

Development and Use of Webinars and Surveys to Engage Ocean Stakeholders

Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean

Final Project Summary

Virginia Coastal Zone Management

FY20, Task 94.02

Introduction

The Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean (MARCO) is the Regional Ocean Partnership (ROP) for the Mid-Atlantic, formed through a Governor's Agreement in 2009 among the states of Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, New Jersey, and New York. MARCO hosts a regional data hub, the Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal ("Portal", portal.midatlanticocean.org) which is an important tool for decision-makers and the public alike to understand the use of ocean space.

In 2019-2020, MARCO partnered with the Northeast ROP, the Northeast Regional Ocean Council (NROC) and the Responsible Offshore Development Alliance (RODA) to increase collaboration with the fishing industry on the development of products that represent their interests and improve fishing industry trust in regional data products and the data that are being used to inform decisions. This effort convened fishing industry representatives and organizations to determine the need and potential uses for fisheries data products, to design and review draft products, and to develop documentation and communications about the appropriate application and use of final data products that are available on both the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast Ocean Data Portals.

The purpose of this project, funded by the VACZM Program via FY20 funds, was to build on the work conducted by MARCO, NROC, and RODA. It sought to bring awareness about recent data product developments and enhancements on the Portal to commercial, recreational, and for-hire fishers in the region, with a special focus on Virginia. This project was developed in conjunction with FY20 Task 94.01 (Virginia Commonwealth University), and is meant to complement that work.

The project sought to accomplish the following goals:

1. Update the fishing community and others about new data products and maps on the Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal, as well as other data collection efforts.
2. Solicit feedback regarding current data products as well as data needs from the commercial fisheries, recreational for-hire anglers and other stakeholders. The feedback will be focused in Virginia but methods will be made available to other MARCO states.
3. Consolidate the feedback obtained into a report, which will provide insight from the fishing community and other Virginia stakeholders to inform ocean planning in the Commonwealth. The report will also provide recommendations for how to deliver wider dissemination of the outreach tool throughout the region.

Approach & Results

MARCO originally proposed three deliverables as part of their approach:

1. Informational webinars for region's commercial & recreational fishing sectors
2. Web-based survey
3. Report on survey & results (contained within this document)

Informational Webinars

The reason webinars were proposed as the primary outreach tool was twofold: (1) Given the COVID-19 pandemic, travel throughout this project period was largely restricted, and (2) A recorded webinar could be posted on the MARCO Portal website to also serve as a tutorial/overview of the fishing data on the MARCO Portal.

MARCO hosted a webinar that delivered information to commercial fishing, recreational, for-hire, and other sectors about data products on the Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal (“Portal”), as well as information about new data collection efforts in the Mid-Atlantic. The purpose of the webinar was to:

1. Update the fishing community and others about new data products and maps on the Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal, as well as other data collection efforts.
2. Solicit feedback regarding current data products as well as data needs from the commercial fisheries, recreational for-hire anglers and other stakeholders.

The 90-minute webinar was held on November 3, 2022. MARCO worked closely with RODA and VCU to develop the content of the webinar, and to facilitate invitations amongst the fisheries community in Virginia (VCU) and the broader Mid-Atlantic region (RODA).

The agenda for the webinar was as follows:

- 1:00 PM: Welcome and overview of webinar purpose [Avalon Bristow, MARCO; Todd Janeski, VCU]
- 1:10 PM: Presentation and Portal Demonstration: Updating Commercial Fisheries Data on the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portals [Nick Napoli, MARCO/NROC; Fiona Hogan, RODA]
- 1:50 PM: Discussion

The slides from the webinar are included in Appendix 1. In total, seventeen fishing stakeholders registered for the meeting, and twelve attended. Three fisheries attendees were from Virginia. At the beginning of the webinar, attendees requested that the discussion not be recorded. MARCO personnel honored this request and took diligent notes. Key takeaways from the discussion included:

- A need for a web-based / virtual tutorial of the fishing data on the Portal - something that could be referenced at any time by fishing stakeholders
- Suggestion to line up VTR and VMS data layers by gear
- Suggestion that unexploded ordinance data would be helpful to show on the Portal

MARCO had originally planned to host two webinars. However, in communicating with VCU, stakeholders expressed some stakeholder fatigue. In response, MARCO developed a story-map overview of the fishing data on the Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal that can be referenced in perpetuity by fishing stakeholders. This storymap, which was published on the Portal website in late November 2022, is also in line with feedback received (see bullet 1, above) during the November 3rd webinar that stakeholders would like a one-stop-shop to learn the basics of the fishing data on the Portal. The storymap can be found here:

<https://portal.midatlanticocean.org/ocean-stories/marco-improves-fishing-map-collection-with-insights-from-industry/>

Web-Based Survey

MARCO developed a survey in partnership with VCU that was sent to fishing stakeholders in Virginia during fall 2022, with the purpose of:

1. Increasing understanding of MARCO's fisheries industry stakeholder base, particularly in Virginia, and continue to identify ways to improve data products on the Portal;
2. Gaining a better understanding of potential industry impacts and concerns related to changes in ocean uses, habitats; and other factors; and
3. Encouraging participation from the commercial and recreational for-hire sectors in MARCO-sponsored outreach events such as webinars, workshops, and Portal trainings.

The survey can be found here: <https://forms.gle/LT8uoieLguaUhtgR7>, and is included in Appendix 2.

VCU led the outreach effort to fisheries contacts in Virginia. The survey was sent to fifteen people from the commercial, recreational, and for-hire industries and VCU followed up via email and phone call to all contacts. Despite these efforts over the course of two months, there were no responses to the survey by the end of the project period.

Conclusions & Next-Steps

Participation of Virginia fisheries stakeholders was low in both the virtual webinar and survey. This result demonstrates that further investment and efforts are needed for MARCO to deepen relationships and outreach strategies with fishers throughout the region, particularly those in the for-hire and/or recreational sectors, and with those located in specific sub-regions such as Virginia.

MARCO has allocated significant funding toward fisheries outreach over the next two years (through the end of 2024). As a first step, MARCO hired a contractor to serve as its Fisheries Liaison, who will MARCO build relationships to increase understanding of the priorities of commercial, recreational, and for-hire fishing stakeholders related to offshore wind development. The survey and online storymap that were created during this effort will be important tools for future outreach efforts conducted by the Fisheries Liaison.

Finally, MARCO will continue developing and enhancing fishing data products on the Portal.

APPENDIX 1 - FISHERIES OUTREACH WEBINAR SLIDES

Updating Commercial Fisheries Data on the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portals

Nick Napoli, NROC & MARCO



Updating Commercial Fisheries Data on the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portals

Fisheries Effort Data on the Portals

1. VMS-based
2. VTR-based
3. Management areas
4. AIS-based

Updating Commercial Fisheries Data on the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portals

Industry Recommendations on VMS

- Update the VMS data with recent years
- Consider additional confidentiality measures
- Maps should generally be on a FMP-by-FMP basis
- Also combine similar fisheries where possible
- Use fishing season instead of calendar year where they are different
- Include DOF and parse different fisheries within DOF, if possible
- Split ocean quahog and surf clam
- Parse gear types, if possible
- Some wanted single years; some wanted combined years
- Various recommendations related to parsing fishing versus transit and using speed thresholds

Updating Commercial Fisheries Data on the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portals

Industry Recommendations on VTR

- Support for updating the Communities at Sea products and for incorporating the NMFS Fishing Footprint data into Portals
- VTR is decent representation of the northern shrimp fishery
- VTR is decent representation of the charter fishery
- VTR does not represent Maine lobster well, but may be a decent representation of lobstering offshore and from other states

Updating Commercial Fisheries Data on the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portals

Industry Recommendations on Management Areas (and other general recommendations)

- Show closed areas, rotational areas, and other fishery management areas as context for fishing patterns
- Include the horseshoe crab reserve area
- Line up fishing effort products with the management regime at the time
- Organize all data by fishery instead of by data type
- Include economic and fishery landing values data
- AIS is generally not a good representation of fishing activity for a variety of reasons

APPENDIX 2 - FISHING DATA SURVEY

1. First and Last Name
2. Email Address
3. Home Port
4. Primary species fished for
5. Rank: Please rate these each of the following ocean uses/changes with your level of concern (#1 being top concern, #5 being not concerned at all)
 - Renewable energy development
 - Shipping
 - Species range shifts
 - Habitat loss
 - Military exclusion
 - Marine protected areas
 - Mineral extraction
 - Commercial fishing activity
 - Recreational/for-hire fishing activity
 - Aquaculture
 - Maintain fishing access
6. Enter any other top concerns that were not already listed

The [Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal](#) contains map representing several fishing data-types. Here is a walk-through of the fisheries data on the Portal. We'd like your feedback on how each data type represents your fishery in the questions below:

Vessel monitoring system (VMS) data are used by the NOAA enforcement program to electronically monitor the location and movement of commercial fishing vessels. The Portal maps were created by averaging the location data over a time window of between two and five years. [View the VMS layers here](#)

7. How well does the VMS data on the Portal represent your fisheries' interest?
 - a. Very Good
 - b. Good
 - c. Satisfactory
 - d. Unsatisfactory
 - e. I am neutral on this

Vessel trip report (VTR) data show a view of the most important areas for commercial fishing by gear type. These maps are also called ""Communities at Sea"" because they show which ports relied on a given area of the ocean. [View an example here](#)

8. How well does the VTR data on the Portal represent your fisheries' interest?

- a. Very Good
- b. Good
- c. Satisfactory
- d. Unsatisfactory
- e. I am neutral on this

The Portal houses dozens of maps delineating fisheries management areas and closures. Many of these were added in 2021 based on feedback received from fisheries managers and industry members as part of a collaborative project conducted by MARCO, the Northeast Regional Ocean Council (NROC) and Responsible Offshore Development Alliance (RODA) through NOAA Regional Ocean Data Sharing Initiative. [View an example here](#)

9. How well do the management areas on the Portal represent your fisheries' interest?"
- a. Very Good
 - b. Good
 - c. Satisfactory
 - d. Unsatisfactory
 - e. I am neutral on this

10. Do you believe the selection of data available on the Portal is:
- a. Very Good
 - b. Good
 - c. Satisfactory
 - d. Unsatisfactory
 - e. I am neutral on this

OPTIONAL: Please expand on your selection (optional)

11. How easy or difficult do you find it to use the Portal and its tools?
- a. Very Good
 - b. Good
 - c. Satisfactory
 - d. Unsatisfactory
 - e. I am neutral on this

OPTIONAL: Please expand on your selection (optional)