more workshops and the involvement of a broad range of stakeholders. The NRCC is in the process of identifying likely participants, scope, process, and funding for this initiative.
45	Review commercial landings of unmanaged species	Beaty	The Council will review an annual update on landings of unmanaged species compiled by GARFO. The intent is to look for signs of emerging unmanaged commercial fisheries.
48	Council action web pages	Sabo	Staff maintain action pages for all ongoing Council pages. These pages provide status updates links to related documents. http://www.mafmc.org/council-actions
50	Communication/Outreach Advisory Panel (AP)	Sabo	During the planning process for 2020 the Council agreed to form a Communication/Outreach AP to provide advice to the Council and staff on various communication initiatives and outreach products. Formation of the AP was delayed until 2021 to align with the 3-year AP reappointment cycle. The new AP will report to the Council's Executive Committee.
51	Commercial eVTR implementation workshops	Sabo/Coutré	In December 2019 and January 2020 the MAFMC and NEFMC took final action to require all commercial vessels with federal permits for species managed by either Council to be required to submit VTRs electronically. GARFO has indicated that there will be an extended implementation timeline after the final rule is published. The Council will work with ACCSP and GARFO to provide training opportunities using eVTR software before the implementation deadline. https://www.mafmc.org/commercial-evtr