



NOAA
FISHERIES

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

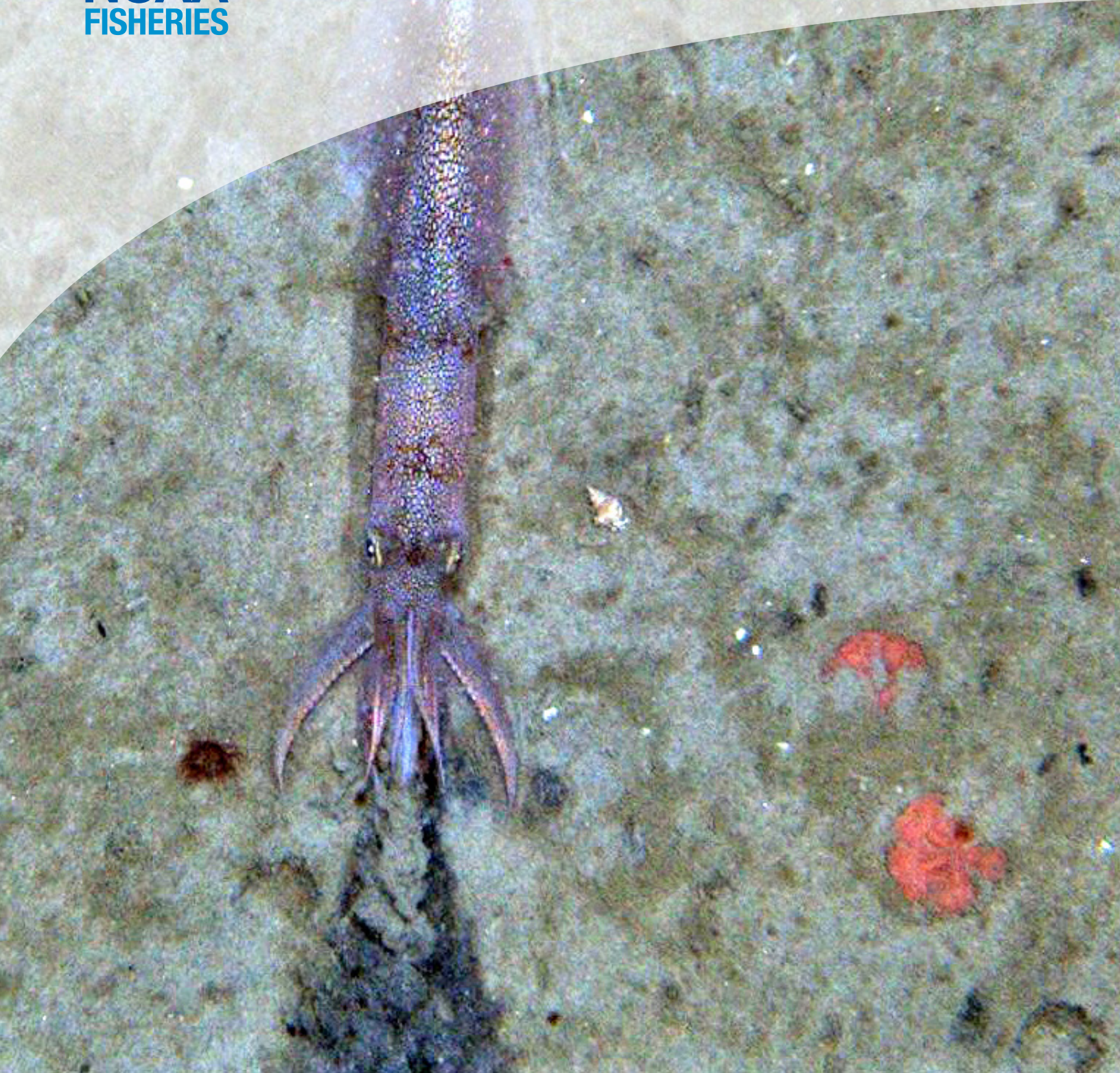
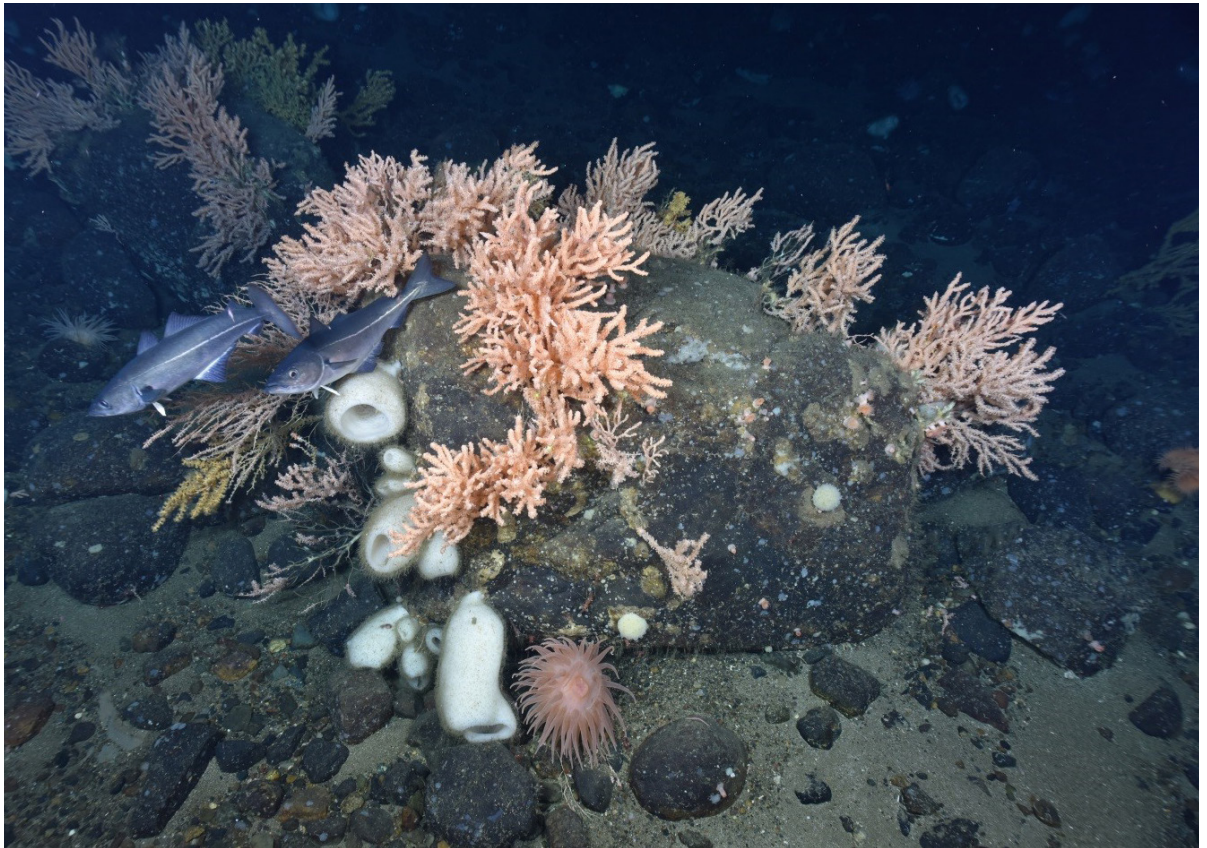


TABLE OF CONTENTS

Joint Message from Regional Administrator and Science Center Director	1
Mission and Mandates.....	2
Strategic Goals	4
Organization.....	5
The Local Landscape	6
Strategic Goal 1: Amplify the economic value of commercial and recreational fisheries while ensuring their sustainability.....	8
Strategic Goal 2: Conserve and recover protected species while supporting responsible fishing and resource development	10
Strategic Goal 3: Improve organizational excellence and regulatory efficiency.....	12



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

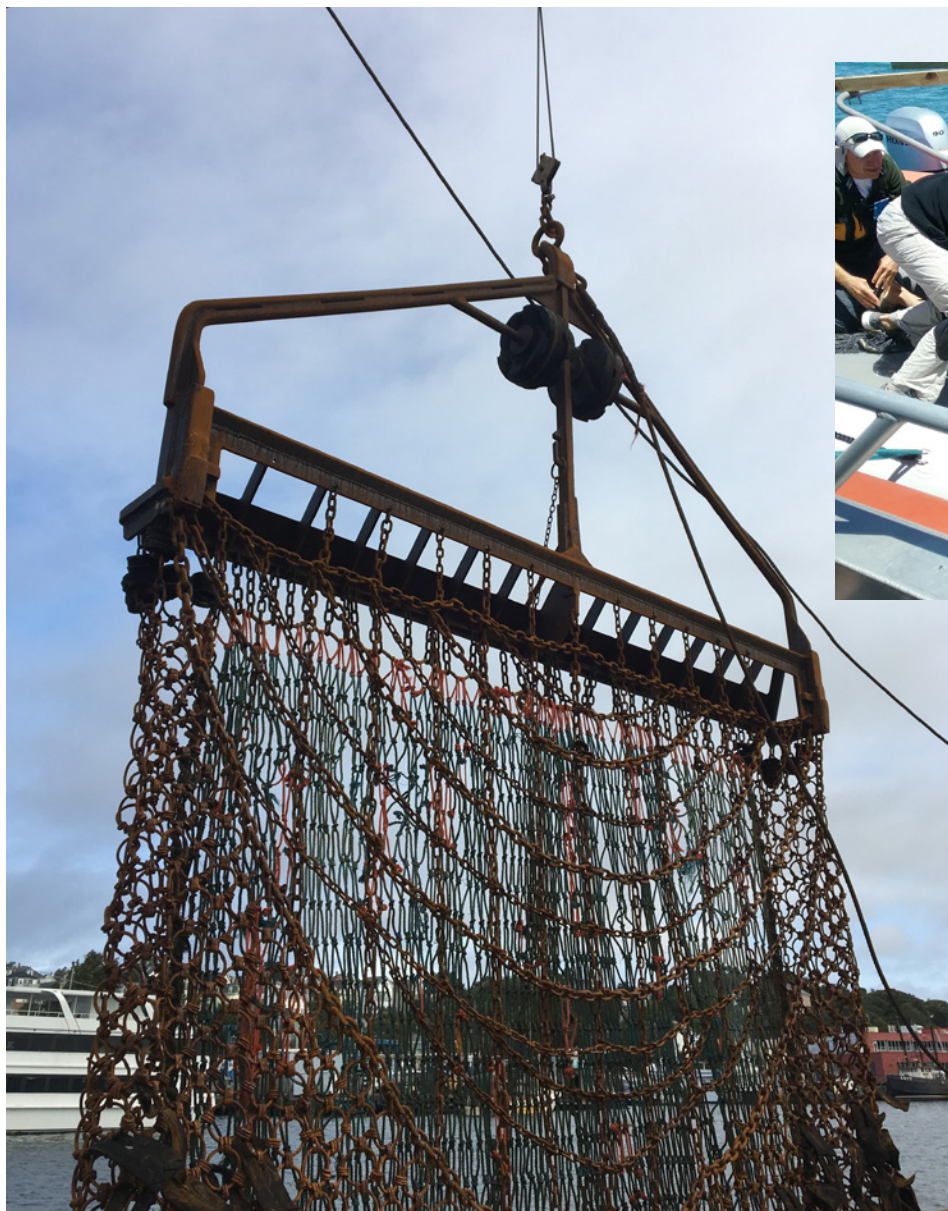
- Support continued fishing opportunities and aquaculture by understanding and minimizing protected species interactions and mortality.
- Work with fishing industry, scientists, environmental organizations, academia, law enforcement agencies, and other stakeholders to develop and enforce bycatch and 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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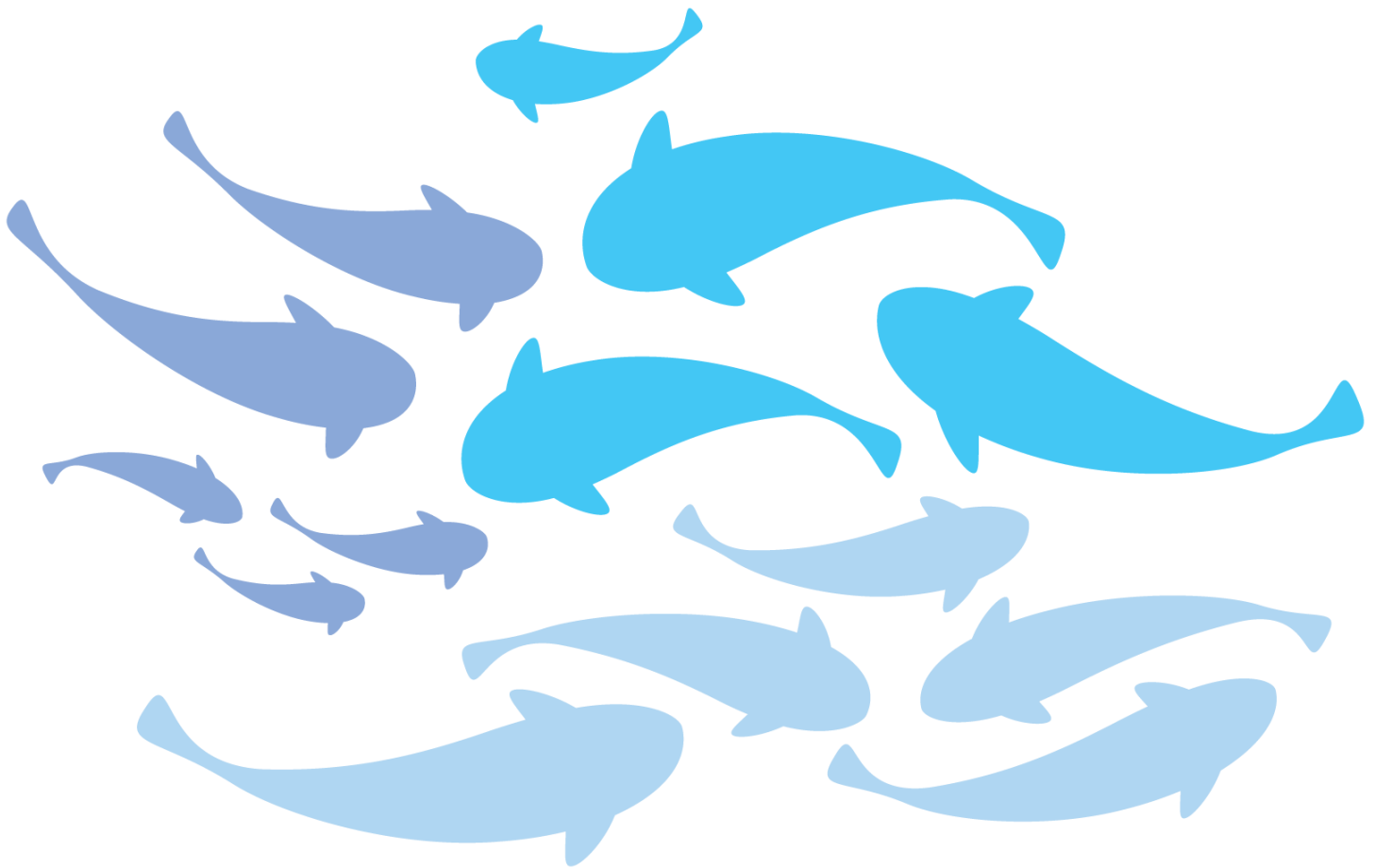
1315 East West Highway
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Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office

2023 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 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.

There are three strategic goals that our plan pursues, based on the vision and strategic guidance from the Department of Commerce (DoC), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and NOAA Fisheries:

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 fiscal year, GARFO divisions select specific annual priorities (milestones) in which to focus efforts to achieve GARFO's long-term Strategic Goals. The Annual Implementation Plan notes each division's 2023 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 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 outcomes, providing focus, and enabling a concentration of resources to accomplish these goals.

Strategic Framework

This plan is structured around the aforementioned 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 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. [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. Improve 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

Connection to other NOAA or National Strategic Plans

While all of the priorities listed in the following sections specifically address the Greater Atlantic Region Strategic Plan, a number of priorities also meet strategic plans at various levels of NOAA and even cascade up to the Department of Commerce. Many of our annual milestones were selected for higher level plans, including the Department of Commerce Annual Operating Plan, NOAA’s Weather, Water, Climate Strategy, and NOAA Fisheries Priorities and Annual Guidance. Additionally, many of our milestones meet elements of NOAA Fisheries Equity and Environmental Justice Strategy. Milestones that meet any of the above mentioned plans are noted with the following symbology:



List of Acronyms

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

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 ex-vessel revenues total nearly \$2 billion, and recreational fisheries result in over \$5.8 billion in total 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.

Complete annual specifications packages and inseason actions for GARFO Fishery Management Plans (SFD)

Complete annual specification packages and inseason actions to ensure that annual catch limits are set to prevent overfishing, rebuild overfished fisheries, and provide fishing opportunities, as well as ensuring inseason actions are completed on time to help prevent overages of established catch limits.

Complete final rule for mandatory harvester reporting for the American lobster fishery (SFD)

Implement mandatory electronic vessel reporting for lobster-only vessel permit holders.

Complete rulemaking and implement Framework 13 to the Monkfish Fishery Management Plan (SFD)

Implement monkfish specifications for fishing years 2023-2025 and other management measures to improve management of the monkfish fishery.

Complete rulemaking and implement Framework 65 to the Northeast Multispecies Fisheries Management Plan (SFD)

Implement fishing year 2023 catch limits and accountability measures for the 20 stocks included in the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan.

Complete rulemaking and implement herring specifications for 2023-2025 (SFD)

Sets Atlantic herring specifications for 2023-2025.

Complete rulemaking and implement Mackerel Rebuilding Amendment (SFD)

Revise the rebuilding plan for Atlantic mackerel and set management measures in the recreational mackerel fishery.

Complete rulemaking and implement Mid-Atlantic Recreational Reform Action (SFD)

Implement a Harvest Control Rule for summer flounder, black sea bass, and scup and Atlantic bluefish.

Complete rulemaking and implement scallop specifications for 2023 and default specifications for 2024 (SFD)

Set fishing year 2023 specifications and other management measures for the Atlantic Sea Scallop Fishery Management Plan.

Complete rulemaking and implement summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass specifications for 2023 (SFD)

Set fishing year 2023 specifications for the Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan.

Develop third party dockside monitoring program to support Maximized Retention Electronic Monitoring Program in the groundfish sector fishery (SFD)

Work with our partners to develop a third party dockside monitoring program that will replace the fund-limited NOAA Fisheries dockside monitoring program that supports the Maximized Retention Electronic Monitoring Program.

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Integrate surfclam/ocean quahog fisheries into the electronic vessel reporting system (SFD)

Update the method for surfclam and ocean quahog vessel reporting and integrate with the larger electronic vessel trip report (eVTR) ecosystem.

Maintain and manage internal and external data platforms (APSD)

Maintain and manage internal and external data platforms to support multifaceted internal programs across GARFO and between GARFO and the NEFSC, as well as portals available to our partners and general public. This milestone includes wind energy, aquaculture, and the GARFO/NEFSC Catch Accounting and Monitoring System (CAMS).

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. This includes our industry data investigation (IDI) program.

Monitor annual catch limits (APSD)

Monitor the fisheries throughout the year to assure that annual catch limits 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 the Regional Office and Science Center. 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 accounts for all catches by sectors.

Provide 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 eVTR support; 2) web design for quota monitoring reports; 3) modernization of fishery dependent data collection and permit application and renewal process; 4) analytical and permitting support for new GARFO, NEFSC, Council, and ASMFC actions and initiatives; 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.

Support NEFMC cod stock structure transition plan priority (SFD)

Support and contribute to the NEFMC's FY 2023 development of management measures to provide for a transition from current cod fishery management to cod fishery management under potential new cod stock structure.

Participate in international efforts for the effective management of living marine resources of the Northwest Atlantic Ocean through engagement with the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (RO and SFD)

Lead and participate on the U.S. delegation to NAFO and support the delegation at the 2023 annual meeting and any preceding intersessional meetings. Participate in working groups as necessary to support U.S. priorities for NAFO.

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.

Working with Blue Water Fisheries, LLC, GARFO will identify a third party contractor to develop an Environmental Impact Statement for the project (HESD)

Consistent with the MOU between Blue Water Fisheries, LLC, and GARFO, Blue Water Fisheries will publish a Request for Information to solicit a third party contractor, under GARFO's oversight, to develop a NEPA analysis to analyze the impacts of the project. These documents will set the standard for the approaches used for this and future offshore aquaculture projects.

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.

Complete a scenario planning exercise for the Lower Susquehanna River (HESD)

Complete a scenario planning exercise for the Lower Susquehanna River to explore options to balance aquatic invasive species prevention and American shad restoration. Partners include the USFWS, the Susquehanna River Basin Commission, and the states of MD, PA, and NY.

Complete environmental review and EFH consultations from requesting agencies (HESD)

Complete environmental review and EFH consultations on proposed projects submitted by partner agencies. Coordinate reviews and comments internally with GARFO Divisions and NEFSC. Coordinate activities and updates with HQ and other regions. Provide technical assistance to agencies to attain projects that minimize impacts to living marine resources.

DoC

FISH

Complete environmental review and EFH consultations of offshore wind 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. Coordinate activities and updates with HQ and other regions. Provide technical assistance to BOEM to attain projects that minimize impacts to living marine resources.

Review and process applications in support of research activities, including Exempted Fishing Permits, Letters of Acknowledgment, and Scientific Research Permits (SFD)

Continue to work with researchers to support permitting of regional cooperative research projects and completing 80% of Exempted Fishing Permit applications within 60 days of receiving a complete application.

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.

Milestones Addressed in Other Goal Sections:

Complete rulemaking and implement Framework 65 to the Northeast Multispecies Fisheries Management Plan (SFD; Goals 1.1, 1.4)

Complete rulemaking and implement Mackerel Rebuilding Amendment (SFD; Goals 1.1, 1.4)

Maintain and manage internal and external data platforms (APSD; Goals 1.1, 1.4, 1.5)

Manage fisheries dealer and vessel reports (APSD; Goals 1.1, 1.4, 1.5, 3.7)

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

Provide internal and external analytical, technical, and industry support (APSD) (SFD; Goals 1.1, 1.4, 1.5, 3.7)

Support NEFMC cod stock structure transition plan priority (SFD; Goals 1.1, 1.4, 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.

Assess readiness and define scope of Data Governance Initiative (TDMD)

Consistent with the NOAA Fisheries Data Governance Plan, evaluate and assess existing data resources from a Data Governance perspective and define the scope of the joint GARFO/NEFSC Data Governance effort.

Collaborate on development of Trip Reporting Development Coding Framework based on Fish Online (TDMD)

Act as subject matter experts and contribute guidance to a collaborative effort between GARFO, NEFSC, SERO, and SEFSC to build upon the Fish Online codebase for mobile trip reporting to create a reusable, extensible development framework for logbook applications in NOAA Fisheries.

Develop and implement MODVP (modernized permits) (TDMD)

Redesign the presentation of permit information on the GARFO public site to facilitate linking it to a unique QR code. The code would be embedded in user-printable permit documents and would also be made available in GARFO's Fish Online applications for web browser, iOS, and mobile devices (React app). At any time, such as during an at-sea boarding, the code could be scanned to confirm permit information and validity.

Develop and launch Fish Online inbox (TDMD)

Develop a user-specific inbox in Fish Online to enable GARFO to contact users directly with information specific to their vessels/permits. This includes, but is not limited to: notification of closures, electronic monitoring and reporting compliance, updates to specifications, alerts for low or negative quota balances, notification that a new document is available to view, etc. Create new capabilities in the Fish Online trip reporting applications to integrate SERO and HMS trip reporting requirements for GARFO-permitted vessels that also possess SERO and/or HMS permits.

Develop and launch SEPT (special permitting letter system) (TDMD)

Replace the multiple tools to support annual fisheries updates, ability to archive and recall issued permits, and the ability to comprehensively track issued exemption permits. As a single entry point, SEPT will integrate the various data streams into an intuitive and flexible view that provides a comprehensive overview of permitted scientific and research programs across fisheries. This view will integrate information from such platforms as the vessel permit system (VPS), eVTRs, pre-trip notification system (PTNS), and the research document system (RDS), giving stakeholders one location to view information and understand what a program is permitted to do, what they have reported, and any deltas in between.

Expand use of electronic permits to all dealers in the Greater Atlantic Region (APSD)

Implement electronic dealer permitting for all GARFO dealers. The submission of electronic applications aligns the application requirements with the existing electronic requirements for vessels and operators in GARFO.

Expand use of electronic vessel trip reports to the American lobster fishery in the Greater Atlantic Region (APSD)

Implement the American lobster mandatory harvester reporting requirement for all federal lobster permit holders and add the collection of several additional data elements. The submission of eVTR aligns the reporting requirements for Federal lobster permit holders with the existing reporting requirements for all other fisheries permitted by GARFO.

Implement an eVTR Data Model (TDMD)

Complete implementation of new data architecture for vessel trip reports. This new design has been developed through a GARFO NEFSC collaboration over the past year. This milestone includes the build of the



new model, data migration from current models, and design of presentation views to be backward compatible with the current model.

Implement Trip Report Changes to support new lobster regulations (TDMD)

Add new report type to existing eVTR apps and support for additional, lobster-specific fields in API (Application Programming Interface), Data Model, and editing features.

Milestones Addressed in Other Goal Sections:

Maintain and manage internal and external data platforms (APSD; Goals 1.1, 1.4, 1.5)

Manage fisheries dealer and vessel reports (APSD; Goals 1.1, 1.4, 1.5, 3.7)

Provide internal and external analytical, technical, and industry support (APSD) (SFD; Goals 1.1, 1.4, 1.5, 3.7)

Complete final rule for mandatory harvester reporting for the American lobster fishery

Develop third party dockside monitoring program to support Maximized Retention Electronic Monitoring Program in the groundfish sector fishery (SFD; Goals 1.1, 1.5)

Integrate surfclam/ocean quahog into the electronic vessel reporting system (SFD; Goals 1.1, 1.5)

Provide permit services to constituents, including fishing allocation transfers (APSD; Goals 1.1, 1.5)

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.

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 (PRD)

Convene Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team through webinars and Team meetings to create recommendations to reduce entanglement impacts on right whales. GARFO will submit a proposed rule and Draft Environmental Impacts Statement to HQ for review and clearance.

Convene Northeast Right Whale Recovery Implementation Team for input on right whale recovery priorities and progress monitoring (PRD)

Convene at least one meeting of the Northeast Right Whale Recovery Implementation Team. Monitor recovery progress to inform priority action planning. Release Final Five Year Review and Species in the Spotlight Annual Action Plan. Finalize Population Viability Analysis model.

Execute ESA Section 7 Program including planning, technical assistance, and consultations with NOAA Fisheries and other federal agencies (PRD)

Complete 75% of formal and informal Endangered Species Act consultations within NOAA Fisheries' monitored timeframes.

Implement activities to support the recovery of shortnose sturgeon and the Gulf of Maine, New York Bight, and Chesapeake Bay Distinct Population Segments of Atlantic sturgeon (PRD)

Work with our partners to implement actions to advance the recovery of shortnose and Atlantic sturgeon in the Greater Atlantic Region. Work to develop a recovery plan for the Gulf of Maine, New York Bight, and Chesapeake Bay Distinct Population Segments of Atlantic sturgeon. Continue to work to address primary threats to the species, including fisheries bycatch and vessel strikes. Develop and distribute outreach and education materials that raise awareness about the recovery needs of sturgeon.

Implement activities to support the recovery of the Gulf of Maine Distinct Population Segment of Atlantic salmon (PRD)

Work with our partners to implement recovery actions identified in the 2019 Recovery Plan and implement the 2021-2025 Species in the Spotlight Action Plan for Atlantic salmon.



DoC

FISH

Participate in international efforts for the management of Atlantic salmon through engagement with the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (PRD)

Participate on the U.S. delegation to NASCO and support the delegation at the 2023 annual meeting and any preceding intersessional meetings. Prepare drafts of the U.S. Annual Report and any necessary updates to the U.S. Implementation Plan for clearance by the Head of Delegation. Participate in working groups as necessary to support U.S. priorities for NASCO.

Participate in regional activities regarding Section 7 compliance in Delaware River (PRD)

Work with the NEFSC, General Counsel, and local experts in the Delaware River regarding the status of Atlantic sturgeon, regional threats, and appropriate responses with existing ESA Section 7 consultations and future actions.

Participate with Canada in annual meetings to share information regarding threats to protected resources (PRD)

Participate in at least four meetings annually with Fisheries and Oceans Canada staff to allow for information exchange on protected species and related issues of common concern in Northern Atlantic coastal waters.

DoC

WWC

FISH

Work with BOEM to develop programmatic approaches to ESA consultation for offshore wind in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic (PRD)

Provide technical assistance to BOEM and other action agencies at all stages of offshore wind project development with the goal of avoiding and minimizing effects to ESA listed species and the ecosystems on which they depend. Provide subject matter expertise on ESA listed species and critical habitat through NOAA Fisheries role as a cooperating agency under NEPA. Complete ESA section 7 consultations on offshore wind energy development projects submitted by BOEM.

DoC

WWC

FISH

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)

Provide technical assistance to BOEM and other action agencies at all stages of offshore wind project development with the goal of avoiding and minimizing effects to ESA listed species and the ecosystems on which they depend. Provide subject matter expertise on ESA listed species and critical habitat through NOAA Fisheries role as a cooperating agency under NEPA. Complete ESA section 7 consultations on offshore wind energy development projects submitted by BOEM.

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.

Revise the Regional Quality Assurance Plan based on NEPA regulatory changes (RO)

Revise the Regional Office's Quality Assurance Plan due to revisions on NEPA Regulations found in NAO 216-6.

DoC

FISH

Support NEPA reviews on offshore wind projects (RO)

Support NEPA reviews and lead in our role as a Cooperating Agency on BOEM EIS actions concerning offshore wind projects.

Undertake streamlining EFH process for IIA activities with the US Army Corps of Engineers (HESD)

HESD will work with the ACOE to streamline the EFH consultation process for civil works and regulatory projects conducted under Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) funding. This includes development of programmatic consultations, development of process guidance, etc.

Milestones Addressed in Other Goal Sections:

Implement activities to support the recovery of shortnose sturgeon and the Gulf of Maine, New York Bight, and Chesapeake Bay Distinct Population Segments of Atlantic sturgeon (PRD; Goals 2.1, 2.2)

Work with BOEM to develop programmatic approaches to ESA consultation for offshore wind in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic (PRD; Goals 2.1, 2.2)

Complete environmental review and EFH consultations from requesting agencies (HESD; Goals 1.3, 2.2)

Complete environmental review and EFH consultations of offshore wind projects (HESD; Goals 1.3, 2.2)

Working with Blue Water Fisheries, LLC, GARFO will identify a third party contractor to develop an Environmental Impact Statement for the project (HESD; Goals 1.2, 2.2)

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:

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 (PRD; Goals 2.1, 2.3)

Convene Northeast Right Whale Recovery Implementation Team for input on right whale recovery priorities and progress monitoring (PRD; Goals 2.1, 2.3)

Execute ESA Section 7 Program including planning, technical assistance, and consultations with NOAA Fisheries and other federal agencies (PRD; Goals 2.1, 2.3)

Implement activities to support the recovery of shortnose sturgeon and the Gulf of Maine, New York Bight, and Chesapeake Bay Distinct Population Segments of Atlantic sturgeon (PRD; Goals 2.1, 2.3)

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

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; Goals 2.1, 2.3)

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.

DoC

FISH

Jointly manage US-Canada Transboundary Resources (RO)

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. Intersessional teleconference/webinar meeting in the spring (usually late April/early May) and then our in person Steering Committee and Transboundary Management Guidance Committee meeting (in Halifax next year) in early September 2023.

Milestones Addressed in Other Goal Sections:

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 (PRD; Goals 2.1, 2.3, 2.4)

Participate with Canada in annual meetings to share information regarding threats to protected resources (PRD; Goals 2.1, 2.3, 2.4)

Participate in international efforts for the management of Atlantic salmon through engagement with the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (PRD; Goals 2.1, 2.4)

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.

Assess and adjust program internal controls to make institutional improvements in line with NOAA Fisheries policy, goals, and objectives (OMD)

Fulfill responsibilities to maintain GARFO financial information in accordance with applicable laws and regulations, including department and agency policies and procedures. Monitor, assess, and adjust as necessary program internal controls to make institutional improvements in line with NOAA Fisheries policies, goals and objectives.

Ensure safe and operational facilities (OMD)

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

Implement two items from the Northeast Learning Plan in collaboration with the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (RO)

Implement two either GARFO-specific or joint GARFO/NEFSC goals from the Northeast Learning Plan. GARFO-specific priorities include evaluating an IDP requirement for regional staff and executing several group training opportunities.

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.

Align financial resources to meet highest priority actions (OMD)

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

Ensure the timely obligation of appropriated funds under a broad portfolio of NOAA Fisheries grant programs that relate primarily to the conservation, management, and utilization of fishery resources from the Northwest Atlantic (OMD)

Maintain state, fishery management council, and constituent partnerships to ensure that projects supported with FY 2023 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.

DoC

FISH

Finalize Google Voice transition (TDMD)

Port all GARFO individual lines, ring groups, and auto attendants from legacy carrier services to Google Voice. Deploy Google Meet kits in GARFO conference rooms to support hybrid meetings. Assign conference and team room phones their own individual Google Voice number.

Modernize the Disaster Recovery Plan (TDMD)

Conduct analysis of alternatives to evaluate the cost and efficiencies of on-premise hardened repository and cloud-based backup solutions for data redundancy and disaster recovery. Collaborate with the NOAA Web Operations Center on solution pricing for Amazon Web Services (AWS) historical and incremental data backup retention. Implement configuration changes to GARFO Domain Name System (DNS) servers to maintain connectivity to the website in the event of a device outage.

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.

Coordinate with USFWS to develop the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument Management Plan (RO)

Coordinate with USFWS in development of a management plan due September 15, 2023, for the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument.

DoC

WWC

FISH

EEJ

Develop the 2023-2027 Greater Atlantic Region Strategic Plan (RO)

Develop the next multi-year strategic plan for the Greater Atlantic Region in consultation with NEFSC.

Draft and submit regulatory action to formally incorporate the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument into Fishery Management Plans and Regulations (SFD)

DoC

FISH

Pursuant to Presidential Proclamations 9496 and 10287 establishing and modifying the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument, we will work with the Mid-Atlantic and New England Fishery Management Councils to draft amendments to fishery management plans and submit a regulatory action to incorporate the Monument area and its commercial fishing prohibition into regulations.

Modernize and maintain web software, network infrastructure, and SIMM (TDMD)

Refactor the code of web applications from PHP 5 to PHP 7, upgrade Codeigniter 1 applications to Codeigniter 4. During refactoring, review and update according to best coding practices and build in quality to streamline applications and enhance durability. Improve network and server monitoring to enhance uptime, improve network and server automation so IT is more efficiently run. Utilize cloud technology for databases and backup redundancy, infrastructure as codes. In addition to routine maintenance and upkeep, refactor SIMM codebase to use PHP 7/Codeigniter 4. Make feature updates as needed in support of Northeast Multispecies Amendment 23, and update data streams to utilize CAMS.

Milestones Addressed in Other Goal Sections:

Align financial resources to meet highest priority actions (OMD; Goals 3.2, 3.3)

Assess and adjust program internal controls to make institutional improvements in line with NOAA Fisheries policy, goals, and objectives (OBD; Goals 1.3, 3.3)

Complete the East Coast Climate Scenario Planning Initiative (SFD; Goals 3.2, 3.3)

Ensure the timely obligation of appropriated funds under a broad portfolio of NOAA Fisheries grant programs that relate primarily to the conservation, management, and utilization of fishery resources from the Northwest Atlantic (OMD; Goals 3.2, 3.3)

Modernize the Disaster Recovery Plan (TDMD; Goals 3.2, 3.3)

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 NOAA Fisheries and NOAA partners, as well as the Councils to remove outdated, unnecessary, and ineffective fishing regulations.

Milestones Addressed in Other Goal Sections:

Assess readiness and define scope of the Data Governance Initiative (TDMD; Goals 1.5, 3.4, 3.6)

Develop and launch Fish Online Inbox (TDMD; Goals 1.5, 3.4, 3.5, 3.7)

Improve use of fishery dependent data through the development of the GARFO/NEFSC Fishery Dependent Data Initiative (APSD; Goals 1.5, 3.4, 3.6)

Modernize the Disaster Recovery Plan (TDMD; Goals 3.2, 3.3, 3.4)

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.

EEJ

Develop and launch Gear Compendium Public Website (TDMD)

Design and build a search application to allow members of the public to identify past gear research projects and to request documentation from GARFO.

Implement Cloud Oracle Database Proof of Concept (TDMD)

Implement a proof of concept approach that would entail the development of a smaller-scale Oracle database hosted on AWS to thoroughly analyze the technology and cost implications of managing and scaling such a database. The project will evaluate connectivity and transactional performance of VTR data stored on the Oracle cloud database to both on premise architecture and existing AWS infrastructure.

Maintain Operations and Infrastructure Lifecycle (TDMD)

Upgrade virtualization platform to take advantage of the latest in modern virtualization and container infrastructure while bolstering security. Continue to replace older/soon to be end of life servers with the latest operating system versions. Improve backup infrastructure for more resilience and allow for quicker restores/recovery.

Milestones Addressed in Other Goal Sections:

Develop and implement MODVP (modernized permits) (TDMD; Goals 1.5, 3.4, 3.5, 3.7)

Develop and launch Fish Online Inbox (TDMD; Goals 1.5, 3.4, 3.5, 3.7)

Develop and launch SEPT (TDMD; Goals 1.5, 3.4, 3.5, 3.7)

Develop third party dockside monitoring program to support Maximized Retention Electronic Monitoring Program in the groundfish sector fishery (SFD; Goals 1.5, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7)

Expand use of electronic permits to all dealers in the Greater Atlantic Region (APSD; Goals 1.5, 3.5)

Expand use of electronic vessel trip reports (eVTRs) to the American lobster fishery in the Greater Atlantic Region (APSD; Goals 1.5, 3.5)

Finalize Google Voice transition (TDMD; Goals 3.2, 3.5)

Implement an eVTR Data Model (TDMD; Goals 1.5, 3.5, 3.7)

Integrate surfclam/ocean quahog into the electronic vessel reporting system (SFD; Goals 1.1, 1.5,3.5)

Modernize and maintain web software, network infrastructure, and SIMM (TDMD; Goals 3.3, 3.5)

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.

EEJ

Develop Equity and Environmental Justice Implementation Plan for the Regional Office (RO)

Develop a regional Equity and Environmental Justice (EEJ) Implementation Plan for GARFO that aligns with the national EEJ Strategy. Continue to work with Councils/ASFMC and management partners to facilitate hybrid meetings and virtual participation to improve accessibility.



Establish a Regional Climate Team (HESD)

Advance discussions and explore options to develop a regional climate team, with a focus on improving communication on climate-related issues across GARFO divisions and the NEFSC. Work product will include a team charter that outlines the scope, membership, roles, and responsibilities.

Milestones Addressed in Other Goal Sections:

Assess readiness and define scope of the Data Governance Initiative (TDMD; Goals 1.5, 3.4, 3.6)

Complete environmental review and EFH consultations from requesting agencies (HESD; Goals 1.3, 2.2, 3.6)

Complete environmental review and EFH consultations of offshore wind projects (HESD; Goals 1.3, 2.2, 3.6)

Complete rulemaking and implement Mid-Atlantic Recreational Reform Action (SFD; Goals 1.1, 3.6, 3.7)

Complete the East Coast Climate Scenario Planning Initiative (SFD; Goals 3.2, 3.3, 3.6, 3.7)

Complete a scenario planning exercise for the Lower Susquehanna River (HESD; Goals 1.3, 3.6, 3.7)

Coordinate with USFWS to develop the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument Management Plan (RO; Goals 3.3, 3.6, 3.7)

Develop the 2023-2027 Greater Atlantic Region Strategic Plan (RO; Goals 3.3, 3.6, 3.7)

Develop and implement MODVP (modernized permits) (TDMD; Goals 1.5, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7)

Develop and launch SEPT (TDMD; Goals 1.5, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7)

Implement activities to support the recovery of shortnose sturgeon and the Gulf of Maine, New York Bight, and Chesapeake Bay Distinct Population Segments of Atlantic sturgeon (PRD; Goals 2.1, 2.3, 3.6)

Implement two items from the Northeast Learning Plan in collaboration with the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (RO; Goals 3.1, 3.6)

Improve use of fishery dependent data through the development of the GARFO/NEFSC Fishery Dependent Data Initiative (APSD; Goals 1.5, 3.4, 3.6)

Jointly manage US-Canada Transboundary Resources (RO; Goals 2.4, 3.6)

Participate with Canada in annual meetings to share information regarding threats to protected resources (PRD; Goals 2.1, 2.3, 2.4, 3.6)

Participate in international efforts for the effective management of living marine resources of the Northwest Atlantic Ocean through engagement with the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (RO and SFD; Goals 1.1, 3.6)

Participate in international efforts for the management of Atlantic salmon through engagement with the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (PRD; Goals 2.1, 2.4, 3.6)

Participate in regional activities regarding Section 7 compliance in Delaware River (PRD; Goals 2.1, 3.6, 3.7)

Review and process applications in support of research activities, including Exempted Fishing Permits, Letters of Acknowledgment, and Scientific Research Permits (SFD; Goals 1.3, 3.6)

Support NEFMC cod stock structure transition plan priority (SFD; Goals 1.1, 1.4, 3.6)

Undertake streamlining EFH process for IJA activities with the US Army Corps of Engineers (HESD; Goals 1.3, 2.2, 3.6)

Working with Blue Water Fisheries, LLC, GARFO will identify a third party contractor to develop an Environmental Impact Statement for the project (HESD; Goals 1.2, 2.2, 3.6)

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 2022 GARFO Annual Report (RO)

Work with all GARFO Divisions, the Deputy Regional Administrator, and Regional Administrator to produce the GARFO Year in Review, which is the Regional Office's annual report.

Produce GARFO Annual Implementation Plan (RO)

Complete the Annual Implementation Plan and distribute it to staff and partners.

Respond to FOIA requests in a timely manner (OMD)

Ensure the effective implementation and execution of national and regional procedures and policies of the FOIA as set forth in the 15 CFR Part 4 , NOAA Fisheries FOIA Handbook (2015) and NOAA Administrative Order 205-14.

Milestones Addressed in Other Goal Sections:

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 (PRD; Goals 2.1, 2.3, 2.4, 3.7)

Collaborate on development of Trip Reporting Development Coding Framework based on Fish Online (TDMD; Goals 1.5, 3.7)

Complete rulemaking and implement Mid-Atlantic Recreational Reform Action (SFD; Goals 1.1, 3.6, 3.7)

Complete the East Coast Climate Scenario Planning Initiative (SFD; Goals 3.2, 3.3, 3.6, 3.7)

Complete a scenario planning exercise for the Lower Susquehanna River (HESD; Goals 1.3, 3.6, 3.7)

Convene Northeast Right Whale Recovery Implementation Team for input on right whale recovery priorities and progress monitoring (PRD; Goals 2.1, 2.3, 3.7)

Coordinate with USFWS to develop the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument Management Plan (RO; Goals 3.3, 3.6, 3.7)

Develop EEJ Implementation Plan for the Regional Office (RO; Goals 3.6, 3.7)

Develop the 2023-2027 Greater Atlantic Region Strategic Plan (RO; Goals 3.3, 3.6, 3.7)

Develop and implement MODVP (modernized permits) (TDMD; Goals 1.5, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7)

Develop and launch Fish Online Inbox (TDMD; Goals 1.5, 3.4, 3.5, 3.7)

Develop and launch Gear Compendium Public Website (TDMD; Goals 3.5, 3.7)

Develop and launch SEPT (TDMD; Goals 1.5, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7)

Develop third party dockside monitoring program to support Maximized Retention Electronic Monitoring Program in the groundfish sector fishery (SFD; Goals 1.5, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7)

Establish a Regional Climate Team (HESD; Goals 3.6, 3.7)

Manage fisheries dealer and vessel reports (APSD; Goals 1.1, 1.4, 1.5, 3.7)

Participate in international efforts for the management of Atlantic salmon through engagement with the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (PRD; Goals 2.1, 2.4, 3.6, 3.7)

Participate in regional activities regarding Section 7 compliance in Delaware River (PRD; Goals 2.1, 3.6, 3.7)

Provide internal and external analytical, technical, and industry support (APSD) (SFD; Goals 1.1, 1.4, 1.5, 3.7)