



Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

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Michael P. Luisi, Chairman | G. Warren Elliott, Vice Chairman
Christopher M. Moore, Ph.D., Executive Director

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Dr. Jon Hare
Science and Research Director
Northeast Fisheries Science Center
166 Water Street
Woods Hole, MA 02543

Mr. Michael Pentony
Regional Administrator
National Marine Fisheries Service
55 Great Republic Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930-2276

Dear Dr. Hare and Mr. Pentony:

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council appreciates the opportunity to submit comments on the draft Greater Atlantic Region Geographic Strategic Plan for 2020-2023. In general, the Council supports this effort to develop a joint strategic plan for the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO) and the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC). We hope that a joint strategic plan will promote greater coordination and collaboration among the region's fishery management partners. Council members and staff have reviewed the draft plan and developed the following comments and recommendations.

First, the Council was encouraged to see the inclusion of *Strategy 1.3 – Promote Ecosystem-Based Fisheries Management (EBFM)* as part of Goal 1. However, we believe a greater emphasis and the continued prioritization of these activities by the Region is needed. The Council has and will continue to invest substantial resources into the development and implementation of its Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM) guidance document. The Region's involvement and development of products such as the Integrated Ecosystem Assessment, the Mid-Atlantic State of the Ecosystem report, the EBFM Roadmap, the Ecosystem Context to Stock Assessment reports, and the Climate-Ready Fisheries Management Process technical memo have all played a critical role in advancing the ecosystem considerations within the Mid-Atlantic. The future success of the Council's EAFM process relies on the continued support of these activities and requires the investment in ecosystem science, data collection, and staff resources by the NEFSC and GARFO.

Second, the Council is concerned that the plan does not include any strategies that directly address the current and anticipated impacts of climate change on the region's fisheries and the broader marine ecosystem. Scientists, managers, and fishermen have already observed oceanographic changes and associated shifts in the distribution, productivity, and life history characteristics of East Coast fisheries. This joint strategic plan offers GARFO and the NEFSC an ideal opportunity to establish their role as a leader in coordinating a region-wide response to climate change. While we are aware that this topic is already discussed in detail in the "NOAA Fisheries Climate Science Strategy – Northeast Regional Action Plan," the Council feels that it would be an oversight to not include any climate-related strategies in the joint regional strategic plan.

Finally, we would like to note that in the coming months the Council will be developing its own strategic plan for 2020 through 2024. During this planning process, the need for effective communication and collaboration with our management partners is particularly important. As you

finalize and implement the regional strategic plan, we hope that our organizations can effectively cooperate to align and integrate our strategic plans to achieve our shared goals and address common concerns.

Thank you for this opportunity to review and comment on the draft Greater Atlantic Region Geographic Strategic Plan. We hope you will find our comments helpful. Please let us know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. Moore". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "C" and a long, sweeping underline.

Dr. Christopher M. Moore
Executive Director, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

cc: M. Luisi, W. Elliott, T. Nies