

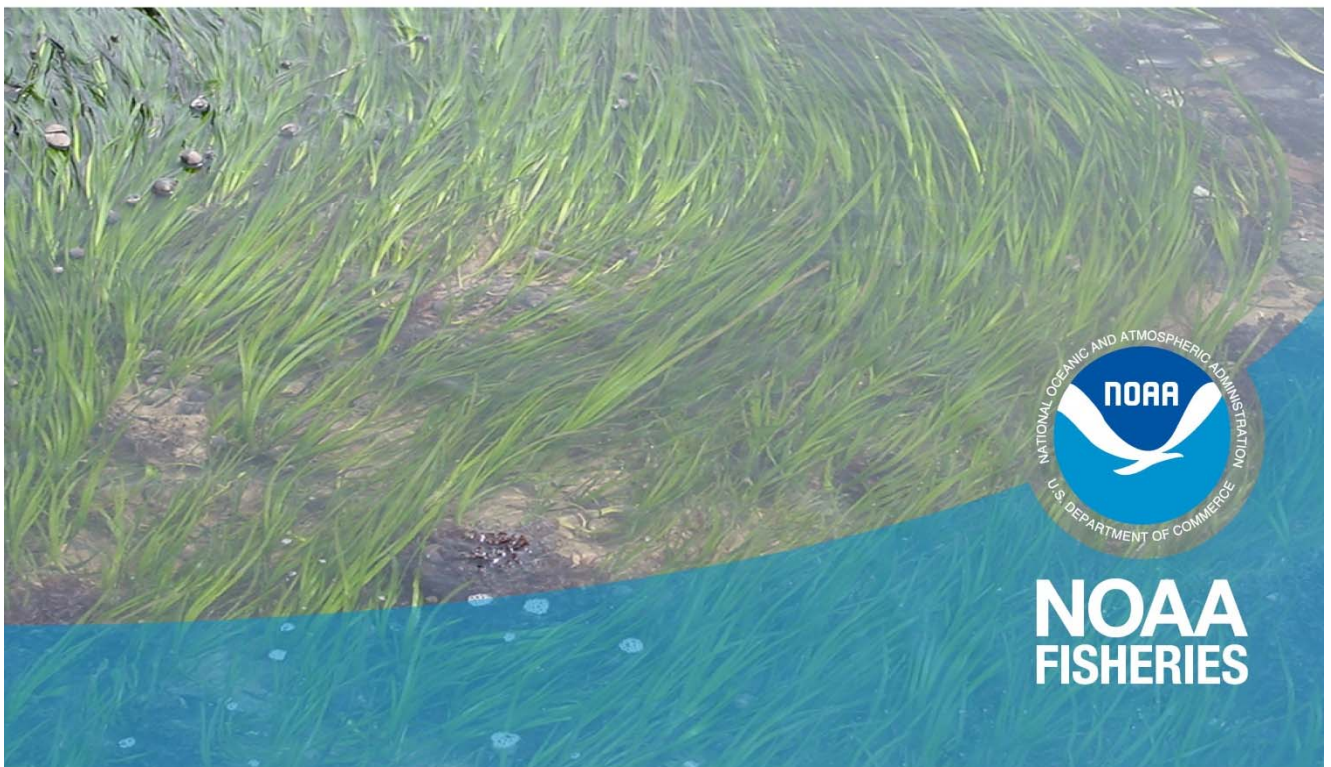


Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office

DRAFT Strategic Plan

FY 2015 - FY 2019

September 16, 2014



Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office
Draft Strategic Plan - FY15-FY19 (10/20/14)

Table of Contents

Executive Summary3

Background and Purpose5

Role of the Regional Office6

GARFO Strategic Goals and Objectives.....7

 Sustainable Fisheries.....7

 Protected Resources.....9

 Habitat Conservation.....11

 Community Resiliency.....12

 Aquaculture.....14

 Organizational Excellence.....15

 Customer Service/External Communications.....19

Appendix 1 (NOAA Mission, Vision and Strategies)..... 22

Appendix 2 (GARFO Organizational Overview and Regional Outreach)28

Appendix 3 (Partial List of Participants in Achieving Selected Strategic Objectives).....32

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO) is responsible for the stewardship of the Nation’s living marine resources from Maine to North Carolina, and includes the Great Lakes under its authority. We have drafted a five-year strategic plan that identifies objectives associated with seven primary strategic goals: sustainable fisheries; protected resources; habitat conservation; community resiliency; aquaculture; organizational excellence; and customer service. This draft will be distributed for public input. We will be seeking input relating to key needs in our stewardship of living marine resources and approaches to meeting our stated objectives.

Our strategic plan has three main sources of input:

1. The seven primary goals are aligned with the strategic direction as presented in Department of Commerce, NOAA, and NOAA Fisheries plans.
2. An internal assessment of strengths and weaknesses, threats and opportunities informs GARFO objectives.
3. Input from our partners and stakeholders is critical for validation of objectives.

Appendix 1 describes the NOAA Fisheries mission and vision, within the organizational context of NOAA and the Department of Commerce strategic guidance. Appendix 2 provides a summary of our regional organization and public outreach.

Section 4 outlines our core responsibilities in accomplishing our mission, as well as “special emphasis” activities under seven strategic goals, that we are committing to undertake during the next five years. Achievement of many of our GARFO responsibilities will rely on close coordination with, and participation of, other federal offices (including the Northeast Fisheries Science Center and NMFS Headquarters), the fishing industry, and other partners and stakeholders. A partial listing of these partnerships is presented in Appendix 3. Our Strategic Goals are:

1. Sustainable Fisheries

Our Sustainable Fisheries Goal highlights:

- science-based service and stewardship of fishery resources to implement the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery and Conservation Act (MSA) and the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act,
- collaboration and guidance on fishery management issues that threaten fishery sustainability and community resiliency and the development and implementation of regulations stemming from collaborative efforts,
- identification and facilitation of fishing opportunities for abundant fishery stocks not fully utilized,

- implementation of the Greater Atlantic Recreational Fisheries Plan, and
- improvement of fishery-dependent data collection to support science-based stewardship of fishery resources.

2. Protected Resources

Our Protected Resources Goal emphasizes:

- Science-based service and stewardship to implement the Endangered Species Act and the Marine Mammal Protection Act,
- proactive efforts for species at risk, and collaborative agreements for recovery of Atlantic salmon and other species under the Endangered Species Act, and
- domestic and international fishery partnerships.

3. Habitat Conservation

Our Habitat Conservation Goal highlights:

- science-based service and stewardship under the MSA, the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, and the Federal Power Act,
- actions to improve efficiency and effectiveness in providing habitat advice through consultative and stewardship opportunities, and
- Habitat Blueprint activities in the North Atlantic.

4. Community Resiliency

Our Community Resiliency Goal proposes:

- an integrated framework of GARFO programs aimed at rebuilding fish stocks and maintaining and restoring a healthy ocean and coastal ecosystem for the long term benefit of the coastal communities. The objectives under this goal also include attention to the impacts of climate change and ecosystem-based management.

5. Aquaculture

Our Aquaculture Goal supports:

- further implementation of the DOC and NOAA Marine Aquaculture Policy,
- a collaborative approach to streamline shellfish, finfish and algal aquaculture permitting processes, and
- helping to reduce aquaculture industry impediments at the local level.

6. Organizational Excellence

Our Organizational Excellence Goal is integral to the successful attainment of the six other goals.

It recognizes that GARFO's success in meeting our mission is dependent on:

- a commitment to maintaining a professional and proficient workforce,
- clear and concise communication skills, tools, and processes,

- our success in ensuring adherence to internal controls and fiscal accountability,
- the continuous development and use of customer-focused and cost-effective information technology,
- our resolve to fully inform management decisions as required by the National Environmental Policy Act,
- our dedication to a structured and continuous process for self-evaluation through strategic planning, and
- successful coordination with other line offices on common activities throughout the region.

7. Customer Service

Our Customer Service Goal advocates for a well-informed public that:

- understands the NMFS mission of science-based stewardship of living marine resources,
- understands the regional organization (what we do) and can access staff and resources (who does what) to accomplish business as needed with GARFO,
- understands the associated fishery regulations (what they need to do and why), and
- interacts constructively with GARFO in meaningful dialogue with appropriate feedback communication opportunities when necessary.

2.0 **Background and Purpose**

As indicated in overarching guidance at higher governmental organizational levels, demand continues to increase for the vital services NOAA Fisheries provides to the nation for:

- productive and sustainable fisheries, that create jobs over the long term in working waterfront communities, as well as provide opportunities for recreational enjoyment,
- safe and affordable sources of seafood,
- the recovery and conservation of protected resources, and
- healthy ecosystems

- all backed by sound science and an ecosystem-based approach to management. Key elements of these services are the economic, societal, and environmental benefits they provide the nation.

As the federal budget is limited while this demand grows, NOAA Fisheries at the headquarters level focuses its efforts to support:

- two core mandates (productivity and sustainability of fisheries and fishing communities, and recovery and conservation of protected resources)
- more effective partnerships, and
- innovative business models.

GARFO strategic plan is predicated on this overarching guidance and is further expanded to address unique opportunities in the Greater Atlantic Region that establish a framework for development of FY 2015 – 2019 (five year) strategic objectives. As described below, these strategic objectives consider our core mission functions in the context of current fiscal conditions. They are intended to guide the development and execution of an Annual Operating Plan and associated strategic milestones over the next five years.

This planning effort also complements NOAA and the Department of Commerce implementation of the Government Performance and Results Modernization Act (2011) (GPRA). Additional background on our mission and vision is presented in Appendix 1.

3.0 Role of the Regional Office

The Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO) is responsible for the science-based stewardship of the Nation’s living marine resources and their habitats over approximately 100,000 square miles of the Northwest Atlantic. The region encompasses the temperate, structurally complex large marine ecosystem from Maine to Cape Hatteras, North Carolina and also includes the Great Lakes as well as rivers and estuaries within this range. GARFO is not planning to expand its efforts around the Great Lakes, but notes that its partner, the NMFS Restoration Center, has many projects in the area.

Working with the New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils (NEFMC, MAFMC) and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC), GARFO manages commercial and recreational marine fisheries. An important focus is given to needed measures for providing sustainable jobs in working waterfront communities, increasing the domestic supply of healthy affordable seafood, and with regard to recreational fisheries, enjoyable angling experiences. GARFO works with the Councils and Commission, as well as other partners such as other federal agencies, states, academics and environmental organizations, to recover protected species and restore and enhance important marine, estuarine and riverine habitats throughout the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic. GARFO employs approximately 170 people, with an average annual budget (2012-2014) of approximately \$51 million. Directed from the Regional Office in Gloucester, MA, there are field offices throughout the region.

GARFO’s organizational overview and a description of our regional outreach with the public, our partners, and our stakeholders are further described in Appendix 2.

4.0 GARFO Strategic Goals and Objectives

We have identified seven primary goals that encompass our strategic objectives over the next five years. The Sustainable Fisheries, Protected Resources, Habitat, and Organizational Excellence goals include a listing of core marine stewardship activities in accordance with our legislative mandates. A summary of objectives of special emphasis then follows that we are committing to undertake in addition to our core responsibilities. Designation of the associated regional divisions or teams responsible for each objective or activity is shown, using the abbreviations for each division noted in Appendix 2.

We recognize that achievement of many of our GARFO responsibilities will rely on close coordination with and participation of other federal offices (including the Northeast Fisheries Science Center and NMFS Headquarters) and other partners and stakeholders. These partners in particular include the Mid-Atlantic and New England Fishery Management Councils, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, state resource agencies, and our industry constituents. Our strategic plan strives to further build these partnerships and reach appropriate common goals and initiatives. A partial listing of our partners in achieving our strategic objectives is shown in Appendix 3.

Goal 1 [Sustainable Fisheries]: *Promote and ensure sustainable fisheries and fishing communities throughout New England and the Mid-Atlantic.*

Narrative: Special emphasis under this Goal highlights efforts to maintain abundant fishery stocks, fishing opportunities for fishery resources not currently fully utilized, vibrant fishing communities, implementation of the Recreational Fisheries Action Plan, and improving fishery-dependent data collection to allow enhanced evaluation of fishery management measures.

Strategic Objectives:

In support of GARFO operations under this Goal, our core responsibilities include the following:

- Provide support to the New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils, and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, to facilitate the development of management measures to achieve optimum yield from fisheries [SFD, RO, NEPA];
- Draft fishery management regulations consistent with the recommendations of the Fishery Management Councils and with the requirements of the MSA and NEPA [SFD, NEPA];

- Close fisheries when catch limits or other triggers have been reached [APSD,SFD];
- Conduct reviews of fishery management regulations [SFD, NEPA];
- Issue permits and other fishery authorizations to vessels, dealers and vessel operators [APSD, IRM];
- Implement limited access vessel permit programs, including vessel upgrade and replacement requirements [APSD, IRM];
- Implement transferable allocation programs, including cost recovery programs [APSD, SFD, OBD, IRM];
- Review vessel trip reports submitted by vessel operators, conduct data entry and data quality programs, including compliance reporting [APSD, IRM];
- Maintain fishing vessel catch histories [APSD];
- Review mandatory seafood dealer reports, and conduct data quality programs, including compliance reporting [APSD, IRM, SED];
- Provide weekly catch and landings reports, and provide projections to determine when in-season management adjustments should be enacted [APSD];
- Analyze fishery-dependent data to support Council technical teams and internal NOAA management decisions [APSD];
- Conduct constituent outreach, workshops, and educational events on relevant management objectives [PRD];
- Advise fishermen on the interpretation of Federal fishing regulations [SFD, SED, APSD];
- and
- Provide fiscal and administrative support for New England/Mid-Atlantic council and ASMFC operations. [OBD].

During 2015 – 2019, special emphasis will be given to:

1. By January 2016, collaboratively establish a plan with the New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils to proactively identify and resolve fishery management issues that threaten fishery sustainability and community resiliency. [SFD]
2. By January 2016, initiate discussions to develop measures to increase fishing opportunities for abundant fishery stocks that have a low interest in current fisheries and markets. [SFD, SED, NEFMC, MAFMC]
3. Continue to implement the 2014-2015 GARFO Recreational Fisheries Action Plan to provide coordination, outreach, education and promotion of regional recreational fisheries. [SFD, SED]

4. Improve GARFO's fishery-dependent data collections, including advancement of electronic reporting technology, timeliness and quality of reports and involvement of fishing industry by May 2017. [SFD, APSD, IRM, SED, NEFSC]
5. Work with NEFSC, HQ and ACCSP to adopt consistent approaches for use of current state/federal fishery dependent data, including quality assurance and quality control processes by 2016. [APSD, IRM, in partnership with NEFSC]
6. Develop a mobile application by September 2015 to be used by industry to submit electronic vessel trip reports. Incorporate user suggestions for additional capabilities when consistent with the overall data collection program. [IRM, APSD]
7. Improve the availability of non-confidential information summarizing fishery participation and activity for use by GARFO/NEFSC staff as well as the public (e.g., permit information, landings, catch, and fishing activity). [APSD]

Goal 2 [Protected Resources]: *Recover and protect living marine resources in the Greater Atlantic Region through sound science, proactive conservation measures, and collaborative approaches with agency partners and stakeholders*

Narrative: Objectives under this Goal highlight proactive efforts for species at risk, sea turtles and marine mammals; collaborative agreements for recovery of Atlantic salmon and other ESA listed species; and implementation of actions under the Penobscot Habitat Focus Area.

Strategic Objectives:

In support of GARFO operations under this Goal, our core responsibilities include the following:

- Respond to petitions to list or delist species under the ESA within 90 days of receipt of petition (to the maximum extent practicable) [PRD];
- Work with our partners to develop recovery plans for newly listed species and update and implement existing recovery plan actions [PRD];
- Address take of ESA listed species through section 10 of the Act when the taking is incidental to and not the purpose of the carrying out of an otherwise legal activity [PRD];
- Work with regional partners to respond to marine mammal and sea turtle entanglements and strandings [PRD];
- Innovate new techniques for assessing marine mammal health and condition when responding to entangled large whales [PRD];
- Conduct section 7 consultations in a collaborative manner both internally and with other federal agencies such as the Army Corps of Engineers, EPA, FWS, FERC and NRC [PRD];

- Annually evaluate marine mammal and sea turtle entanglement risk from commercial fishing gear through the List of Fisheries (LOF) and Annual Determination (AD) processes in coordination with NEFSC and HQ [PRD];
- Coordinate with state agencies to register commercial fishermen who engage in fisheries posing moderate to high risk of entanglement to marine mammals in the Marine Mammal Authorization Program {MMAP} [PRD];
- Coordinate with NEFSC and HQ to monitor right whale ship strike reduction rule compliance and effectiveness [PRD];
- Work with industry, scientists, environmentalists, state and federal agencies to design, implement, and monitor strategies for reducing serious injury and mortality of marine mammals in commercial fishing gear through the Take Reduction Team process under the MMPA [PRD];
- Coordinate with Office of Law Enforcement to strategically monitor compliance with MMPA laws and regulations [PRD];
- Conduct constituent outreach, workshops, and educational events on relevant management objectives [PRD];
- Implement voluntary ocean stewardship programs for non-regulated constituent groups, such as the whale watching industry, to increase compliance with voluntary guidelines and measures that support the objectives of the MMPA and ESA [PRD]; and
- Manage grants and contracts using federal funds to assist in the research and recovery of ESA listed species, species of concern, and marine mammals under our jurisdiction under the MMPA [PRD].

During 2015 – 2019, special emphasis will be given to:

1. Monitoring of entanglement reduction measures. [PRD]
2. Conducting meetings, webinars, or conference calls related to Take Reduction Plans. [PRD]
3. Promote whale watch industry participation in Whale SENSE, a voluntary education and recognition program supporting responsible whale watching practices. Increase public understanding of program through promotional educational events and coordination with partnering organizations. [PRD]
4. Identify and work to implement, by 2018, proactive conservation efforts for species at risk (e.g., river herring and cusk) to obviate the need to potentially list them under the ESA in the future. [PRD]
5. Work with our federal partners, by 2016, to develop a collaborative agreement to more effectively use their authorities and programs under section 7(a)(1) of the ESA to work towards recovery of Atlantic salmon, sea turtles, and other ESA listed species. [PRD]

6. By 2019, implement actions under the Penobscot Habitat Focus Area with the NOAA Restoration Center and other partners, to ensure the recovery of Atlantic salmon, Atlantic and shortnose sturgeon, and river herring within the Penobscot watershed. [PRD, HCD]
7. Engage in partnerships both domestically and internationally to implement measures by 2018, to address specific threats to Atlantic salmon from international fisheries, and Atlantic sturgeon and river herring, and large whales primarily from incidental catch in state and federal fisheries. Additionally, work with our Canadian counterparts to work to conserve these important trans-boundary species. [PRD]
8. Increase the efficiency of the ESA section 7 program by collaborating with internal partners and external action agencies by developing technical assistance and streamlined approaches to consultation. [PRD]
9. Improve public compliance and understanding of MMPA and ESA mandates and foster stewardship of protected marine resources. [PRD]
 - a. Provide directed industry outreach on marine mammal and sea turtle fishing regulations. [PRD]
 - b. Promote responsible action and reporting of stranded, entangled, dead marine mammals and sea turtles. [PRD]
 - c. Create strategic outreach plan for distributing outreach materials and messages to school aged children and public audiences. [PRD, SED]
 - d. Produce outreach presentations, activities and kits to assist staff in reaching school aged children and public audiences. [PRD]
 - e. Develop new educational partnerships and student opportunities. [PRD]

Goal 3 [Habitat Conservation]: *Protected and restored marine, estuarine and riverine habitats to support sustainable fisheries and protected resources.*

Narrative: Objectives under this Goal highlight actions to improve the efficiency and effectiveness in providing habitat advice through consultative and stewardship opportunities. Such actions include development of programmatic agreements with federal action agencies, better integration of habitat impact evaluations and associated recommendations into protected species consultations, collaboration with NEFSC, and implementation of Habitat Blueprint activities in the North Atlantic.

Strategic Objectives:

In support of GARFO operations under this Goal, our core responsibilities include the following:

- Advise federal action agencies how their activities can avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse impacts on living marine resources. This includes impacts from fishing and non-fishing activities [HCD]; and
- Advise the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission about impacts of hydropower dams on migratory fish species and prescribe fishways when necessary. [HCD]

During 2015 – 2019, special emphasis will be given to:

1. Develop programmatic agreements or other appropriate processes to improve program efficiency in providing habitat advice to other federal action agencies – Initial emphasis will be placed on a) developing a programmatic EFH consultation with the New England District of the ACOE by 2016; and b) developing programmatic agreements with the Federal Highway Administration by 2017. [HCD]
2. Develop policy/guidance on various habitat issues to promote conservation of fish habitats and other living aquatic resources. [HCD]
3. Coordinate with other NOAA programs for maximum effectiveness in conserving living marine resources – initial emphasis will be given to the coordination/integration of the project review/consultation processes with the Protected Resources Division and establishment of geographic teams by 2014. [HCD, PRD]
4. Coordinate and collaborate with the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership to ensure that NOAA habitat conservation needs are fully considered by the partnership and integrated into their Action Plan as appropriate; represent NOAA as a member of the Steering Committee. [HCD]
5. Coordinate and collaborate with the NEFSC in the development of research priorities in support of habitat management activities and development of refined EFH designations. Research priorities will be discussed annually. [HCD]
6. Undertake activities associated with the NOAA Habitat Blueprint. Develop (2014-2015) and implement (2014-2018) action plans for the North Atlantic habitat focus areas, Choptank River Complex (MD/DE), and Penobscot River (ME). [HCD]
7. Provide technical and policy advice to the New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils on the development of deep sea coral conservation actions (2014-2016). [HCD]

Goal 4 [Community Resiliency]: *An integrated approach among regional programs to enhance fishery community resiliency in order to ensure sustainable fisheries, recovery of protected resources, and healthy habitat.*

Narrative: In accordance with the 2015 NOAA Annual Guidance Memorandum, GARFO has identified a combination of actions to provide information and services to make communities more resilient. The following objectives investigate an integrated framework among GARFO programs that are intended to enhance community resilience, from both fishery working waterfront (economic) and living marine resource community (ecological) perspectives. As such, the objectives also encompass attention to the impacts of climate change and enhanced attention to ecosystem-based management.

Strategic Objectives:

1. Working with stakeholders, and in collaboration with other NOAA line offices, identify and implement an integrated approach among regional programs to enhance community resiliency as it applies to sustainable fisheries, recovery of protected resources, habitat, resource disaster financial assistance and recovery, and place-based conservation. [SFD, PRD, HCD, OBD]
2. By 2019, work with the NOAA Restoration Center and other partners to implement measures to address fish passage needs for important freshwater habitat communities for diadromous fish (Atlantic salmon, Atlantic and shortnose sturgeon, American shad and river herring, and American eel) in order to provide them with increased access to important habitats and better respond to changing climatic conditions. [HCD, PRD]
3. By 2017, work with the NEFSC and other partners to better integrate information on the geographic and temporal distribution and abundance changes of protected species as a result of climate change for use in developing long term conservation/restoration plans. [PRD, HCD]
4. Working with NEFSC, the New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils, and the public, identify potential avenues by which ecosystem approaches to management and climate change could be integrated into more traditional single species management. [SFD, HCD, NEPA]
5. Complete an updated “Fishing Through Hard Times” overview, identifying possible avenues for economic relief and recovery associated with the groundfish fishery resource disaster. [RO, SFD, SED, OBD]
6. Work with state fishery agencies and industry, through communications and funding opportunities, to develop and monitor groundfish disaster recovery activities supported by \$32.8 million made available in FY 14. [RO, SFD, APSD, SED, OBD]
7. Work with the States of NJ and NY to approve and monitor the Super Storm Sandy fisheries economic recovery supported by \$3 million under the FY 14 disaster funding for Super Storm Sandy, and continue providing habitat and protected species technical support, as needed. [OBD, HCD, PRD]

8. Support the development, by Federal and State agencies, of Regional Ocean Plans in the Mid-Atlantic and North Atlantic. [SED]
9. Collaborate with a variety of partners and stakeholders to promote conservation of habitats through development and implementation of best management practices, management plans, watershed plans, and other non-regulatory tools. [HCD]
10. Build regional capacity and expertise in climate change and ecosystem based resource management. [SFD, HCD, PRD, NEPA]
11. Identify the potential contribution of marine aquaculture to community resiliency in New England and the Mid-Atlantic. [OBD]
12. Work with USCG, NOS, and other federal and state agencies to develop regional emergency response planning (e.g., such as oil spills, etc.) as it pertains to protection and recovery of living marine resources in the Greater Atlantic Region. [SFD, HCD, PRD, SED, OBD]
13. Develop communications plans as appropriate to support division work to promote community resiliency. [SED]

Goal 5 [Aquaculture]: *A thriving marine aquaculture industry off New England and the Mid-Atlantic in both state and federal waters, providing jobs to working waterfront communities, harmonious with the Region's commercial and recreational fisheries, and increasing the domestic supply of healthy sustainable seafood.*

Narrative: Objectives under this goal support the DOC and NOAA Marine Aquaculture Policies, involve a collaborative internal/external approach to promote sustainable marine finfish and shellfish aquaculture (including finfish, shellfish, and algae), and are intended to help increase sustainable seafood production and enhance the economic resiliency of fishing communities.

Strategic Objectives:

1. Maintain services to coordinate and support aquaculture regional management activities by providing expertise and assistance to the aquaculture industry and GARFO fishery management, protected resources, and habitat programs [OBD, PRD]
2. Streamline NOAA's role in the finfish, shellfish, and algal aquaculture permitting processes for state and federal waters, harmonious with ESA and EFH mission responsibilities. [OBD, PRD, HCD, SFD]
3. Conduct outreach, striving for an informed/educated public with respect to benefits, potential impacts, and management of marine aquaculture. [OBD, SED]
4. Collaborate with internal/external researchers to identify research approaches to address aquaculture management needs. [OBD]

5. Implement collaborative state/federal approach to increase accuracy of reported aquaculture production in the Greater Atlantic Region. [OBD, APSD, SED]

Goal 6 [Organizational Excellence]: *Organizational excellence through a well-trained and proficient workforce, internal communications, financial integrity/internal controls, the enhancement and security of information technology, compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act, and strategic planning.*

Narrative: As emphasized in NOAA Policy, the phrase, “Mission First, People Always”, is an important aspect of meeting our mission. The objectives under this heading are integral to the successful attainment of other goals under this Strategic Plan. We recognize that GARFO’s success in meeting our mission depends on: our commitment to maintain a professional and proficient workforce; our ability to ensure effective internal communications and collaboration; our success in ensuring continued adherence to internal controls and fiscal accountability; our ability to maintain and enhance customer-focused and cost-effective information technology; our ongoing effort to frontload and streamline compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act through improved coordination and planning; and our dedication to a structured and continuous process for self-evaluation through adherence to a strategic plan.

Strategic Objectives:

1. *Maintain a professional, diverse and proficient Workforce:*
 - a. Promote GARFO workforce professional growth and career development through creation of Individual Development Plans (IDPs) with staff; mentoring opportunities; and cross-training exchange opportunities among GARFO and NEFSC offices, fishery management councils, ASMFC, and state fishery agencies. [RO wide]
 - b. Update GARFO’s Workforce Management Plan to recruit, train, and maintain a highly skilled, diverse and dedicated workforce. Special attention will be given to mission critical occupations and associated essential skills, and impacts of retirement eligibility for those in key supervisory positions and associated succession planning, and ensuring adequate time to ensure robust recruitment processes. [OBD]
 - c. Update GARFO’s Training Policy and guidelines. Work with division chiefs to identify training and development needs, ensure appropriate training is provided, and training is properly documented. [OBD]

- d. Work with NOAA to ensure GARFO's recruitment and other human resource management needs are met efficiently, effectively, and in a timely manner to include recruitment actions under the Recruitment Inter-Agency Agreement with OPM implemented in 2014. [RO wide]
- e. Develop process for periodic reviews of GARFO division activities to ascertain and evaluate strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for streamlining regional program operations. [RO wide]
- f. Continue to support and/or facilitate activities that build morale and recognize staff internally and where appropriate, publicly for staff achievements. [RO]
- g. Maintain high standards of ethics and conduct in GARFO, consistent with NOAA/NMFS EEO and workforce diversity policy [RO wide].

2. *Ensure effective internal communications and collaboration.*

- a. Enhance GARFO – NEFSC communications to provide for more effective fishery management-science collaboration through supervisory retreats and strategic plan coordination that establish clear expectations and understanding of roles and responsibilities. [RO wide]
- b. Clarify GARFO roles and responsibilities for staff involved in cross-divisional programs required to implement fishery management measures involving multiple programs and processes. [RO, APSD, SFD, PRD, NEPA, IRM]
- c. Improve response efficiencies under the Freedom of Information Act, including expanded identification of processing roles and responsibilities, and better differentiation of tasks. [OBD, RO wide]
- d. Enhance collaborative and working relationships among GARFO program offices, NEFSC, the councils, ASMFC, Office of General Counsel, and Office of Law Enforcement to ensure successful incorporation of expertise and perspectives in the implementation and administration of approved measures under the MSA. [SFD, PRD]
- e. Develop, in consultation with NEFSC and HQ, an enhanced and integrated management-science approach toward protected species recovery in the Greater Atlantic Region. [PRD]

3. *Ensure effective internal controls and fiscal accountability.*

In support of GARFO operations under this Objective, our core responsibilities include the following:

- Oversee all financial transactions and maintain a system of internal controls to ensure federal funds are expended responsibly and GARFO's budget is not exceeded [OBD, RO wide];
- Support NMFS transparency of financial reporting initiatives [OBD];
- Ensure that grants administered by GARFO are based on a fair process and conducted in accordance with federal laws and regulations [OBD, PRD, SED];
- Ensure that contracts awarded by GARFO follow all federal requirements for fair and open competition and that funds expended through the contracts are done so in accordance with the contract and in compliance with federal laws [OBD, RO wide];
- Ensure that purchases comply with Federal Acquisition Regulations [OBD];
- Ensure that all GARFO facilities are maintained to federal standards and that the use of space complies with General Services Administration requirements [OBD];
- Oversee the process of hiring GARFO staff to ensure that hiring practices comply with federal laws and regulations and meet the objectives for equal employment opportunity [OBD];
- Maintain the fleet of GARFO vehicles to ensure that vehicles and drivers comply with safety standards and that access to government owned vehicles is not abused [OBD];
- Ensure compliance with the Freedom of Information Act [OBD, RO wide];
- Ensure that GARFO – administered grants comply with the legislative provisions of the MSA, the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Management Act, the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Management Act, and the Saltonstall-Kennedy Grant Program [OBD]; and
- Promote a safe and hazard free work environment. [OBD]

During 2015 – 2019, special emphasis will be given to:

- a. Working with the senior management team, ensure that necessary internal controls are in place to achieve effective and efficient operations, reliable financial reporting, and compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and agency procedures [OBD, RO wide]

- b. Develop annual spending plans and enhance procedures to comprehensively and continuously identify and prioritize internal and external programmatic, functional and financial risks to achieving GARFO's Strategic Plan's goals and objectives [OBD, RO wide]
- c. Conduct periodic budget and program execution reviews to ensure GARFO's goals and objectives are being achieved. [OBD, RO wide]

4. *Maintain and enhance customer-focused and cost-effective information technology (IT).*

In support of GARFO operations under this Objective, our core responsibilities include the following:

- Maintain and safeguard the computer network [IRM];
- Collect, store, protect, and distribute mission critical data and associated files [IRM];
- Assist GARFO staff with the effective use of information technology [IRM];
- Maintain and enhance the GARFO web site and web-based applications [IRM]; and
- Develop software applications to assist in the efficient execution of GARFO responsibilities. [IRM]
- Effectively communicate about and train customers on use of new technologies. [IRM, SED]

During 2015 – 2019, special emphasis will be given to:

- a. Identify opportunities for improvement of GARFO's IT infrastructure – initial emphasis will be given to network equipment in need of an upgrade. [IRM]
- b. Conduct testing of GARFO's Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP), and upgrade equipment in order to maintain a robust continuity of operations relative to GARFO's critical fishery information databases. [IRM,OBD]
- c. Increase usage of the Oracle IT Business Intelligence platform to enhance operations of GARFO's programs by 2016. [IRM]
- d. Establish GARFO Administrative Record Procedures by 2016. [IRM, OBD]

5. *Inform GARFO management decisions under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).*

In support of GARFO operations under this objective, our core responsibilities include the following:

- review all NEPA documents prepared by GARFO, the Northeast Fisheries Science Center, and the Fishery Management Councils to ensure compliance with NEPA and other applicable laws [NEPA]; and
- review documents for compliance with the Endangered Species Act and Essential Fish Habitat consultation requirements. [NEPA]

During 2015 – 2019, special emphasis will be given to:

- Reduce the time and resources required to comply with NEPA through the development and use of guidance on the applicability of supplemental EAs/EISs and supplemental information reports (SIR). [NEPA]
- Provide informal training to ensure that regional office staff understand the requirements for an appropriate NEPA analysis and the process associated with the review and approval of NEPA documents. [NEPA]
- Improve NEPA planning and coordination with the Science Center by appointing a NEPA liaison that periodically meets with Center staff. [NEPA]
- Enhance NEPA coordination with the grants process. [NEPA, OBD, SFD,PRD]
- Develop guidance, training, and provide assistance in incorporating climate-change and ecosystem information into EAs/EISs [NEPA]

6. *Strategic Planning*

- Conduct an annual review and evaluation, and update GARFO’s strategic plan; prepare an “Annual State of the Region” report, documenting findings on results in achieving objectives. [OBD, RO wide]
- In consultation with the the New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils, ASMFC, and the Greater Atlantic regional state fishery management agencies, identify shared priorities in strategic planning and out-year budget planning. [RO, OBD]
- Annually, update GARFO’s Workforce Management Plan to support effective and efficient implementation of the GARFO Strategic Plan. [OBD]

Goal 7 [Customer Service/External Communications]: A well informed and engaged public that understands: GARFO’s mission of science-based service and stewardship of regional living marine resources; the nature and scope of our program activities (what we do); the regulations established by NOAA Fisheries (what they have to do); how and when to provide meaningful input into policy and rulemaking; and how to contact the appropriate GARFO staff who will understand public concerns and can help address them.

Narrative: GARFO will strive to improve customer service and stakeholder satisfaction with agency interactions. It aims to provide clear and accessible information about regulatory requirements established by GARFO. It also seeks to increase public and internal knowledge of NOAA Fisheries programs and to improve dialogue and feedback mechanisms between stakeholders and GARFO. This should result in more effective external communications and better informed decision making.

Strategic Objectives:

1. Improve accessibility and timely delivery of information
 - a. Improve the cell phone alert system for fishermen. [SED, IRM]
 - b. Assist with the evolution of electronic reporting methodologies. [SFD, APSD, IRM, SED]
 - c. Maintain the publication of "NOAA Navigator" in Commercial Fisheries News. [SED]
 - d. Maintain a staff directory that clearly describes contact roles and responsibilities. [SED]
 - e. Maintain customer-focused and effective mail/telephone operations [OBD, RO wide]
 - f. Prepare clear, interesting, and timely webstories and press releases and where necessary, facilitate media availability to proactively respond to sensitive issues. [SED, RO wide]
 - g. Continue to explore use of, and utilize new technologies and modes of communication (e.g., social media, tweet chats, Google Hangout, Skype, Constant Contact) to reach broader public to educate and engage as appropriate. [SED]
2. Encourage the consumption of U.S. caught seafood.
 - a. Explain FishWatch to the interested public at boat shows and informal education events. [SED]
 - b. Facilitate meetings between seafood suppliers and restaurateurs. [SED]
3. Improve the accessibility of federal funding opportunities.
 - a. Update the description of grants on the GARFO website. [SED, OBD, PRD, IRM]
 - b. Describe associated relevance of grants to the agency mission and GARFO Strategic Plan. [SED, OBD, PRD]
 - c. Support applicants and grantees with webinars.
4. Increase outreach and collaboration with the recreational fishing industry.
 - a. Arrange at least ten port agent presentations at saltwater angling club meetings. [SED, SFD]
 - b. Assist with outreach on behalf of the NMFS Marine Recreational Information Program. [SED, SFD]
5. Apprise GARFO staff of constituent concerns and interests.
 - a. Give at least three presentations to all GARFO staff and three briefings of senior staff in FY15. [SED]
 - b. Continue the preparation of "Fathoms" to inform GARFO staff of events and opinions in the fishing industry. [SED]
6. Improve public knowledge of fishery management, GARFO organization and the value of living marine resources. [SED, RO wide]

- a. Update the GARFO website when new fishery management measures are in place. [SED, SFD, IRM]
- b. Use the GARFO website to explain fishery management, protected resources, habitat and aquaculture goals and successes by adding at least one new web story per month. [SED, IRM, RO wide]
- c. Continue to provide plain language information and guidance to stakeholders and particularly, the fishing community, through permit holder bulletins and letters, stakeholder correspondence, compliance guides, and outreach materials at council meetings, public hearings, and other outreach events. [SED, RO wide]
- d. Support regional educational and outreach programs (MREP, Sector workshops, BWET, etc.). [SED, SFD, OBD, PRD]

Appendix 1: NOAA Mission, Vision and Strategies

1.0 NOAA Mission and Vision

1.1 NOAA Overview

Through its long-standing mission of science, service, and stewardship, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) advances our understanding of and ability to anticipate changes in the Earth's environment, by improving society's ability to make scientifically informed decisions, and by conserving and managing ocean and coastal resources. The mission and vision are articulated in NOAA's Next Generation Strategic Plan (2010).

1.2 NOAA Mission

NOAA's Mission: *Science, Service, and Stewardship*

To understand and predict changes in climate, weather, oceans, and coasts, to share that knowledge and information with others, and to conserve and manage coastal and marine ecosystems and resources.

NOAA's mission is central to many of today's greatest challenges:

- Climate change
- Severe weather
- Natural and human-induced disasters
- Declining biodiversity
- Ocean acidification
- Threatened or degraded ocean and coastal resources.

These challenges convey a common message: human health, prosperity, and well-being depend upon the health and resilience of coupled natural and social ecosystems. Managing this interdependence requires timely and usable information to make decisions and relies on the science that underpins our knowledge of these systems. NOAA's mission of science, service, and stewardship is directed to a vision of the future where societies and their ecosystems are healthy and resilient in the face of sudden or prolonged change.

1.3 NOAA Vision

NOAA's Vision of the Future: *Resilient Ecosystems, Communities, and Economies*. Healthy ecosystems, communities, and economies that are resilient in the face of change

Resilient ecosystems, communities, and economies can maintain and improve their health and vitality over time by anticipating, absorbing, and diffusing change. This vision of resilience guides NOAA and its partners in a collective effort to reduce the vulnerability of communities and ecological systems in the short-term, while helping society avoid or adapt to long-term environmental, social, and economic changes.

2.0 NOAA Strategic Goals and Objectives

2.1 Higher level planning

There are several layers of Strategic Plans that currently guide NOAA Fisheries:

Department of Commerce Strategic Plan for fiscal years 2014-2018 (2014) (DOCSP)

<http://www.commerce.gov/blog/2014/03/10/department-commerce-releases-fy-2014-2018-strategic-plan>

NOAA's Next – Generation Strategic Plan (2010) (NGSP)

<http://www.ppi.noaa.gov/ngsp/>

NOAA Annual Guidance Memorandum (2012) (AGM)

http://www.ppi.noaa.gov/wp-content/uploads/FY14-20_AGM_Final_Signed_130816.pdf

NOAA Fisheries Priorities and Annual Guidance for 2014 (2013) (APG)

<http://www.npfmc.org/wp-content/PDFdocuments/CM/cm112713/NOAAFisheriesPriorities2014.pdf>

2.1.1 Department of Commerce Strategic Plan (2014)

NOAA is located within the Department of Commerce. The Department is comprised of 12 bureaus that work in five key areas: trade and investment, innovation, environment, data and operational excellence. NOAA furthers the Department's mission with strong stewardship of the ocean's resources which contribute more than \$250 billion annually to the Nation's economy. (2014)

Specifically tied to the NOAA mission in the Department of Commerce Strategic Plan (2014) are the following goal, objective and key strategies:

Strategic Goal 3:

Ensure communities and businesses have the necessary information, products, and services to prepare for and prosper in a changing environment.

Strategic Objective 3.4,

Foster healthy and sustainable marine resources, habitats, and ecosystems through improved management and partnerships (NOAA),

Key Strategies for 3.4

- *Strengthen capabilities to assess and monitor fish and protected resources (NOAA).*

Ensuring sustainable populations of living marine resources is a key Departmental mandate. NOAA will increase the precision of stock assessments, performing more robust monitoring, and applying ecosystem-based management to ensure healthy, sustainable populations of living marine resources. NOAA will incorporate integrated biological, physical, and chemical data and ecosystem modeling into fish stock and protected species assessments. NOAA will also produce more advanced technologies for monitoring of living marine resources and ecosystems.

- *Improve recovery of listed species through innovative partnerships (NOAA).*

International, federal, state, local, tribal, and nongovernmental organizations play a role in conservation. NOAA will strengthen partnerships with these stakeholder groups to ensure greater collaboration toward the recovery and conservation of protected species in marine and coastal ecosystems. Greater collaboration will improve the development and implementation of effective recovery and conservation plans for marine mammals and endangered and threatened species.

- *Enhance place-based conservation (NOAA).*

Through its coastal management and place-based conservation programs, NOAA will expand protections at current sites, add protections at new sites, and work with public and private partners. This place-based approach will preserve the economic and environmental benefits of these special places to local communities. NOAA will implement efforts such as the Habitat Blueprint framework, which employs partnerships to improve habitat conditions for fisheries, and coastal and marine life, to achieve economic, cultural, and environmental benefits.

2.1.2 NOAA's The Next Generation Strategic Plan (NGSP)

The Next Generation Strategic Plan (2010) (NGSP) conveys NOAA's mission and future vision, as well as the road map for achieving the vision as laid out through the long term goals, and objectives. With the release in 2010 of the Plan and Executive Summary and in the 2013 Addendum, Dr. Kathy Sullivan, Acting Undersecretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, called on NOAA to focus on the following areas:

1. Climate: Through collaborative strategies, continue to advance the observations, modeling, and research necessary to understand climate change and its impacts; and transition mature climate science into regular, reliable, and relevant information services;
2. Weather: NOAA will build a “Weather-ready” nation by preserving and improving its ability to provide timely and accurate forecasts and warnings for the protection of life and property through science, technology, infrastructure improvements and collaborative efforts with partners;
3. Oceans: NOAA will advance our efforts to ensure the long-term sustainability of marine fisheries and recovery of protected species and their habitats;
4. Coasts: NOAA will deliver integrated data, information, products, and services needed to support resilient coastal communities and economies;
5. Science and Technology: NOAA will focus on developing systems-level understanding of ecosystems and phenomena—across missions and disciplines—with the goal of increasing the resilience of ecosystems, economies, and communities;
6. Engagement: NOAA will expand efforts to listen and respond to our customers’ and stakeholders’ concerns and better relate NOAA mission responsibilities and activities to those concerns; and
7. Organization and Administration: NOAA will further capitalize on recent initiatives to cut costs and improve effectiveness.

As one of five line offices in NOAA, the Fisheries mission is most closely tied to the objectives for the “Healthy Oceans: goal:

Healthy Oceans: *Marine fisheries, habitats, and biodiversity sustained within healthy and productive ecosystems.*

Healthy Ocean’s goal is to ensure that ocean, estuarine and related ecosystems and the NOAA trust resources that inhabit them are resilient and sustainable in the face of increasing threats and changing conditions. A sound understanding of these ecosystems, communication of this knowledge to decision makers and stakeholders, and the capacity and resources to support key NOAA programs are critical to fulfilling this goal (Draft Goal Implementation Plan, 2012).

The Strategic objectives of the Healthy Oceans Goal are:

- Improved understanding of ecosystems to inform resource management decisions
- Recovered and healthy marine and coastal species
- Healthy habitats that sustain resilient and thriving marine resources and communities

- Sustainable fisheries and safe seafood for healthy populations and vibrant communities

2.1.3 Annual Guidance Memorandum (2012) (AGM)

The Annual Guidance Memorandum (2012) (AGM) focuses the agency's corporate attention on near-term execution challenges and a balanced implementation of NOAA's strategy across mission areas given our mandates, stakeholder priorities, and the fiscal outlook.

From the AGM, Fisheries Focus Areas for Planning:

- *Improve ocean and coastal stewardship by focusing habitat efforts in priority areas and demonstrating landscape-scale results*

The NOAA Habitat Blueprint is the framework for NOAA to integrate better, focus its efforts, and leverage internal and external collaborations to achieve measurable benefits within key habitats — such as coral reefs and wetlands. We will improve the delivery of science to decision makers to facilitate complementary habitat conservation actions across federal, state and local levels. We will leverage and expand local, inter- agency and NGO partnership efforts in targeted/priority areas to achieve measurable conservation results.

- *Improve the methodologies to assess and manage fish stocks and protected resources*

To continue to meet management needs in this resource-constrained environment, NOAA will implement further improvements and efficiencies in fisheries science that informs management through advanced sampling techniques and next generation stock assessments.

NOAA will also continue international efforts to end overfishing, enhance development of sustainable aquaculture and provide enhanced compliance assistance to optimize fishing opportunities and jobs.

2.1.4 NOAA Fisheries Priorities and Annual Guidance for 2014

This document provides guidance to all NOAA Fisheries employees in executing our mission responsibilities by establishing a framework for development of FY2014 priority milestones. These priorities consider the core mission functions in context of current fiscal conditions. For FY 2014 the focus remains on the two core mandates:

Ensure the productivity and sustainability of fisheries and fishing communities through science-based decision-making and compliance with regulations.

Recover and conserve protected resources through the use of sound natural and social sciences.

All other NOAA Fisheries programs, projects, and investments (including Science and Technology, Habitat Conservation, Enforcement, etc.) should be designed and conducted in a manner that supports these two core mission functions.

Appendix 2: GARFO Organizational Overview and Regional Outreach

Organizational Structure

The GARFO Regional Directorate [RO] includes the Regional Administrator, the Deputy Regional Administrator, their direct staff, and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Program staff. The NEPA Program facilitates the compliance of actions with NEPA and related environmental requirements.

The Regional Directorate is supported by seven divisions. Below is a description of the key responsibilities for each.

Analysis and Program Support [APSD]:

The Analysis and Program Support Division provides permit services to the public and fisheries data and analytical products to support quota monitoring and management decisions.

Habitat Conservation [HCD]:

The Habitat Conservation Division protects, restores, and promotes stewardship of marine, estuarine, and riverine habitat to support fisheries and protected resources for future generations. The program focuses on two principal activities: (1) the identification and conservation of Essential Fish Habitat through the fishery management process of the Magnuson-Stevens Act and (2) consultation and advice to federal agencies whose actions may adversely affect Essential Fish Habitat and other living marine resources. HCD provides recommendations on ways that federal actions can avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse impacts on living marine resources.

Habitat conservation is essential to maintaining sustainable fisheries and recovering populations of protected species. The Division has responsibilities for requirements of the Magnuson Stevens Fisheries Conservation and Management Act, the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act and the Federal Power Act.

Information Resource Management [IRM]:

The Information Resource Management Division provides support for divisions across GARFO. The division is responsible for the development and maintenance of the technological infrastructure needed for fisheries management and provides geographical information system (GIS) data and

analyses both internally and externally. In addition, IRM is responsible for customer support services, IT security management, and website design and development.

Operations and Budget [OBD]:

The Operations and Budget Division provides regional programs with planning, budgeting, and management analysis support. Within GARFO, OBD oversees GARFO financial operations, manages facilities and property, ensures coordination of and input into the development of aquaculture issues/policies, coordinates the budget processes, and administers financial assistance to states and other non-Federal interests for carrying out projects through grants and contracts.

Protected Resources [PRD]:

The Protected Resources Division manages, conserves, and rebuilds populations of marine mammals and endangered and threatened species as well as NMFS species of concern in rivers, bays, estuaries, and marine waters within the region. Programs within the division include: (1) the marine mammal and sea turtle program, (2) Endangered Species Consultations (Section 7), and (3) ESA listed fish (i.e., Atlantic sturgeon, shortnose sturgeon, and Atlantic salmon) and species of concern. Through conservation and recovery efforts, PRD works to ensure the survival of protected marine and diadromous species for future generations. The Protected Resources Division is responsible for the execution of two primary laws—the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) and the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

Stakeholder Engagement [SED]:

The Stakeholder Engagement Division is responsible for public affairs, communications support and fishing industry outreach. The division includes (1) the GARFO communications team which is responsible for providing public affairs support, promoting ocean literacy, and developing communication policies; and (2) the fishing industry outreach team that provides in-person advice and support to fishermen and seafood dealers and provides current information to GARFO staff regarding the fishing industry. The Division serves a crucial role in facilitating the execution of other divisions and communicating the work occurring in the region to the affected public.

Sustainable Fisheries [SFD]:

The Sustainable Fisheries Division executes provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) and the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act. Sustainable Fisheries Division staff work cooperatively with the New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils, the Northeast Fisheries Science Center, and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission to develop, review, and implement fishery management plans in federal

waters in the Greater Atlantic Region (GARFO). There are 14 fishery management plans within GARFO. The primary goal is to end overfishing and rebuild and maintain sustainable fisheries.

Regional Outreach

GARFO is committed to providing information about its activities and about the ocean in a clear and timely manner. Through its stakeholder engagement, GARFO strives to:

- provide clear and accessible information about regulatory requirements established by GARFO;
- improve and increase dialogue and feed-back mechanisms among the general public, stakeholders, and GARFO;
- improve customer service and stakeholder satisfaction with Agency interactions;
- increase public and internal knowledge of NOAA Fisheries programs;
- improve collaboration and teamwork among NOAA Fisheries workforce, Councils, and other partner organizations; and
- integrate regional communications program with NOAA Fisheries national communication campaigns as appropriate.

GARFO provides information to the public through a variety of channels. Information about regional activities and about living marine resources is available through:

- Reports to the Councils and Commission about our activities;
- Federal Register Notices informing of regulations, grant opportunities, etc.;
- GARFO web site with information on specific regulations and requirements and with matters of general interest;
- person to person communications from GARFO port agents or other staff;
- public hearings on proposed regulations;
- "town hall" style meetings on select topics;
- permit holder letters;
- press releases and media stories;
- information about GARFO regulations published in "NOAA Navigator" by Commercial Fisheries News;
- announcement of regulations through VMS system;
- announcement through text alert system;
- fact sheets and informational materials (pamphlets, cards, etc.) that provide information about our programs and/or regulatory requirements;
- sector manager books/guides the provide information sector managers need to know, including regulatory updates;

- announcement of time sensitive regulations through NOAA Weather Radio and USCG bulletins;
- talks to school groups or informal education lectures;
- boat and fishing shows and other public information events; and
- GARFO staff attendance at meetings of fishermen at their request.

Ways a member of the public can provide information to us include:

- responding in writing to a solicitation for information in a Federal Register Notice;
- commenting during public sessions at Fishery Management and Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission;
- commenting during GARFO public hearings or town halls;
- writing a letter to GARFO at any time;
- calling GARFO staff at any time during working hours;
- sending an email to relevant staff or to GARFO feedback email address found on our website or in announcements
- seeking comments
- asking for an appointment to meet a staff member and
- visiting any port agent office

Appendix 3:
Partial List of Participants in Achieving Selected Strategic Objectives *

	Strategy	Regional/External Participants
Goal 1 [Sustainable Fisheries]: <i>Promote and ensure sustainable fisheries and fishing communities throughout New England and the Mid-Atlantic</i>	1. By January 2016, collaboratively establish a plan with the New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils to proactively identify and resolve fishery management issues that threaten fishery sustainability and community resiliency.	1,2, 3, 4, 5, 6,7, 8, 9,10
	2. By January 2016, initiate discussions to develop measures to increase fishing opportunities for abundant fishery stocks that have a low interest in current fisheries and markets.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 10
	3. Continue to implement the 2014-2015 GARFO Recreational Fisheries Action Plan to provide coordination, outreach, education and promotion of regional recreational fisheries.	1,2,7
	4. Improve GARFO's fishery-dependent data collections, including advancement of electronic reporting technology, timeliness and quality of reports and involvement of fishing industry by May 2017.	1, 2, 3, 4, 11, 13
	5. Work with NEFSC, HQ and ACCSP to adopt consistent approaches for use of current state/federal fishery dependent data, including quality assurance and quality control processes by 2016.	1, 2, 3, 4, 13,14,
	6. Develop a mobile application by September 2015 to be used by industry to submit electronic vessel trip reports. Incorporate user suggestions for additional capabilities when consistent with the overall data collection program.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5,6

* See partner key on last page

	7. Improve the availability of non-confidential information summarizing fishery participation and activity for use by GARFO/NEFSC staff as well as the public (e.g., permit information, landings, catch, and fishing activity).	1,2
Goal 2 [Protected Resources]: <i>Recovered and protected living marine resources in the Greater Atlantic Region through sound science, proactive conservation measures, and collaborative approaches with agency partners and stakeholders</i>	8. Monitoring of entanglement reduction measures.	1,15
	9. Conducting meetings, webinars, or conference calls related to Take Reduction Plans.	1,15
	10. Promote whale watch industry participation in Whale SENSE, a voluntary education and recognition program supporting responsible whale watching practices. Increase public understanding of program through promotional educational events and coordination with partnering organizations.	1,16
	11. Identify and work to implement, by 2018, proactive conservation efforts for species at risk (e.g., river herring and cusk) to obviate the need to potentially list them under the ESA in the future.	1, 2,10,33
	12. Work with our federal partners, by 2016, to develop a collaborative agreement to more effectively use their authorities and programs under section 7(a)(1) of the ESA to work towards recovery of Atlantic salmon, sea turtles, and other ESA listed species.	1, 18, 33
	13. By 2019, implement actions under the Penobscot Habitat Focus Area with our partners, to ensure the recovery of Atlantic	1, 2,3,18,10,11,19,33

	salmon, Atlantic and shortnose sturgeon, and river herring within the Penobscot watershed.	
	14. Engage in partnerships both domestically and internationally to implement measures by 2018, to address specific threats to Atlantic salmon from international fisheries, and Atlantic sturgeon and river herring, and large whales primarily from incidental catch in state and federal fisheries. Additionally, work with our Canadian counterparts to work to conserve these important trans-boundary species.	1, 2,3,4,10,11,18, 19,21,33
	15. Increase the efficiency of the ESA section 7 program by collaborating with internal partners and external action agencies by developing technical assistance and streamlined approaches to consultation.	1,2,18,33
	16. Improve public compliance and understanding of MMPA and ESA mandates and foster stewardship of protected marine resources. [PRD] a. Provide directed industry outreach on marine mammal and sea turtle fishing regulations. [PRD] b. Promote responsible action and reporting of stranded, entangled, dead marine mammals and sea turtles. [PRD] c. Create strategic outreach plan for distributing outreach materials and messages to school aged children and public audiences. [PRD, SED] d. Produce outreach presentations, activities and kits to assist staff in reaching school aged children and public audiences. [PRD] e. Develop new educational partnerships and student opportunities.	1, 2, 6, 15, 22
Goal 3 [Habitat Conservation]: <i>Protected and restored marine, estuarine and riverine habitats to support sustainable fisheries and protected</i>	17. Develop programmatic agreements or other appropriate processes to improve program efficiency in providing habitat advice to other federal action agencies – Initial emphasis will be placed on a) developing a programmatic EFH consultation with the New England District of the ACOE	1, 18

<i>resources.</i>	by 2016; and b) developing programmatic agreements with the Federal Highway Administration by 2017	
	18. Develop policy/guidance on various habitat issues to promote conservation of fish habitats and other living aquatic resources	1, 14
	19. Coordinate with other NOAA programs for maximum effectiveness in conserving living marine resources – initial emphasis will be given to the coordination/integration of the project review/consultation processes with the Protected Resources Division and establishment of geographic teams by 2014.	1,2,23, 33
	20. Coordinate and collaborate with the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership to ensure that NOAA habitat conservation needs are fully considered by the partnership and integrated into their Action Plan as appropriate; represent NOAA as a member of the Steering Committee.	1,30
	21. Coordinate and collaborate with the NEFSC in the development of research priorities in support of habitat management activities and development of refined EFH designations. Research priorities will be discussed annually	1,2
	22. Undertake activities associated with the NOAA Habitat Blueprint. Develop (2014-2015) and implement (2014-2018) action plans for the North Atlantic habitat focus areas, Choptank River Complex (MD/DE), and Penobscot River (ME).	1,10,33
	23. Provide technical and policy advice to the New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils on the development of deep sea coral conservation actions (2014-2016).	1, 3,4
Goal 4 [Community Resiliency]: <i>An integrated approach among regional programs to enhance</i>	24. Working with stakeholders, and in collaboration with other NOAA line offices, identify and implement an integrated approach among regional programs to enhance community resiliency as it applies	1, 2,23

<p><i>fishery community resiliency in order to ensure sustainable fisheries, recovery of protected resources, and healthy habitat.</i></p>	<p>to sustainable fisheries, recovery of protected resources, habitat, resource disaster financial assistance and recovery, and place-based conservation.</p>	
	<p>25. By 2019, implement measures to address fish passage needs for important freshwater habitat communities for diadromous fish (Atlantic salmon, Atlantic and shortnose sturgeon, American shad and river herring, and American eel) in order to provide them with increased access to important habitats and better respond to changing climatic conditions.</p>	<p>1, 2,10,18,24</p>
	<p>26. By 2017, work with the NEFSC and other partners to better integrate information on the geographic and temporal distribution and abundance changes of protected species as a result of climate change for use in developing long term conservation/restoration plans.</p>	<p>1, 2, 25</p>
	<p>27. Working with NEFSC, the New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils, and the public, identify potential avenues by which ecosystem approaches to management and climate change could be integrated into more traditional single species management.</p>	<p>1, 2, 3, 4,11</p>
	<p>28. Complete an updated “Fishing Through Hard Times” overview, identifying possible avenues for economic relief and recovery associated with the groundfish fishery resource disaster</p>	<p>1, 2,10</p>
	<p>29. Work with state fishery agencies and industry, through communications and funding opportunities, to develop and monitor groundfish disaster recovery activities supported by \$32.8 million made available in FY 14.</p>	<p>1, 3,6,10</p>
	<p>30. Work with the States of NJ and NY to approve and monitor the Super Storm Sandy fisheries economic recovery supported by \$3</p>	<p>1,26</p>

	million under the FY 14 disaster funding for Super Storm Sandy, and continue providing habitat and protected species technical support, as needed.	
	31. Support the development, by Federal and State agencies, of Regional Ocean Plans in the Mid-Atlantic and North Atlantic.	1, 2, 3, 4, 10, 24, 25, 31
	32. Collaborate with a variety of partners and stakeholders to promote conservation of habitats through development and implementation of best management practices, management plans, watershed plans, and other non-regulatory tools.	1, 2,10,24,32
	33. Build regional capacity and expertise in climate change and ecosystem based resource management.	1, 2, 3, 4
	34. Identify the potential contribution of marine aquaculture to community resiliency in New England and the Mid-Atlantic.	1, 2, 3, 4,10
	35. Work with USCG, NOS, and other federal and state agencies to develop regional emergency response planning (e.g., such as oil spills, etc.) as it pertains to protection and recovery of living marine resources in the Greater Atlantic Region.	1, 2, 9, 10, 23
	36. Develop communications plans as appropriate to support division work to promote community resiliency.	1,2,14
Goal 5 [Aquaculture]: <i>A thriving marine aquaculture industry off New England and the Mid-Atlantic in both state and federal waters, providing jobs to working waterfront communities, harmonious with the Region's commercial and recreational fisheries, and increasing the domestic supply of healthy</i>	37. Maintain services to coordinate and support aquaculture regional management activities by providing expertise and assistance to the aquaculture industry and GARFO fishery management, protected resources, and habitat programs	1, 6,10,33

<i>sustainable seafood.</i>		
	Streamline NOAA’s role in the finfish, shellfish, and algal aquaculture permitting processes for state and federal waters, harmonious with ESA and EFH mission responsibilities.	1, 2, 10,14,33
	Conduct outreach, striving for an informed/educated public with respect to benefits, potential impacts, and management of marine aquaculture	1,14,33
	Collaborate with internal/external researchers to identify research approaches to address aquaculture management needs.	1, 2,14,33
	Implement collaborative state/federal approach to increase accuracy of reported aquaculture production in the Greater Atlantic Region.	1,2,10,14,33
Goal 6 [Organizational Excellence]: <i>Organizational excellence through a well-trained and proficient workforce, internal communications, financial integrity/internal controls, the enhancement and security of information technology, assistance under the National Environmental Policy Act, and strategic planning.</i>	38. Maintain a professional and proficient Workforce:	1,14,28
	39. Ensure effective internal communications and collaboration	1,2,5,8,14
	40. Ensure effective internal controls and fiscal accountability	1,14
	41. Maintain and enhance customer-focused and cost-effective information technology (IT)	1, 2,12,29
	42. Inform GARFO management decisions under	1,2

	<p>the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. Reduce the time and resources required to comply with NEPA through the development and use of guidance on the applicability of supplemental EAs/EISs and supplemental information reports (SIR). b. Provide informal training to ensure that regional office staff understand the requirements for an appropriate NEPA analysis and the process associated with the review and approval of NEPA documents. Improve NEPA planning and coordination with the Science Center by appointing a NEPA liaison that periodically meets with Center staff. [NEPA] d. Enhance NEPA coordination with the grants process. e. Develop guidance, training, and provide assistance in incorporating climate-change and ecosystem information into EAs/EISs 	
	43. Strategic Planning	1,14,28
<p>Goal 7 [Customer Service/External Communications]: A well informed and engaged public that understands: GARFO’s mission of science-based service and stewardship of regional living marine resources; the nature and scope of our program activities (what we do); the regulations established by NOAA Fisheries (what they have to do); how and when to</p>	44. Improve accessibility and timely delivery of information	1,2,12,29

provide meaningful input into policy and rulemaking; and how to contact the appropriate GARFO staff who will understand public concerns and can help address them.		
	45. Encourage the consumption of U.S. caught seafood.	1,14
	46. Improve the accessibility of federal funding opportunities.	1,14
	47. Increase outreach and collaboration with the recreational fishing industry	1,2,7,10,14
	48. Apprise GARFO staff of constituent concerns and interests	1,14
	49. Improve public knowledge of fishery management, GARFO organization and the value of living marine resources.	1,2,14

Partner Key

- 1 Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO)
- 2 Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC)
- 3 New England Fisheries Management Council (NEFMC)
- 4 Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council
- 5 NMFS Office of Law Enforcement (OLE)
- 6 Commercial fishing industry
- 7 Recreational fishing interests
- 8 NOAA Office of General Counsel (OGC)
- 9 United States Coast Guard (USCG)
- 10 State agencies
- 11 Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC)
- 12 National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Chief Information Officer (NNMFS CIO)
- 13 Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP)
- 14 NMFS Headquarters (NMFS Hqtrs)
- 15 Take Reduction Teams (TRTs)
- 16 Whale watch industry
- 17 Conservation groups
- 18 Federal agencies
- 19 NGO partners
- 20 Foreign governments
- 21 International conservation groups
- 22 Educational institutions
- 23 Other NOAA Line Offices including National Ocean Service, Marine Sanctuary Program, and National Weather Service
- 24 Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC)

- 25 United States Geological Survey (USGS)
- 26 States in the Greater Atlantic Region
- 27 Aquaculture industry
- 28 NOAA Workforce Management (WFM)
- 29 NOAA Office of Chief Information Officer
- 30 Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership
- 31 Federal Highway Administration
- 32 Army Corps of Engineers
- 33 NMFS Habitat Restoration Office
- 34 Aquaculture Industry