

**Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council**  
**2021 Communications Improvement Plan**  
**January 2021**  
**Updated : November 2021**

Planned improvements to Current Endeavors

**Gulf Currents Blog**

We will transition away from creating a traditional newsletter. Instead, we will focus efforts on publishing individual articles. This will allow for more timely, relevant, and easily digested content to be shared.

Platform: Blogger

Cross Promotion: Articles shared individually via website and social media. A quarterly blog article digest will be distributed via listserve.

Frequency: Every other week

Planned Improvements:

- ✓ Increase frequency and relevance of articles
- ✓ Determine if PTP can add Wordpress blog to our website rather than use a third-party hosting service.
- Create a quarterly listserve digest

Staff Responsibility:

- EM and CRS will write articles.
- EM and CRS will develop a list of article ideas and create a loose article topic schedule for each quarter.
- EM and CJS will be responsible for posting on website and sharing on social media.
- CJS will complete the quarterly listserve digest.
- EM will work with PTP to host blog on website.

Update: We have successfully transitioned away from the Blogger platform and have begun hosting the blog on the website. We've been successful in increasing the frequency of articles. We've published 12 blog posts so far this year compared to an average of 7-post per/year in recent years. We have not completed a quarterly digest.

**Listserve**

We would like to increase our subscribers and ensure that current subscribers are getting content targeted specifically to them.

Platform: Constant Contact

Cross Promotion: listserve members, website, social media

Frequency: As needed

### Planned Improvements:

- ✓ Create a pop-up bubble on the website to promote newsletter sign-up when someone accesses a press release on the website
- ✓ Maintain Staff and Council contact lists in Constant Contact
- ✓ Improve opportunities to sign up on website and in individual press releases
- Staff Responsibility:
  - EM will work with PTP to create pop-up
  - CJS will update website buttons to increase sign-up
  - EM will add a “Subscribe to Receive Gulf Council News to Your Inbox” note at the bottom of each press release
  - JM will maintain staff and Council contact lists

Update: We have completed all the goals and listserv subscribership is up. We also created a QR code for sign-up which we’ve framed and display on our tabletop during events.

### **Social Media**

We would like to increase the frequency and regularity of our posts. We would also like to create more positive content by reviving recurring thematic posts.

Platform: Facebook (Hootsuite)

Cross Promotion: None.

Frequency:

Meeting Notices: Scheduled when FRN publishes for 1 week prior to meeting and for the morning of the meeting.

Regulations Updates: Shared when FRN publishes and a reminder 1-3 days before the change is implemented

Season openings and closings: 1 day in advance.

Blog/Press Releases/Public Comment Opportunities on as-needed basis.

Weekly reoccurring positive engagement posts

### Planned Improvements:

- Recurring positive content
  - ✓ Fish Fact Friday
    - Deep Water Wednesday
    - Monthly Marine Map Monday or Managed Area Monday
    - Fish Identification Challenge (Species Comparisons & Zoom in)
  - ✓ Regularly announce season openings and closings
  - ✓ Explore the utility of using Instagram

### Staff Responsibility

- EM and CRS monitor comments
- EM and CRS create content
  - EM- meeting notices, regulations updates, public comment opportunities, blog articles, press releases
  - CRS- season openings/closings, reoccurring positive content

- EM, CRS, CJS – will schedule on Hootsuite and proof each other
- CRS will look into using Instagram

Update: We have reinvigorated our Facebook page and the analytics show a clear increase in engagement. We have also started an Instagram page and are beginning to build a following there. We've drafted social media guidelines (SOPPs) and determined that we are not subject federal social media records retention policies. We have added one reoccurring positive content post 'Fish Fact Friday.' We've decided to continue using our current social media management platforms because Facebook business suite seems to provide the functionality and analytics we need.

### **Something's Fishy**

We would like to increase the number and quality of responses received. We would also like to consider improving the utility of the tool by seeking approval through the Paperwork Reduction Act.

Platform: Google Docs (forms)

Cross Promotion: Listserve, Facebook, Website

Frequency: In advance of every stock assessment (not currently used for interim analysis)

Planned Improvements:

- ✓ Considering renaming the tool with a 'naming contest.' When the tool started it was narrower in scope (looking for strange occurrences), but because of user support, it has now expanded to gather info on stock abundance to inform assessments and yield projections
- Research blanket approval and expedited approval process for Paperwork Reduction Act
- Create SOPPs/Technical Guidance Document outlining timing, promotion, analysis, reporting, and communication with internal and external audiences
- ✓ Host past efforts on fish science webpage on Council website
- Create a fact-sheet explaining the tool and highlighting why responding benefits the fishermen
- ✓ Increase response rates by encouraging members of the Outreach and Education Technical Committee to cross promote the tool

Staff Responsibility:

- EM- Create and deploy tool
- EM, CRS- manually analyze comments
- LH and JF- automatically analyze comments and produce figures
- EM write report
- EM, CRS share report with assessment scientists, AP, SSC, Council
- EM generate follow-up summary for respondents
- CJS add to fish science webpage
- EM, CRS create SOPPs/Technical Guidance document
- EM research PRA approval options

- CRS host re-naming contest
- EM - encouraging members of the Outreach and Education Technical Committee to cross promote the tool
- EM, CRS- Create a factsheet explaining the tool and highlighting why responding benefits the fishermen

Update: We have added all the past efforts to the fish science webpage and have increased our efforts to have state agencies amplify each opportunity. We have also added information on the tool to the Fish Rules app. We have completed the re-naming contest and expect the O&E Technical Committee to choose the new name. We have not found information on expedited PRA approval and plan to continue work on that. We have not drafted SOPPS or created a one-page fact sheet on the tool.

### **Website – Fish Science Pages**

We would like to finalize the creation of the fish science portion of our website. This section will host stock assessment executive reports, species one-page hot sheets, Something’s Fishy efforts, infographics, and any other relevant information.

Platform: Website (WordPress)

Cross Promotion: Listserve and social media for launch

Frequency: Updated and improved on an as-needed basis

Planned Improvements:

- ✓ Create a space to host SEDAR stock assessment links, stock assessment executive reports, Something’s Fishy reports, one-page hot sheets and infographics

Staff Responsibility:

- CRS- collate all stock assessment/ Something’s Fishy materials
- CJS- design pages and upload content
- EM-write text intro to the Stock Assessment, Rec Data Collection, and SDC infographics tabs
- CJS will link species specific pages to the stock assessment page and remove SEDAR link from species pages
- EM- promote

Update: We have completed this task and will continue to curate that page. We will look at adding ecosystem information and a comprehensive reference list to this page.

### **Public Comment**

We would like to improve our methods for collecting and organizing comments. Ideally, they will all live in one central repository that is searchable and can be sorted and linked by topic. We would also like to formalize and standardize the way comments are packaged and shared with the Council.

Platform: Google Docs

Cross Promotion: Shared on homepage and implemented page on website, social media, pre-council blog posts

Frequency:

- New comment form created for each new amendment. Relevant 'general' comments from the previous year are added.
- General comments received since the last Council meeting sorted by topic and added to each Council meeting materials page
- Comments are reported out for each item during scoping and before final action

Planned Improvements:

- ✓ Consider a new hosting platform that will keep all comments in one central repository that is searchable and can be sorted and linked by topic. This should also improve the topics list for users
- ✓ Create SOPPs for public comment procedures

Staff Responsibility:

- JM places written comments in appropriate places
- JM sorts comments and posts them for each Council meeting
- EM summarizes and presents comments
- EM work with PTP to find new avenue for comment collection
- JM and EM draft SOPPS
- Whoever posts new amendment to website will create new comment form

Update: After speaking with our web contractor, it seems like there is no 'off the shelf' solution to improving our public comment database. We have hired a contractor who is currently working to optimize our use of google docs and create one searchable, sortable comment database.

### New Communications Endeavors

- **Videos**

We would like to take better advantage of our studio and the cornucopia of knowledgeable people who participate in the Council process to create video content to share across communications platforms. We would like to start conducting interviews with SSC, AP, and Council members. We'll create a list of topics and explore the idea of creating a vlog or series of themed shorts.

Update: We have made no progress here.

- **Website Improvements**

There are a few items we would like to improve on the website that will require contracted expertise. We will explore the following ideas with our web contractor PTP.

- ✓ Pop-up for newsletter sign-up when users access press releases
- ✓ Blog hosting
- ✓ Mechanisms for collecting public comment

- ✓ Printing widget for the regulations

Update: We have completed all these actions.

- **Communications SOPPs**

We would like to formalize our communications procedures. As our team expands and our responsibilities grow, it's imperative that we create a communications handbook to ensure that our products and methods are standardized. The document will outline our communications methods, staff roles, and explain the rationale when necessary. The following list of items should be included in the SOPPs:

- End of year regulations
  - a. Website tables and species pages
  - b. Fish Rules
  - c. ACL Infographic
  - d. Recreational calendar
- Something's Fishy
- ✓ Public Comment Protocols
  - a. How to we handle them (our policies)
    - i. Cut off dates and forwarding protocols
    - ii. Links when comments are better shared as .pdfs
    - iii. Emailed comments
    - iv. General comments on council agenda
    - v. New documents initiated
    - vi. Storage/archiving
    - vii. Moving comments out of general if there is already a document
- ✓ Social Media
  - a. When/what we post
  - b. How we post
  - c. How to handle issues with users or incorrect content.
- ✓ Press Releases
  - b. Forwarding NOAA Bulletins
  - c. Timing of Meeting Notices
  - d. What contact lists to choose when?
  - e. Constant contact list maintenance (Council members and staff)
- Passwords
- Analytics

Update: We plan have Public Comment, Social Media, and Press Release SOPPS ready for O&E Technical Committee review.

**New projects added in 2021:**

- **Fish Rule Commercial**  
We have launched the Fish Rules Commercial App and continue to maintain and promote both recreational and commercial apps.
- **Species Timeline Project**  
We plan to develop a webtool that hosts management histories for each managed species.