



Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

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MEMORANDUM

Date: November 4, 2020
To: Chris Moore, Executive Director
From: Kiley Dancy, Staff
Subject: East Coast Climate Change Scenario Planning Initiative

NRCC Working Group Recommendations Recap

In the Spring of 2020, the NRCC formed a Scenario Planning Working Group (SPWG) to further explore the feasibility, logistics, and costs of an East Coast climate change scenario planning initiative. SPWG membership included staff from the Mid-Atlantic, New England, and South Atlantic Councils, Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office, Northeast Fisheries Science Center, Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, and NMFS Headquarters.

The SPWG met several times to develop recommendations to the NRCC ahead of their intercessional meeting on July 30, 2020. The working group recommendations are attached.

In summary, the SPWG recommended:

- Moving forward with an East Coast climate change scenario planning initiative.
- Appointing a core team of NRCC membership technical staff; appoint chair or chairs; determine if additional participants are desired in core team and, if so, identify process for selection.
- Contracting a facilitator for full facilitation and process support.
- Accepting The Nature Conservancy's offer to partner.
- Creating and ad hoc committee of Council/Commission members, technical staff, and scientific and industry advisors (as needed); discuss and agree on governance structure for committee.
- Conducting scoping or outreach effort to increase potential public engagement.
- Use a "two workshop model" over an 18-36 month time frame, with the first workshop consisting of scenario building and the second focused on implications and management applications.

Last NRCC Discussion

The NRCC held an intercessional meeting on July 30, 2020 to review SPWG recommendations. In general, many NRCC members were supportive of the scenario planning process and noted that it could help with climate change related governance discussions. Some members were supportive of moving ahead right away, and others needed to discuss more fully with their membership organization as part of priority setting before committing resources to this initiative. It was noted that states are going to realize funding impacts from Covid-19, and some organizations were concerned about staff and time commitments in relation to ongoing or emerging priorities.

The NRCC ultimately agreed to postpone additional discussion until their Fall 2020 meeting, to allow NRCC member organizations to discuss scenario planning in fall priority setting discussions, and for additional discussions of available resources to support the process.

Update on Funding from the Nature Conservancy

Earlier this year, the Nature Conservancy (TNC) applied for a grant from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation to support East Coast scenario planning efforts in partnership with the Mid-Atlantic Council and other organizations that choose to participate. The grant was recently approved, and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission has indicated that they are willing to administer these funds. These funds could cover some of the costs of this initiative such as process facilitation, meeting facilities and/or technology contracts for remote meeting platforms, potentially public invitational travel, and other miscellaneous expenditures such as printing, outreach, or scoping surveys. It is expected that the Councils, Commission, and agency personnel would have their respective participation costs paid by their organization.

Recommendations for Identifying a Core Team

The SPWG report from July contains recommendations for formation of a core team, which would be the next step in the process following the identification of participating organizations. The **SPWG recommended appointing a small core team comprised of NRCC membership technical staff** (similar to the SPWG composition), appointing a chair or chairs, and determining if additional participants on the core team are desired. The core team would be responsible for the majority of technical work and logistics behind the scenario planning process, analogous to a Plan Development Team (PDT) or Fishery Management Action Team (FMAT).

Once the core team is formed, the next steps would be for this group to work with the NRCC to outline a plan and timeline for the scenario planning process, secure a facilitator (if the NRCC is supportive of hiring a facilitator), and identify the key project objectives and questions to be addressed.

The SPWG assumed at the NRCC would be the ultimate decision-making group for scenario planning. This could be modified to include a subset of the NRCC if not all organizations participate. Consideration could also be given to adding South Atlantic representation to the relevant NRCC discussions. Another consideration for the NRCC, at this or a future meeting, is whether to adopt the SPWG recommendation to form an ad hoc committee to serve as a body of managers that would “provide a conduit for public participation, discussion, advancement of topic and issue development (analogous to any fishery management action development with the Councils or Commission).” This could provide opportunities for public and manager engagement in the process outside of planned workshops. If an ad hoc committee is formed, the NRCC should consider which group (the ad hoc committee or the NRCC) should be the ultimate decision making body for this process, and work with the core team to clearly identify what the roles and responsibilities of each group should be within the process.

Possible Project Timeline

A general stepwise approach to a scenario planning process is outlined in the SPWG recommendation summary. A more detailed plan and timeline can be developed once it is clear which organizations are participating, and once the NRCC has formed the core team for the process. At this stage, a very tentative timeline could be considered as follows (note that this is an estimation by Mid-Atlantic Council staff and has not been discussed by the full SPWG):

- **Late 2020/Early 2021:** Core team formed, facilitator secured. Road map for scenario planning process designed by core team and participating organizations. Key questions and objectives identified by core team and NRCC.
- **Winter/Spring 2021:** Structured public input or "scoping" process to gather stakeholder input on driving forces in the fisheries and to introduce stakeholders to scenario planning.
- **Summer 2021:** Identification and description of major "driving forces" in the fisheries and preparation of materials and logistics for scenario building workshop.
- **Fall 2021:** Scenario building workshop.
- **Late 2021/Early 2022:** Refinement and ground-truthing of draft scenarios; preparation for second workshop.
- **Spring 2022:** Second workshop to identify implications and identify potential management response recommendations.
- **Fall 2022:** Reports and products from scenario planning process finalized and distributed.