

Outreach and Education Committee Report
January 31, 2024
JD Dugas, Chair
Dr. Anthony Overton, Vice Chair

The Committee adopted the agenda (Tab O, No.1) and approved the minutes (Tab O, No. 2) from the February 2023 meeting as written.

2023 Communications Improvement Plan Progress and 2023 Analytics (Tab O, No. 4)

Staff provided an overview of communications analytics along with a progress report on the 2023 Communications Improvement Plan. Staff noted some issues with Google Analytics and cumulative analytics tracking for blog articles. Staff highlighted the incredible return on investment it gets from creating short videos for social media and called out the positive reception it's received for the blog digests. A Committee member complimented the Fish Rules Commercial app and noted that the quota monitoring feature on the app is well maintained and incredibly useful.

2024 Communications Improvement Plan (Tab O, No. 5)

Staff presented the 2024 Communications Improvement Plan which was developed in response to communications analytics and using suggestions from the Outreach and Education Technical Committee. Staff highlighted its intent to update management area maps, publish eight blog articles, improve the aesthetic of the website, publish a paper on the Council's Fisherman Feedback tool, begin sending press releases promoting comment opportunities for framework actions, and redesign the *Navigating the Council Process* publication.

2023 In-Person Event Outreach Progress and 2024 Plan (Tab O, No. 6)

Staff presented a summary of the 2023 in-person outreach and an outline of the proposed 2024 in-person outreach plan. Staff highlighted the goal of attending at least one event in each state and the desire to find events that allow Council staff to interact with a variety of stakeholder groups. Staff will also attempt to have a booth at iCAST, if time and logistics permit. Staff provided a list of potential events in each state with the targeted event highlighted. It was suggested that staff replace the Blessing of the Fleet in Mississippi with the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources Discovery Day because the Mississippi shrimp fleet is diminishing. Committee members were supportive of continuing to collect and assess engagement metrics, and several Committee members commented on the benefits of collaboration with other agencies and offered assistance with choosing appropriate events. It was also suggested, while in-person outreach is valuable, it can be cost-prohibitive and may be worth trying other outreach efforts such as radio shows or Facebook Live.

Communications Guidelines Book Review (Tab O, No. 7)

Staff reviewed the final draft of the Council Communications Guidelines Book. The Committee had previously reviewed and approved communication guidelines for media, press releases,

public comment, and social media. This was the first opportunity for the Committee to review guidelines on the use of Council products, fishing regulations, communications analytics, Fisherman Feedback, and in-person outreach events. One Committee member sought clarification on the process for giving quotes to the media. Staff explained that when answering as an individual, Council members may freely represent their own interest on Council-related topics, but should make it clear that they are not presenting the Council as a whole. However, individual Council members should not act as a spokesperson to represent the Council without coordination with the Public Information Officer and Council leadership.

Fishery Ecosystem Plan Outreach (Tab O, No. 8)

Staff presented a draft Fishery Ecosystem Plan and Red Tide Fishery Ecosystem Issue Communications Plan outline. The first part of the plan addresses the need to broadly communicate the Fishery Ecosystem Plan by redesigning and maintaining the Council's Fishery Ecosystem Management webpage. Next, the plan outlines a process for engaging the public in gathering and ranking Fishery Ecosystem Issue ideas by developing an online tool that allows the public to suggest potential Fishery Ecosystem Issues, and asking submitters to rank potential Fishery Ecosystem Issues on a regular basis before the Council reviews and selects future issues. Staff then explained that there were general communications strategies that would be appropriately applied across all Fishery Ecosystem Issues which include creating dedicated webpages for each Fishery Ecosystem Issue, curating a list of involved stakeholders appropriate for each individual issue, and measuring stakeholder sentiment on each issue through feedback received using an online tool.

Staff highlighted the specific outreach plan for addressing the pilot Fishery Ecosystem Issue of Red Tide. Staff suggested hosting a Red Tide Symposium that brings together a range of affected stakeholders, extra-jurisdictional agencies, media, and other groups to collaboratively address the issue holistically. Staff also suggested producing a Federal Fisheries Red Tide report that summarizes social, economic, and biological impacts that red tide has on federal fisheries and share that report with existing agencies and organizations addressing red tide. The Committee clarified that, although the Council may not be able to directly manage red tide events, the Council can take action indirectly by reacting in useful ways to red tide events, including using management buffers and shifting effort in response to fish kill events. The Committee also cautioned that the symposium could easily become a huge undertaking and suggested that staff carefully define goals and manage expectations and attendance. Staff reminded the Committee that a summit is proposed in the Council's phase II of the funding request for the Inflation Reduction Act. It was also noted that the Federal Fisheries Red Tide Report would be a very useful product that could be used to justify continued work on Red Tide mitigation.

Coastal Migratory Pelagics Stakeholder Engagement (Tab O, No. 9)

Staff presented a draft Coastal Migratory Pelagic Communications Plan that aims to gather stakeholder input on king and Spanish Mackerel to compliment the South Atlantic Council's Port Engagement effort and inform future Gulf Council actions. The plan is a three-pronged approach that leverages an online tool, virtual workshops, and Advisory Panel feedback to develop a broad understanding of the Coastal Migratory Pelagic fisheries, their status, and their value to the

fishing community. The Committee advised the staff to include cobia in this effort and asked how biases based on different levels of fishing experience or geographic location would be addressed. Staff suggested that gathering broad feedback should allow for themes to emerge and for biases to be recognized if a sufficient number of representative stakeholders are engaged.

Management Timeline Tool Review (Tab O, No. 10)

Staff presented the Committee with a draft of its new interactive, web-based Management Timeline Tool which uses gag grouper and greater amberjack as pilot species, allows users to view all management changes over time and sort them by action type. Numerous members of the Committee remarked on the utility of the tool and the Committee suggested that staff add management histories for red grouper, gray triggerfish, and red snapper next.

Return 'Em Right Best Practices Manual Update (Tab O, No. 11)

Staff presented the Council with the newly published Return 'Em Right Best Release Practices Manual for Reef Fish and Related Species. The manual is organized around the major decision points that anglers are likely to encounter during a fishing trip and aims to present anglers with the information necessary to make decisions based on their individual situations to improve survival of fish that are caught and released. The Committee asked if hard copies are available for distribution and if it was appropriate for businesses and other entities to share this resource. Staff indicated that hard copies could be requested from Return 'Em Right staff and that the resource could and should be shared as widely as possible.

Other Items from the December 2023 Outreach and Education Technical Committee Meeting (Tab O, No. 12)

The Chair of the Outreach and Education Technical Committee, Captain Dylan Hubbard, presented the remaining items from the December 2023 Outreach and Education Technical Committee meeting. He reviewed the Technical Committee's discussion on illegal sale of recreationally caught fish and concern expressed that it's not clear that bartering fish in exchange for a free meal at a restaurant is illegal. Captain Hubbard also emphasized the desire for the Outreach and Education Technical Committee to play a major role in the roll-out and communications of the newly formed for-hire data collection program as it's implemented. Good communications strategies may play a pivotal role in the acceptance and success of the program.

Mr. Chair, this concludes my report.