



Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

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Dr. Jon Hare
Science and Research Director
Northeast Fisheries Science Center
166 Water Street
Woods Hole, MA 02543

Mr. Michael Pentony
Regional Administrator
National Marine Fisheries Service
Greater Atlantic Region
55 Great Republic Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930-2276

Dear Dr. Hare and Mr. Pentony:

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council appreciates the opportunity to submit comments on the draft NOAA Fisheries New England and Mid-Atlantic Geographic Strategic Plan for 2024-2028. In general, the Council supports this effort to update the regional strategic plan and hopes that it will promote greater coordination and collaboration among the region's fishery management partners. Council members and staff have reviewed the draft plan and developed the following comments and recommendations.

Top Geographic Priorities (page 7): There is extra, duplicative language at the end of the sixth bullet that should be deleted ("Facilitate and increase the accessibility of information in support of regional priorities, for both our staff and our constituents., **for both our staff and our constituents.**") Also, the meaning of "regional priorities" in this context is unclear. Is it referring to the strategic plan priorities, or does it also encompass the priorities of the Council and other regional partners? While the Council strongly supports efforts to facilitate and increase the accessibility of information, we note that none of the strategic goal sections appear to directly address this priority. We believe there is a continued need to strengthen the connection between management and research to ensure that research is conducted and communicated in a manner that is useful to resource managers. We suggest incorporating additional language to address this priority under Strategy 1.1.

Strategic Goal #1, Key Performance Indicators (page 8): The second bullet refers to core data collection efforts, but there is no mention of fishery dependent data collection efforts such as dockside monitoring or the study fleet. These are critical data elements that need to continue and be completed each year. We recommend modifying the beginning of the sentence to read "Complete core fisheries-independent **and -dependent surveys...**". We recommend making the same change to the last sentence of Strategy 1.1 (page 9).

Strategic Goal #1, Strategy 1.5 (page 10): There is a need to define and identify the underserved communities in the Mid-Atlantic region. Having a specific definition and identification of our underserved communities is a critical first step in order to be effective at engaging and supporting these communities. We suggest modifying the second sentence of Strategy 1.5 to read "**Identify and engage with underserved communities...**".

Strategic Goal #2, Key Performance Indicators (page 11): The meaning of the second bullet is unclear (“Increase the number and percentage of recovery actions ongoing or completed.”) This could be interpreted to mean that we are striving for more protected species recovery actions. However, wouldn’t we want this indicator to go down as we have less need for recovery actions over time? Providing some clarity here would be helpful.

Minor/editorial comments:

- Strategy 1.6 (page 10) – “IUU” acronym should be spelled out/defined.
- Strategy 2.1 (page 11) – “North Atlantic right whales” should be “the North Atlantic right whale.”
- Strategy 3.2 (page 13) – Add “(DEIA)” at the end of the first sentence.

Thank you for this opportunity to review and comment on the draft Greater Atlantic Region Geographic Strategic Plan. We hope you will find our comments helpful. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christopher M. Moore".

Christopher M. Moore, Ph.D.
Executive Director

cc: M. Luisi, W. Townsend