

Caribbean Fishery Management Council

Strategic Plan Stakeholder Input Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DRAFT December 2020

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INTRODUCTION

In August 2019, the Caribbean Fishery Management Council (Council) elected to move forward with development of a five-year strategic plan beginning in January 2020. The goal of the plan is to guide the Council's activities and decisions, and provide for effective and efficient use of its resources.

To inform the development of priorities for the strategic plan framework, the Council solicited input from its stakeholders. This feedback is a critical component of building a successful strategic plan. The Council has a diverse constituency with a wide range of interests, priorities, and needs that is distributed across three unique island platforms.

The Council used the following methods to solicit feedback on future priorities:

- Facilitated virtual discussion with the Council and its District Advisory Panels
- An online comment form
- Management partner outreach

The feedback received from each of these approaches are detailed in separate sections of the report and reflect a range of perspectives that is impacted by factors such as geography, as well as specific needs and interests.

FACILITATED VIRTUAL SESSIONS

Each of the Council's District Advisory Panels (DAPs) provided feedback and recommendations for future priorities across four themes: Resource Health; Social, Cultural, and Economic Issues; Management and Operational Issues; and Communication and Outreach. The Council's Outreach and Education Advisory Panel (OEAP) provided input only on topics within the Communication and Outreach theme. The Council also provided feedback on priorities across all four themes after its advisory panels met.

THEME: RESOURCE HEALTH

The following issues were reviewed and considered by the DAPs and the Council:

- Invasive species
- Climate change
- Erosion and sedimentation
- Coastal development
- Natural disasters
- Habitat loss/destruction and habitat creation/rehabilitation
- Enforcement
- Pollution
- Bycatch and discard mortality
- Abundance of bait fish/forage
- Lack of biological or ecosystem information, data mining
- Overfishing
- Illegal fishing

Individual members of the DAPs and the Council were asked to select up five priority issues within this theme. Tabulation of individual selections resulted in the following top five priorities for each body:

Resource Health Issues	STT/STJ DAP	STX DAP	PR DAP	Council
Invasive species				
Climate change		X		
Erosion and sedimentation	X	X	X	
Coastal development	X		X	
Natural disasters			X	
Habitat loss/destruction & creation/rehabilitation	X	X		X
Enforcement	X	X	X	X
Pollution			X	X
Bycatch and discard mortality				
Abundance of baitfish/forage				
Lack of biological or ecosystem information	X			X
Overfishing				
Illegal fishing		X		X

THEME: SOCIAL, CULTURAL, AND ECONOMIC ISSUES

Under this theme, the following issues were reviewed and considered by the Council and the DAPs:

- Closed seasons & stock assessments for impacted species and evaluation of area/season closures
- Increasing costs
- Competition with foreign fishermen
- Recreational and commercial user conflicts
- Displacement of fishing communities
- Ability to support a family
- Illegal/unlicensed commercial fishers
- Lack of new entrants into the fishery
- Lack of social & economic data
- Excess gear
- Market instability (new ways to virtually advertise product, e.g., via social media, and prioritizing locally caught seafood)
- Infrastructure needs (landing and market sites)
- Inadequate enforcement
- Excess fishing capacity

After reviewing and discussing the topics, individual DAP and Council members provided selections for up to five priority issues under this theme. Tabulation of responses resulted in the following five priority areas:

Social, Cultural, and Economic Issues	STT/STJ DAP	STX DAP	PR DAP	Council
Closed seasons & stock assessments for impacted species and evaluation of closed areas/seasons	X	X	X	X
Increasing costs				
Competition with foreign fishermen				
Recreational and commercial user conflicts		X		X
Displacement of fishing communities				
Ability to support a family				
Illegal/unlicensed commercial fishers	X	X	X	X
Lack of new entrants into the fishery				
Lack of social and economic data	X	X	X	
Excess gear				
Market instability (new ways to virtually advertise product, prioritizing locally caught seafood)				
Infrastructure needs (landing and marketing sites)	X		X	X
Inadequate enforcement	X	X	X	X
Excess fishing capacity				

THEME: MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONAL ISSUES

The following Management and Operational Issues were reviewed by the DAPs and the Council:

- Accurate/timely commercial & recreational catch data (e.g., mandatory reporting for all sectors)
- Enforcement of existing regulations
- Fisher involvement in data collection
- Regulatory consistency (federal & territorial, where such compatibility is feasible)
- Gear limits
- Cost-effective data collection technology
- Balancing commercial & recreational concerns
- Incorporation of climate change into management
- Federal permit program

- Clear management objectives
- Bycatch/regulatory discards
- Territorial licensing requirements (e.g., consider recreational licensing requirement to improve reporting)

After deliberation on the above topics, individual DAP members and Council members provided their recommendations for up to five issues. Responses were summarized, resulting in the following selections:

Management and Operational Issues	STT/STJ DAP	STX DAP	PR DAP	Council
Accurate/timely commercial & recreational catch data	X	X	X	X
Enforcement of existing regulations	X	X	X	X
Fisher involvement in data collection	X	X	X	
Regulatory consistency (federal & territorial, where such compatibility is feasible)			X	X
Clear management objectives			X	
Bycatch/regulatory discards				
Gear limits				
Cost-effective data collection technology				
Balancing commercial & recreational concerns		X		X
Incorporation of climate change into management	X			
Federal permit program				
Territorial licensing requirements (e.g., consider recreational licensing requirement to improve reporting)	X	X		X

THEME: COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH

The OEAP reviewed and prioritized a list of six topics under this theme and was asked to provide additional comments and suggestions. Subsequently, the DAPs reviewed the list of Communication and Outreach issues, and added two additional topics: Expand outreach efforts to other groups (e.g., dive groups, etc.); Expand the role of fishery liaisons beyond participation in the OEAP to increase their knowledge of fisheries issues. The DAPs and the Council were not asked to select priorities under this theme, but rather to provide comments and suggestions. The final list of topics, including additions, is below:

- Frequency of communication (alerts/reminders of scoping meetings and Council meetings)
- Variety of tools used in communication (e.g., email, website, social media, paper, text message alerts)
- Educational resources (e.g., science & stock assessment, business planning, restaurant choices, etc.; include other jurisdictions/agencies such as U.S. Coast Guard, National Park Service, etc. that have marine interests).
- Improving general public awareness of fisheries issues
- Expand communications to other groups (divers, dive shop owners, etc.)
- Regular in-person outreach workshops on important topics
- Clarity and simplicity of presentations
- Expand role of fishery liaisons beyond participation in OEAP to increase liaison understanding of fishery issues, and to increase public understanding of the role of liaisons (e.g., have liaisons give presentation of each island's activities at Council meetings).

Detailed input was received from the OEAP, the DAPs and the Council and is contained in the full report, but a consolidated list of areas receiving significant input from all bodies is below:

- All communication and outreach topics are important, and in general, there is always a need for more resources to ensure that the Council's diverse constituencies are receiving the necessary information to improve their knowledge of the process and issues.
- The variety of communication tools is a constantly evolving process that involves identifying audiences and determining what their communication preferences are. This should include consideration of generational preferences, such as the use of electronic tools and social media vs. paper and traditional media (e.g., newspaper and radio).
- Improving general public awareness of fisheries issues is important to help build understanding of and support for sustainable local fisheries and fishing communities, as well as increase knowledge of the relationships between non-fishing activities and the resource.
- Improving the clarity and simplicity of presentations is paramount to engaging more fishers and the public in the Council process. Many feel embarrassed by their lack of knowledge and/or difficulty comprehending the complex issues that the Council addresses.
- Continued in-person outreach and expansion of the roles of fishery liaison officers is necessary to ensuring that fishers understand the issues and that their feedback is incorporated into the process.

ONLINE COMMENT FORM

Online comment forms specific to each of the Council's three districts provided another opportunity for public input on the four themes discussed by the OEAP, DAPs, and the Council. Only ten responses were received through the Puerto Rico comment form. Priorities identified by the majority of respondents are noted below:

- Coastal development, pollution, habitat loss and destruction.
- Illegal and unlicensed fishing, failure to report catches.

- General lack of education and knowledge about fishery resources and regulations.
- Failure to enforce existing regulations, regulatory compatibility.
- Additional outreach and education for fishers and the public.
- Improvements in the territorial licensing process.
- Use of a diverse array of communication tools that includes electronic/online resources (e.g., social media) as well as traditional media.

MANAGEMENT PARTNER OUTREACH

The Council's management partners were solicited for suggestions and recommendations regarding priorities and mutual objectives for consideration in the strategic plan. The following are broad recommendations received across topic areas:

- Support for improving data collection and data management, including commercial and recreational catch reporting, social and economic data.
- Continued strengthening of relationships with stakeholders and territorial as well as community involvement and outreach.
- Evaluating the effectiveness of existing management approaches to determine if they are meeting management objectives.
- Continued implementation of ecosystem-based approaches to management.
- Encouraging regulatory collaboration and consistency.
- Support for increased scientific and assessment capacity and resources.
- Enhancing communication and information exchange among agencies to improve mutual awareness of U.S. Caribbean activities.
- Encouraging consistent public messaging among management partners on topics of mutual interest.