Communicating for Effective Stakeholder Engagement: Lessons Learned in the Mid-Atlantic

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"The most serious mistakes are not being made as a result of wrong answers. The truly dangerous thing is asking the wrong questions."

-Peter Drucker
Overview

- Background
- Communication challenges in fisheries management
- Visioning and strategic planning: communication methods
- Lessons Learned
Regional Fishery Management Councils
10 National Standards

- Prevent overfishing while achieving optimum yield
- Best available science
- Manage stocks as a unit
- Be fair and equitable

- Efficiency
- Consider variations among fisheries
- Avoid redundancy
- Minimize adverse social/economic impacts

- Minimize bycatch
- Consider safety of human lives
Mid-Atlantic Fisheries

Commercial (2011)
- 780 million pounds
- $527 million (54% increase from 2002)
- 37,000 jobs

Recreational (2011)
- 2.4 million anglers
- 16 million fishing trips
- 25,000 jobs
Rebuilding History

- 1980s-early 1990s: overfishing
- Late 1990s through 2000s: rebuilding
- Social and economic consequences of rebuilding
Communication Challenges

- Complex nature of information
- Distrust
- Lack of respect
- Lack of clarity about roles and jurisdictions
- Expectations
- Perceptions of inaccessibility
Visioning and Strategic Planning

Objective: Develop a stakeholder-defined vision and strategic plan for Mid-Atlantic fisheries

How will we measure our success?
Data Collection Methods

Online Surveys
- General: 1,253 responses
- Fishery-specific: 1,048 responses

Port Meetings/Focus Groups
- 14 commercial
- 5 recreational
- 1 ENGO

Position Letters
- 12 Letters
Commercial Industry

What Worked

- Targeting “key contacts” (processors, association leaders, industry advisors)
- Face-to-face interactions (port meetings)
- Leadership attendance at port meetings
- Flexibility
- Acknowledging failures/shortcomings
- Question & answer
Commercial Industry

What Didn’t Work

- Surveys
- Permit-holder letter
- The interview question: “What is the Council doing well?”
Recreational Community

What worked

- Combination of methods: surveys and focus groups
- Club outreach
- Forums/message boards
- Question & Answer
Stakeholder Input:
Communication Themes
"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."
#2 Respect

“If you don’t have a briefcase, you are not listened to.”
“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.”
"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 issues that are “not your responsibility”

"The restaurants want to buy consistency and lower prices; they won’t buy a whole fish from me. So you need to get the public to buy the local fish, which is the plus side that will keep us fishing in the long term."
Council Actions

- Council member name badges
- Replaced standing microphone for public comment with seat at the table
- Listening sessions
- Advisory panel fishery performance reports
2013 Squid Workshop
Looking Toward the Future

“We won’t be here in 5 years if things don’t change. There is no one behind us. We are the last people. We love what we do. Who is going to buy our boats?”
“My son wanted to be a fishermen and I told him don’t even think about it because before you realize it you will be 40 and unemployed.”