



NOAA
FISHERIES

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

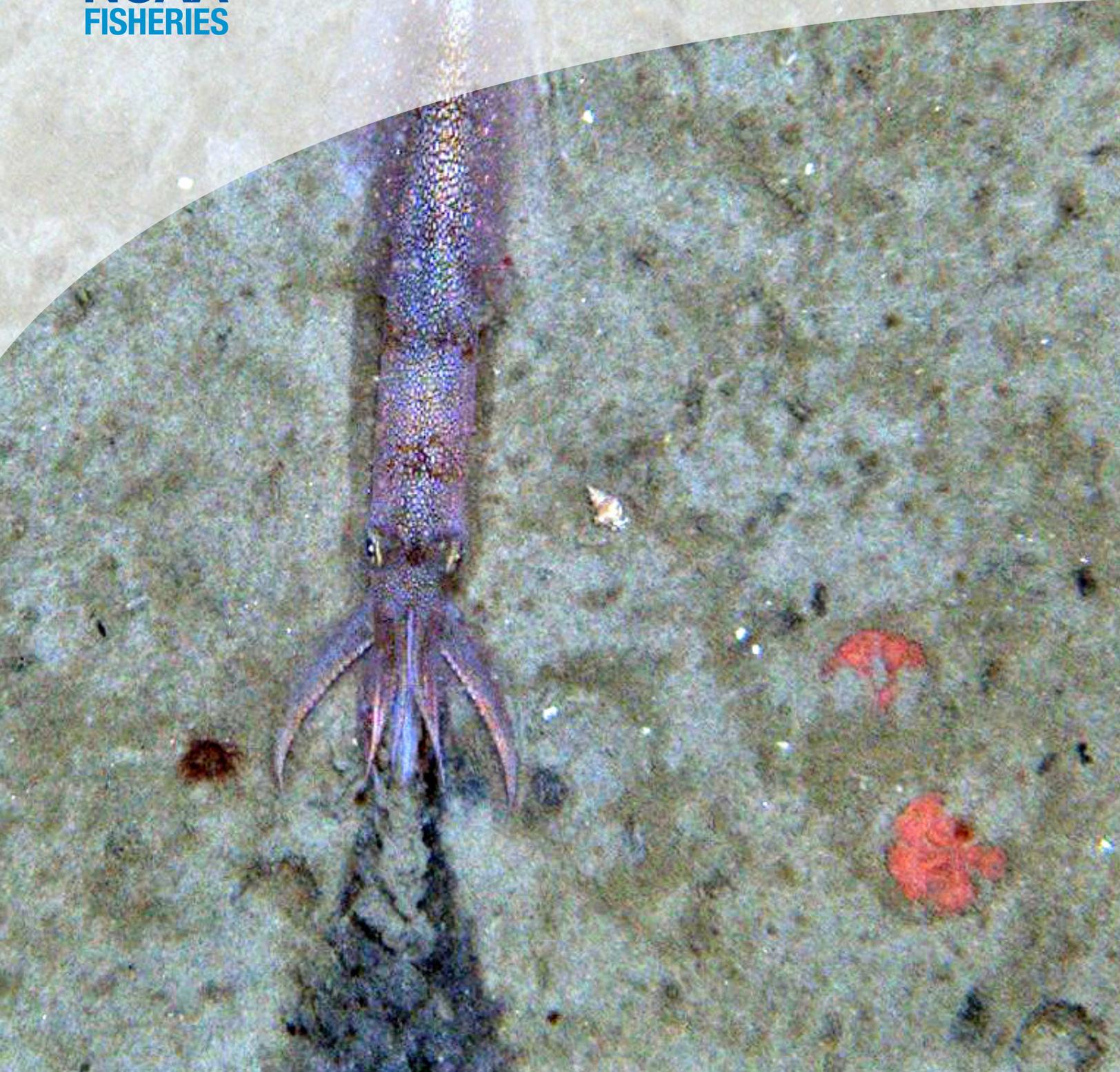
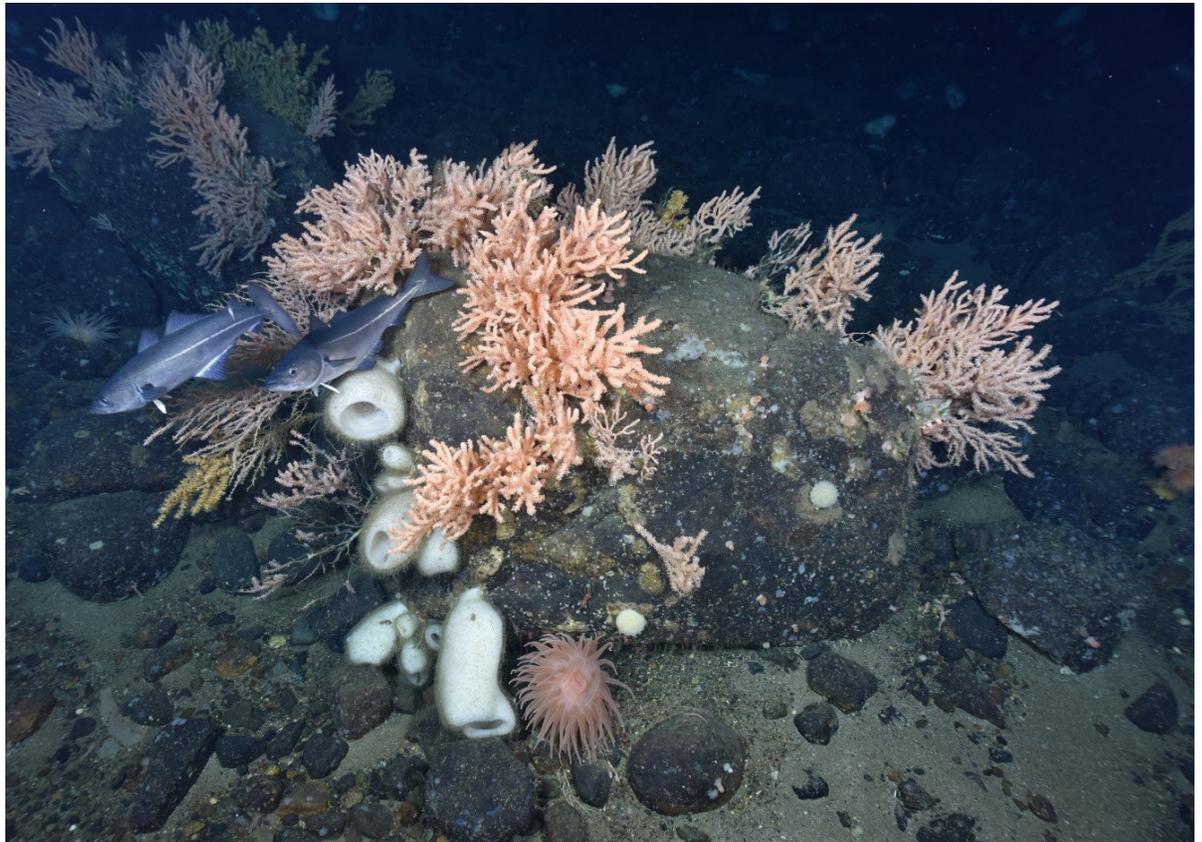


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A Joint Message from Regional Administrator and Science Center Director for NOAA Fisheries' Greater Atlantic Region



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).

- 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.

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.

- 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

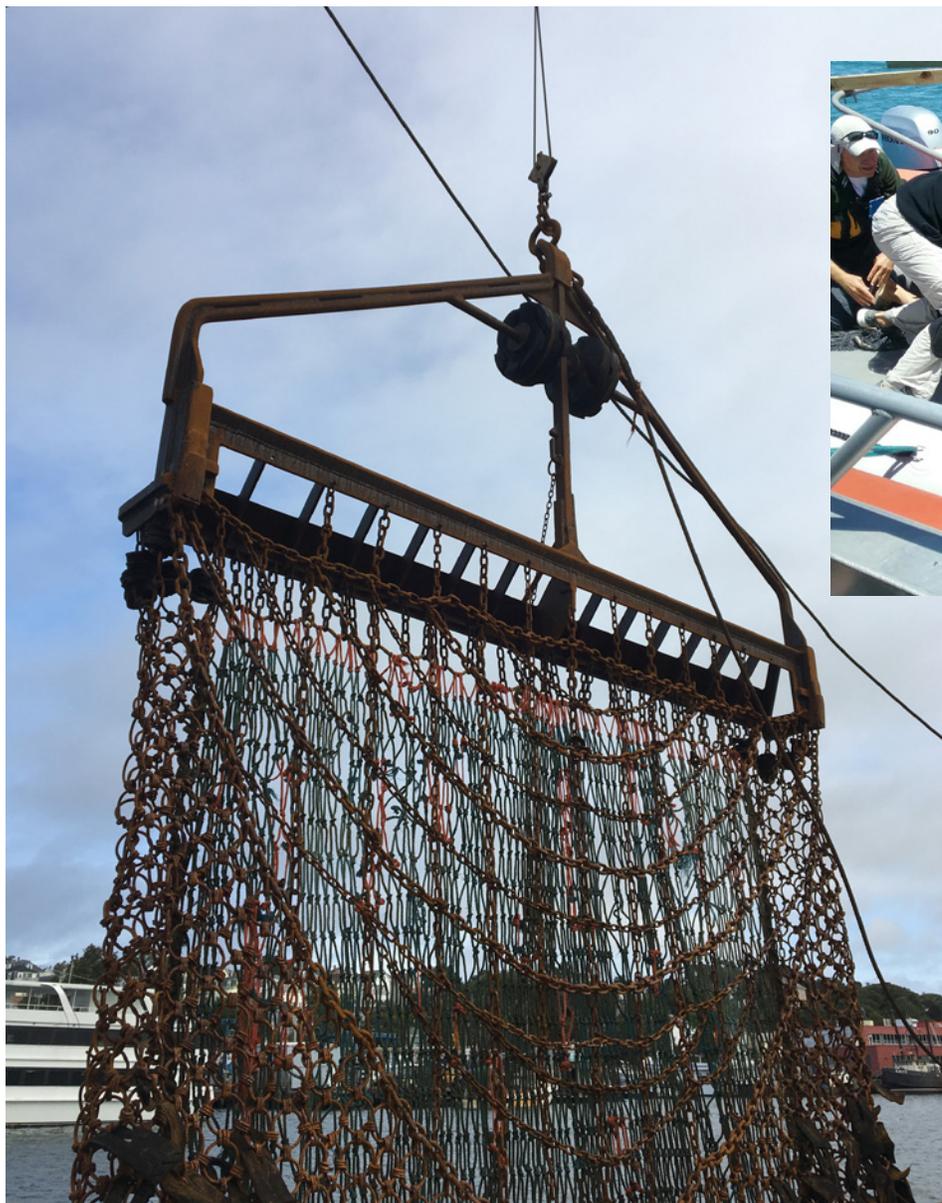
- Support continued fishing opportunities and aquaculture by understanding and minimizing protected species interactions and mortality.
- Work with fishing industry, scientists, environmental organizations, academia, law enforcement agencies, and other stakeholders to develop and enforce bycatch and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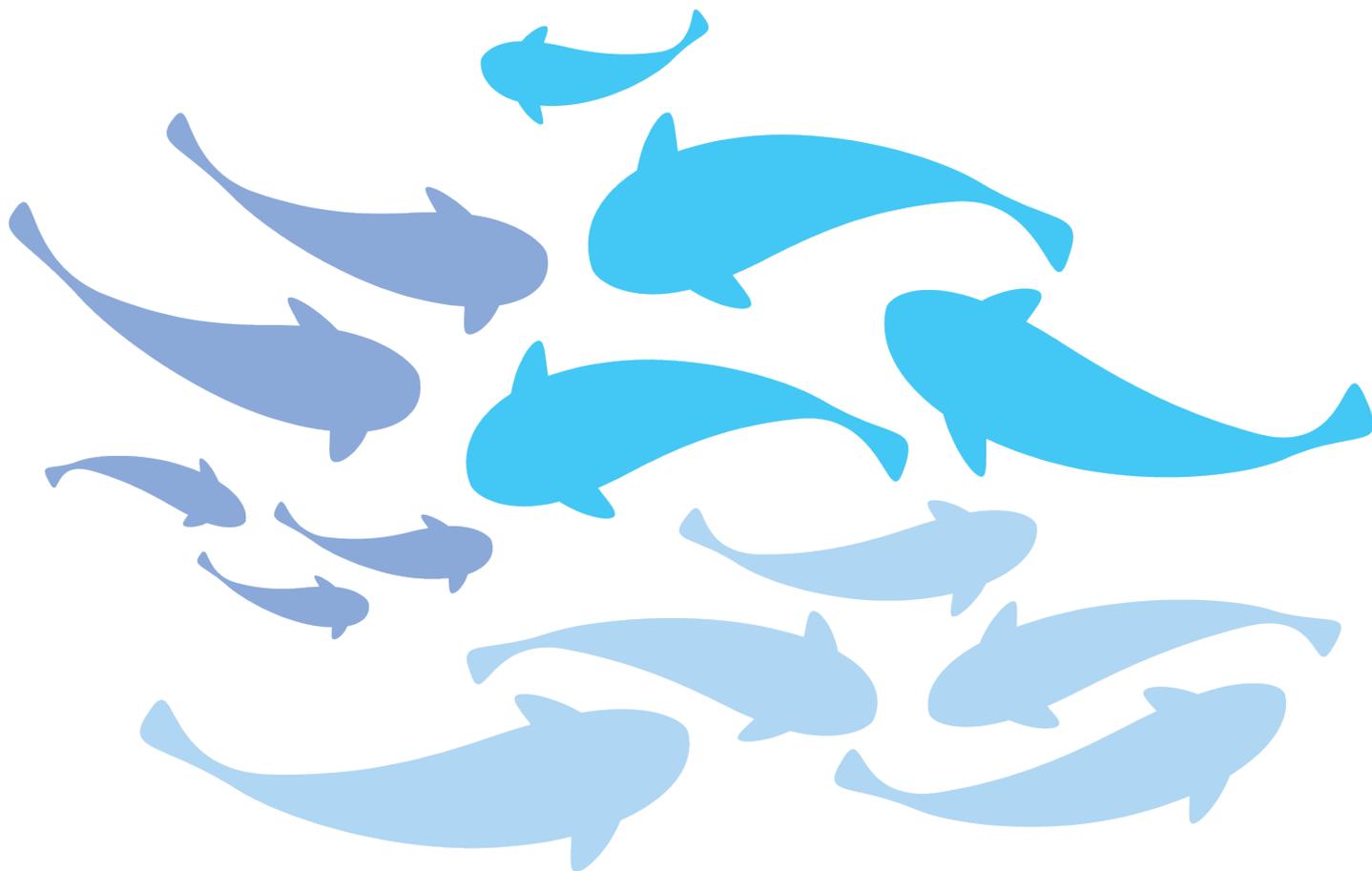
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NOAA
FISHERIES

Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office 2020 Annual Implementation Plan



Introduction

The Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO) and the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) have developed a joint geographic strategic plan 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.

Our plan recognizes our need to work together to develop and conduct sound science that support 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 and 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.

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

- 1.1. 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 prioritized 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

- 2.1. 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

- 3.1. 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

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, Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, state and fishing industry partners, the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization, 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 Mid-Atlantic and New England 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.

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.

Monitor annual catch limits

Monitor the fisheries throughout the year to assure that ACLs are not exceeded. For each managed stock, a year-end catch evaluation is made to determine if accountability measures are required.

Monitor catch share programs

Independently monitor the region's catch share programs using data provided to both the Regional Office and Science Center

Conduct consultation activities for high priority actions under the Essential Fish Habitat provisions of the MSA and FWCA

Conduct EFH and FWCA consultations with Federal and State agencies from Maine through Virginia. Provide conservation recommendations to avoid, minimize or mitigate impacts to living marine resources and their habitats. Consultations will focus on high priority development activities including: transportation and port development, infrastructure and energy development. Consult on all internal fishery management actions. Develop programmatic consultations to increase efficiency of consultations program.

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

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

Initiate development of a Management Plan for the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument

Initiate development of Management Plan for the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument (NCSMNM) in coordination with the New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management

Councils, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and other agency partners. Work with the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) to determine potential for extending the management of NCSMNM in international waters. Activities for the year will involve initial GARFO staffing assignments, determining needed budget, and public outreach.

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

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

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 Monument Management Plan.

Monitor GARFO and NEFSC fishery management actions to ensure compliance with CEQ and NOAA NEPA requirements

Provide general guidance on the preparation of NEPA documents relating to fisheries management, including fisheries habitat, ensure that NEPA analyses fully supports the science-based decisions made as part of the management process. Develop and recommend policy, procedures, consistency measures, technical administration and NEPA training. Recommend methods for improving NERO and Science Center Compliance with NEPA.

Complete review and update as necessary the GARFO Recreational Fishing Plan

This milestone requires that we review and, as necessary, update the GARFO recreational fishing action plan in 2020, 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.)

Sustainable management of fisheries

Work with the Councils and ASMFC on the sustainable management of fisheries by setting annual catch limits for 45 stocks as well as other conservation and management measures (e.g., review of rebuilding progress, review of commercial and recreational allocations in light of recalibrated MRIP data, and continued progress on deregulatory actions).

Collaborate with the NEFMC, MAFMC, and ASMFC to identify measures for increasing fishing opportunities, particularly for abundant and healthy fish stocks

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

Progress towards Ecosystem-Based Fishery Management

GARFO will continue to work with the MAFMC, NEFMC, and ASMFC to make progress towards implementing ecosystem-based management.

Provide support for the development of Fishery Management Council NEPA documents.

NEPA staff will attend Council PDT and FMAT meetings as necessary throughout the year and advise Council and GARFO staff on ways to maintain and improve GARFO NEPA compliance for Council-driven actions developed in support of fishery management regulations.

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.

Provide and manage external grant activities that foster marine aquaculture development

In FY18, one new aquaculture project was funded regionally under the NMFS SK grant program. Aquaculture is a funding priority for Agency.

Initiate development of a GARFO Regional Aquaculture Plan

In conjunction with the new NOAA/GARFO/NEFSC Joint Geographic Strategic Plan, GARFO will start the development of a region-wide aquaculture implementation plan that will look into expanding the capacity of the agency to deliver collaborative aquaculture extension, education, and outreach services throughout the whole region. This includes the development of a regional aquaculture communications plan, consistent with the NMFS Office of Aquaculture Communications Strategic Plan.

Compile legal authorizations required for EEZ aquaculture operations in the GAR

Initiate the compilation of legal authorities, permit requirements, and permit application review protocols by various federal, interstate, state, or local agencies for approval of EEZ aquaculture operations in the Greater Atlantic region, including authorizations to farm/harvest likely proposed species.

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.

*Initiate development of a Management Plan for the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument (1.1, 3.6)*¹*

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

Progress towards Ecosystem-Based Fishery Management (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 and conduct vessel reporting programs

* Items in grey italics font are already detailed in other sections of the plan, the numbers following are section numbers.

Federally-permitted vessels are required to submit detailed trip reports through various systems, depending upon the fishery. We review vessel trip reports, conduct data entry and data quality programs, and carry out compliance checks to ensure that reports are timely, complete and accurate.

Provide permit services to constituents, including fishing allocation transfers

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. In FY 20 APSD will be developing and implementing an online permit application process that will converting paper applications to electronic applications.

Manage fisheries dealer reports

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

Support NEFSC's stock assessments through collection of biological samples in ports

OSD will work with the NEFSC to reduce variability in stock assessments by improving the collection of samples.

Support catch share management for the Northeast multispecies fishery (1.1, 1.5)

Monitor annual catch limits (1.1, 1.5)

Monitor catch share programs (1.1, 1.5)

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

Sustainable management of fisheries (1.1, 3.4, 3.6)

Collaborate with the NEFMC, MAFMC, and ASMFC to identify measures for increasing fishing opportunities, particularly for abundant and healthy fish stocks (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 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 accessibility of fisheries information

Expand the number of non-confidential information summaries available to the public that describe fishery participation and activity (e.g., permit information, landings, catch, fishing activity)

Expand use of electronic vessel trip reports to all commercial and for-hire fisheries in the Greater Atlantic Region

Work with the NEFMC and MAFMC 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 for-hire fisheries in the Greater Atlantic Region. Enhancements to mobile, tablet, and desktop applications to be used by industry to submit electronic vessel trip reports is included in this milestone.

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

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. For the FDDI to succeed clearly defined and well understood roles, responsibilities, authorities, and decision making process must be developed and agreed to by GARFO/NEFSC and its collaborating partners.

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. Ensure NOAA Fisheries data security protocols and data confidentiality requirements are satisfied.

Collaborate in the review of cooperative research programs

This milestone entails SFD staff working with others in OSED and the NEFSC to coordinate and collaborate in the review of cooperative research programs such as the NEFSC's research set-aside programs and the S-K grant program.

Expansion of mobile app and fish tank application suite capabilities

Work on an online vessel permit renewal system. Expand our electronic reporting infrastructure to improve speed and reliability, allow for haul-by-haul reporting, and provide a single electronic submission point (the API) for existing or future approved electronic reporting software systems. Provide ongoing support and improvement for GARFO's existing electronic reporting mobile app. It works on iPhones now, with future plans to work on other mobile platforms). Continue data modernization efforts, in accord with agency-wide efforts. In the coming year, this will include infrastructure improvements to our existing sector information management tool through a secure web tool for sectors to manage their fishing activity. These changes will support future groundfish regulatory changes, and lay the groundwork for larger data modernization.

Support this years overall objectives of the Fishery Dependent Data Visioning (FDDV) from a security, data structure and web development perspective

Develop any new and modify any existing applications and data structures in support of FDDV in regards to ACCSP becoming the data warehouse. Assist ACCSP through a FISMA security audit and implementing security controls.

Manage and conduct vessel reporting programs (1.4)

Support catch share management for the Northeast multispecies fishery (1.1, 1.4, 1.5)

Monitor annual catch limits (1.1, 1.4)

Monitor catch share programs (1.1, 1.4)

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

Manage fisheries dealer reports (1.4)

Support NEFSC's stock assessments through collection of biological samples in ports (1.4)

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 effect of changing climate on protected species and their habitats.

Complete the ESA five year review for Atlantic salmon

Under the ESA, we are required to conduct reviews every five years to determine if there has been a change in the status of and/or threats to ESA listed species. We will work with the NEFSC Atlantic salmon program to complete a five year review for Atlantic salmon in Q1 FY20 and will coordinate with USFWS.

Complete a 5-year review for the three DPSs of Atlantic sturgeon that occur in GAR

Under the ESA, we are required to conduct reviews every five years to determine if there has been a change in the status of and/or threats to ESA listed species. We will work with SERO to draft a five year review for the five distinct population segments of Atlantic sturgeon and anticipate coordinating with ASMFC for review of the draft. We anticipate completing the draft of the three GAR DPSs in Q1 and finalizing the document in Q3.

Conduct consultation activities for high priority actions under the Essential Fish Habitat provisions of the MSA and FWCA

HCD will conduct EFH and FWCA consultations with Federal and State agencies from Maine through Virginia. HCD will provide conservation recommendations to avoid, minimize or mitigate impacts to living marine resources and their habitats. Consultations will focus on high priority development activities including: transportation and port development, infrastructure and energy development. HCD will also consult on all internal fishery management actions. Develop programmatic consultations to increase efficiency of consultations program.

Implement Atlantic and shortnose sturgeon outreach and education, including the SCUTES program, to enhance public awareness of ESA listed sturgeon

Increase 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 ME to VA. Also, it includes hosting the annual teacher workshop to supply teachers with the information necessary to use the kits effectively.

Participate in Bilateral US/Canada Right Whale Working Group Meetings

We will continue to host 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 have shared management lessons learned, standardized information

sharing on recovered entangling gear, planned joint aerial and passive acoustic surveillance, and collaborated on right whale prey modeling methods.

Develop revised Batch Fisheries Biological Opinion, including American Lobster, and coordinate with SFD, PRD and NEFSC partners

Due to a significant change in North Atlantic right whale abundance and the re-initiation triggers being met for both the Batched Fisheries and Lobster Biological Opinions, we will work with the Sustainable Fisheries Division and Northeast Fisheries Science Center to develop a new biological opinion that is based on the best available scientific information and collaborate closely with the Take Reduction Team, Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and Fishery Management Councils to develop new right whale protective measures.

Lead U.S. participation in the international efforts for management of Atlantic Salmon

The GARFO DRA is the US Commissioner to the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (NASCO). Completion of this milestone will require coordinating the development of the US position to provide for the protection of Atlantic salmon of U.S. origin and negotiating for positions that support critical efforts to prevent the extinction of our stocks.

Implement the Species in the Spotlight Action Plan for Atlantic salmon

We will continue to implement the recovery actions identified in the Species in the Spotlight Action plan. As resources allow, we will fund our partners to also undertake the work identified in the action plan, and we will continue to encourage that our partners seek out other funding opportunities as well. We will explore creating a federal funding opportunity for our partners to pursue projects that will implement the action plan. We will also ensure that the actions undertaken under the SiS action plan are linked to the overall salmon recovery program and plan.

Coordination with Canada on programs and activities to address anthropogenic threats to protected resources

Exchange information with Canada on programs and activities to address threats to marine mammals, sea turtles, and protected fish species from commercial fishing, shipping and other threats. Attend meetings of the Species at Risk Working Group.

Implement the recommendations of the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team in a rulemaking with supporting analyses (NEPA, etc.) to reduce serious injury and mortality of Atlantic large whales, North Atlantic right whales in particular

Based on the near-consensus agreement of the ALWTRT at its meeting in April 2019, we will modify the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan to reduce the risk of entanglement mortality to North Atlantic right whales. This will include the preparation of a proposed rule and draft Environmental Impact Statement.

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

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.

Coordinate the focal year for education and outreach for the International Year of the Salmon, with partners, to promote domestic and international efforts to advance science, understand and manage threats and recover salmon

We will be undertaking efforts to coordinate with our partners on the West Coast and with the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization and North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission on a large scale outreach and science effort to promote efforts to recover salmon throughout the North Atlantic and North Pacific. We will host a launch event in October 2018 in Boston in cooperation with partners including the New England Aquarium and will hold a number of partner events in 2019 aimed at increasing awareness and action towards the recovery of wild Atlantic salmon.

Work with BOEM to evaluate the effects of offshore wind projects in the Northeast and Mid Atlantic on ESA listed species and critical habitats

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 OPR on the issuance of any MMPA authorizations. We will adhere to the requirements of FAST-41, EO 18307/One Federal Decision to streamline consultations and carry out efficient consultation processes.

Convene webinars for Atlantic Large Whale and Harbor Porpoise Take Reduction Teams to review new abundance and bycatch estimates; and monitor compliance and effectiveness of the respective TRPs to ensure goals and objectives of MMPA are met

We will host annual monitoring webinars for both the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team and Harbor Porpoise 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. We also update the teams on recent law enforcement efforts, new relevant scientific research, and public outreach efforts.

Work with BOEM to evaluate the effects of offshore wind projects in the Northeast and Mid Atlantic on ESA listed species and critical habitats

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 OPR on the issuance of any MMPA authorizations. We will adhere to the requirements of FAST-41, EO 18307/One Federal Decision to streamline consultations and carry out efficient consultation processes.

Work with our partners to implement recovery actions through the Atlantic Salmon Framework and Recovery Plan

We will work 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 lead the implementation of the new collaborative recovery framework and will hold at least one SHRU team meeting in each SHRU, hold quarterly interagency meetings, and hold an annual meeting to review and discuss progress towards meeting recovery goals (April 2020).

Implement the mandates of the ESA and MMPA

Implement the ESA and MMPA from Maine through Virginia including providing technical assistance, issuing marine mammal authorization permits, developing recovery plans, and working cooperatively with states, industries and interested parties.

Monitor GARFO and NEFSC fishery management actions to ensure compliance with CEQ and NOAA NEPA requirements (1.1, 3.4)

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 (1.1, 2.4, 3.6)

Provide support for the development of Fishery Management Council NEPA documents (1.1, 2.4)

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.

Provide policy and technical guidance to MAFMC in the development of their EFH 5 year review assessment

MAFMC is undertaking a Northeast Regional Habitat Assessment as part of their 5 year review of EFH information to determine the need to revise EFH and HAPC designations and provide management measures to minimize impacts of fishing on EFH. HCD will participate in working groups, Steering Committee, provide assistance and guidance to MAFMC on their analysis, EFH designation methodologies, characterization of HAPCs for various species, and fishing gear effects analysis.

Complete BOEM Wind Energy project concurrence points for NEPA Cooperating Agency requirements of the One Federal Decision (OFD) executive order

Complete BOEM Wind Energy project concurrence points for NEPA Cooperating Agency requirements of the One Federal Decision (OFD) executive order.

Provide support for the review of GARFO/NEFSC grant proposals to determine appropriate level of NEPA compliance and ensure adequate NEPA document preparation.

Assist with the review and assessment of grant proposals. Based on CEQ and NOAA NEPA requirements, and taking into consideration impacts to fisheries resources, habitat and protected resources, make a determination regarding the required level of NEPA compliance that must be met prior to making the financial award.

Conduct consultation activities for high priority actions under the Essential Fish Habitat provisions of the MSA and FWCA (1.1, 2.1)

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

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

Implement Atlantic and shortnose sturgeon outreach and education, including the SCUTES program, to enhance public awareness of ESA listed sturgeon (2.1, 3.6, 3.7)

Participate in Bilateral US/Canada Right Whale Working Group Meetings (2.1, 2.4, 3.6)

Develop revised Batch Fisheries Biological Opinion, including American Lobster, and coordinate with SFD, PRD and NEFSC partners (2.1)

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

Implement the Species in the Spotlight Action Plan for Atlantic salmon (2.1, 2.4, 3.7)

Coordination with Canada on programs and activities to address anthropogenic threats to protected resources (2.1, 2.4)

Implement the recommendations of the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team in a rulemaking with supporting analyses (NEPA, etc.) to reduce serious injury and mortality of Atlantic large whales, North Atlantic right whales in particular Develop revised Batch Fisheries Biological Opinion, including American Lobster, and coordinate with SFD, PRD and NEFSC partners (2.1)

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

Coordinate the focal year for education and outreach for the International Year of the Salmon, with partners, to promote domestic and international efforts to advance science, understand and manage threats and recover salmon (2.1, 2.4, 3.7)

Convene webinars for Atlantic Large Whale and Harbor Porpoise Take Reduction Teams to review new abundance and bycatch estimates; and monitor compliance and effectiveness of the respective TRPs to ensure goals and objectives of MMPA are met (2.1, 3.6, 3.7)

Work with our partners to implement recovery actions through the Atlantic Salmon Framework and Recovery Plan (2.1, 3.6, 3.7)

Implement the mandates of the ESA and MMPA (2.1, 3.6, 3.7)

Provide support for the development of Fishery Management Council NEPA documents (1.1, 2.1)

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.

Participate in Bilateral US/Canada Right Whale Working Group Meetings (2.1, 2.3, 3.6)

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

Implement the Species in the Spotlight Action Plan for Atlantic salmon (2.1, 2.3, 3.7)

Coordination with Canada on programs and activities to address anthropogenic threats to protected resources (2.1, 2.3)

Coordinate the focal year for education and outreach for the International Year of the Salmon, with partners, to promote domestic and international efforts to advance science, understand and manage threats and recover salmon (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 (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.

Review, compile and prioritize tasks for Port Agent Team to develop a strategic plan for the Port Programs Section

Obtain views, opinions and suggestions of Port Agents and current customers of the Section and if time is available, other potential internal customers. Our current customers include all GARFO divisions, other NOAA Fisheries offices (NEFSC, SEFSC, SERO, OST, OSF, OLE/NEED) and other NOAA offices (NOS/ONMS, NWS). Priorities will be those organizations that manage fisheries within GARFO's area.

The prime focus of the Section's mission is to provide services to external stakeholders that have some NOAA Fisheries requirements predicated on their businesses and/or permits. Other GARFO divisions have a small number of staff with similar duties, these will also be considered.

Accomplished fact finding through interviews, either in-person or remotely. Other methods such as form completion could supplement personal methods, but not replace them. In order to ensure views were captured correctly this would be an iterative process where the participants would have an opportunity to review the summarized information and provide further comments. Existing documents compiled during the reorganization planning will also be provided.

Initiate development of the 2020-2025 GARFO Annual Implementation Plan

Complete draft of the Annual Implementation Plan following approval and public roll out of the Joint GARFO/NEFSC Regional Geographic Strategic Plan.

Develop and execute annual budget spending plans in coordination with NMFS HQ and NEFSC

This is accommodated, in part, through OBD-GARFO division budget consultations and development of an annual contract spending plan.

Review and revise, as needed, GARFO program and fiscal internal controls to reflect associated current/revised DOC/NOAA/NMFS policies and regulations

A GARFO FY2019 FMC Management Representation Memo was signed August 2019. 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.

Maintain the safety and security of GAR facility and staff: Achieve the safety and security targets in the 2019 NMFS Safety & Environmental Action Plan (SEAP).

Among the major elements of the GARFO 2020 Safety & Environmental Action Plan (SEAP) is a follow up on: (1) Job Hazard Analysis (JHA) for field work, (2) anticipated NOAA Safety and Health Week, and (3) conduct of regular safety/emergency drills.

Conduct FOIA Training workshop for GARFO staff

GARFO's FOIA coordinator will work with NOAA FOIA office develop and conduct a FOIA Workshop/Training for GARFO staff that are either their respective divisions FOIA point of contact or staff that are often involved in FOIA requests.

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.

IT Infrastructure Upgrades and Improvements

Replace end of life core network switch, replace end of life firewalls, refresh IP desk phones, all by the end of Q1 FY20. Success is measured on these being put into production.

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.

Provide support for the review of GARFO/NEFSC grant proposals to determine appropriate level of NEPA compliance and ensure adequate NEPA document preparation. (2.2, 3.4)

Review, compile and prioritize tasks for Port Agent Team to develop a strategic plan for the Port Programs Section (3.1, 3.7)

Initiate development of the 2020-2025 GARFO Annual Implementation Plan (3.1, 3.7)

Develop and execute annual budget spending plans in coordination with NMFS HQ and NEFSC (3.1)

Review and revise, as needed, GARFO program and fiscal internal controls to reflect associated current/revised DOC/NOAA/NMFS policies and regulations (3.1)

Maintain the safety and security of GAR facility and staff: Achieve the safety and security targets in the 2019 NMFS Safety & Environmental Action Plan (SEAP). (3.1)

Conduct FOIA Training workshop for GARFO staff (3.1)

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.

Provide support for the review of GARFO/NEFSC grant proposals to determine appropriate level of NEPA compliance and ensure adequate NEPA document preparation. (2.2, 3.3)

Assist with Revisions to NEPA Regulations Found in NAO 216-6 (1.1, 2.1)

Compile legal authorizations required for EEZ aquaculture operations in the GAR (1.2)

Monitor GARFO and NEFSC fishery management actions to ensure compliance with CEQ and NOAA NEPA requirements (1.1, 2.1)

Sustainable management of fisheries (1.1, 1.4, 3.6)

Collaborate with the NEFMC, MAFMC, and ASMFC to identify measures for increasing fishing opportunities, particularly for abundant and healthy fish stocks (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., AUV/UAS 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.

Improve accessibility of fisheries information (1.5, 3.7)

IT Infrastructure Upgrades and Improvements (3.2)

FDDI coordination with ACCSP FDDI coordination with ACCSP (1.5, 3.6)

Expansion of mobile app and fish tank application suite capabilities (1.5, 3.7)

Support this year's overall objectives of the Fishery Dependent Data Visioning (FDDV) from a security, data structure and web development perspective (1.5)

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 effective coordination of the New England Bay Watershed Education and Training Program

Maintain grant partnerships with not-for-profit organizations that promote locally relevant, experiential learning opportunities in the field of ocean sciences, for K-12 school students. Develop and administer a

competitive grants solicitation during FY2019. Success is contingent on congressional appropriations and availability of funds with adequate lead time.

Ensure effective administration of GARFO state/federal, fishery management council, ASMFC and S-K grants

Maintain state, fishery management council, and constituent partnerships to ensure that projects supported with FY 2020 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.

Convene Northeast Right Whale Recovery Implementation Team

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 November 2019 to prioritize and execute recovery actions. The NEIT has also formed a Population Evaluation Tool subgroup, which will meet in October 2020 and thereafter, to produce a statistical population viability analysis which has been prioritized in the past two 5-year reviews.

FDDI coordination with ACCSP (1.5, 3.5)

Implement Atlantic and shortnose sturgeon outreach and education, including the SCUTES program, to enhance public awareness of ESA listed sturgeon (2.1, 2.3, 3.7)

Participate in Bilateral US/Canada Right Whale Working Group Meetings (2.1, 2.3, 2.4)

Convene webinars for Atlantic Large Whale and Harbor Porpoise Take Reduction Teams to review new abundance and bycatch estimates; and monitor compliance and effectiveness of the respective TRPs to ensure goals and objectives of MMPA are met (2.1, 2.3, 3.7)

Work with our partners to implement recovery actions through the Atlantic Salmon Framework and Recovery Plan (2.1, 2.3, 3.7)

Implement the mandates of the ESA and MMPA (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 (1.1, 2.1, 2.4)

Initiate development of a Management Plan for the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument (1.1, 1.3)

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

Progress towards Ecosystem-Based Fishery Management (1.1., 1.3)

Sustainable management of fisheries (1.1, 1.4, 3.4)

Collaborate with the NEFMC, MAFMC, and ASMFC to identify measures for increasing fishing opportunities, particularly for abundant and healthy fish stocks (1.1, 1.4, 3.4)

Initiate development of a GARFO Regional Aquaculture Plan (1.2, 3.7)

Collaborate in the review of cooperative research programs (1.5)

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 2019-2020 GAR Annual Report

The Communications Team will work with all GARFO Divisions, the Deputy Regional Administrator, and the Regional Administrator to produce the GARFO 2019-2020 Year in Review, which is the Regional Office's annual report.

Complete development of a Strategic Communications Plan for the Greater Atlantic Region

Work with all GAR divisions to look ahead for FY2020-21, and possibly beyond, to identify issues for which they will likely need strategic communications support. These may be highly controversial issues, or new or existing programs they want to draw attention to or educate our stakeholders about. The result will be a strategic communications plan that will guide our communications efforts for the next two years, but will be a living document to adapt to changing needs.

Improve accessibility of fisheries information (1.5, 3.5)

Review, compile and prioritize tasks for Port Agent Team to develop a strategic plan for the Port Programs Section (3.1, 3.3)

Initiate development of the 2020-2025 GARFO Annual Implementation Plan Initiate development of the 2020-2025 GARFO Annual Implementation Plan (3.1, 3.3)

Ensure effective coordination of the New England Bay Watershed Education and Training Program (3.6)

Ensure effective administration of GARFO state/federal, fishery management council, ASMFC and S-K grants (3.6)

Implement Atlantic and shortnose sturgeon outreach and education, including the SCUTES program, to enhance public awareness of ESA listed sturgeon (2.1, 2.3, 3.6)

Implement the Species in the Spotlight Action Plan for Atlantic salmon (2.1, 2.3, 2.4)

Coordinate the focal year for education and outreach for the International Year of the Salmon, with partners, to promote domestic and international efforts to advance science, understand and manage threats and recover salmon (2.1, 2.3, 2.4)

Improve accessibility of fisheries information (1.5, 3.5)

Convene webinars for Atlantic Large Whale and Harbor Porpoise Take Reduction Teams to review new abundance and bycatch estimates; and monitor compliance and effectiveness of the respective TRPs to ensure goals and objectives of MMPA are met (2.1, 2.3, 3.6)

Work with our partners to implement recovery actions through the Atlantic Salmon Framework and Recovery Plan (2.1, 2.3, 3.6)

Implement the mandates of the ESA and MMPA (2.1, 2.3, 3.6)

Initiate development of a GARFO Regional Aquaculture Plan (1.2, 3.6)

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

Expansion of mobile app and fish tank application suite capabilities (1.5, 3.5)