



NOAA
FISHERIES

New England and Mid-Atlantic Geographic Strategic Plan 2020-2023

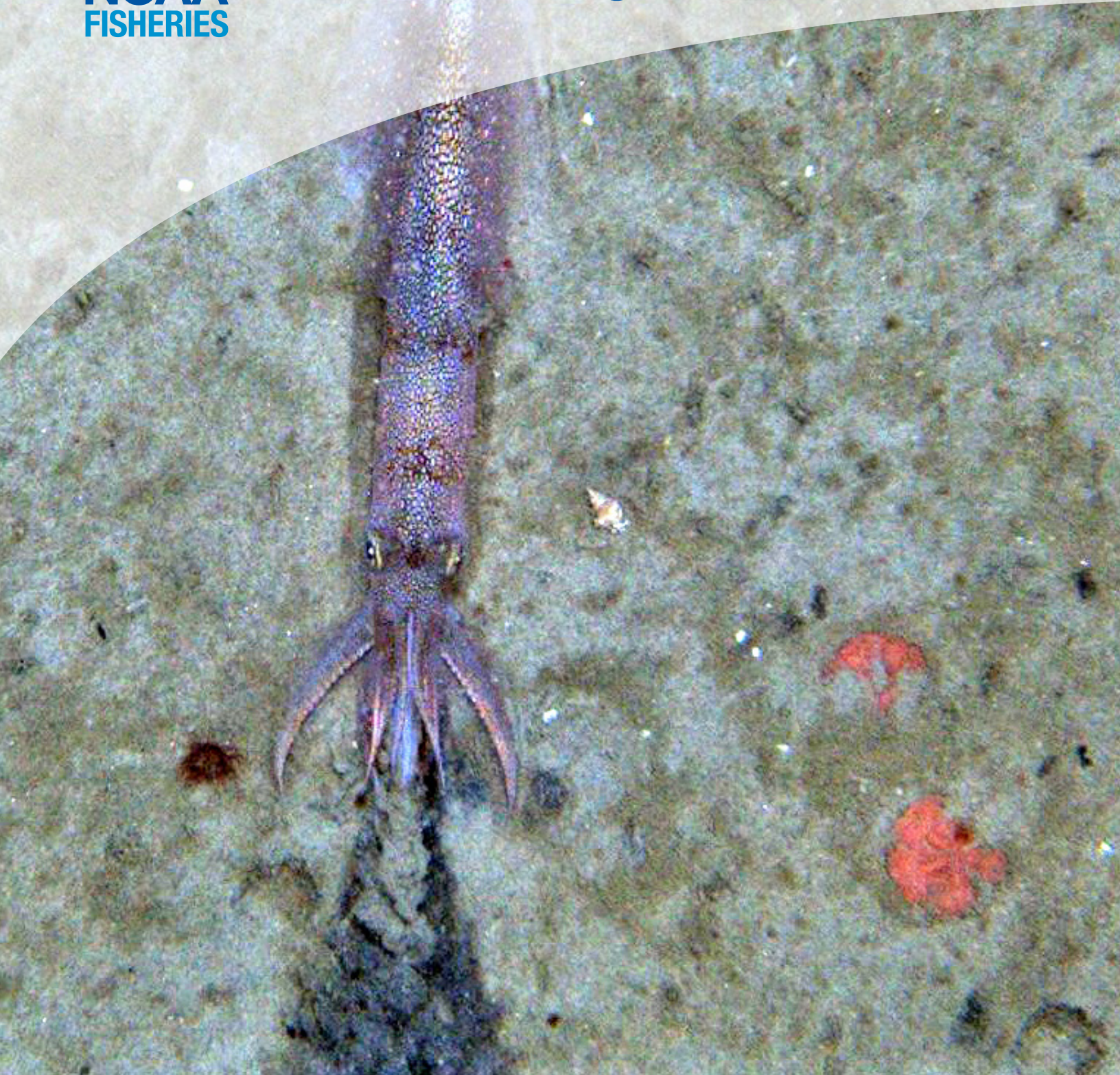


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A Joint Message from Regional Administrator and Science Center Director for NOAA Fisheries' Greater Atlantic Region



Dear Partners, Stakeholders, and Members of the Public:

We are proud to share NOAA Fisheries' Geographic Strategic Plan for the New England and Mid-Atlantic region, which describes how the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office and the Northeast Fisheries Science Center intend to implement the three NOAA Fisheries strategic goals for 2020–2023. Our region is made up of diverse and complex ecosystems that support some of the most valuable fisheries and oldest fishing communities in the nation. They also support iconic species such as the North Atlantic right whale, Atlantic salmon, and Atlantic cod.

This plan recognizes our need to work together to develop and conduct sound science that supports the conservation and management of our trust resources and the habitats upon which they depend, and provides joint strategies for achieving these goals. Specifically, this plan identifies strategies for modernizing our fishery-dependent data systems; rebuilding fish stocks through improved understanding, monitoring, and enforcement; focusing recovery efforts on high-priority protected species, implementing ecosystem-based fisheries management in the region; incorporating considerations of our trust resources and fisheries in offshore wind energy development processes; and improving international coordination to ensure the sustainability of fisheries and the recovery of endangered and protected species.

In addition to strategies to protect and conserve our trust resources, we have established joint strategies toward ensuring that we operate as effective and efficient organizations with the agility necessary to adapt and evolve to meet new challenges. These strategies recognize the importance of our people and infrastructure toward fulfilling our mission. In this plan, we commit to establishing a diverse workforce and developing innovative technologies that will enhance our ability to serve the public and achieve our strategic goals. We also commit to working with our partners to strengthen our collaborative science and management activities and reduce unnecessary regulatory burden on our fishing industry and other stakeholders to maximize economic growth.

Michael Pentony
Regional Administrator
Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office

Jon Hare, Ph.D.
Director
Northeast Fisheries Science Center

Mission and Mandates

NOAA Fisheries is responsible for the stewardship of the nation's ocean resources and their habitat. We provide vital services for the nation, which ensure: productive and sustainable fisheries; safe sources of seafood; the recovery and conservation of protected resources; and healthy ecosystems—all backed by sound science and an ecosystem-based approach to management.

U.S. fisheries are among the largest and most sustainable in the world. The U.S. science-based fishery management process, as mandated by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) and other laws, is designed to provide optimum yield while preventing overfishing and taking into account the protection and restoration of habitat and marine ecosystems.

We partner to achieve our mission. Our partners include other NOAA line offices, the New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, federal agencies, states, tribes, commercial and recreational fishing stakeholders, national and regional aquaculture associations, foundations, non-governmental organizations, academia, and other stakeholders.

We work closely with the regional fishery management councils and implement effective management programs. Working with councils and other partners, NOAA Fisheries has



significantly reduced the number of fish stocks subject to overfishing and increased the number of rebuilt stocks through implementation of annual catch limits, stock rebuilding plans, and conservation and restoration of habitat. We also conduct extensive data collection programs in collaboration with states, and provide stock assessments and ecological and socioeconomic information required for the federal management of fisheries and their essential habitats. The NOAA Fisheries Headquarters Office of Law Enforcement and its regional divisions, in partnership with states, territories, and other federal agencies, conducts compliance assistance and enforcement activities to ensure the success of our regulatory efforts.

NOAA Fisheries also seeks to grow domestic marine aquaculture production, supplementing U.S. wild-caught fisheries while promoting business and employment opportunities. NOAA Fisheries accomplishes this by working closely with federal and state partners to develop effective and streamlined aquaculture permitting systems, and by providing science and services to support the expansion and sustainability of U.S. marine aquaculture.

The health of species such as marine mammals, sea turtles, coral, and salmon is important for maintaining balanced and thriving ocean ecosystems and supporting a thriving ocean and coastal recreation sector. We work to conserve marine species and their habitats, protect and restore ecosystems from detrimental human activities, and monitor activities that might affect them, as mandated by the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA).

NOAA Fisheries promotes international cooperation to ensure sustainability of fisheries and species conservation globally. In partnership with industry and consumer groups, we work to increase consumer confidence in seafood by ensuring safe, wholesome, and properly labeled seafood through inspection, law enforcement, and international cooperation. Our international efforts prevent unfair seafood import practices or seafood labeling fraud from disadvantaging our domestic fisheries. We also collaborate with our international partners to advance fisheries science and management and to ensure the recovery of protected and endangered species.



Strategic Goals

Reflecting the vision of the Department of Commerce and NOAA to *Help the American Economy Grow*, our three Strategic Goals for 2020-2023 are to:

- Amplify the economic value of commercial and recreational fisheries while ensuring their sustainability
- Conserve and recover protected species while supporting responsible fishing and resource development
- Improve organizational excellence and regulatory efficiency

Regional Fishery Management Councils

The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act created eight regional fishery management councils. These councils are responsible for fisheries requiring conservation and management in their region. Voting and non-voting council members, supported by NOAA Fisheries, represent the commercial and recreational fishing sectors and environmental, academic, and government interests.

Under the MSA, councils are required to:

- Develop fishery management plans and recommend regulations to NMFS.
- Convene committees and advisory panels and conduct public meetings.
- Develop research priorities in conjunction with a Scientific and Statistical Committee.
- Select fishery management options.
- Recommend to NMFS annual catch limits based on best available science.
- Establish rebuilding plans.

NOAA Fisheries works closely with the councils to designate essential fish habitat for federally managed species, research and describe habitats essential for each life stage of many species, create maps, and designate Habitat Areas of Particular Concern.

The Northeast Regional Office and Science Center work closely with two councils:

- New England Fishery Management Council
- Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

Learn more about the Regional Fishery Management Councils.

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/topic/partners#regional-fishery-management-councils>

Organizations

Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office Our staff of 229 is aligned toward the achievement of our three strategic goals. We are organized as follows:

- **Directorate:** The directors Office provides GARFO oversight and communications.
- **Analysis and Program Support Division:** The division provides permit services, data collection, data quality, and data analysis to support catch monitoring and fishery management decisions.
- **Habitat Conservation Division:** The division conducts environmental, aquaculture, and offshore wind consultation, review, and permitting.
- **National Environmental Policy Act Review**
- **Operations and Budget Division:** The division manages grants, operations, and budget planning.
- **Protected Resources Division:** Endangered Species and Marine Mammal Protection Act consultations, stranding and recovery coordination, policy making.
- **Sustainable Fisheries Division:** Commercial and recreational fisheries management and policymaking.
- **Technology and Data Management Division:** The division support IT infrastructure and operations and software application/database development.

Regional Facilities:

The main Regional Office facility is located in Gloucester, MA. Additional field offices in New England and the Mid-Atlantic gather commercial fisheries catch data for scientific and statistical analyses, collaborate with our stakeholders, and share information with members of the fishing industry and public.

Northeast Fisheries Science Center:

Our staff of 400—occupying five facilities—is aligned toward reaching our three strategic goals. We are organized as follows:

- **Directorate:** Provided oversight, academic programs, and addresses wind energy issues.
- **Ecosystems and Aquaculture Division:** The division manages aquaculture, environment and marine biota interactions, ecosystem monitoring, and habitat ecology.
- **Fishery Monitoring and Research Division:** The division manages cooperative research, observer, and at-sea monitoring programs.
- **Information Technology Division:** The division provides IT security, IT infrastructure, data systems, and data application design and development.
- **Resource Evaluation and Assessment Division:** The division provides science for protected species, fisheries, socio-economic and ecosystem dynamics.
- **Operations, Management, and Information Division:** The division manages facilities, budget execution, and communication
- **Population and Ecosystems Monitoring and Analysis Division:** The division conducts fishery-independent surveys, fish biology, age-and growth, shark biology

Science Center Facilities:

Sandy Hook Laboratory (NJ)
 Milford Laboratory (CT)
 Narragansett Laboratory (RI)
 Woods Hole Laboratory and Observer Training Center (MA)
 Orono Field Station (ME)

Regional Vessels and Observation Platforms:

FSV Henry Bigelow
 RV Gloria Michelle
 RV Victor Loosanoff
 Small boats and unmanned aerial vehicles
 De Havilland DHC-6-300 Twin Otter.

The Local Landscape

Our region spans from Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, to the Scotian Shelf in the Gulf of Maine and is well-known for historic fisheries, popular coastlines, and complex ecosystems. We strive to manage, preserve, and enhance valuable resources, from scallops, lobster, and summer flounder, to the endangered North Atlantic right whale, and coastal bays and watersheds. Environmental factors in our region are changing at an unprecedented pace. We must be strategic with a willingness to move in new directions, while choosing what must be phased out. This strategic plan is tightly focused on addressing these challenges and capitalizing on new

opportunities. We recognize that prioritization and a tight focus on critical needs are necessary to meet these challenges.

Highly Migratory Species

NOAA Fisheries Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Management Division, a headquarters program, manages the fisheries for tunas, sharks, swordfish, and billfish throughout the Northwest Atlantic Ocean. This division develops and implements fishery management plans, monitors commercial and recreational catches to ensure compliance with domestic and international quotas, and supports U.S. negotiations at the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas. The Science Center and Regional Office are collaborative partners with the division, especially given the presence of these stocks and interaction of these stocks and fisheries (e.g., Atlantic bluefin tuna and the associated fisheries, pelagic sharks and tournaments, as well as the Grand Banks swordfish fishery).

Some of the *Issues* we face:

- Changing climate, oceanic conditions, and coastal habitat affecting distribution, productivity, and sustainability of fish and other marine species and ecosystems.
- Ocean acidification as a growing concern affecting fisheries, aquaculture, and marine ecosystems.
- Marine, estuarine, and riverine habitat loss.
- Increasing demands (e.g., offshore wind energy, hydropower, infrastructure, new fisheries, and aquaculture) on resources and resource users.

Some of the *Challenges* we must address:

- Maintaining an adequate level of surveys and population assessments for marine resource management.
- Meeting the increased needs for assessment data and modeling capabilities to provide the most accurate catch advice.
- Addressing fisheries allocation issues in light of changes in fishery conditions, science, management, and other social and economic factors.
- Reducing regulatory burden while ensuring sustainable fisheries and protecting marine species.
- Rebuilding overfished stocks in a manner that promotes fishing industry resilience.
- Promoting fishing community resiliency.
- Increasing catch of underutilized commercial fish stocks.
- Improving stability and opportunity in U.S. recreational fisheries.
- Reducing bycatch of non-target species while supporting commercial and recreational fisheries.

- Protecting endangered species and marine mammals while promoting responsible resource use.
- Identifying ecosystem-level species interactions and habitat productivity.
- Improving data collection processes and promoting efficient data integration.
- Developing and implementing innovative technologies that hold promise but are often difficult to apply.
- Communicating with stakeholders through a variety of methods, both face to face and technologically through traditional and social media.

Some of the *Risks* we foresee:

- NOAA's aging infrastructure and availability/dependability of vessels could impact data collection critical for resource management.
- Enhancing our science and management capabilities to ensure the coexistence of sustainable fisheries and mixed-ocean uses.
- A greater workload than the available resources can address requires a priority-based approach.

Habitat Restoration

The Office of Habitat Restoration has a working group within the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office. This division focuses primarily on restoring essential fish habitat, including dam removal and shoreline restoration.



Strategic Goal 1: Amplify the economic value of commercial and recreational fisheries while ensuring their sustainability

We expect to amplify the economic value of regional seafood production by optimizing commercial harvest, ensuring recreational opportunities, promoting marine aquaculture, and restoring habitat. Effective science-based management is essential to reaching optimum yield while preventing overfishing. Annual commercial landings revenues total nearly \$2 billion, and recreational fisheries result in over \$5.8 billion in trip expenditures, while a number of notable species are underharvested. We intend to continue our close collaboration with the New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils, Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, state and fishing industry partners, the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization, and local organizations and stakeholders.

Key Strategies

1.1 Manage stocks for optimum yield

- Rebuild overfished stocks, prevent overfishing with improved quota monitoring and fisheries enforcement, and find ways to increase the use of legally caught fish.
- Support the New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils in addressing regulatory amendments to achieve optimum yield.
- Explore opportunities for alternative management strategies for recreational fisheries.
- Protect essential fish habitat and restore damaged habitats for managed species and their prey to help maintain productive fisheries.



1.2 Increase U.S. marine aquaculture production

- Lead the Federal Government in coordinating authorizations for growth of marine aquaculture.
- Provide advanced marine aquaculture science and technology for ready adoption in the U.S. aquaculture industry, and provide industry incentives.

1.3 Promote ecosystem-based fisheries management

- Develop approaches to support ecosystem-based fisheries management and stock assessments and incorporate ecosystem considerations into management advice.
- Encourage and collaborate with the councils to develop ecosystem-based approaches to fisheries management and address changing climate conditions.

1.4 Adequately assess all prioritized stocks and maintain information for currently assessed stocks

- Establish target stock assessment levels and strive to meet targets for priority stocks without compromising sustainable management of other stocks.
- Develop incentives for industry-based (commercial and recreational) data collection and reporting.

1.5 Modernize fishery information collection, management, and dissemination systems, and enhance cooperative data collection and sharing

- Support and coordinate with states to advance user-centered fishery information networks and data platforms, with greater efficiency and lower cost, to improve the ability to effectively manage stocks for optimum yield and recreational opportunities.
- Collaborate with industry through the Fishery Dependent Data Initiative to integrate and modernize fishery-dependent data systems to simplify fisheries reporting, improve data quality, and enhance monitoring and analysis to better support management decisions, advance scientific understanding, and facilitate the elimination of redundant reporting burdens.

Key Indicators

- Fish Stock Sustainability Index (FSSI).
- Number of domestic stocks for which annual catch does not exceed the annual catch limit.
- Number of adequate assessments for fish stocks.
- Trend in U.S. marine aquaculture production (% increase over the previous year).



Strategic Goal 2: Conserve and recover protected species while supporting responsible fishing and resource development

We are responsible for recovering threatened or endangered marine species and for conserving and protecting marine mammals. Many of these species are key components of their ecosystems and have particular social and cultural importance. The focus is on recovery while using our understanding of limiting factors and threats to minimize conflict with infrastructure projects or other forms of economic growth. We will continue to improve the timeliness of our regulatory decisions and conservation outcomes when fishing and resource development projects interact with protected resources. Recovery of protected species would relieve restraints on development or other economically important projects.

Key Strategies

2.1 Stabilize highest priority protected species

- Focus science and recovery actions, and recruit partners to collaborate on actions to stabilize declining populations such as North Atlantic right whales and Atlantic salmon.
- Protect and restore habitat where it limits species recovery.
- Understand effect of changing climate on protected species and their habitats.

2.2 Review and streamline permitting and authorization processes for energy development and national defense, while maximizing fishing opportunities and conservation outcomes

- Promote energy independence and economic growth by creating efficiencies in our environmental review processes, including implementing guidance and policies that support conservation and effectively address major infrastructure and energy projects important to our nation's energy independence, economy, and defense.
- Develop collaborative regional science and incorporate fisheries considerations in offshore development processes to ensure coexistence of fisheries, aquaculture, energy development and national defense.

2.3 Minimize bycatch and entanglement of protected species while supporting fisheries

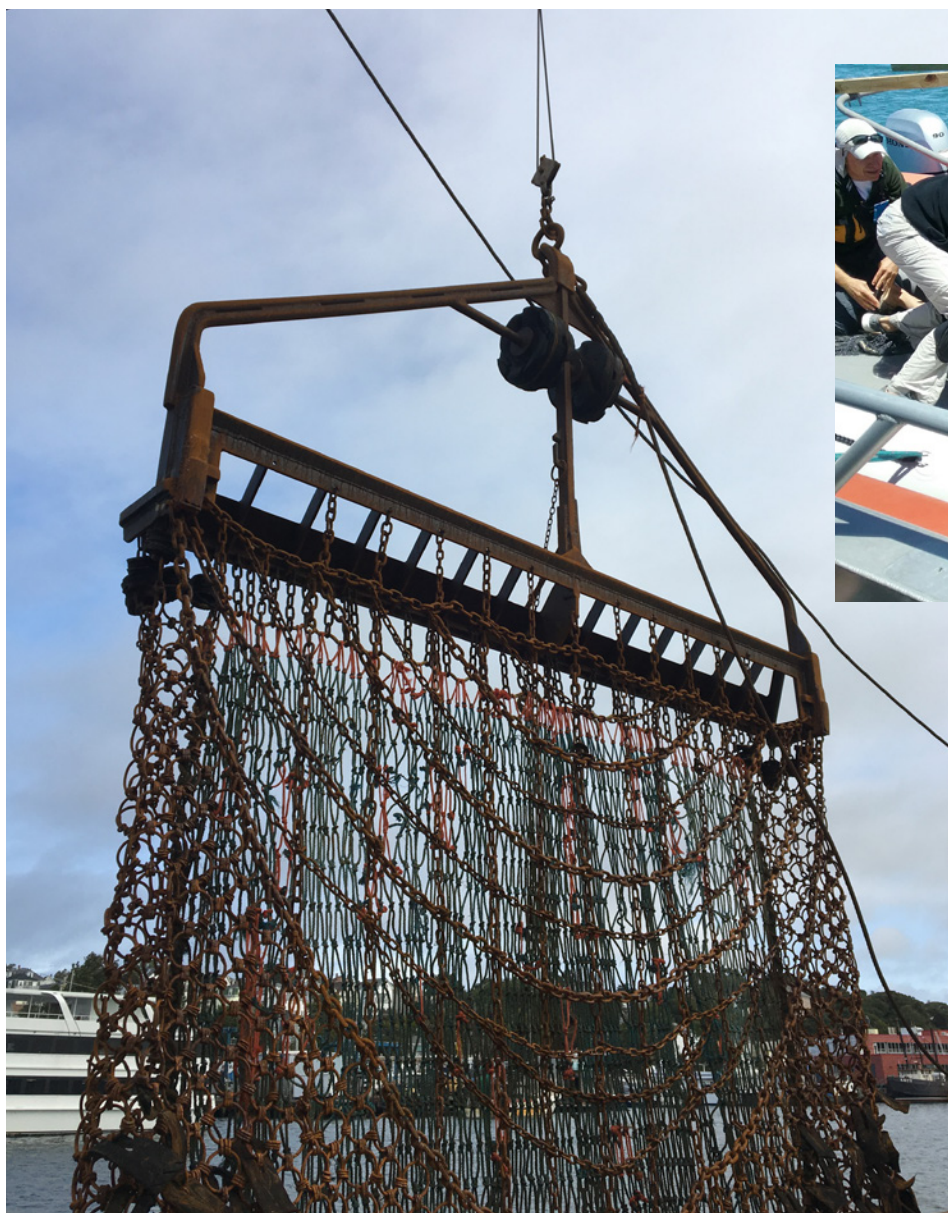
- Support continued fishing opportunities and aquaculture by understanding and minimizing protected species interactions and mortality.
- Work with fishing industry, scientists, environmental organizations, academia, law enforcement agencies, and other stakeholders to develop and enforce bycatch and entanglement prevention measures domestically and internationally.

2.4 Improve international cooperation and coordination

- Continue to develop and improve cooperation and collaboration with other countries and international organizations as it pertains to the recovery of endangered species, such as Atlantic salmon and the North Atlantic right whale, and other protected resources.

Key Indicators

- Number and percentage of recovery actions ongoing or completed.
- Percentage of protected species with adequate assessments.
- Average number of days to complete consultations, permits, and authorization.



Strategic Goal 3: Improve organizational excellence and regulatory efficiency

To realize our first two strategic goals, we must have effective and efficient organizations with the agility to adapt and evolve to meet emerging challenges. Promoting organizational excellence is a continuous process to improve our ability to fulfill our mission, support our people, and support the organization. The key factors that determine organizational excellence include our people, our business and management processes, and our technology and infrastructure. Improving business processes and implementing best practices conducted in a priority-based environment, along with continuous regulatory reform, will ensure our operations best support our customers and partners.

Key Strategies

3.1 Match a diverse workforce to mission needs

- Plan and deploy workforce strategically to ensure flexibility and agility in support of evolving mission functions and continuity of operations.
- Emphasize prioritized workforce composition and succession planning (i.e., the right people in the right place), diversity, competency-based management, and cross-collaborative approaches to promoting an inclusive and safe workplace.



3.2 Recapitalize infrastructure and facilities

- Conduct facility condition assessments to evaluate properties, and prioritize and address critical maintenance needs.
- Evaluate the infrastructure needs for workspace in light of an evolving workforce, and propose strategies for recapitalization to NOAA and the Department of Commerce.

3.3 Institutionalize prioritization and performance management practices

- Use priority-based methods to optimize investments for maximum economic return while meeting food security and conservation mandates.
- Evaluate organizational performance, assess programmatic and operational risks, and assess opportunities to ensure the best value for the American public.

3.4 Review agency regulations and remove or modify rules that unnecessarily burden businesses and economic growth

- Implement Executive Order 13771 by reviewing regulations to identify and modify or repeal rules that add burden and costs without adding value.
- Work with other NOAA partners, as well as the councils, to remove outdated, unnecessary, and ineffective fishing regulations.

3.5 Institutionalize the use of innovative technologies

- Support the development, leveraging, and use of powerful technologies (e.g., AUV/UAS platforms, advanced sensors, fishing industry platforms, molecular genetics, digital platforms, electronic reporting/monitoring, mobile applications, and cloud computing) for conducting surveys, enhancing and improving the accuracy of observing systems, and collecting and sharing data using cost-effective, transparent, and real-time approaches.

3.6 Expand regional collaborations

- Collaborate with the councils, commission, Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans, industry, academia, international management organizations, and other partners to progress our science and management priorities and promote innovation and sustainability.
- Develop and implement a regional watershed program.

3.7 Enhance stakeholder communications

- Improve communications with stakeholders by evaluating existing tools and methods and developing flexible approaches to communicate more effectively and efficiently.

Key Indicators

- Scores on Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey key indices.
- Percentage of agency performance measures met.
- Percentage of priority planned accomplishments completed.
- Percentage of facility condition assessments completed.



U.S. Secretary of Commerce

Wilbur Ross

Acting Under Secretary of Commerce
for Oceans and Atmosphere

Neil Jacobs, Ph.D.

Assistant Administrator for Fisheries

Chris Oliver

March 2020

www.fisheries.noaa.gov

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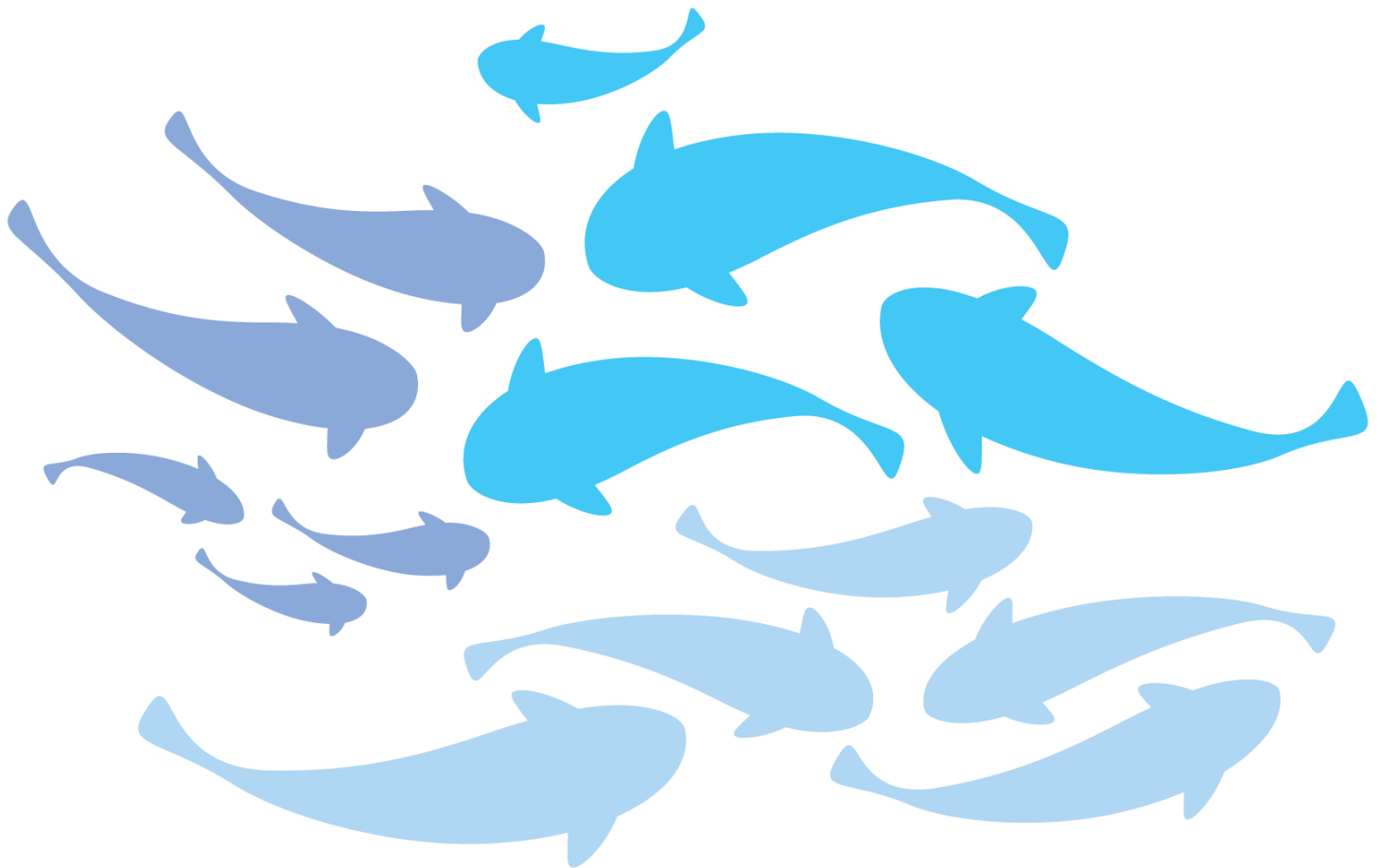
1315 East West Highway
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**NOAA
FISHERIES**

Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office

2022 Annual Implementation Plan



Introduction

In 2020, the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO) and the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) released a joint geographic strategic plan for the years 2020-2023. This strategic plan serves as our main guidance to prioritize activities in the Greater Atlantic region. Our region is made up of diverse and complex ecosystems that support some of the most valuable fisheries and oldest fishing communities in the nation. They also support iconic species such as the North Atlantic right whale, Atlantic salmon, and Atlantic cod.

Our plan recognizes our need to work together to develop and conduct sound science that supports the conservation and management of our trust resources and the habitats upon which they depend, and provides joint strategies for achieving these goals. Specifically, our plan identifies strategies for modernizing our fishery dependent data systems, rebuilding fish stocks through improved understanding, monitoring, and enforcement, focusing recovery efforts on high priority protected species, implementing ecosystem-based fisheries management in the region, incorporating considerations of our trust resources and fisheries in offshore wind energy development processes, and improving international coordination to ensure the sustainability of fisheries and the recovery of endangered and protected species.

In addition to strategies to protect and conserve our trust resources, we have established joint strategies towards ensuring that we operate as effective and efficient organizations with the agility necessary to adapt and evolve to meet new challenges. These strategies recognize the importance of our people and infrastructure towards fulfilling our mission. Through our plan, we commit towards establishing a diverse workforce and developing innovative technologies that will enhance our ability to serve the public and achieve our strategic goals. We also commit to working with our partners to strengthen our collaborative science and management activities and reduce unnecessary regulatory burden on our fishing industry and other stakeholders to maximize economic growth.

There are three strategic goals that our plan pursues, based on the vision of the Department of Commerce (DOC) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) as an agency:

- Goal 1:** Amplify the economic value of sustainable commercial and recreational fisheries.
- Goal 2:** Conserve and recover protected species while supporting responsible fishing and resource development.
- Goal 3:** Improve organizational excellence and regulatory efficiency.

The GARFO Implementation Plan

Accompanying our joint geographic strategic plan is a GARFO-specific Annual Implementation Plan, which outlines the procedures for obtaining organizational excellence through strategic resource allocation, informed decision-making, organizational collaboration, and transparent and effective communication to accomplish core activities.

Each year, GARFO divisions select specific annual priorities (milestones) in which to focus efforts within each fiscal year to achieve GARFO's long-term Strategic Goals. The Annual Implementation Plan notes each division's 2022 priorities and how they align with our Strategic Plan. Within each Strategic Goal, Annual Milestones are indicated with bold headers and the division responsible for implementing the milestone (Division acronym listed in parentheses following milestone). Following each milestone header is a short description of the specific work to be accomplished during the year in order to satisfy the priorities set by each milestone. Many of GARFO's annual milestones support multiple Strategic Goals. To reduce redundancy in this document, once a

milestone has been described within a Strategic Goal, additional listings of that milestone in subsequent Goals will be documented in a subsection of each goal under “Milestones Addressed in Other Goal Sections,” with the title of the specific milestone, the Division responsible, and any additional Goals that milestone meets.

Together, our Strategic Plan and Implementation Process documents provide guidance for decision making within GARFO and the NEFSC with the goal of increasing the transparency of these decisions. These documents help position our region to meet our future challenges by clearly stating our core and desired research, providing focus, and enabling a concentration of resources to accomplish these goals.

Strategic Framework

This plan is structured around the aforementioned research and support themes. The full portfolio of GARFO’s activities are further characterized by particular areas which describe the accomplishments we expect to achieve within the theme.

Greater Atlantic Region Strategic Plan Goals and Strategies

1. [Amplify the economic value of sustainable commercial and recreational fisheries](#)
 - 1.1. Manage stocks for optimum yield
 - 1.2. Increase U.S. marine aquaculture production
 - 1.3. Promote ecosystem-based fisheries management
 - 1.4. Adequately assess all prioritizes stocks and maintain information for currently assessed stocks
 - 1.5. Modernize fishery information collection, management, and dissemination systems, and enhance cooperative data collection and sharing
2. [Conserve and recover protected species while supporting responsible fishing and resource development](#)
 - 2.1. Stabilize highest priority protected species
 - 2.2. Review and streamline permitting and authorization processes for energy development and national defense, while maximizing fishing opportunities and conservation outcomes
 - 2.3. Minimize bycatch and entanglement of protected species while supporting fisheries
 - 2.4. Improved international cooperation and coordination
3. [Improve organizational excellence and regulatory efficiency](#)
 - 3.1. Match a diverse workforce to mission needs
 - 3.2. Recapitalize infrastructure and facilities
 - 3.3. Institutionalize prioritization and performance management practices
 - 3.4. Review agency regulations and remove or modify rules that unnecessarily burden businesses and economic growth

3.5. Institutionalize the use of innovative technologies

3.6. Expand regional collaborations

3.7. Enhance stakeholder communication

List of Acronyms

ACCSP	Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program	HQ	NMFS Headquarters
ACL	Annual Catch Limit	MAFMC	Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council
ACOE	Army Corps of Engineers	MMPA	Marine Mammal Protection Act
AIP	Annual Implementation Plan	NAFO	Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization
APSD	Analysis and Program Support Division	NEFMC	New England Fishery Management Council
ASMFC	Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission	NEFSC	Northeast Fisheries Science Center
BOEM	Bureau of Ocean and Energy Management	NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
DOC	Department of Commerce	NMFS	National Marine Fisheries Service
DPS	Distinct Population Segment	NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
EFH	Essential Fish Habitat	OMB	Office of Management and Budget
EM	Electronic Monitoring	OMD	Operations Management Division
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency	PRD	Protected Resources Division
ESA	Endangered Species Act	RO	Regional Office
eVTR	Electronic Vessel Trip Report	SERO	Southeast Regional Office (NMFS)
FDDI	Fishery Dependent Data Initiative	SHRU	Salmon Habitat Recovery Unit
FY	Fiscal Year	SFD	Sustainable Fisheries Division
GARFO	Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office	TDMD	Technology and Data Management Division
HESD	Habitat and Ecosystem Services Division	USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
HMS	Highly Migratory Species		

Implementing Our Strategies

Goal 1: Amplify the economic value of sustainable commercial and recreational fisheries

We expect to amplify the economic value of regional seafood production by optimizing commercial harvest, ensuring recreational opportunities, promoting marine aquaculture, and restoring habitat. Effective science-based management is essential to reaching optimum yield while preventing overfishing. Annual commercial landings revenues total nearly \$2 billion, and recreational fisheries result in over \$5.8 billion in trip expenditures, while a number of notable species are under harvested. We intend to continue our close collaboration with the Mid-Atlantic and New England Fishery Management Councils (MAFMC, NEFMC), Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC), state and fishing industry partners, the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO), and local organizations and stakeholders.

1.1 Manage stocks for optimum yield

Rebuild overfished stocks, prevent overfishing with improved quota monitoring and fisheries enforcement, and find ways to increase the use of legally caught fish. Support the MAFMC and NEFMC in addressing regulatory amendments to achieve optimum yield. Explore opportunities for alternative management strategies for recreational fisheries. Protect essential fish habitat and restore damaged habitats for managed species and their prey to help maintain productive fisheries.

Monitor annual catch limits (APSD)

Monitor the fisheries throughout the year to assure that annual catch limits (ACLs) are not exceeded. For each managed stock, a year-end catch evaluation is made to determine if accountability measures are required and make projections for in-season management actions. Monitor catch share programs: Independently monitor the region's catch share programs using data provided to both GARFO and NEFSC. Support catch share management for the Northeast multispecies fishery: Coordinate with sector managers throughout the year to reconcile data and ensure that final year-end data fully account for all catches by sectors.

Complete a draft of the River Herring Habitat Comprehensive Plan for the Atlantic Coast (HESD)

Complete a draft of the River Herring Habitat Comprehensive Plan for the Atlantic Coast, in coordination with SERO and ASMFC. This plan is meant to aid with FERC hydropower relicensing as well as guide overall fish passage needs.

Lead U.S. efforts to work with Canada on the joint management of shared, transboundary resources as part of the U.S./Canada Transboundary Understanding process (RO)

Staff from GARFO and regional Canadian officials will meet to discuss mutual interests in the conservation and management of transboundary living marine resources.

Assist with Revisions to NEPA Regulations Found in NAO 216-6 (RO)

Work with HQ NEPA Staff and General Counsel on revisions to NOAA's NEPA regulations - NAO 216-6. Based on revised NAO 216-6 regulations, update Regional Office NEPA procedures outlined in GARFO's NEPA Quality Assurance Plan.

Coordinate with USFWS on issues related to the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument, including research and management plan development (RO)

Work with our partners at USFWS to monitor activities proposed or occurring in the NE National Monument. This includes plans to permit the installation of cables through the Monument, along with research proposals and the development of the Monument Management Plan.

Complete review of, and update as necessary, the GARFO Recreational Fishing Plan (SFD)

This milestone requires that we review and, as necessary, update the GARFO recreational fishing action plan in 2022, as well as complete or make progress towards action items included in the plan (i.e., continued engagement and outreach events, explorations of new ways to manage recreational fisheries, etc.).

Progress towards Ecosystem-Based Fishery Management and Climate-Related Initiatives (SFD)

GARFO will continue to work with the MAFMC, NEFMC, and ASMFC to make progress towards implementing ecosystem-based management, as well as other initiatives to evaluate and adapt to climate-related impacts.

Collaborate with the Councils and ASMFC to sustainably manage fish stocks, including measures to promote rebuilding and measures for increasing fishing opportunities, where possible, and particularly for abundant and healthy fish stocks (SFD)

This milestone involves working with the Councils and Commission to develop specifications, rebuilding measures, and measures to increase fishing opportunities, particularly for healthy and abundant fish stocks. This includes measures to increase quotas, when possible, but also other measures to provide increased flexibility and additional fishing opportunities to improve the likelihood of achieving optimum yield.

1.2 Increase U.S. marine aquaculture production

Lead the Federal Government in coordinating authorizations for growth of marine aquaculture. Provide advanced marine aquaculture science and technology for ready adoption in the U.S. aquaculture industry, and provide industry incentives.

Complete an interagency agreement with the Army Corps of Engineers and EPA to facilitate our role as lead federal agency for the NEPA review of the proposed Blue Water Fisheries aquaculture project (HESD)

Complete an interagency agreement with the Army Corps of Engineers and EPA to facilitate our role as lead federal agency for the NEPA review of the proposed Blue Water Fisheries aquaculture project. This is the first AQ project where GARFO will be the lead agency under NEPA.

1.3 Promote ecosystem-based fisheries management

Develop approaches to support ecosystem-based fisheries management and stock assessments and incorporate ecosystem considerations into management advice. Encourage and collaborate with the Councils to develop ecosystem-based approaches to fisheries management and address changing climate conditions.

Milestones Addressed in Other Goal Sections:

Coordinate with USFWS on issues related to the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument, including research and management plan development (RO; Goals 1.1, 3.6)

Complete a draft of the River Herring Habitat Comprehensive Plan for the Atlantic Coast (HESD; Goals 1.1 3.6)

Progress towards Ecosystem-Based Fishery Management and Climate Related Initiatives (SFD; Goals 1.1, 3.6)

1.4 Adequately assess all prioritized stocks and maintain information for currently assessed stocks

Establish target stock assessment levels and strive to meet targets for priority stocks without compromising sustainable management of other stocks. Develop incentives for industry-based (commercial and recreational) data collection and reporting.

Manage fisheries dealer and vessel reports (APSD)

Federally-permitted seafood dealers and vessels are required to submit detailed reports of all purchases and catches, respectively. We review dealer and vessel reports and conduct data quality programs and compliance checks to ensure that reports are timely, complete and accurate.

Internal and external analytical, technical, and industry support (APSD)

Provide analytical and education/outreach services to internal and external stakeholders that have NOAA Fisheries requirements predicated on their businesses and/or permits. Specific tasks include: 1) Fish online permit, allocation transfer and electronic Vessel Trip Report (eVTR) support; 2) Web design for quota monitoring reports; 3) Modernization of fishery; fishery dependent data collection and permit application and renewal process; 4) Analytical support to support to GARFO, NEFSC, Councils and ASMFC; and 5) Support NEFSC's stock assessments through collection of biological samples in ports and working with the NEFSC to reduce variability in stock assessments by improving the collection of samples.

Provide permit services to constituents, including fishing allocation transfers (APSD)

Issue fishery permits and authorizations to eligible applicants within regulatory timeframes. In addition to vessel, dealer and operator permits, this includes the transfer of limited access vessel permits, fishing histories, fishing allocations and managing the regional cost recovery program.

Improve implementation of regional fisheries monitoring programs (SFD)

Continue improved implementation of regional monitoring programs, including initial implementation of the herring industry-funded monitoring program and the at-sea monitoring program for groundfish through Amendment 23.

Milestones Addressed in Other Goal Sections:

Monitor annual catch limits (APSD; Goals 1.1, 1.5)

Complete review and update as necessary the GARFO Recreational Fishing Plan (SFD; Goals 1.1, 3.7)

Collaborate with the Councils and ASMFC to sustainably manage fish stocks, including measures to promote rebuilding and measures for increasing fishing opportunities, where possible, and particularly for abundant and healthy fish stocks (SFD; Goals 1.1, 3.4, 3.6)

1.5 Modernize fishery information collection, management, and dissemination systems, and enhance cooperative data collection and sharing

Support and coordinate with states to advance user-centered fishery information networks and data platforms, with greater efficiency and lower cost, to improve the ability to effectively manage stocks for optimum yield and recreational opportunities. Collaborate with industry through the Fishery Dependent Data Initiative (FDDI) to integrate and modernize fisheries dependent data systems to simplify fisheries reporting, improve data quality,

and enhance monitoring and analysis to better support management decisions, advance scientific understanding, and facilitate the elimination of redundant reporting burdens.

Improve use of fishery dependent data through the development of the GARFO/NEFSC Fishery Dependent Data Initiative (FDDI) (APSD)

Work with the NEFSC, SERO, HQ (for HMS species) and other offices and agencies as appropriate to develop consistent approaches for use of state and federal fishery dependent data, including quality assurance and quality control processes. FDDI coordination with ACCSP: Establish ACCSP as a Data Repository of Greater Atlantic Fisheries Dependent Data. Working with ACCSP and NEFSC to prepare data, scripts, migration process, and data systems to ensure a smooth transition and to ensure ACCSP systems are compliant and compatible with existing data and ensure NOAA Fisheries data security protocols and data confidentiality requirements are satisfied. This milestone includes the development of the GARFO/NEFSC Catch Accounting and Monitoring System (CAMS).

Improve accessibility of fisheries information (APSD)

Expand the number of non-confidential information summaries available to the public that describe fishery participation and activity.

Expand use of electronic vessel trip reports (eVTRs) to all commercial and for-hire fisheries in the Greater Atlantic Region, except the American lobster fishery (APSD)

Implement the NEFMC and MAFMC omnibus action to convert vessel trip reports from paper to electronic submission. For-hire eVTRs became mandatory in some fisheries in the Mid-Atlantic in 2018. This milestone is intended to expand eVTR usage to all commercial and New England for-hire fisheries in the Greater Atlantic Region. Enhancements to mobile, tablet, and desktop applications such as "One Stop Reporting" to be used by industry to submit electronic vessel trip reports is included in this milestone.

Collaborate in the review, management, and implementation of cooperative research programs (SFD)

This milestone includes SFD staff working with other GARFO divisions and NEFSC to coordinate and collaborate review of cooperative research programs, particularly the Research Set-Aside Programs and the Saltonstall-Kennedy grant program.

Continue to advance regional electronic monitoring programs (SFD)

Advance and expand electronic monitoring programs in the region, including increasing vessel participation or expanding EM fleets, as well as further development of EM-related programs.

Provide support for GARFO's software development needs (TDMD)

Maintenance and expansion of IOS and Android mobile apps and fish tank web application suite capabilities in support of electronic business processes, reporting and monitoring. Take an appropriate project management approach to all software development. Ensure software development is done in a secure manner. Success will be measured in software being released on schedule, accepted by users and meeting GARFO needs and regulatory requirements for FY22.

Milestones Addressed in Other Goal Sections:

Monitor annual catch limits (APSD; Goals 1.1, 1.4)

Provide permit services to constituents, including fishing allocation transfers (APSD; Goal 1.4)

Manage fisheries dealer and vessel reports (APSD; Goal 1.4)

Internal and external analytical, technical, and industry support (APSD; Goals 1.4, 3.1, 3.3, 3.6)

Improve implementation of regional fisheries monitoring programs (SFD; Goals 1.4, 3.5)

Goal 2: Conserve and recover protected species while supporting responsible fishing and resource development

We are responsible for recovering threatened or endangered marine species, and conserving and protecting marine mammals. Many of these species are key components of their ecosystems and have particular social and cultural importance. The focus is on recovery while using our understanding of limiting factors and threats to minimize conflict with infrastructure projects or other forms of economic growth. We will continue to improve the timeliness of our regulatory decisions and conservation outcomes when fishing and resource development projects interact with protected resources. Recovery of protected species would relieve restraints on development or other economically important projects.

2.1 Stabilize highest priority protected species

Focus science and recovery actions, and recruit partners to collaborate on actions to stabilize declining populations such as North Atlantic right whales and Atlantic salmon. Protect and restore habitat where it limits species recovery. Understand the effect of changing climate on protected species and their habitats.

Oversee recovery and outreach for shortnose sturgeon and the three Distinct Population Segments (DPSs) of Atlantic sturgeon that occur in our region (PRD)

We will continue to work toward the ongoing recovery of Atlantic and shortnose sturgeon through: (1) finalizing the five year review for the three distinct population segments (DPSs) of Atlantic sturgeon in our region and coordinating with SERO on their reviews; (2) beginning the development of a recovery plan for the three DPSs of Atlantic sturgeon in our region; and, (3) Increasing awareness of the status of Atlantic and shortnose sturgeon throughout the GAR through an outreach program designed for elementary, middle, and high school students. This includes increasing the number of educational kits that are at existing learning centers for lending out to states from Maine to Virginia. Also, it includes hosting the annual teacher workshop to supply teachers with the information necessary to use the kits effectively. We will research ways to do this virtually as/if necessary.

Address ongoing impacts from fisheries to North Atlantic right whales by continuing to convene/implement the recommendations of the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team and finalizing the Batched Fisheries Biological Opinion that considers measures needed to avoid jeopardizing right whales (PRD)

To address ongoing right whale recovery issues we will: (1) Host annual monitoring webinars for the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team. The purpose of these webinars is to review, according to our monitoring plans, the most recent population abundance, mortality, and PBR estimates from the annual marine mammal Stock Assessment Reports; (2) Continue modifications to the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan to reduce the risk of entanglement mortality to North Atlantic right whales. This includes scoping and analyzing potential risk reduction measures for consideration by the Team, development of Team recommendations for NMFS consideration for proposed rulemaking in late 2022.

Convene Northeast Right Whale Recovery Implementation Team (PRD)

The North Atlantic right whale recovery plan Northeast Implementation Team (NEIT) was convened in 2018 as a recommendation of the 2017 North Atlantic Right Whale 5-Year Review. The NEIT will meet next in winter 2022 to continue prioritization and execution of recovery actions. The NEIT has also formed a Population Evaluation Tool subgroup, which met in October 2021 and will continue to meet as needed to produce a statistical population viability analysis which has been prioritized in the past two 5-year reviews.

Participate in the international efforts for management of Atlantic Salmon (PRD)

Completion of this milestone will require participating in the development of the US position to provide for the protection of Atlantic salmon of U.S. origin and advocating for positions that support critical efforts to prevent the extinction of our stocks.

Monitor GARFO protected species actions to ensure compliance with Council on Environmental Quality and NOAA NEPA requirements (PRD)

Provide general guidance on the preparation of NEPA documents relating to protected resources management and ensure that the analysis prepared in support of these actions uses sound science aimed at the recovery and conservation of protected species. Develop and recommend policy, procedures, consistency measures, technical administration and NEPA training.

Work with the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) to evaluate the effects of offshore wind projects in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic on Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed species and critical habitats (PRD)

Coordinate with BOEM and other federal agencies permitting offshore wind projects to evaluate the effects of these actions on ESA listed species and critical habitat. We will coordinate with the Office of Protected Resources (OPR) on the issuance of any Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) authorizations. We will adhere to the requirements of FAST-41, Executive Order (EO) 18307/One Federal Decision to streamline consultations and carry out efficient consultation processes.

Participate with Canada in annual meetings to address threats to protected resources (PRD)

Continue to work with Canada to address threats to protected resources through: (1) Participate in regular meetings of the US/Canada Bilateral Right Whale Working Group to build a collaborative relationship with our counterparts in Canada on both right whale science and management. Through this working group, we will continue to share management lessons learned, standardize information sharing on recovered entangling gear, plan joint aerial and passive acoustic surveillance, and collaborate on right whale prey modeling methods. These discussions are ongoing and will continue; and (2) Attend US/Canada Species at Risk Working Group meetings to exchange information on programs and activities to address threats to marine mammals, sea turtles, and protected fish species from commercial fishing, shipping and other threats.

Work with our partners to implement recovery actions through the Atlantic Salmon Framework and Recovery Plan and implement the Species in the Spotlight (SIS) Action Plan for Atlantic salmon (PRD)

We will continue to work toward the recovery of Atlantic salmon by: (1) Working with the USFWS, Maine Department of Marine Resources, Maine Tribes, and other partners and stakeholders to implement the 2019 Recovery Plan for the Gulf of Maine DPS of Atlantic salmon. We will develop prioritized work plans for each of the three Salmon Habitat Recovery Units. We will continue to lead the implementation of the new collaborative recovery framework and will hold at least one Salmon Habitat Recovery Unit (SHRU) team meeting in each SHRU, hold quarterly interagency meetings, and hold an annual meeting to review and discuss progress towards meeting recovery goals; (2) we will identify and implement high priority recovery actions including initiatives to improve connectivity between headwater streams and the Gulf of Maine; and (3) participate in efforts to improve fish passage in high priority watersheds including the Kennebec River. As resources allow, we will fund our partners to also undertake the work identified in the SIS action plan and/or Recovery Plan, and we will continue to encourage that our partners seek out other funding opportunities as well. We will continue to support the multiyear federal funding opportunity launched in FY21 and will monitor project progress and seek to ensure funding support for year 2 projects. We will also ensure that the actions undertaken under the SIS action plan are linked to the overall salmon recovery program and plan. We will also work to identify actions necessary to support climate resiliency.

Milestones Addressed in Other Goal Sections:

Lead U.S. efforts to work with Canada on the joint management of shared, transboundary resources as part of the U.S./Canada Transboundary Understanding process (RO; Goals 1.1, 2.4, 3.6)

2.2 Review and streamline permitting and authorization processes for energy development and national defense, while maximizing fishing opportunities and conservation outcomes

Promote energy independence and economic growth by creating efficiencies in our environmental review processes, including implementing guidance and policies that support conservation and effectively address major infrastructure and energy projects important to our Nation's energy independence, economy, and defense. Develop collaborative regional science and incorporate fisheries considerations in offshore development processes to ensure coexistence of fisheries, aquaculture, energy development and national defense.

Complete an EFH best management practices guide for offshore wind development (HESD)

Complete an EFH best management practices guide that details various habitat types and impacts associated with offshore wind projects and provides conservation recommendations that can be used programmatically.

Complete environmental reviews and EFH consultations on offshore wind energy development projects (HESD)

Complete environmental review and EFH consultations on offshore wind energy development projects submitted by BOEM. Coordinate reviews and comments internally with GARFO Divisions and NEFSC. Provide technical assistance to BOEM to attain projects that minimize impacts to living marine resources.

Complete update of New England Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) EFH Programmatic Consultation (HESD)

The EFH programmatic consultation with the New England District of the ACOE will be updated to provide more efficient and effective use for providing habitat conservation.

Complete update of the 2018 Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) EFH Programmatic Consultation (HESD)

The existing 2018 FHWA EFH programmatic consultation will be updated to make it more efficient with respect to usability and more effective for habitat conservation.

Milestones Addressed in Other Goal Sections:

Work with BOEM to evaluate the effects of offshore wind projects in the Northeast and Mid Atlantic on ESA listed species and critical habitats (PRD; Goal 2.1)

Assist with Revisions to NEPA Regulations Found in NAO 216-6 (RO; Goals 1.1, 3.4)

2.3 Minimize bycatch and entanglement of protected species while supporting fisheries

Support continued fishing opportunities and aquaculture by understanding and minimizing protected species interactions and mortality. Work with fishing industry, scientists, environmental organizations, academia, law enforcement agencies, and other stakeholders to develop and enforce bycatch and entanglement prevention measures domestically and internationally.

Milestones Addressed in Other Goal Sections:

Oversee recovery and outreach for shortnose sturgeon and the three DPSs of Atlantic sturgeon that occur in GAR (PRD; Goals 2.1, 3.6, 3.7)

Address ongoing impacts from fisheries to North Atlantic right whales by continuing to convene/implement the recommendations of the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team and finalizing the Batched Fisheries Biological Opinion that considers measures needed to avoid jeopardizing right whales (PRD; Goal 2.1)

Convene Northeast Right Whale Recovery Implementation Team (PRD; Goals 2.1, 3.6)

Lead U.S. participation in the international efforts for management of Atlantic Salmon (PRD; Goals 2.1, 2.4)

Monitor GARFO protected species actions to ensure compliance with Council on Environmental Quality and NOAA NEPA requirements (PRD; Goal 2.1)

Participate with Canada in annual meetings to address threats to protected resources (PRD; Goals 2.1, 2.4)

Work with our partners to implement recovery actions through the Atlantic Salmon Framework and Recovery Plan and implement the Species in the Spotlight Action Plan for Atlantic salmon (PRD; Goals 2.1, 2.4, 3.7)

2.4 Improved international cooperation and coordination

Continue to develop and improve cooperation, and collaboration with other countries and international organizations as it pertains to the recovery of endangered species, such as Atlantic salmon and the North Atlantic right whale, and other protected resources.

Milestones Addressed in Other Goal Sections:

Lead U.S. participation in the international efforts for management of Atlantic Salmon (PRD; Goals 2.1, 2.3)

Participate with Canada in annual meetings to address threats to protected resources (PRD; Goals 2.1, 2.3)

Work with our partners to implement recovery actions through the Atlantic Salmon Framework and Recovery Plan and implement the Species in the Spotlight Action Plan for Atlantic salmon (PRD; Goals 2.1, 2.3, 3.7)

Lead U.S. efforts to work with Canada on the joint management of shared, transboundary resources as part of the U.S./Canada Transboundary Understanding process (RO; Goals 1.1, 2.1, 3.6)

Goal 3: Improve organizational excellence and regulatory efficiency

To realize our first two strategic goals, we must have effective and efficient organizations with the agility to adapt and evolve to meet emerging challenges. Promoting organizational excellence is a continuous process to improve our ability to fulfill our mission, support our people, and support the organization. The key factors that determine organizational excellence include our people, our business and management processes, and our technology and infrastructure. Improving business processes and implementing best practices conducted in a priority-based environment, along with continuous regulatory reform, will ensure our operations best support our customers and partners.

3.1 Match a diverse workforce to mission needs

Plan and deploy workforce strategically to ensure flexibility and agility in support of evolving mission functions and continuity of operations. Emphasize prioritized workforce composition and succession planning (*i.e.*, the right people in the right place), diversity, competency-based management, and cross-collaborative approaches to promoting an inclusive and safe workplace.

Align financial resources to meet highest priority actions (OBD)

Assess and implement financial resources to the highest priority organizational and program goals to successfully meet NMFS and GARFO's mission; adjust to changing situations by implementing innovative solutions to make institutional improvements.

Ensure safe and operational facilities (OBD)

Ensure safe and operational facilities to address and/or mitigate COVID-19 impacts, including by documenting best practice and achieve the safety and security targets in the 2022 NMFS Safety & Environmental Action Plan (SEAP).

3.2 Recapitalize infrastructure and facilities

Conduct facility condition assessments to evaluate properties, and prioritize and address critical maintenance needs. Evaluate the infrastructure needs for workspace in light of an evolving workforce, and propose strategies for recapitalization to NOAA and the Department of Commerce.

Information Technology Infrastructure Lifestyle Maintenance (TDMD)

Ensure that the IT infrastructure refresh cycle is maintained and all equipment is under warranty. Ensure that staff have the software and hardware tools to support the GARFO mission and be successful in completing their duties both in the office and remote during FY22. Project management approach is taken when necessary and all software is up to date and secure.

Milestones Addressed in Other Goal Sections:

Align financial resources to meet highest priority actions (Goals 3.1, 3.3)

3.3 Institutionalize prioritization and performance management practices

Use priority-based methods to optimize investments for maximum economic return while meeting food security and conservation mandates. Analyze performance, risk, and opportunities to ensure the best value to the American public.

Assess and adjust program internal controls to make institutional improvements in line with NMFS policy, goals, and objectives (OBD)

A GARFO FY2021 FMC Management Representation Memo was signed. It described FMC efforts to fulfill our responsibilities for our financial information in accordance with applicable laws and regulations, including OMB/DOC/NOAA/NMFS policies and procedures. The region had no adverse audit findings.

Finalize Fiscal Year 2022 GARFO Annual Implementation Plan (RO)

Complete the Annual Implementation Plan.

Milestones Addressed in Other Goal Sections:

Internal and external analytical, technical, and industry support (APSD; Goals 1.4, 1.5, 3.6)

Align financial resources to meet highest priority actions (OBD; Goals 3.1, 3.2)

Ensure safe and operational facilities (OBD; Goal 3.1)

Finalize Fiscal Year 2022 GARFO Annual Implementation Plan (RO; Goal 3.7)

3.4 Review agency regulations and remove or modify rules that unnecessarily burden businesses and economic growth

Implement Executive Order 13771 by reviewing regulations to identify and modify or repeal rules that add burden and costs without adding value. Continue to work with other NMFS and NOAA partners, as well as the Councils to remove outdated, unnecessary, and ineffective fishing regulations.

Milestones Addressed in Other Goal Sections:

Assist with Revisions to NEPA Regulations found in NAO 216-6 (RO; Goals 1.1, 2.1)

Collaborate with the Councils and ASMFC to sustainably manage fish stocks, including measures to promote rebuilding and measures for increasing fishing opportunities, where possible, and particularly for abundant and healthy fish stocks (SFD; Goals 1.1, 1.4, 3.6)

3.5 Institutionalize the use of innovative technologies

Support the development, leveraging, and use of powerful technologies (e.g., autonomous underwater vehicle platforms, advanced sensors, fishing industry platforms, molecular genetics, digital platforms, electronic reporting/monitoring, mobile applications, cloud computing) for conducting surveys, enhancing and improving the accuracy of observing systems, and collecting and sharing data in cost effective, transparent, and real-time approaches.

Milestones Addressed in Other Goal Sections:

Improve use of fishery dependent data through the development of the GARFO/NEFSC Fishery Dependent Data Initiative (FDDI) (ASPD; Goals 1.5, 3.6)

Improve accessibility of fisheries information (APSD; Goals 1.5, 3.7)

Improve implementation of regional fisheries monitoring programs (SFD; Goals 1.4, 1.5)

Continue to advance regional electronic monitoring programs (SFD; Goal 1.5)

IT Infrastructure lifecycle maintenance (TDMD; Goal 3.2)

Provide support for GARFO's software development needs (TDMD; Goals 1.5, 3.7)

3.6 Expand regional collaborations

Collaborate with the Councils, Commission, Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans, industry, academia, international management organizations, and other partners to progress our science and management priorities and promote innovation and sustainability. Develop and implement a regional watershed program.

Ensure the timely obligation of appropriated funds under a broad portfolio of NMFS grant programs (OBD)

Maintain state, fishery management council, and constituent partnerships to ensure that projects supported with FY 2022 grant funding are carried out to gather information and conduct activities that support management and development of domestic/ interjurisdictional fisheries. These projects include fishery management plan development, data collection (fishery statistics), fishery research, climate change, socio-economics, and community resiliency. Associated funding priorities are identified under the Atlantic Coastal Act, the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act, the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and the Saltonstall-Kennedy grant program. Success is contingent on congressional appropriations, and HQ allocating program funds with adequate lead times.

Milestones Addressed in Other Goal Sections:

Improve use of fishery dependent data through the development of the GARFO/NEFSC Fishery Dependent Data Initiative (FDDI) (APSD; Goals 1.5, 3.5)

Internal and external analytical, technical, and industry support (APSD; Goals 1.4, 1.5, 3.3)

Complete an EFH best management practices guide for offshore wind development (HESD; Goal 2.2)

Complete a draft of the River Herring Habitat Comprehensive Plan for the Atlantic Coast (HESD; Goals 1.1, 1.3)

Oversee recovery and outreach for shortnose sturgeon and the three DPSs of Atlantic sturgeon that occur in GAR (PRD; Goals 2.1, 2.3, 3.7)

Convene Northeast Right Whale Recovery Implementation Team (PRD; Goals 2.1, 2.3)

Lead U.S. efforts to work with Canada on the joint management of shared, transboundary resources as part of the U.S./Canada Transboundary Understanding process (RO; Goals 1.1, 2.1, 2.4)

Coordinate with USFWS on issues related to the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument, including research and management plan development (RO; Goals 1.1, 1.3)

Collaborate in the review of cooperative research programs (SFD; Goal 1.5)

Progress towards Ecosystem-Based Fishery Management and climate related activities (SFD; Goals 1.1, 1.3)

Collaborate with the Councils and ASMFC to sustainably manage fish stocks, including measures to promote rebuilding and measures for increasing fishing opportunities, where possible, particularly for abundant and healthy fish stocks (SFD; Goals 1.1, 1.4, 3.4)

3.7 Enhance stakeholder communication

Improve communications with stakeholders by evaluating existing tools and methods and developing flexible approaches to communicate more effectively and efficiently.

Produce 2021 GARFO Annual Report (RO)

The Communications Team will work with all GARFO Divisions, the Deputy Regional Administrator, and the Regional Administrator to produce the GARFO 2021 Year in Review, which is the Regional Office's annual report.

Milestones Addressed in Other Goal Sections:

Improve accessibility of fisheries information (APSD; Goals 1.5, 3.5)

Complete an EFH best management practices guide for offshore wind development (HESD; 2.2, 3.6)

Ensure the timely obligation of appropriated funds under a broad portfolio of NMFS grant programs (OBD; Goals 3.6)

Oversee recovery and outreach for shortnose sturgeon and the three DPSs of Atlantic sturgeon that occur in GAR (PRD; Goals 2.1, 2.3, 3.6)

Work with our partners to implement recovery actions through the Atlantic Salmon Framework and Recovery Plan and implement the Species in the Spotlight Action Plan for Atlantic salmon (PRD; Goals 2.1, 2.3, 2.4)

Finalize Fiscal Year 2022 GARFO Annual Implementation Plan (RO; Goal 3.3)

Complete review and update as necessary the GARFO Recreational Fishing Plan (SFD; Goals 1.1, 1.4)

Provide support for GARFO's software development needs (TDMD; Goals 1.5, 3.5)