

**Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council**  
**Outreach and Education Technical Committee**  
**Meeting Summary**  
**Tampa, Florida**  
**December 6, 2022**

The meeting of the Gulf of Mexico (Gulf) Fishery Management Council's (Council) Outreach and Education Technical Committee (O&E) was convened at 9:00 AM EST on December 6, 2022. The agenda for this meeting was adopted with two "other business" items added. The [minutes from the August 1, 2022 meeting](#), were approved as written.

**2022 Communications Improvement Plan Review and Communications Analytics**

Staff gave a presentation on the progress made on the 2022 Communications Improvement Plan and 2022 communication analytics. The following is a summary of items discussed:

- **Website** – Staff dismantled the Fishing For Our Future webpage, created a website style guide, and linked Final Action Federal Register Notices to each item on the Implemented Fishery Management Plan pages. Analytics continue to show upward trends in use. For the first time, regulations pages for lane snapper and yellowtail snapper made the top-ten most popular pages on the Council website. A blog post from a previous year on identifying the other snapper species that look similar to red snapper also made it on the top 10 list. The O&E reiterated that it wanted the Council to work with NOAA to add a one stop shop webpage of angler resources that includes quota monitoring, stock assessment reports, and the MRIP query tool.
- **Listserv** – Staff developed species-specific email contact lists from the Fishermen Feedback tool and used those groups to send species-specific press releases. Staff also endeavored to regularly nudge people on social media and during in-person events to join our listserv subscriber list. Subscribership continues to trend upwards and the percent of emails that were opened (campaign open-rate) was incredibly high this year. Staff concluded, and the O&E concurred, that the species-specific email targeting is a useful way to provide relevant content to subscribers.
- **Videos**- Staff created two interview style vlog videos on topics beyond the typical public hearings. Total video views were very high this year and views of videos specifically produced this year were also higher than normal. The O&E suggested that staff should rely on partners to share video content and that staff should live stream pre-recorded Council videos to enhance viewership.
- **Social Media**- Staff transitioned away from using a third-party social media management tool, created a social media calendar, increased posting of positive content and content directing anglers to helpful resources. Staff also created place holder accounts on all relevant social media platforms. Facebook followers continue to trend upward. Strangely, the number of times people interact with our content is down, but the size of the audience we reach is up. Instagram analytics continue to grow slowly. The O&E noted that Facebook is still the most appropriate social media tool to reach fishermen. Reddit is issue driven and not

conducive to agency use. The Twitter audience is not an exact match for Council targeted communications. Instagram and TikTok do not allow clickable links so they are not conducive for call's to action or linking content.

- **Blog** – Staff published six blog articles and one digest so far this year. This did fall short of staff's expressed goal of completing 12 article and 4 digests for 2022. Those blogs received a total of 1,566 views. Staff is looking into capturing the number of total views of all blogs, an important metric that was lost when we transitioned away from using a third-party hosting platform.
- **Fish Rules App**- Recreational and Commercial Fish Rules analytics continue to show the highest volume of users across all Council communication platforms. The O&E suggested that we consider adding quota monitoring to the Fish Rules Recreational App.
- **Fisherman Feedback**- Staff has applied for Paperwork Reduction Act approval through a NOAA Citizen Science application. If approved, this will allow the use of the Fisherman Feedback tool through an expedited approval process. The tool was successfully rebranded from the former "Something's Fishy" title. Staff still intends to create a factsheet and draft a guideline document. Staff would also like to publish a formal paper on the tool.
- **Public Comment Database** – Staff successfully learned and implemented the new optimized public comment database system.
- **Communications Guidelines**- Staff completed drafting communications guidelines for Hosting Fishing Regulations, Communications Analytics, Media, and the Use of Council Products. Staff plans to complete guidelines for the Fisherman Feedback tool.
- **Species Timeline Project**- Staff has begun to gather all relevant information for development of a dynamic web-tool that will display the history of management for each species. The tool will be a timeline sortable by the type of regulatory change (i.e. bag limit, catch limit, etc.). The O&E expressed strong support for the development of this tool and suggested that relevant scientific information be added. This should include stock assessment results, stock status determination, and rebuilding timelines. It should also include key events that may have influenced science and management such as red tides, hurricanes, and oil spills. It was noted that this tool will be very useful for our heavily engaged audience and for the media. It might also be a way to replace the current way we include the history of management in each amendment and stock assessment. The O&E also suggested we look at a similar product made by the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council and that we consider creating a beginner option and an advanced, or more technical option.
- **In-Person Public Hearings**- In the past two years, in-person public hearings have been held on three issues. Hearings for Reef Fish Amendment 53: Red Grouper Allocation and Catch Limits were held solely in Florida and had high attendance. Hearings for Coastal Migratory Pelagic Amendment 32: Gulf Group Cobia Catch Limits, Possession Limits, Size Limits and Framework Procedure, and Reef Fish Amendment 54: Greater Amberjack Catch Limits and Sector Allocations were both held Gulf-wide with poor attendance. Two of the scheduled Florida hearings had to be canceled due to hurricanes. The O&E

suggested that location, time-of-year, and topic are all factors driving attendance. It also noted that it is generally difficult to get people to come to meetings. The O&E pondered whether stakeholders feel disenfranchised and do not show up because they don't believe that their input will influence management. It also suggested that post-COVID there is an appetite for both virtual and in-person formats and each audience is different. The O&E made the following motion, which passed without opposition:

**MOTION: in an effort to increase participation, effectiveness and efficiency, the O & E Technical Committee recommends that the Council explore new methods to conduct public hearings such as, incorporating state partners or Sea Grant programs as facilitators. Council members should attend in-person and Council staff can potentially attend virtually.**

### Communications Guidelines

Staff presented draft Council Communications Guidelines for Hosting Regulations, Use of Council Products, and Analytics Tracking and Reporting. The O&E suggested that social media 'shares' be tracked because it is a good indicator of cross-agency promotion and the reliance on Council as a reputable source of information. The O&E offered no additional modifications to the other guidelines.

### MRIP Story Map Review

Staff provided a draft version of an MRIP storyboard. An MRIP infographic with information relating to how conversion from the old data currency (CHTS) to the new currency (FES) affects management decisions was presented at the last O&E meeting. During that meeting, the O&E requested the infographic be moved to a more dynamic format. The O&E was pleased with the direction of the MRIP Storyboard, but offered several suggestions to improve content and design. Suggestions included making sure the storyboard is optimized to the device it is being viewed on, and tracking what devices viewers are using to better inform development of future outreach materials. The O&E also discussed inclusion of state supplemental program information, and whether a comprehensive storyboard would have too much text and cause scrolling fatigue. Staff will continue to explore ways to incorporate the suggested information.

### 2022 In-Person Outreach Summary

Staff provided a presentation that summarized the 2022 in-person outreach events attended and their respective analytics, which led to a discussion and use of the Google Jamboard (a digital whiteboard that lets you collaborate in real time) to brainstorm better, more effective ways to do in-person outreach events in 2023. After reviewing the 2022 event analytics, the O&E suggested that tournaments likely aren't the best events to attend because fishermen are focused on fishing and it's difficult to maintain the focus of the target audience. The O&E also mentioned that the goal and target audience depend on the type of event. After discussion on poor attendance at public hearings, it isn't surprising that it has been more difficult to engage people at in-person outreach events. Staff explained that it was working on creating a 2023 In-Person Outreach Event Plan and asked the O&E to brainstorm responses for three questions:

who should the target audience be for in-person outreach events, what type of in-person outreach events should the Council prioritize, and what is the best in-person outreach opportunity in each state. The O&E was then asked to prioritize the suggestions by voting using check marks. Results of this session are located in Appendix A and will be considered when developing the 2023 In-Person Outreach Events Plan.

#### Fishery Ecosystem Plan Outreach

Staff provided a basic overview of the Council's progress on development of a Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP) which included a summary of the Council motion that directed the Council's Ecosystem Technical Committee to develop a plan to engage stakeholders in the process. The O&E noted that outreach should begin early so that stakeholder participation is an integral part of executing the FEP. It recognized that currently, the FEP is too abstract and that outreach should begin once there are specific issues identified that would appeal to a layman audience. The O&E postulated that they were likely the more appropriate group to develop an outreach plan and made the following motion which passed without opposition:

**MOTION: To charge the Outreach & Education Technical Committee with developing the Fishery Ecosystem Plan stakeholder engagement plan in collaboration with the Ecosystem Technical Committee.**

#### 2023 Communications Improvement Plan

Staff explained that it was working on creating the 2023 Communications Improvement Plan and asked the O&E to brainstorm ideas using the Google Jamboard tool. The O&E was first asked to identify how the communications team can improve their function in each of the current communication strategies. Next, the O&E was asked to identify any new communication methods. Finally, the O&E was asked to identify general things that should be changed about Council communications and general things that are working particularly well with Council communications. The O&E was then asked to prioritize the suggestions by voting using check marks. Results of this session are located in Appendix B and will be directly incorporated into the 2023 Communicants Improvement plan.

#### Other Business

- **Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease:** A member of the O&E noted that stony coral tissue loss disease is present in the Caribbean, Dry Tortugas, and Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary. Communications materials including best practices related to coral care are available through the Florida Coral Disease Outbreak Response Communications Team and the Department of Environmental Protections Coral Reef Conservation Program.
- **Public Testimony Updates:** The O&E discussed how public testimony is held during Council and Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) meetings. All of the Council's approach public testimony differently and it might be helpful to audit what we're doing compared to the other Councils. One idea for improvement was to allow stakeholders a way to suggest items that should be considered

during deliberations rather than having to wait until the end of each day of a meeting, when decisions and recommendations might already have been made. The O&E acknowledged that there wasn't any extra time available during the meetings and suggested that stakeholders could be allowed to make limited online comments before the meeting to suggest considerations for each Committee before they meet and make recommendations to full Council. It was also noted that we don't want to create an atmosphere at the SSC level that allows stakeholders to influence scientific discussions with the addition of personal socioeconomic drivers. It was also suggested that the Council provide a goal for the type of improvements for public comment by meeting type they are trying to obtain, so that future discussions could be focused around those efforts. The O&E expressed its continued support for allowing virtual testimony. The O&E also noted that it would be helpful to find a way to bolster the importance of public comment to Council members.

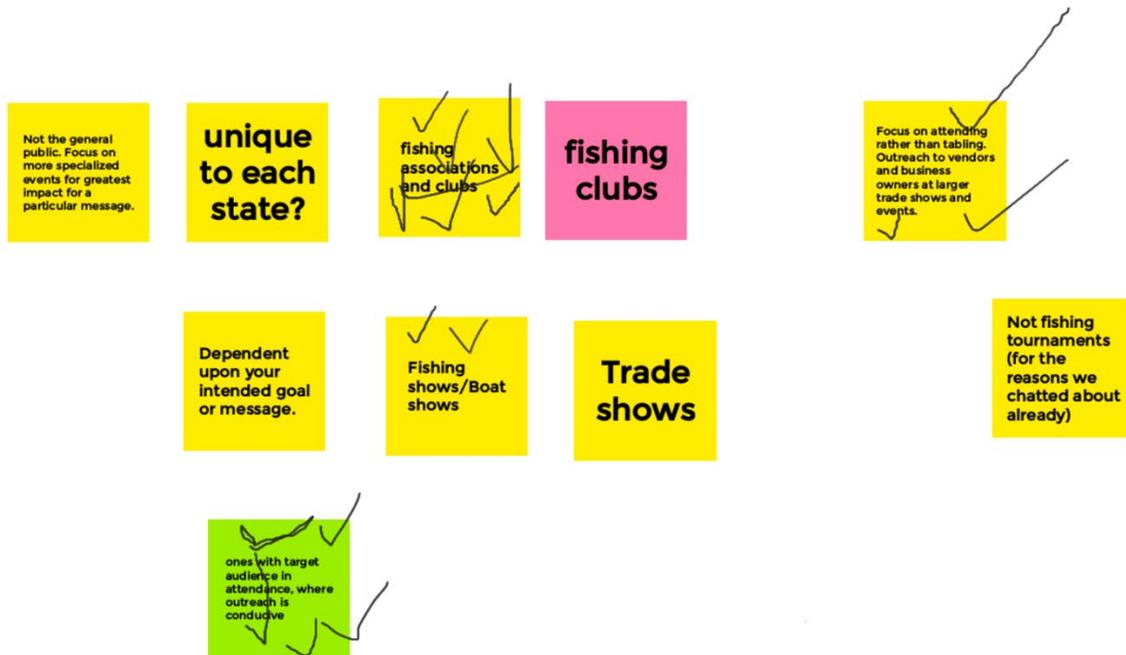
- **Electronic Voting:** A member of the O&E expressed concern that the Council's appetite for electronic voting seemed low despite a need for a better method and a previous recommendation from the O&E that supported use of an electronic voting system. Council staff stated that the Council was moving forward with testing the electronic voting systems during the January 2023 meeting.

## Appendix A: In-Person Outreach Events Brainstorm Jamboard

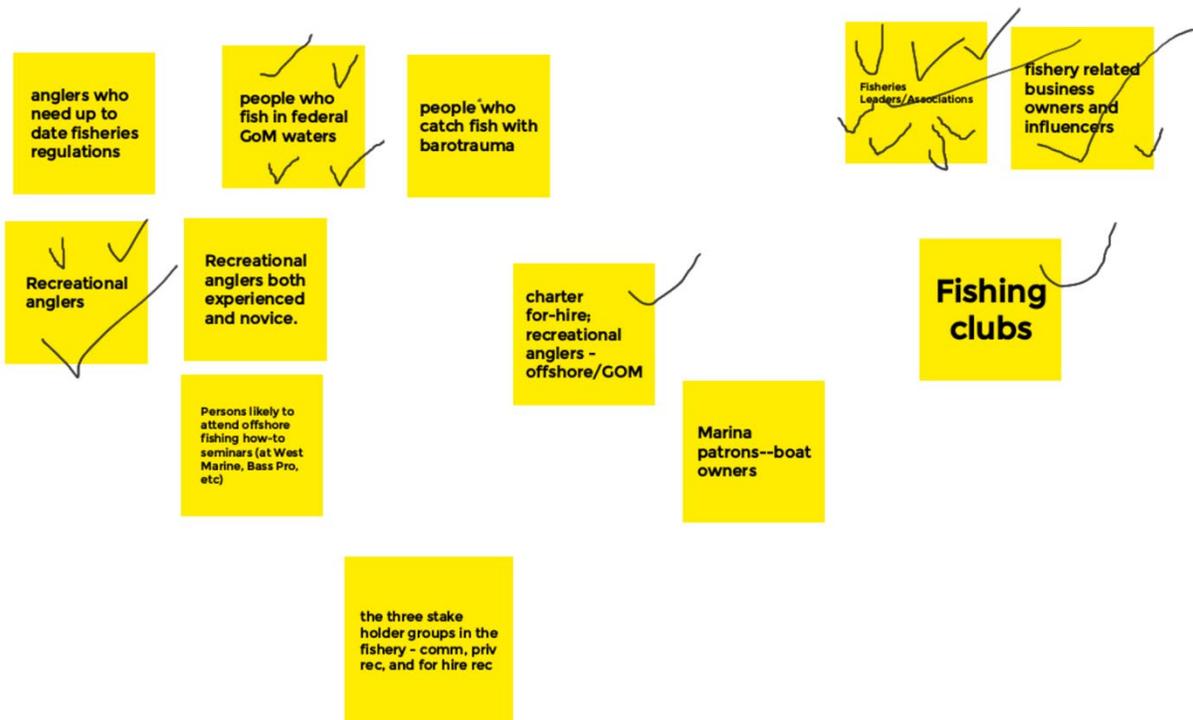
List the best in-person outreach opportunity/event in each state



Which type of in-person outreach events should the Council prioritize?

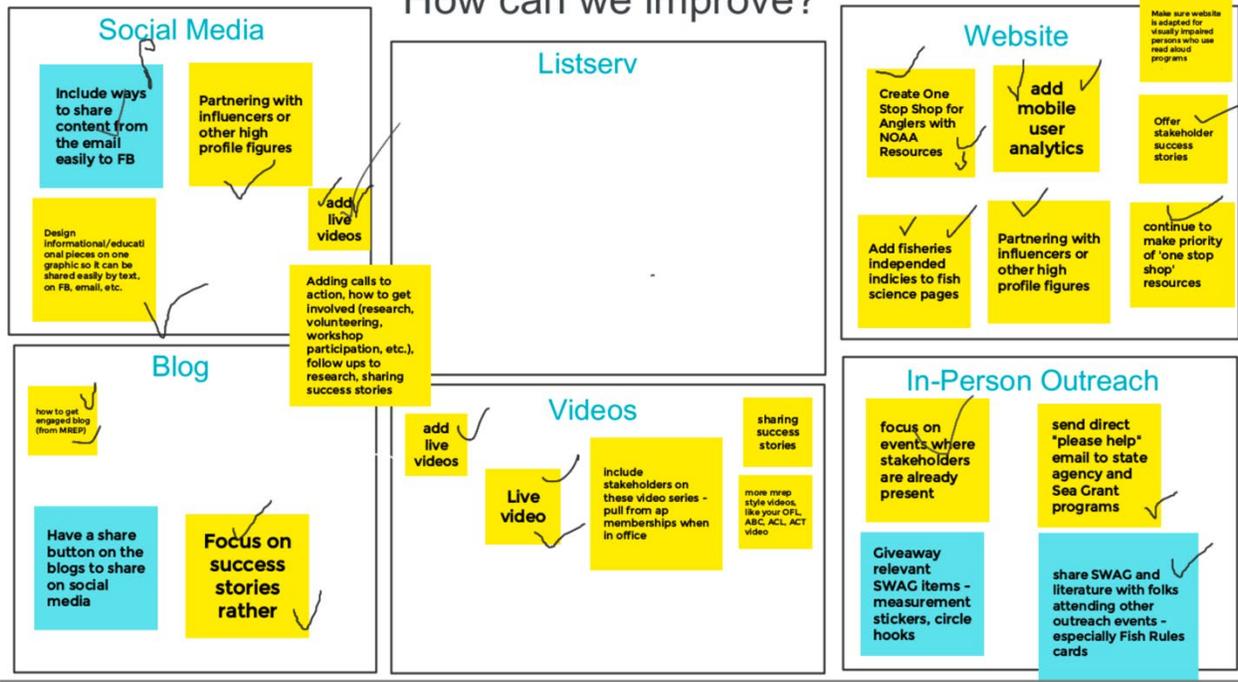


Who should our target audience be for in-person outreach events?



**Appendix B: 2023 Communications Improvement Plan Brainstorm Jamboard**

# How can we improve?



Anything general we should change about Council Communications?

let our team get more freedom to respond on social posts... don't hold emily back, leash off

Examples, testimonials involving real fishermen or scientists can be powerful. Relate to audience

Anything working particularly well with Council Communications?

timeline idea on website - awesome

When you send specific email asking to share info with stakeholders (fishermen's feedback).

Agreed - dynamic timeline was a great idea

**Fish Rules**

Suggest new communications methods that we should undertake

Continue working with other agencies/partners to streamline messaging and share outreach strategies

live videos

Really like the species timeline project idea.

provide packaged messages that can be used for various platforms

more jamboards

podcasts?

Engagement with marine navigational equipment manufacturers and chart makers... there is space for content here

engage with marine manufacturers especially for descending and venting tools, plus retailers!

Fish brain pop-up surveys?