



Comprehensive 5-Year (2020 – 2024) Research Priorities

Annapolis, MD
December 9, 2019

Background

- MSA requirement – priorities and budget considerations by regional science center
- Priorities developed with SSC input
- First plan in 2008
 - Research recommendations from assessment reports
- Current research priorities approved in 2015 and covers 2016 – 2020
 - Included key research themes/elements
 - Some prioritization of research projects
- Moved up development of draft priorities to align with new Strategic Plan and 5-Year Agreement



Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

Comprehensive Five Year (2016-2020) Research Plan

Approved December 7, 2015

Introduction

The Magnuson Stevens Reauthorization Act of 2006 requires that each Council develop a five-year research priority plan. The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council), in consultation with its Scientific and Statistical Committee, first developed a research plan to meet this requirement in 2008 through examination of research needs identified in numerous stock assessments, Council FMP/Amendment documents and through the Council's Research Set Aside Program.

Since then, the Council embarked on a Visioning Project to map out the future course of marine fisheries management in the Mid-Atlantic region. The Visioning Project resulted in the development of the Council's Strategic Plan (<http://mafmc.org>) which outlines the Council's strategies for implementing the Council's vision for improved federal fisheries management in the Mid-Atlantic. A central theme that emerged from this exercise was the lack of public confidence in the data and science that drive fishery management decisions. As a result, one of the major goals of the Council's Strategic Plan is to ensure that Council management decisions are based on timely and accurate scientific data that are analyzed and modeled in a manner that improves management performance and build stakeholder confidence. To this end, the Council's intent is to conduct cooperative research and rebuild stakeholder confidence in the data and analyses which support its management programs. This updated research plan is responsive to and organized around key elements articulated in the Strategic Plan relative to improving the timeliness and accuracy of data used in the management of marine resources under the purview of the Council.

Improvement

Analyses supporting the stock assessment process in the North Atlantic. Uncertainty is generally a function of the quality of the data used in the specification of catch limits.



Review of 5-Year Plan

- Understand how the report was used by Council and partners and evaluate its utility
- Helped identify strategies and changes to new priorities document
- Future process to review what priorities have/haven't been addressed





Research Priority Themes

- Stock assessment improvement
- Research to support measures to reduce/eliminate discards
- Collect and incorporate social and economic data into fishery management decision process and stabilize yields
- Evaluation of existing allocations to fishery sectors
- *Recreational data collection and utilization*
- *Collect ecosystem data and development of ecosystem tools and management strategies to support EAFM initiatives*
- *Climate change impacts on stock productivity and distribution shifts*

Species Specific Priorities

■ Input

- Part of specs process and development of Fishery Performance Report
- Input from AP, MC, SSC, assessment lead, staff, and Research Steering Committee
- Feedback received, SSC reports, assessment documents, other reports



Species Specific Priorities



■ Organization

- Short-term/smaller scale and long-term/larger scale
- Prioritized under each category
- General or Cross-Species list

■ Goals

- Comprehensive approach with greater input
- Tactical and strategic
- Increased utility for Council and management/science partners

BLUEFISH

SHORT-TERM/SMALLER SCALE

30. Enhance the data collection of recreational discard lengths and weights to develop a more reliable recreational discard estimate.

31. Evaluate species associations with recreational angler trips targeting bluefish to potentially modify the bluefish recreational CPUE index used in the assessment.

32. Evaluate methods for integrating disparate indices produced at multiple spatial and temporal scales into a stock-wide assessment model.

33. Evaluate changes in selectivity of age-0 bluefish in fishery independent surveys due to shifting environmental conditions. Investigate trends in recruitment.

34. Conduct a post-release mortality study to determine if the recreational discard mortality rate has changed over time.

35. Investigate the assumption of zero discards in the commercial fishery.

LONG-TERM/LARGER SCALE

36. Develop a fishery independent index and/or fishery dependent sampling program of offshore populations of bluefish to capture larger, older fish.

37. Investigate how environmental variability may affect timing of migration patterns of juvenile Bluefish and the distribution of adults, which in turn, may affect availability.

Future Direction



■ Short Term

- Biennial review of species-specific priorities
 - Input from AP, MC, SSC, assessment staff
 - Make sure priorities are reflective of current issues and priorities
 - Broad research themes remain for 5-year period
 - Identify research priority theme addressed by each species-specific need
- Review process to track progress in addressing priorities
 - What was/wasn't done and why

■ Long Term

- Development of a comprehensive research priorities plan
 - Process to be successful
 - Improve effectiveness and approaches to integrate priorities across region
 - Communication and coordination; leveraging resources

■ Incorporated into the new Strategic Plan

Meeting Goals

- Feedback on updated document and priorities
- Review and approve for implementation in 2020
- Committee motion:
 - *Move that the Council approve the Five-year (2020-2024) Research Priorities document as modified by the Committee today (deFur/Nolan). Motion passed by unanimous consent*

