



Research Steering Committee Meeting

Re-Development of the Mid-Atlantic Research Set-Aside Program

Webinar Meeting Summary

March 2021

The Research Steering Committee (RSC) met via webinar on Thursday, March 18, 2021 to discuss redevelopment of the Research Set-Aside (RSA) program. In doing so, the RSC discussed the outcomes of the April 2020 RSC meeting, the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) Economic Working Group involvement, and a variety of workshop approaches/logistics. The Committee's recommendations from this meeting will be presented via the Committee reports at the April 2021 Council meeting.

RSC members present: Adam Nowalsky (Chair), Michelle Duval (Vice-Chair), Chris Batsavage, Bob Beal, Peter deFur, Tony DiLernia, Paul Risi, Kate Wilke, Ryan Silva, and Matthew Seeley (MAFMC Staff).

Others present: Jorge Holzer (MAFMC SSC), Paul Rago (MAFMC SSC), Geret DePiper (MAFMC SSC), John Boreman (MAFMC SSC), Mark Holliday (MAFMC SSC), Cheryl Corbett (NMFS), Scott Curatolo-Wagemann (Cornell), Tara McClintock (Cornell), James Fletcher (UNFA), Katie Almeida (Town Dock), Brandon Muffley (MAFMC Staff), Stephen Pearson (MAFMC Staff), Mary Sabo (MAFMC Staff), and Jason Didden (MAFMC Staff).

Summary

The RSC meeting began with a presentation from staff summarizing the goals of the webinar and workshop (proposed) and the RSC progress to date. Discussion initially focused on the RSC's involvement with the SSC Economic Work Group (WG), the options to redevelop an RSA program, and workshop logistics to be discussed on the webinar. As a result of this discussion, the RSC recommended option 2 for a workshop structure. This option consists of three workshop webinars during the summer and early fall focusing on research, funding, and enforcement, followed by an in-person 1-day workshop in the fall to report all findings and recommendations to the participants. The RSC confirmed that the results of the entire workshop will be presented to the Council in December with a recommendation on whether/how to re-develop the RSA program.

Workshop Structure and SSC Economic WG Involvement

The RSC recommends an RSA Workshop that would consist of 3 webinars and 1 in-person meeting in 2021. Goals for each workshop webinar are presented below but will be further refined

at the next RSC meeting tentatively set for late spring 2021. This workshop structure offers a more accelerated approach compared to the non-preferred option of holding a 3-day in-person workshop in the fall. SSC Economic WG members expressed concerns over not having sufficient time to provide detailed options and analysis on each WG topic (i.e., research, funding, and enforcement). To adjust for the preferred workshop structure, SSC Economic WG leads indicated they will provide draft concepts and potential options that encompass the overall scope of each meeting topic. These products, which will be based on the suggested best economic practices, will be used to facilitate and supplement workshop discussions. The RSC and invited participants will offer feedback and direction on the SSC Economic WG products for additional development and refinement prior to the final in-person workshop.

RSC-Recommended Workshop Structure

- **Meeting 1 (Workshop Webinar):** Draft Goal – Identify how research goals will be prioritized, projects will be screened, and results will inform management/be communicated to the Council and stakeholders.
 - Review draft SSC Economic WG products on Research
 - Primary and Other Invited Participants (see list below)
- **Meeting 2 (Workshop Webinar):** Draft Goal – Recap meeting 1, confirm how the program will be administered (federal grant program), discuss funding mechanism, detail the range of topics/options for discussion at the workshop, and indicate that projects should be tied to management/assessment needs.
 - Review draft SSC Economic WG products on Funding
 - Primary and Other Invited Participants (see list below)
- **Meeting 3 (Workshop Webinar):** Draft Goal – Recap meeting 1 and 2, identify how the Council will collaborate with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and other agencies, and identify/discuss revisions that will avoid future enforcement issues.
 - Review draft SSC Economic WG products on Enforcement
 - Primary and Other Invited Participants (see list below)
- **Meeting 4 (1-day In-Person Workshop):** Goal – Recap meetings 1-3, review final SSC Economic WG products, and develop a detailed recommendation (with timelines) for the Council identifying whether and how RSA should be re-developed.
 - Primary and Other Invited Participants

Primary Participants:

- Committee Members, Mid-Atlantic Council Staff, New England Council Staff, Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) Staff, ASMFC Law Enforcement Committee, NOAA Office of Law Enforcement (OLE), Northeast Fisheries Science Center, Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO), Scientific and Statistical Committee (e.g., Working Groups and Chair)

Other Invited Participants:

- National Fisheries Institute, State representatives (e.g., MAFMC and ASMFC Administrative Commissioners), MAFMC Advisory Panels, previously successful RSA participants, Science Center for Marine Fisheries, Other individuals.

Areas of Focus

The RSC and Economic WG will work collaboratively to produce meeting reports and briefing materials for a synthesis workshop (Meeting 4) in the late Fall.

Anticipated Economic Working Group Products

The main product will be a report with options and alternatives regarding economic considerations to be submitted to the stakeholders that will participate in the 2021 workshop for the redevelopment of the program. This report will focus on the three main components of the program: 1) selection of fishery and research projects, 2) allocation of RSA quota and revenue generation, and 3) enforcement and monitoring. Importantly, the report will highlight the economic link across these three components, as driven by researchers' objectives and fishermen's incentives. The WGs will include case studies, scenarios, trigger questions, etc. to promote positive dialogue regarding all topics. Polished products will not be available at the webinar meetings, but ample materials will be available to guide the discussion and supplement the RSC's work.

The subgroups of the Economic WG will develop draft reports for each workshop webinar (meetings 1-3) focusing on research, funding, and enforcement. The WGs will focus efforts on the areas of the RSA program that led to its suspension. Ideally, these reports and possible considerations will span the overall meeting scope and supplement/guide the RSC's discussion.

Anticipated Research Steering Committee (and Council) Recommendations

The RSC will develop a report highlighting the outcomes of the workshop with respect to each individual meeting. This report will include the recommendation to redevelop RSA (should that be the outcome of the workshop) with a focus on the revisions and improvements to the program, as previously implemented. The Council will review this report at the December 2021 meeting and consider action on the re-development of RSA.

A further detailed report from the RSC will be presented to the Council in early to mid-2022 detailing revisions that will lead to a successfully redesigned program. This report intends to highlight the following:

- Prioritization (i.e., research needs, proposals, access to RSA quota, etc.)
- Amount of quota to set-aside
- Provide recommendations on dealing with enforcement concerns
- Administrative details (and costs)
- Provide input into the review process so the center director can make strong selections
- Integrate research results into the management process where appropriate
- Incorporate criteria that address the "problem areas" and lessons learned
- Recommendations to the Council/RSC that define the legal bounds of what can be conducted through this workshop, as it is important to ensure the results that come out of the workshop are fully practicable.
- Other ideas considered during the workshops

Timeline

Date	Event/Topic
March 18 th	RSC Planning Meeting (multi-day workshop or 3 virtual meetings and 1-day workshop) Confirm whether the RSC will move forward with Option 1 or 2.
April 6-8 th Council Meeting	RSC will present detailed outcomes of 3/18 meeting and outline the workshop structure.
May (late)	RSC Planning Meeting
June (late)	Meeting 1 (Workshop Webinar) - Research
August	Meeting 2 (Workshop Webinar) - Funding
August	Council Meeting: Economic WG progress report to Council
September	SSC Meeting: Economic WG progress report to SSC
September/October	Meeting 3 (Workshop Webinar) - Enforcement
October/November	Meeting 4 (1-day In-Person Workshop)
December	Council Meeting: RSC and Economic WG report to Council

Next Steps

The RSC will hold another meeting prior to the first workshop webinar (Meeting 1) to further define the structure for each meeting. Staff will develop briefing materials outlining specific goals and action items for each individual workshop webinar. These materials will incorporate the recommendations from the RSC and SSC Economic WG, as well as trigger questions to help guide discussion.