

2019 Groundfish Monitoring Strategic Communications Plan

OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

NOAA Fisheries - Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office - Gloucester, MA



CORE COMPETENCIES

- Communications Strategy
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Consensus Building
- Confidential Interviews
- Stakeholder Surveys
- Public Outreach/Education
- Inter-Departmental Cooperation
- Plan Development

PROJECT SUMMARY

Vision Planning and Consulting (VPC) supported the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries - Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO) by developing a Groundfish Monitoring Strategic Communications Plan to promote the Multispecies Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) Amendment 23 development process, and to help alleviate public misconception about how trip reporting and fisheries data is used. In light of restrictive fishing quotas, the accuracy of catch information, given the strong incentives to illegally discard fish or misreport catch, is in question. There is also evidence suggesting fishing behavior may be different on observed versus unobserved trips. In response to these issues, an Amendment to the Northeast Multispecies FMP is in development. Building consensus and strengthening relationships between the stakeholders is critical to the success of the Amendment development process, and to the success of the fishing industry as a whole.

PROJECT DETAILS

VPC developed the Groundfish Monitoring Strategic Communications Plan for NOAA - GARFO in Gloucester, Massachusetts. The Plan assists in bolstering public knowledge surrounding the FMP Amendment 23. The Amendment is intended to improve the reliability and accuracy of catch monitoring.

The project initially called for workshops, which stakeholders were averse to. VPC quickly developed an alternate course of action involving one-on-one confidential interviews and a stakeholder survey, which were well received, and garnered in-depth, candid, and informative feedback from the target stakeholders.

VPC helped identify over 20 stakeholders for the confidential interviews; developed key messages and outreach objectives; and identified the type of input NOAA hopes to receive from stakeholders. Stakeholders included: fishermen, industry organizations, non-profits, scientific and educational institutions, environmental advocacy groups, and regulatory agencies.

An industry survey was developed to identify: the kind of information stakeholders want; the frequency; and channels preferred. Over 160 stakeholders participated in the survey.

Information garnered from these interviews, and via the stakeholder survey, informed the Strategic Communications Plan. The Strategic Communications Plan identifies: targeted audiences; outreach outlets; NOAA/GARFO mission and goals; message framing; and feedback channels.

The Plan includes an implementation strategy that identifies: offices/agencies responsible for message development, release, and providing responses; a mechanism for tracking outreach effectiveness; and a timeline for scheduled releases throughout the Amendment 23 development process.

VPC's recommendations are currently being implemented to enhance GARFO's communications and collaborative efforts with fishing industry stakeholders.