

NOAA Fisheries Southeast Equity and Environmental Justice (EEJ) Implementation Plan

Action Items and Performance Metrics

Objective: Research and Monitoring

Immediate or Near-Term (Funded) Actions to Identify Underserved Communities and Their Needs, Conduct Collaborative Research, and Assess Impacts of Management Decisions

Who	Immediate or Near-Term (Funded) Actions	Metrics
SERO: SFD SEFSC: SFD; SSRG	Analyze factors that hold back underserved persons from entering federally managed fisheries.	Pilot barriers analysis is conducted for a select fishery or fisheries
SEFSC: SSRG SERO: SFD	<p>Expand demographic data collection and undertake interview work to better define and thoroughly identify both place-based and non-place based underserved communities in the coastal and island regions of the Southeast; examine historical factors/processes that have led to status as underserved; and establish strategies for improving linkages between such communities, NOAA Fisheries, and the Councils.</p> <p>Partner with the regional fishery management councils, and with other federal agencies, to explore new and different tools for identifying and better understanding underserved communities, and for examining vulnerabilities to sources of change among such communities. Use results from this work to inform definitions and principles of equity as these relate to human aspects of marine fisheries and fishery management in the Southeast and elsewhere in the nation.</p>	<p>Human capital/demographic data obtained</p> <p>Demographic assessments completed at local/regional levels</p> <p>Stakeholder analyses completed at regional levels</p>
SEFSC: SSRG SERO: SFD	Survey crew members in the South Atlantic and analyze the results of crew surveys in the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic to improve understanding of EEJ-relevant aspects of fisheries in each sub-region.	<p>Presentations of summary results to Councils</p> <p>Technical reports/publications generated to inform fishery management process in Gulf and South Atlantic</p>
SEFSC: SSRG, EBFM	Work with the regional fishery management councils to involve underserved communities in participatory research and citizen science designed to integrate LEK/TEK and stakeholder values/preferences into the fishery management process (e.g., through use of the Gulf of Mexico Council’s Fisherman Feedback Tool, South Atlantic Council’s fishery performance reports, and other strategies).	Evidence of participation of underserved communities in engagement efforts, workshops, and citizen science initiatives

Who	Immediate or Near-Term (Funded) Actions	Metrics
SEFSC: SFD; SSRG SERO: SFD	Identify and analyze the interrelated social, cultural, and economic effects of management decisions that allocate or limit allocation of living marine resources among fishery participants in underserved communities, prioritizing the focus of this work in collaboration with the regional fishery management councils.	Fisheries-specific allocation assessments and decisions consider impacts on participants from underserved communities
SEFSC: SFD; SSRG SERO: SFD	Conduct systematic interview work with IFQ participants, with persons who aspire to attain shares, and with program managers to identify IFQ-related challenges and possible solutions to such challenges.	Analysis of IFQ-related challenges is conducted for key IFQ programs Analysis of IFQ impacts on underserved communities integrated into 5 year reviews
SEFSC: SFD; SSRG SERO: SFD	Conduct research and analysis with academic and other federal partners and regional fisheries management bodies to examine the extent and implications of seafood imports on fleets and fisheries in key fisheries in the Southeast region.	Assessments of the economic and social effects of seafood importation on key Southeast fisheries produced, reviewed, and disseminated to fishery analysts and decision-makers in the Southeast

Longer-Term (Unfunded) Actions to Identify Underserved Communities and Their Needs, Conduct Collaborative Research, and Assess Impacts of Management Decisions

Who	Longer-Term (Unfunded) Actions Dependent on Additional Resources	Metrics	Resources Needed
SEFSC: SSRG SERO: DIR	Conduct a situational analysis of marine aquaculture development in the U.S. Caribbean to identify forms of aquaculture that are best-suited to regional conditions and explore opportunities for more accessible pathways for authorizing small-scale or experimental projects.	Formal assessment of local capacity and limitations of scale in developing offshore aquaculture projects in the U.S. Caribbean is completed Results are communicated in each island area where interest in offshore aquaculture has been expressed to government	Staff Time and Travel Funding, Other
SERO: SFD SEFSC: EBFM (IEA); SSRG	Work with underserved fishery participants, NOAA Sea Grant, and state and territorial partners in disaster response agencies to identify core challenges and lessons learned from recent and historic disaster events, including effective recovery strategies; review and use this information to help improve and monitor disaster response efforts in the Southeast.	Experience-informed fishery-specific disaster guidance documents are produced, reviewed, and disseminated	Staff Time Funding, Translation Funding, Other

Who	Longer-Term (Unfunded) Actions Dependent on Additional Resources	Metrics	Resources Needed
SEFSC: SSRG	Conduct social science research to identify and examine factors that hinder the entry of underserved persons into aquaculture, and potential opportunities and challenges that aquaculture development may present for underserved communities around the Southeast.	Research and analysis of prospective federal waters aquaculture development around the Southeast completed, with specific focus on potential benefits and challenges for underserved communities	Staff Time Funding, Travel
SEFSC: SFD; SSRG SERO: SFD	Conduct an overall assessment of equity in domestic marine fisheries, with attention to equity from the bottom up—from the base of seafood consumers and anglers to regional commercial and recreational fisheries.	A well-developed assessment is produced, reviewed, and disseminated	
SERO: SFD SEFSC: SSRG	Research the importance of diversification of operations in federally managed fisheries (where diversification refers to involvement in multiple commercial fisheries, use of dual charter/commercial permits, and involvement in both state and federal fisheries); include this information in cumulative impact analyses where possible.	Report on operational diversification generated for each sub-region in the Southeast	
SEFSC: SSRG SERO: SFD	Research the social and economic impacts of fishery management measures relative to the projected impacts of such measures - with the dual intent of enabling better adaptation and avoiding any unintended consequences among underserved participants.	Technical report is developed to identify and examine empirical impacts in relation to those projected in select regional fishery amendments	
SEFSC: SSRG SERO: SFD	Analyze the social, cultural, and economic impacts of NOAA Fisheries services and management decisions (e.g., fisheries management, aquaculture, climate change and habitat conservation) on underserved communities.	Number of reports or other documents that integrate social, cultural, and economic impacts to underserved communities	Staff Time Funding, Training
SEFSC: SSRG SERO: SFD	Examine barriers and inequities experienced by women involved in or seeking involvement in domestic marine fisheries, and identify potential means for mitigating such challenges and for monitoring mitigation outcomes.	Technical report is developed to examine barriers and challenges among females involved in or seeking involvement in domestic marine fisheries	Staff Time Funding, Travel Funding, Other

Who	Longer-Term (Unfunded) Actions Dependent on Additional Resources	Metrics	Resources Needed
SEFSC: SSRG SERO: SFD	In collaboration with fishery participants, conduct in-depth social science research, analyze, and communicate the full range of challenges involved in commercial fishing as it is undertaken by the underserved in the Southeast.	Descriptive analysis of contemporary challenges associated with commercial fishing in the Southeast is disseminated to fishery analysts, decision-makers, and stakeholders	Staff Time Funding, Translation Funding, Other
SEFSC: SFD; SSRG SERO: SFD	Undertake primary and secondary source research to identify, describe, and analyze "subsistence" or consumption-oriented use of federal fishery resources and related dimensions of fishing-oriented communities in each sub-region of the Southeast.	Technical report describing and analyzing subsistence or consumption-motivated pursuit and use of living marine resources in the Southeast region is produced, reviewed, and disseminated	Staff Time Funding, Translation Funding, Other
SERO: DIR; SFD SEFSC: DIR	Examine current decision-making processes for both fisheries governance and NOAA Fisheries operations in order to assess equity, the nature and flow of benefits, and how such processes are structured and could potentially be improved.	Internal report is produced to examine procedural equity in fisheries-specific decision-making processes and in relation to NMFS operations	Staff Time

Objective: Policies and Plans

Immediate or Near-Term (Funded) Actions to Ensure that our Policies Promote Equal Opportunities for All and Do Not Create Unintended Inequities or Unequal Burdens for Underserved Communities

Who	Immediate or Near-Term (Funded) Actions	Metrics
SERO: DIR SEFSC: DIR, SSRG	Collaborate with underserved communities to identify and incorporate community objectives into aquaculture grants and research opportunities and develop a list of best practices designed to help future projects grow at the appropriate scope and scale.	Underserved community objectives for aquaculture are identified and advanced in aquaculture grant opportunities and best practices guidance documents
SERO: Regional Climate Team SEFSC: Regional Climate Team	Incorporate national and regional EEJ goals, objectives, and actions, where applicable, into the next version of the Southeast Climate Regional Action Plan.	Number of regional climate actions that advance Southeast EEJ Implementation Plan objectives
SEFSC: DIR, SFD	Work with NOAA Fisheries observer program to determine if any policy changes (e.g., training, dress code or uniform, bilingual recruitment incentives) are appropriate to address EEJ objectives. Develop a one-pager that explains the purpose of the observer	Learned information about relevant barriers in the SE, and potential solutions, is shared with observer

Who	Immediate or Near-Term (Funded) Actions	Metrics
SERO: DIR. SFD	program, data confidentiality and sharing requirements, and how the data will be used for science or management.	<p>program leadership and staff</p> <p>One-pager developed to explain the purpose of the program and how data will be shared and used</p>
SEFSC: DIR SERO: DIR	Establish best practices for the development and use of fisher surveys in the Southeast, including: (a) use of plain language, (b) making content as brief as possible, (c) translating content to the appropriate primary languages, and (d) consistently providing technical assistance to those taking the surveys.	Best practices established
SERO: DIR; SFD SEFSC: DIR	<p>Collaborate with HQ to explore how the National Seafood Strategy can address trade and other market issues impacting fishery performance, including through development of local markets for domestic product and domestic seafood campaigns, improved and well-enforced seafood labeling practices, consumer education, and increased funding and enforcement to combat IUU seafood imports - especially during local harvest closures.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Engage underserved communities in a shrimp fishery pilot program that works across federal agencies (e.g., ITA, FDA, USDA, Seafood Inspection) to help achieve the short, medium, and long term goals and objectives of the regional shrimp fisheries. ● Consider whether strategies employed by the Culebra Fishing Association pilot initiatives to reduce nutritional insecurity and make local seafood more accessible to underserved communities could be expanded to other communities/regions. ● Review FAO's Voluntary Guidelines for securing sustainable small-scale fisheries in the context of food security and poverty eradication and discuss with the Caribbean Council their potential for assisting small-scale fisheries in the U.S. Caribbean 	<p>Number of issues affecting underserved communities addressed by the National Seafood Strategy</p> <p>Shrimp pilot program is developed and executed</p> <p>Culebra's Fishing Association pilot initiatives and FAO guidelines are reviewed for broader applicability in collaboration with the Caribbean Council</p>
SERO: SFD SEFSC: DIR; SSRG	Pursue a safe fishing zone designation by the International Maritime Organization for Lang Bank along the eastern side of St. Croix to prevent disruption of fishing activities by large vessels transiting the area.	<p>NOS is consulted for input on how to apply for the designation</p> <p>Relevant paperwork is submitted and tracked to final decision</p>
SERO: DIR; SFD	Engage the regional fishery management councils in identifying and addressing any barriers that may unintentionally lead to the systemic exclusion of underserved communities. Encourage the councils to continue their efforts to incorporate EEJ principles into operating procedures, codes of conduct, and daily practice by members, staff, and advisory panels to avoid unintentional barriers to equitable involvement in regional marine fisheries.	Council policies and protocols are reviewed and updated as appropriate to ensure harassment prevention, training, and codes of conduct

Who	Immediate or Near-Term (Funded) Actions	Metrics
SERO: DIR; SFD SEFSC: DIR; SFD; SSRG	Identify and present to regional fishery management councils key barriers that can hinder underserved community access to Gulf of Mexico reef fish and South Atlantic snapper grouper fisheries (e.g., eligibility criteria, access to capital) and collaborate with the Councils to explore and identify potential options for addressing identified barriers. Develop a plan, strategy, and schedule for addressing those items that NOAA Fisheries can address independently (e.g., communication, administrative, system, marketplace issues) and for working with the Councils to identify options to address the remaining challenges. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prioritize NOAA Fisheries Southeast work on Gulf Council fishery management plan amendments designed to address identified barriers in the Gulf IFQ fisheries and increase IFQ marketplace transparency by creating an information message board that advertises people's intent to sell shares or allocation, and providing information about the average price of shares, allocation, and ex-vessel values of landings, as appropriate. ● Work with the South Atlantic and Caribbean Councils to proactively eliminate or minimize any barriers associated with the design of new limited access programs proposed by the Councils for the commercial or for-hire fisheries. 	Information is shared with regional fishery management councils to communicate (a) factors that constrain access to permits and shares, and (b) strategies that could alleviate such constraints (such as, but not limited to, those identified here).
SERO: DIR SEFSC: DIR	Work with NOAA General Counsel and NOAA Fisheries HQ offices to develop policy guidance addressing use of stipends, travel reimbursement, and liaison activities to support underserved community engagement objectives.	Policy guidance developed

Longer-Term (Unfunded) Actions to Ensure that our Policies Promote Equal Opportunities for All and Do Not Create Unintended Inequities or Unequal Burdens for Underserved Communities

Who	Longer-Term (Unfunded) Actions Dependent on Additional Resources	Metrics	Resources Needed
SERO: OMI	Simplify fishery permit application and renewal processes and provide easy-to-access technical support for use by applicants.	Fisher feedback	Staff Time Funding, Translation
SERO: DIR; SFD SEFSC: SSRG	Review and apply November 2022 White House guidance and implementation memo to develop a policy framework for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Understanding local and traditional ecological knowledge; ● Growing and maintaining positive relationships needed to appropriately gather local and traditional ecological knowledge; and ● Considering, including, and applying such knowledge when appropriate in fishery data collection, science, and management, and aquaculture planning and development; and 	A local and traditional ecological knowledge policy framework is established	Staff Time Funding, Travel

Who	Longer-Term (Unfunded) Actions Dependent on Additional Resources	Metrics	Resources Needed
	incorporating ideas and lessons learned from other regions where applicable.		

Objective: Benefits

Immediate or Near-Term (Funded) Actions to Distribute Benefits Equitably Among Communities by Increasing Access to Opportunities for Underserved Communities

Who	Immediate or Near-Term (Funded) Actions	Metrics
SERO: ALL SEFSC: ALL	Track and report on the percentage of grants, experimental fishing permits, and other benefits and opportunities allocated to underserved communities.	Tracking and reporting mechanisms developed Tracking and reporting mechanisms used to analyze the allocation of resources to underserved communities
SERO: SFD; OMI SEFSC: SFD; OMI	Identify and address potential barriers and resulting inequities that underserved communities may face when accessing agency acquisition and financial assistance opportunities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work to incorporate EEJ considerations into best practices for designing competitive funding opportunities, recruiting applicants, reviewing applications, selecting recipients, etc. Provide ongoing technical support, including grant-writing seminars, for underserved persons pursuing NMFS opportunities. 	Number of grant/funding/contracting program selection criteria reviewed and modified Feedback on accessibility of benefits and services Documented increase in technical support and grant-writing seminars provided to underserved communities
SERO: DIR SEFSC: ALL	Work with HBCUs and other minority serving institutions to develop or support scholarship, internship, and mentorship opportunities for local residents to train and remain in/contribute to their communities; for example, Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education vocational fisheries track and Minorities in Aquaculture Internship Program	Number of scholarships and internships awarded to advance participation of youth in mission-related educational programs Number of paid interns employed from underserved communities
SERO: DIR; SFD SEFSC: DIR; SSRG	Promote the consideration of underserved community needs in federal fishery disaster assistance allocations in collaboration with HQ, states/territories, and other partners. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proactively work with fishing communities to identify priority needs. 	New communication pathways established to share information on underserved community needs

Who	Immediate or Near-Term (Funded) Actions	Metrics
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate priority needs to FEMA, state, territory, and other federal partners. • Explore options for incorporating underserved community objectives into spend plan guidance. • Train staff working in state and territorial agencies in the use of the Community Social Vulnerability Indicators (CSVI) Toolbox and other tools that could be used to incorporate and consider community vulnerability information in response and relief efforts. 	Select state and territorial agency staff are trained in use of social vulnerability indicators
SERO: DIR; SFD SEFSC: DIR; SFD	Collaborate with other federal agencies and state and local governments to explore and pursue opportunities to preserve existing infrastructure and identify suitable locations and funding support for the development of more sustainable, resilient working waterfronts with icehouses, docks, and cold storage facilities. Locate new facilities in underserved communities where possible and consider incorporating community "evacuation or disaster centers" that can support critical infrastructure needs following disaster events. Work with the Department of Transportation to evaluate how 2024 revisions to the Port Infrastructure Development Program can support this work.	Grants/funding identified and pursued to sustain, maintain, upgrade, or develop resilient working waterfronts
SERO: DIR; SFD SEFSC: SSRG	Collaborate with NOAA Fisheries Finance Program to develop and distribute information in multiple languages about the various options available inside and outside NOAA and the Department of Commerce to assist underserved communities in accessing capital and other forms of assistance to enable them to successfully compete for limited access fishery and aquaculture opportunities and maintain profitable businesses (e.g., https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/bulletin/information-about-loan-opportunities-available-individual-fishing-quota-ifq , https://www.usgrants.org/business/fishing-companies).	Viable options for enabling access to capital and financial assistance are identified
SERO: PRD; HCD; SFD SEFSC: SSRG	Use ESA/EFH consultation responsibilities to promote the collection of data needed to monitor and address the impacts of major infrastructure projects on NOAA Fisheries trust resources; with the goal of increasing attention to those resources valued or relied on by underserved communities. Consider lessons learned from the blue justice movement for small-scale fisheries (see Farmery et al., 2021 ; Campbell et al., 2021), in relation to other blue economy sectors being developed in the U.S. Caribbean.	EFH Conservation Recommendations and ESA Terms and Conditions/Reasonable and Prudent Alternatives promote monitoring and mitigation of impacts to resources of known value to underserved communities
SERO: DIR SEFSC: DIR; SSRG	Collaborate across NOAA to promote the evaluation of natural resource injuries (including lost human use, as well as social, cultural, and economic benefits) borne by underserved communities, the equitable allocation of restoration projects for those injuries, and effective monitoring to inform needed adaptations.	Number of natural resource damage assessment cases with explicit consideration of natural resource and human use losses borne by underserved communities

Who	Immediate or Near-Term (Funded) Actions	Metrics
		and engagement in restoration planning
SERO: Wind Team SEFSC: Wind Team	Continue to work with federal partners to prioritize communication and collaboration with underserved communities directly affected by offshore wind energy projects to minimize navigational hazards and user conflicts.	Stakeholder feedback on wind energy areas and leasing proposals

Longer-Term (Unfunded) Actions to Distribute Benefits Equitably Among Communities by Increasing Access to Opportunities for Underserved Communities

Who	Longer-Term (Unfunded) Actions Dependent on Additional Resources	Metrics	Resources Needed
SERO: DIR SEFSC: DIR	Advance and improve territorial fisheries science and management by increasing funding for data collection, processing, and analysis, and prioritizing enforcement in the region. Prioritize the collection of data to support ecosystem-based management strategies. Partner with territorial government agencies to invest in a permanent research and reporting process that periodically generates a full socio-economic analysis of fishing in the U.S. Caribbean, where such work: (a) builds upon historical baseline datasets, (b) fosters local trust in NOAA Fisheries and research in the region, and (c) involves local residents in the data collection process.	Percentage increase in funding for enhanced U.S. Caribbean fisheries management and Caribbean-related enforcement priorities Percentage increase in number of stocks for which status determinations can be made, including through use of indicator-based approaches Number of projects funded	Staff Time Funding, Other
SERO: SFD; OMI SEFSC: DIR; OMI; SSRG	Collaborate with HBCUs and other minority-serving institutions, tribal colleges, the aquaculture a industry, fishers, and other underserved community members to develop or support high school technical courses and other vocational training and technical assistance programs in fishing and marine aquaculture, with a focus on underserved community members.	Number of vocational programs developed or supported that are accessible to underserved community members Rate of job placement	Staff Time Funding, Translation Funding, Other

Objective: Outreach and Engagement

Immediate or Near-Term (Funded) Actions to Build Relationships with Underserved Communities to Better Understand their Engagement Preferences, and Improve Information Sharing With All Communities

Who	Immediate or Near-Term (Funded) Actions	Metrics
SERO: DIR SEFSC: DIR	Organize a facilitated workshop between NOAA Fisheries and regional NOAA Sea Grant programs to institutionalize new communication pathways with underserved communities.	NOAA Fisheries-Sea Grant workshop is completed and related communication protocol developed
SERO: DIR SEFSC: DIR	Establish an approach to support routine translation services at SERO and the SEFSC for scientific, policy, and opportunity messaging. This should include use of the agency’s State Department contract, Artificial Intelligence translation services, and potentially regional-scale contracts if and as funding is identified for that purpose.	Percentage increase in management, scientific, and opportunity messages that are communicated in languages other than English
SERO: DIR SEFSC: DIR; SSRG	Partner with identified underserved community members to develop culturally appropriate strategies for improving communication with underserved communities in a way that addresses the full range of barriers, including technological, language, and literacy limitations and issues, with prospective communication options including electronic and paper mail-outs, text messaging, community newspapers, local television and radio stations, topic-specific stakeholder calls and/or in-person discussion, podcasts, web and social media postings, and webinars. Consider developing tailored strategies for communicating about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The status, availability, and schedule for federal fishery disaster declarations and assistance and (to the extent possible), the effects of disaster events on underserved communities and infrastructure, ● Prospective and actual regulatory changes, and ● Grants and other opportunities. 	Number of approaches employed to address identified barriers Number of information products that are designed and distributed for use by underserved persons Underserved community feedback on outreach efforts
SERO: ALL SEFSC: ALL	Identify or establish Division-specific Points of Contact to support the review of information and outreach products for plain language. Develop new strategies (e.g., executive summaries, FAQs) to support the communication of stock assessments and other technical information to diverse stakeholders.	Plain language is incorporated into appropriate agency information products Underserved community feedback on readability and understandability of communications

Who	Immediate or Near-Term (Funded) Actions	Metrics
SERO: DIR SEFSC: DIR; Comms; SSRG	Work with NOAA and other partners to explore the potential for providing space and technical support to underserved stakeholders who wish to participate in virtual or in-person meetings but who face barriers to access.	Number of partnerships identified that could be used for this purpose
SEFSC: DIR; SFD; SSRG	Develop plain language outreach materials in English and other regionally important languages to describe why fisher survey research is needed to accomplish our mission, how the work is conducted, and how the information will be used; include such materials with each new survey package.	Survey research with stakeholders is consistently preceded by explanation of its need, intent, basic approach, and potential outcomes - with feedback to be provided by stakeholders regarding the effectiveness of the strategy

Longer-Term (Unfunded) Actions to Build Relationships with Underserved Communities to Better Understand their Engagement Preferences, and Improve Information Sharing With All Communities

Who	Longer-Term (Unfunded) Actions Dependent on Additional Resources	Metrics	Resources Needed
SERO: DIR SEFSC: DIR	Prioritize translation needs during fiscal year activity and budget planning and develop and track spend plans for allocated resources.	Percentage increase in management, scientific, and opportunity messages that are communicated in languages other than English	Staff Time Funding, Translation Funding, Other
SERO: DIR SEFSC: DIR	Identify or create one or more multilingual stakeholder liaisons at SERO and the SEFSC who are responsible for responding to stakeholder’s questions about mission-related activities (e.g., fishery and protected species regulations, permits and permit applications, observers, surveys, grants and other opportunities, contact information for other relevant line offices or partners) with the goal of providing one-stop-shop service.	One or more one-stop-shop stakeholder liaisons are identified or established for this purpose Underserved community feedback on one-stop-shop efforts is compiled	Staff Time Funding, Translation Funding, Other
SERO: DIR SEFSC: DIR	Work with underserved communities to establish a system of community liaisons, using the support of NOAA Sea Grant and other trusted and knowledgeable partners to enable a strategic and cost-effective approach to outreach.	A community liaison plan is established in collaboration with key representatives of underserved communities in each sub-region	Staff Time Funding, Travel Funding, Other

Who	Longer-Term (Unfunded) Actions Dependent on Additional Resources	Metrics	Resources Needed
SERO: DIR; SFD SEFSC: SSRG	Work with regional fishery management councils to develop strategies to enable more frequent and meaningful outreach and interaction with female stakeholders, including female fishery participants who are members of ethnic minority groups, who identify as LGBTQ, who are partners of commercial fishermen, and/or who are members of other underserved populations.	Number of strategies that are designed, employed, and afforded feedback opportunities to enable more frequent and meaningful outreach and interaction with female stakeholders Percentage increase in female stakeholders with sustained engagement in mission-related activities	Staff Time and Travel Funding, Translation

Objective: Inclusive Governance

Immediate or Near-Term (Funded) Actions to Enable the Meaningful Involvement of Underserved Communities in Decision Making Processes

Who	Immediate or Near-Term (Funded) Actions	Metrics
SERO: DIR; SFD SEFSC: DIR	Work with the regional fishery management councils on strategies to increase engagement of persons from underserved communities in public meetings and input processes, and on Council advisory bodies.	Number of new strategies used to engage underserved community members
SERO: DIR; SFD SEFSC: DIR	Collaborate with HQ to develop regional rollout strategies designed to notify underserved communities and other interested stakeholders when NOAA Fisheries seeks nominations from state governors for Council appointments, and communicate information about pending openings and the appointments process.	Regional rollout strategies developed Number of communications about upcoming appointment opportunities and process
SERO: DIR SEFSC: DIR	Encourage the regional fishery management councils to consider how their Outreach and Education Committees/Advisory Panels or new Ad Hoc EEJ Advisory Panels could be used to support implementation of the Southeast EEJ Implementation Plan and advise on other EEJ issues related to Council activities.	EEJ Advisory Panels are considered by the Council in each sub-region
SERO: DIR; SFD SEFSC: DIR	Collaborate with the regional fishery management councils to explore ways to ensure welcoming/safe agency and Council meeting environments through the use of ground rules, facilitators, or other approaches that prioritize inclusion, equality, and the value of diverse perspectives. Promptly and directly address harmful or threatening communications or harassment that limits stakeholder interest or engagement in Council or agency activities.	Number of strategies or approaches implemented to prioritize inclusion and equality Demonstrated commitment to addressing harmful or intimidating communications

Who	Immediate or Near-Term (Funded) Actions	Metrics
SEFSC: DIR SERO: ALL	Assess the current level and type of participation of underserved persons on other (non-regional fishery management council) stakeholder advisory bodies in the Southeast and co-develop strategies to increase participation by such persons moving forward.	<p>Underserved community feedback on these efforts</p> <p>Data are collected to track and report representation of underserved communities</p> <p>Extent to which engagement of underserved community members is expanded beyond baseline</p>
SERO: SFD	Collaborate with state representatives on the regional fishery management councils and with Council Outreach and Education Committees/Advisory Panels to develop or further distribute existing educational materials (e.g., brochures, videos) designed to help fishers better understand (a) the authorities, roles and responsibilities of federal versus state fishery agencies, Councils, and Commissions and (b) who to contact for information and support on local and regional issues and opportunities.	<p>Number of educational materials co-developed and distributed to increase fisher capacity to engage in fishery management decision processes</p> <p>Underserved community feedback on educational materials</p>
SERO: DIR SEFSC: DIR	Encourage the Southeast Marine Resources Education Program to consider strategies for increasing underserved community participation in the program with the goal of supporting regional efforts to address the educational barriers that hinder our ability to advance our inclusive governance objective.	<p>Increase in the frequency of opportunities for underserved persons to participate in MREP</p> <p>Number of underserved community members trained</p> <p>Underserved community satisfaction with training and educational resources / materials</p>
SEFSC: DIR	Work with Council staff and the Councils' Scientific and Statistical Committees to enable Advisory Panels to inform the identification of scientific research priorities each budget cycle, and consider ways to enable fishers to contribute to or participate in funded research through competitive grants, Exempted Fishing Permits, and other mechanisms where possible.	<p>APs are enabled to identify pertinent science priorities</p> <p>Increase in number of AP members/fishers</p>

Who	Immediate or Near-Term (Funded) Actions	Metrics
		participating in research projects
SERO: PRD	Engage underserved communities and stakeholders prior to ESA listings and development of recovery plans, status reviews, or critical habitat designations by hosting accessible informational meetings and public hearings or other mechanisms.	Number of ESA actions preceded by accessible informational meetings and public hearings Underserved community feedback on those efforts

Longer-Term (Unfunded) Actions to Enable the Meaningful Involvement of Underserved Communities in Decision Making Processes

Who	Longer-Term (Unfunded) Actions Dependent on Additional Resources	Metrics	Resources Needed
SERO: DIR; SFD SEFSC: DIR; SSRG; SFD	Explore the potential to leverage the skills and relationships of community liaisons to gather and report input from rural and other underserved communities that would otherwise face access barriers.	Number of distribution lists that include these liaisons Number of meetings scheduled to brief underserved community liaisons Percentage of regulatory and policy initiatives for which input is provided by liaisons on behalf of underserved persons/communities	Staff Time Funding, Other
SERO: DIR; OMI; SFD SEFSC: DIR; OMI; SFD; SSRG	Consider targeted/special competitive grants and pilot projects as ways to involve underserved fishery participants in regional research and monitoring activities.	Number of grants and pilot projects awarded to underserved fishery participants	Staff Time Funding, Other
SERO: DIR; SFD SEFSC: DIR	Fund the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils to provide real-time translation of meetings (or components thereof, as appropriate) so that persons whose first language is not English can easily understand and contribute to the discussion, and/or make Council meeting recordings available in appropriate primary languages for stakeholders who do not have time or capability to listen to the meetings in real time.	Number or percentage of meetings for which real-time language translation is provided	Staff time Funding, Translation Funding, Other

Objective: Empowering Environment

Immediate or Near-Term (Funded) Actions to Provide the Institutional Support Needed to Implement Multiple EEJ Approaches at NOAA Fisheries Southeast

Who	Immediate or Near-Term (Funded) Actions	Metrics
SERO: ALL SEFSC: ALL	Integrate immediate near-term Southeast EEJ Implementation Plan Action Items into organizational priorities through annual planning processes.	Number of divisions with EEJ activities and milestones Percentage of EEJ activities and milestones accomplished
SERO: DIR SEFSC: DIR	Develop a strategy for pursuing the funding needed to address longer-term unfunded Southeast EEJ Implementation Plan Action Items, including through support to the regional fishery management councils, state fishery agencies, and Sea Grant as applicable.	Strategy developed Number of proposals submitted Amount of funds allocated to EEJ implementation
SERO: ALL SEFSC: ALL	Establish sub-regional teams of NOAA Fisheries and Council staff members to support implementation of the EEJ plan.	Teams are established to support implementation of the EEJ Plan in each of the three sub-regions
SERO: DIR; SFD SEFSC: DIR; SSRG; SFD	Work with HQ to train regional NMFS and Council staff and members on regional EEJ objectives to build a shared understanding and increase our collective capacity to succeed.	Number of EEJ training sessions convened Number of staff members trained
SERO: DIR SEFSC: DIR	Build relationships with HBCU and other minority partners to enable entry of underserved persons into ocean-related careers via the STEM pipeline.	Number of HBCU and other minority partnerships created
SERO: DIR, OMI SEFSC: DIR; OMI; SSRG	Identify scholarship, internship, and mentorship programs that can be used to recruit underserved community members, along with sources that are readily accessible to underserved communities; draft targeted language for use in opportunity announcements.	Number of opportunities established and advertised to underserved communities Number of scholarships, paid internships and mentorships awarded

Who	Immediate or Near-Term (Funded) Actions	Metrics
SERO: DIR SEFSC: DIR	Organize (or participate in) regional EEJ workshop(s) and conversations with federal, state, and local partners to share pertinent information, including lessons learned, and to leverage resources.	Number of strategic partner workshops organized and/or attended by SERO and SEFSC staff

Longer-Term (Unfunded) Actions to Provide the Institutional Support Needed to Implement Multiple EEJ Approaches at NOAA Fisheries Southeast

Who	Longer-Term (Unfunded) Actions Dependent on Additional Resources	Metrics	Resources Needed
SERO: DIR SEFSC: DIR	Hire FTE EEJ Coordinators at SERO and the SEFSC to support community identification, outreach and engagement functions as well as implementation of our regional EEJ plan.	FTE EEJ Coordinators are hired at SERO and the SEFSC	Funding, FTE
SERO: DIR; SFD SEFSC: DIR, SSRG	Prioritize hiring additional FTE anthropologists or other non-economic social scientists in SERO and SEFSC staffing plans.	Number of FTE anthropologists or other non-economic social scientists hired in the Southeast	Funding, FTE
SERO: DIR; SFD	Prioritize hiring additional FTE biologists in SERO's Sustainable Fisheries Division's Caribbean Branch and consider locating the position(s) in the islands.	Number of additional FTE biologists hired to contribute to the SFD mission in the Caribbean	Funding, FTE
SERO: ALL SEFSC: ALL	Require staff who produce or review NMFS communication outputs to take plain language training (and annual refresher courses); purchase and make available for use Grammarly or similar editing software.	Periodic communications training requirements for staff whose responsibilities involve oral or written interaction with stakeholders and the larger public	Funding, Training
SERO: ALL SEFSC: DIR; SSRG	Identify points of contact who can provide technical assistance to underserved community members and liaisons who wish to apply for grants and other funding opportunities.	Number of contacts identified for this purpose	Staff Time Funding, Translation
SERO: SFD SEFSC: DIR; SSRG; SFD	Provide facilitation training to port agents and other staff who interact directly with the public that is specifically focused on interfacing with underserved communities.	Facilitation training requirements established for port agents and others who interact with stakeholders on a regular basis	Staff Time Funding, Translation Funding, Training

Who	Longer-Term (Unfunded) Actions Dependent on Additional Resources	Metrics	Resources Needed
		Number of staff members trained	
SERO: OMI SEFSC: OMI	Train grant reviewers on how to avoid or diminish the types of bias that may disadvantage underserved communities during the review process	Training requirements established for grant reviewers	Staff Time Funding, Training

List of Acronyms

Councils	Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils
DIR	Directorate
EBFM	Ecosystem Based Fishery Management
EEJ	Equity and Environmental Justice
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
FTE	Full Time Employee
GC	General Counsel, NOAA Fisheries
HBCU	Historically Black Colleges and Universities
HCD	Habitat Conservation Division
HQ	Headquarters, NOAA Fisheries
IEA	Integrated Ecosystem Assessment
IUU	Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated
IFQ	Individual Fishing Quota
MSA	Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act
NASEM	National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine
NOAA Fisheries	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service
OMI	Operations, Management, and Information Services
PRD	Protected Resources Division
SEFSC	NOAA Fisheries Southeast Fisheries Science Center
SERO	NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office
SFD	Sustainable Fisheries Division
SSRG	Social Science Research Group
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
STJ	St. John, U.S. Virgin Islands
STT	St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands
STX	St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands
U.S. Caribbean	Puerto Rico, St. Thomas, St. John, and St. Croix
USVI	U.S. Virgin Islands

Definitions

Equity means the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment.

Environmental Justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of race, color, gender, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies including but not limited to:

- Equitable protection from environmental and health hazards
- Equitable access to decision-making processes
- Equitable opportunity for disadvantaged communities that have been historically marginalized

Underserved communities have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life. These include geographic communities as well as populations sharing a particular characteristic such as: women and girls; Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons*, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and other persons of color; persons facing discrimination or barriers related to gender identity; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.

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