



**MID-ATLANTIC**  
FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

**Visioning and  
Strategic Planning:  
Engaging the  
Mid-Atlantic  
Recreational Fishing  
Community**



# Visioning and Strategic Planning Context

- **Opportunities**
  - Rebuilt stocks
  - Council motivation
- **Risks**
  - Stakeholder disengagement
  - Lack of confidence
  - Environmental and economic uncertainty
- **Long-term goals**
  - Ecosystem-based management
  - Stakeholder engagement



# What can we learn from stakeholders?

- “On the water” knowledge
  - Social and economic impacts of regulations
  - Ecosystem interactions
  - Fishery trends
- Effective communication strategies
- Ideas for improving management
- ??? (We don’t know what we don’t know)

# Data Collection Methods

**Goal:** Depth of input and breadth of stakeholder participation

## Survey

- Inclusive
- Relatively inexpensive
- Wide distribution

## Roundtable Discussions

- In-depth data
- More conducive to discussions of complex issues
- Builds trust
- Successfully partnered with local co-hosts

## Position Letters

- Added at the request of several organizations
- Free-form
- Lets organizations provide input on behalf of members

# Participation Summary

## Surveys

### General

1,253 responses

810 recreational

### Fishery-specific

1,048 total responses



## Position Letters

**12  
Letters**

# RECREATIONAL THEMES



# Management Strategies

- **Size Limits-** Current regulations result in discard mortality of larger, more fertile breeding fish
- **Access-** Current regs excessively limit recreational fishing access
- **Inconsistency-** Annual fluctuations and inconsistency in state and federal fishing regulations are unreasonable
- **Regulatory inequality-** Regulations favor commercial fishermen over recreational fishermen
- **Recreational community complexity-** Needs of different recreational user groups are not adequately factored into management decisions

# Economic Challenges

- **Closures and Instability**  
Shortened/closed seasons and substantial annual fluctuations in regulations/quotas are the top economic challenge
- **Concern about exceeding quotas**  
Recreational fishermen fear that they will be penalized drastically if they exceed their quota



# Communication & Participation

- **How to participate?**

Most recreational fishermen do not know how or when to participate in the Council process

- **Complex Communications**

Council communication materials are difficult to understand

# Governance

- **Management organizations**  
Fishery management efforts by the different management organizations are confusing and disjointed
- **Representation**  
Recreational fishing interests are not adequately represented in the Council process

#1

# Listen & Respect

“It’s going to be a difficult thing to have us back at the table and win back trust... You have to listen to us when we say something, you cannot just disregard us.... If you don’t have a briefcase, you are not listened to.”



#2

## Consider the distribution of regulatory impacts

“As the bag limits go down and size goes up, if you are not out in a boat in the ocean fishing, it’s hard to get an 18 inch flounder.”



#3

# Establish Feedback Loops

“The Councils need to say, ‘this is what we heard you say, this is what we are doing, and this is why.’ You see all these people providing this input, and they don’t see any actions. Actions resulting from our input are precious.”



#4

## Create the right opportunities for effective participation

“You need a process where fishermen can give input at the right point in the process. You hold these types of meetings and present information in conjunction with the science information before you make a recommendation.”

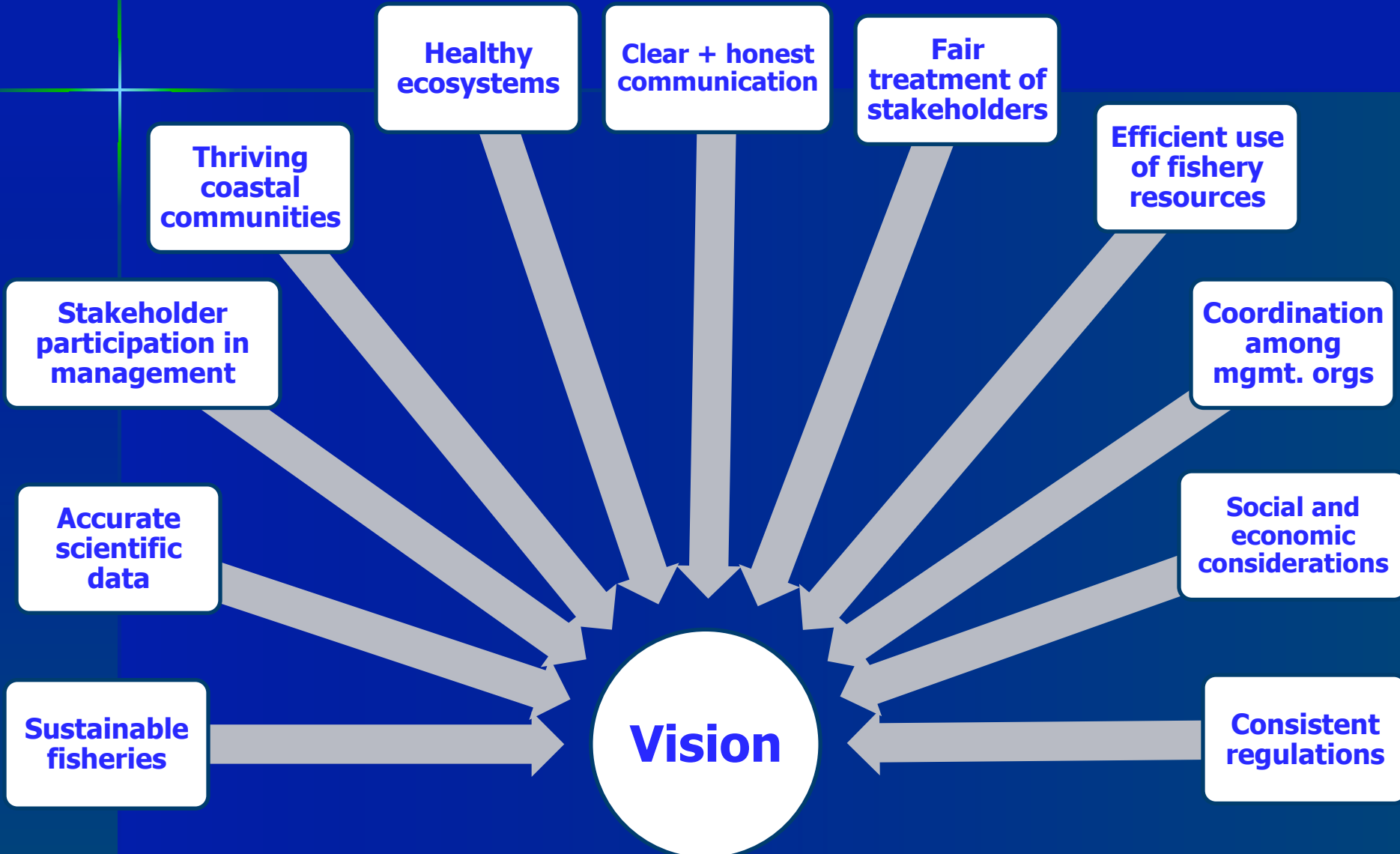


**#5**

**Pay attention to (and try to address) issues that are “not your responsibility”**

“No one in my 100 person fishing club has ever been contacted by MRFSS. If catch is based on that, and no one is calling us, that survey CANNOT be working.”

# Stakeholder Visions





# Questions?

