



**MARCO'S MID-ATLANTIC OCEAN DATA PORTAL PROJECT:
"COMMUNITIES AT SEA" APPROACH TO DEVELOP COMMERCIAL FISHING ACTIVITY MAPS**

MAFMC Briefing Materials

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Fishery managers and stakeholders are well aware that specific areas at sea are very important to large fishing communities that depend on them. What is less well understood is which areas are important to which communities given new claims on ocean space. Using a combination of existing data and community engagement, we can identify areas that particular communities depend upon and use this information to help inform decision making processes.

This is a project of the MARCO Portal Team

- MARCO Portal Team is helping to build capacity for coastal and ocean planning through development of the Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal.
- Project goals include developing and providing broad access to maps on diverse ocean resources and human uses, including commercial and recreational fishing, recreational activity, offshore wind energy and marine transportation.
- Providing ocean resource managers and stakeholders with better information about which ocean places are most important to Mid-Atlantic fishing communities can facilitate better decision making.

Data and Analysis Method

1. Producing Initial Maps

- Data processed using NMFS protocols to address confidentiality.
- VTR data was linked with vessel permit data. The resultant database links fishing ports/communities to areas where they fish. It also includes information on gear used, trip length, number of crew on board, species and quantities caught.
- The importance of fishing areas to communities is measured by the amount of time they spend there (on average over most recent 3 years).
- Trip length was multiplied by crew on board to create a new variable called "fisherman days," as a measure of community presence.

2. Engaging Fishing Communities

- Maps of fishing areas are made for each community. "Communities" are defined as a function of port association and gear type used.

- Peer groups of fishermen hailing from the same ports and using the same gear types become the basis for community engagement, testing map accuracy, and validation.

3. *Incorporating Fishermen Feedback into Final Maps*

- Coastal community meetings are held to review maps, ideally with local co-hosts.
- Fishermen are invited to edit and amend maps as appropriate.
- Fishermen also asked to indicate what is not well represented (e.g. state licensed fisheries).

Help and Advice Needed

We are asking MAFMC to provide advice to the project team on best approaches and opportunities for engaging the fishing industry for review, discussion and improvement of project data and maps.

What are possible forms of outreach?

- Continued consulting with industry representatives and other advisors representing a range of commercial fishing sectors to guide overall effort.
- Meeting with commercial fishermen at Mid-Atlantic fishing ports to review data layers to confirm and validate the data and provide additional information and richness.
- Returning to advisors, states, representatives to ASMFC and the MAFMC, and meeting participants to affirm changes made to data prior to displaying on the Marine Planner.

ABOUT MARCO

The Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean (MARCO) is collaboration among the states of New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia working to ensure ocean health and a robust coastal economy. Learn more at: www.midatlanticocean.org.

ABOUT THE Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal

The Portal is an online toolkit and resource center to engage stakeholders in ocean planning in the five-state Mid-Atlantic region. Learn more at: www.portal.midatlanticocean.org.

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