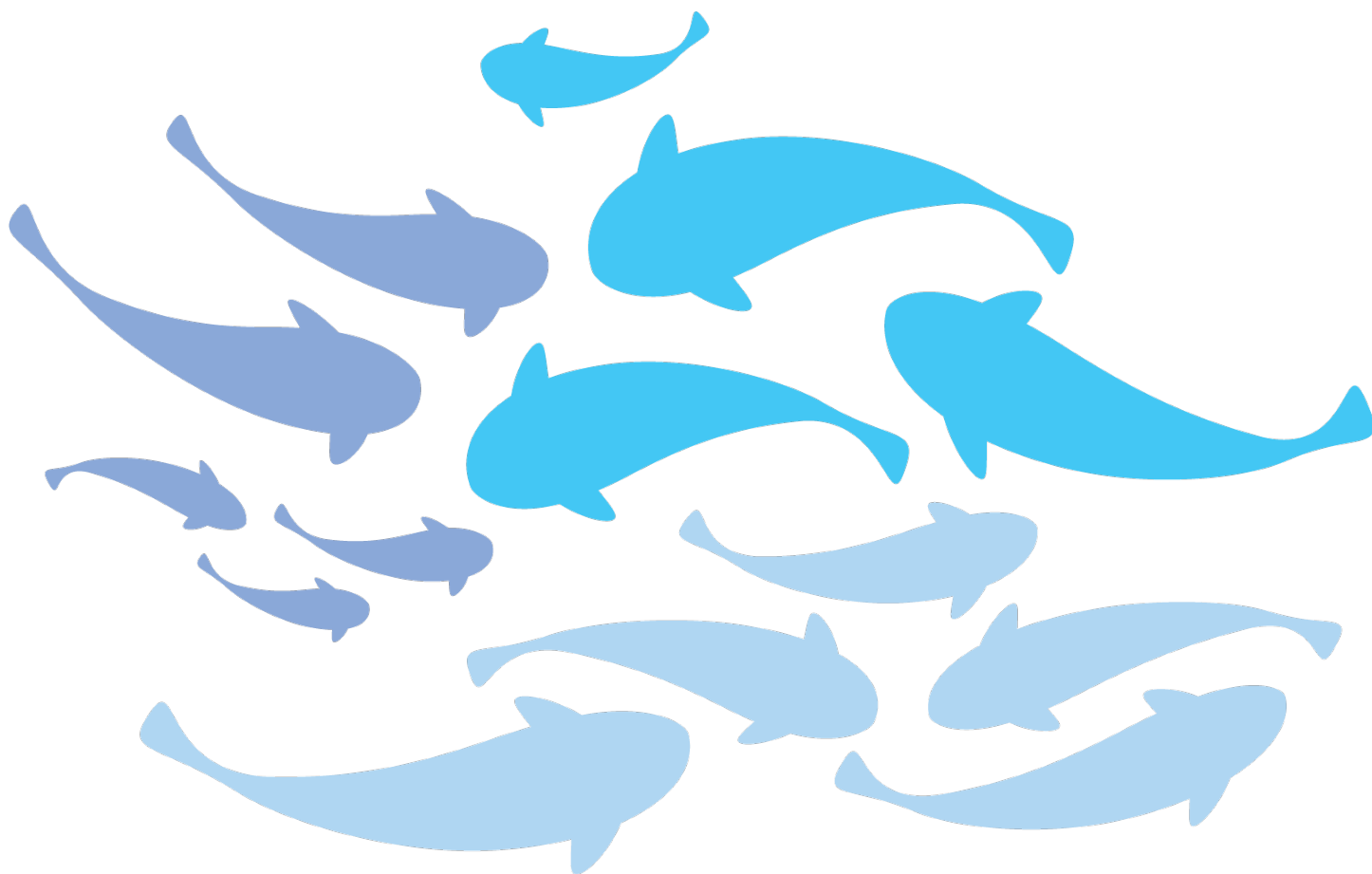




NOAA
FISHERIES

Office of Sustainable Fisheries

Equity and Environmental Justice Implementation Plan



Executive Summary

NOAA Fisheries' Office of Sustainable Fisheries endeavors to equitably serve all stakeholders in our stewardship of marine and anadromous fisheries, protected resources, and habitats. The Office of Sustainable Fisheries' (OSF) Implementation Plan uses guidance set forth in NOAA Fisheries' national [Equity and Environmental Justice Strategy](#) to incorporate and prioritize equity and environmental justice (EEJ) in our current and future activities. This plan is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees or agents, or any other person.

OSF supports the implementation of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) and other applicable statutes, manages Atlantic highly migratory species (HMS) fisheries (e.g., tunas, swordfish, Atlantic sharks, and billfish), and helps ensure that seafood sold in the United States is safe. We work with our regional offices and science centers in partnership with the regional fishery management councils, interstate marine fisheries commissions, and states to sustainably manage U.S. fisheries. We also engage the commercial and recreational fishing industry, seafood dealers, environmental groups, federal agencies, academia, and the general public to promote and create sustainable fisheries, sustainable economies, and safe seafood.

Fair and equal access for those who wish to participate in managed fisheries is essential to serve our stakeholders equitably. This requires enforcement of all laws, regulations, and limits equally, without bias or favor to any particular groups or individuals. Barriers to access and equitable participation in the HMS and regional fisheries include high costs of running a commercial fishing business, lack of familiarity with fishing regulations, language and cultural barriers, and underrepresentation of women and minorities in the fishing industry, especially in leadership roles.

OSF is working proactively to incorporate EEJ in everyday operations. We believe that by including EEJ considerations in all of our regulatory roles and programs (e.g., resource allocations, research and grant programs, and education and outreach materials), we can reduce or remove barriers for traditionally underserved communities and stakeholders. While the scope of our EEJ work may expand over time, based on our external engagement last summer our near-term efforts will focus on the following stakeholders and underserved communities:

- U.S. Caribbean HMS commercial and recreational fishermen
- Vietnamese pelagic longline community (Gulf of Mexico)
- West Coast and Alaska tribes (Fishery Resource Disaster Program)
- Council-related stakeholders (council appointments/member diversity)
- Minority Serving Institutions and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (Bycatch Reduction Engineering Program (BREP) Outreach)
- Underserved communities at large

We will continue to engage with communities, and underserved communities in particular, to implement the national EEJ Strategy at the OSF level and advance EEJ through our role within NOAA Fisheries.

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List of Acronyms

- BREP: Bycatch Reduction Engineering Program
- CITES: Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
- EEJ: Equity and Environmental Justice
- HMS: Atlantic Highly Migratory Species
- IN FISH: Inclusive NOAA Fisheries Internship Program
- MREP: Marine Resource Education Program
- MSA: Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act
- NGOs: Non-governmental Organizations
- NOAA Fisheries: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s National Marine Fisheries Service
- OPM: Office of Personnel Management
- OSF: Office of Sustainable Fisheries
- PEPCO: El Programa de Educación a Pescadores Comerciales
- REDI: Race, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

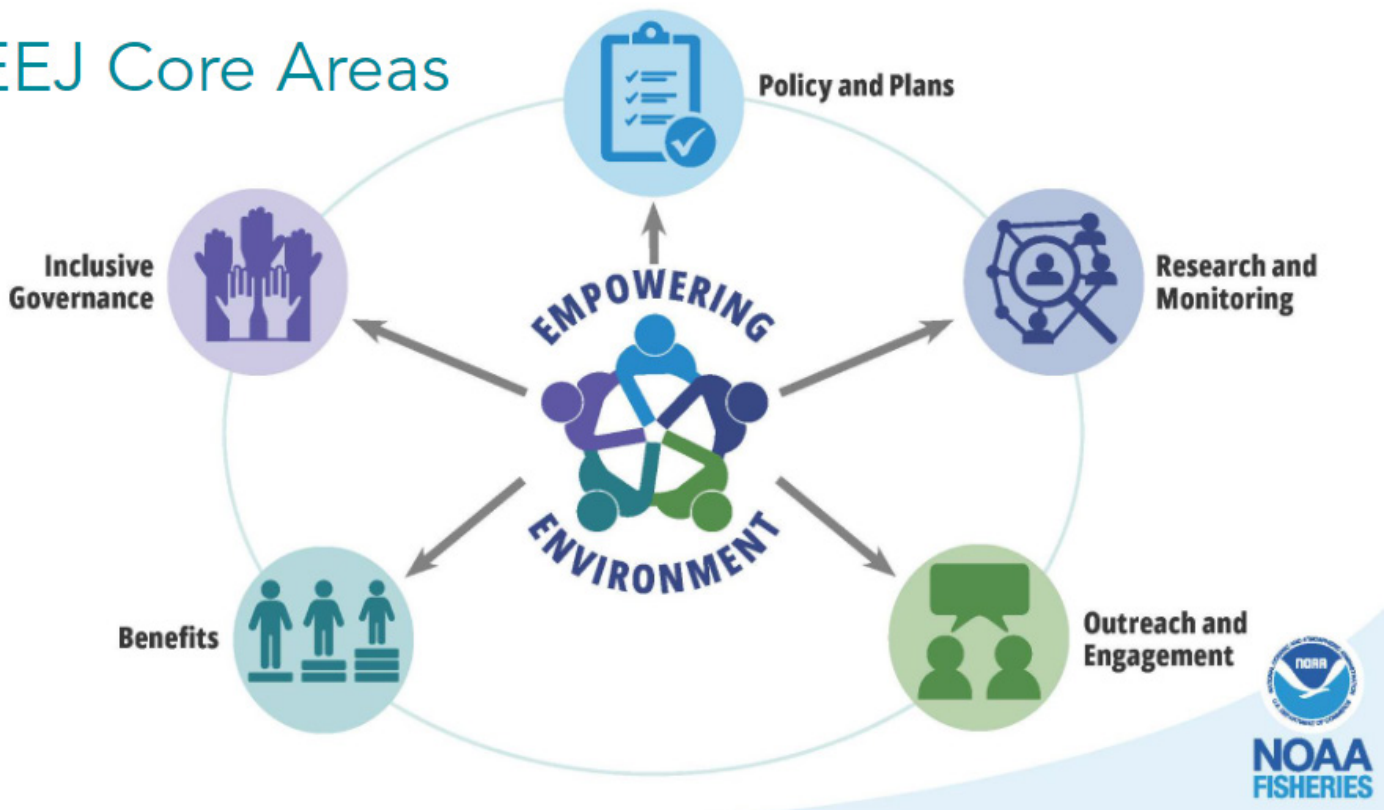
EEJ Objectives Implementation

The OSF EEJ Implementation Plan uses the objectives framework of the NOAA Fisheries’ national Equity and Environmental Justice Strategy. To provide equitable and just service to our key stakeholders and underserved communities, we identify priority actions for approximately the next year, metrics to measure success, and resources needed. These actions would be carried out to the extent allowed by and consistent with applicable law.

The needs and barriers our stakeholders and underserved communities face will change over time. In recognition of this, the OSF EEJ Implementation Plan is designed to be a living document. The OSF EEJ Team will review annually and update the plan as needed to ensure it stays relevant.

NOAA Fisheries’ Equity and Environmental Justice Goals				
<p>Prioritize identification, equitable treatment, and meaningful involvement of underserved communities.</p>		<p>Provide equitable delivery of services.</p>	<p>Prioritize EEJ in our mission work with demonstrable progress.</p>	
Core Areas and Objectives				
<p>Empowering Environment: Provide the institutional support, including training and resources, needed to implement multiple EEJ approaches at NOAA Fisheries. Internal leadership and management will identify EEJ as priorities and encourage staff to consider EEJ in every aspect of their work.</p>				
<p>Policy and Plans: Ensure that our policies promote equal opportunities for all and do not create unintended inequities or unequal burdens for underserved communities.</p>	<p>Research and Monitoring: Identify underserved communities and their needs, conduct collaborative research, and assess impacts of management decisions.</p>	<p>Outreach and Engagement: Build relationships with underserved communities to better understand their engagement preferences, and improve information sharing with all communities.</p>	<p>Benefits: Distribute benefits equitably among communities by increasing the access to opportunities for underserved communities.</p>	<p>Inclusive Governance: Enable the meaningful involvement of underserved communities in decision-making processes.</p>

EEJ Core Areas



Empowering Environment

- **Objective:** Provide the institutional support, including training and resources, needed to implement multiple EEJ approaches at NOAA Fisheries. Internal leadership and management will identify EEJ as priorities and encourage staff to consider EEJ in every aspect of their work.
- **Barriers Addressed:** Gaps in expertise, gaps in representation.

OSF has supported an empowering environment by:

- Including EEJ activities in staff performance plans.
- Encouraging OSF staff attendance in NOAA Environmental Justice training.
- Prioritizing EEJ projects for underserved communities and increasing OSF staff time spent on them.
- Leveraging communication skills of Spanish-speaking staff and contractors.
- Prioritizing and allocating financial resources to address EEJ issues and concerns.

To strengthen an empowering environment for EEJ, OSF will integrate EEJ considerations into our employees' day-to-day work. OSF will also take steps to increase EEJ expertise within our workforce. Achieving the goals of the strategy across all OSF divisions will require dedicating adequate staff and resources to these areas. Creating an empowering environment within OSF will put staff in a better position to recognize and integrate underserved communities in the decision-making process, and ensure fairness in the distribution of benefits and recognize potential harms of management decisions.

Public comments we received during the national EEJ Strategy drafting process and OSF engagement process included the following types of suggestions, which we have taken/are taking into consideration as we identify focal areas:

- Provide staff with resources to better understand the needs of underserved communities and existing governance.

Table 1: Empowering Environment: Actions, Metrics, and Resources Needed

Actions	Metrics	Resources Needed
1. Leverage hiring to increase diversity in the workplace.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Demographics of the Office of Sustainable Fisheries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff time
2. OSF Leadership at every level communicates about EEJ and prioritizes EEJ in OSF strategic plans and annual priorities documents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Number of divisions with an EEJ milestone ● Percentage of milestones reached 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Leadership support ● EEJ training
3. At every organizational level in OSF, continue to include EEJ roles in the performance plans of applicable staff, including time needed for training, relationship building, and metrics for accountability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Percentage of applicable staff with EEJ included in performance plans and work statements ● Distribution of EEJ focused work across pay bands/leadership levels - Y/N 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Leadership support ● Suggested performance plan language
4. Support continued staff participation in the NOAA Fisheries national EEJ Working Group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Number of OSF participants on the NOAA Fisheries national EEJ Working Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff time
5. Support continuation of OSF EEJ Working Group, with representation from each OSF division. The Working Group should continue to meet to share information about successful approaches, collaborate on outreach and inclusion of common constituencies, and guide OSF decision-making.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Division representation at regular meetings - Y/N 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Leadership support ● Staff time
6. Provide and/or encourage participation at trainings or workshops that help build a shared understanding of the concepts of EEJ and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and how to implement these concepts in our work and evaluate the success of EEJ efforts (such as provided via the Environmental Protection Agency’s “Environmental Justice Learning Center”).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Number and percentage of staff trained ● Evaluation of training by participants - Y/N 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● EEJ training materials and/or funds for trainer ● Staff time
7. Provide Sexual Assault/Sexual Harassment training for councils and advisory body members.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Number of trainings provided ● Number of council participants trained ● Feedback collected from trainees on training efficacy - Y/N 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff time ● EEJ training materials and/or funds for trainer

Actions	Metrics	Resources Needed
8. Provide training on NOAA Fisheries' EEJ goals, objectives, and implementation for new council members and the HMS Advisory Panel.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of trainings provided • Number of council and advisory panel participants trained • Feedback collected from trainees on training efficacy - Y/N 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff time • EEJ training materials and/or funds for trainer
9. OSF grant program staff and grant reviewers attend training on how to mitigate the types of bias that may disadvantage underserved communities when calling for and/or reviewing applications.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and percentage of grant reviewers trained • Number of grant project descriptions that include EEJ considerations • Feedback collected from trainees on efficacy - Y/N 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff time • EEJ training
10. OSF staff continue to engage with other federal, state, territorial, and local agencies, and non-profit organizations to increase the scope and impact of NOAA Fisheries' EEJ goals and objectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EEJ interactions with other agencies and entities - Y/N • Number of resulting collaborative projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff time
11. Offer quarterly or semi-annual webinars where guests share their EEJ stories in collaboration with OSF's REDI group, where appropriate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of webinars provided 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff time • Translators/interpreters
12. Continue to participate in internships and other programs (e.g., IN FISH, Jose E. Serrano Educational Partnership Program with Minority Serving Institutions, OPM Pathways Program) dedicated to increasing diversity in the marine and environmental sciences and exploring federal careers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of interns from underserved communities • Number of OSF staff mentoring intern(s) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff time • EEJ training
13. Conduct education and outreach activities to engage and recruit NOAA's future workforce and build the NOAA brand among underrepresented populations including women, minorities, and persons with disabilities in partnership with Minority Serving Institutions and other appropriate entities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of education and outreach activities conducted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff time • EEJ training

Policy and Planning

- **Objective:** Ensure that our policies promote equal opportunities for all and do not create unintended inequities or unequal burdens for underserved communities.
- **Barriers Addressed:** Structural barriers.

OSF has incorporated EEJ into our policies and plans by:

- Modifying Caribbean-specific HMS permits (and two other open access handgear permits) to allow for additional fishing opportunities and conducting targeted education and outreach in Spanish on HMS permit requirements and regulations.
- Presenting and engaging with constituents at council meetings and nationally (including two tribal webinars) to gather input on the need to revise guidelines for MSA National Standards 4 (fair and equitable allocations), 8 (importance of fishing communities), and 9 (bycatch and bycatch mortality).
- Including reference to the national EEJ Strategy and including EEJ-relevant sections in our environmental analysis documents for fisheries regulations. As an example, resources developed by the Office of Science and Technology (e.g., community social and climate vulnerability indicators) are being used to update and improve our “Community Profiles” sections.
- Commissioning a two-part study that will outline the data and information needed to assess whether the distribution of federal fisheries management benefits is equitable, what information and data currently exist, what additional information is needed, and any potential obstacles that may hinder collection of that information.
- Evaluating how NOAA Fisheries’ EEJ efforts intersect with NOAA’s National Seafood Strategy.
- Working with Regional Recreational Coordinators and National Policy Advisor for Recreational Fisheries to incorporate recreational-focused EEJ projects into the Recreational Policy headquarters implementation plan.
- Participating in NOAA working groups focused on Caribbean-specific issues affecting fisheries.

To further incorporate EEJ into our policies and plans, OSF will, to the extent permitted by applicable law, purposefully consider EEJ in policy and planning activities. Doing so will reduce barriers to inclusion and institutionalize equity for the long term. This includes considering the impacts and responsiveness of OSF programs to underserved communities.

Public comments we received during the national EEJ Strategy drafting process and OSF engagement process included the following types of suggestions, which we have taken/are taking into consideration as we identify focal areas:

- Focus on outcomes of outreach to underserved communities, rather than number of meetings.
- Sentiment that recent actions not initiated by NOAA Fisheries (such as CITES actions and the Shark Fin Sales Elimination Act passed by Congress) contradict NOAA Fisheries’ EEJ efforts (i.e., they create additional structural barriers).
- Consider how flexibility could be applied in quota-managed fisheries to provide increased opportunities for underserved communities (e.g., higher retention limits for headboat participants, use of non-allocated fishery quotas).
- Remove barriers to fishing opportunities such as permits restrictions (e.g., one HMS permit per calendar year).
- Explore partnerships with other agencies that have the lead authority to find solutions when NOAA Fisheries is not the lead agency.
- Consider appropriateness and applicability of requirements to fishermen in the U.S. Caribbean territories.

- Consider how language barriers impact underserved communities’ ability to comply with regulations and fully participate in fisheries:
 - Vietnamese-speaking vessel owners often rely on dealers to understand complex regulations, but dealers will only help them if the vessel owners sell their catch to them. This arrangement prevents the vessel owner from seeking the best price for landed catch.
 - Required technology (e.g., electronic monitoring and vessel monitoring system equipment) should have a simpler user interface with multiple language options.

Table 2: Policy and Planning: Actions, Metrics, and Resources Needed

Actions	Metrics	Resources Needed
1. For upcoming regulatory and policy development actions, engage underserved communities through relevant outreach best practices, whether in-person, virtual, or electronic options.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Percentage of new rules, regulations, policies, and plans for which underserved communities were engaged 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff time ● EEJ training
2. When OSF-led Policy Directive System documents are up for review, ensure the review considers accessibility (including but not limited to 508 compliance) and includes clear messaging for a broad audience as well as underserved communities impacted by the directive. Ensure the review considers language, customs, and Indigenous knowledge.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Percentage of applicable OSF policy directives include EEJ considerations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff time ● EEJ training
3. Coordinate with regional offices and other groups to expand outreach to tribal entities and Caribbean territories on new fishery resource disaster process requirements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Number of tribal entities and Caribbean territories participating in fisheries disaster meetings/workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff time ● EEJ training
4. Consider EEJ advancement in OSF outreach to Congress, e.g., when providing requested technical drafting assistance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Include EEJ objectives in our briefings and/or communications with Congress as appropriate - Y/N ● Include EEJ considerations when providing input on Congressional actions (such as Technical Drafting Assistance on bills) as appropriate - Y/N 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff time ● EEJ training
5. Continue to determine what, if any, policy improvements or changes need to be made to remove barriers in the distribution of benefits in fisheries management to underserved communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Policy improvements or changes as necessary for equitable distribution of benefits - Y/N 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff time ● EEJ training

Research and Monitoring

- **Objective:** Identify underserved communities and their needs, conduct collaborative research, and assess impacts of management decisions.
- **Barriers Addressed:** Unawareness of underserved communities, gaps in expertise, system complexity.

OSF incorporated EEJ into our research and monitoring, especially in regards to HMS (Atlantic sharks, tunas, swordfish, and billfish). For example:

- Conducting an in-person workshop in the U.S. Caribbean to evaluate the vulnerability of HMS to climate change and ensure Caribbean region experts were represented and able to help inform the process and results.
- Collaborating with/assisting Puerto Rico scientists in HMS data needs.
- Prioritizing research and data needs in the U.S. Caribbean in our HMS Research Plan.
- Facilitating cooperative place-based research in the U.S. Caribbean via scientific research permits.
- Involving place-based experts to leverage local knowledge in HMS Essential Fish Habitat work.

To embed EEJ into our research and monitoring, OSF will facilitate meaningful involvement of underserved communities in biological research and monitoring. Meaningful involvement includes early engagement with underserved communities to identify shared priorities that meet their needs and fulfill OSF’s mission. It also includes engagement of underserved communities during data gathering and reporting. OSF must ensure that our findings and the resulting documentation are transparent and accessible.

Public comments we received during the national EEJ Strategy drafting process and OSF engagement process included the following types of suggestions, which we have taken/are taking into consideration as we identify focal areas.

- The importance of including coastal community (academics, local fishermen, and other stakeholders) participation in fisheries research (particularly for U.S. territories and commonwealths), including with regard to climate change.
- The importance of incorporating ecosystem-based fisheries management into fisheries management (re: impacts of Sargassum to fisheries).
- Recognizing lack of available data, the importance of local research before adopting new regulations and policy measures.

Table 3: Research and Monitoring: Actions, Metrics, and Resources Needed

Actions	Metrics	Resources Needed
<p>1. Promote meaningful involvement of underserved communities through the HMS research permitting process. This includes co-development and co-production of research and monitoring for fisheries management and climate change. Such co-development and co-production should incorporate local knowledge and proceed consistently with applicable confidentiality of information requirements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Number of research collaborations with institutions/organizations in underserved communities ● Reporting of findings to underserved communities and those who contributed to the research - Y/N ● Percentage of projects that meaningfully involve underserved community members during planning, fieldwork, and reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff time ● EEJ training ● Additional funding to pay study participants

Outreach and Engagement

- **Objective:** Build relationships with underserved communities to better understand their engagement preferences and improve information sharing with all communities.
- **Barriers Addressed:** Unawareness of underserved communities, barriers to engagement and accessing services, gaps in expertise, gaps in representation.

OSF has incorporated EEJ into our outreach and engagement work by:

- Holding HMS rulemaking public hearings in Louisiana to reach the Vietnamese community and U.S. Caribbean to reach Caribbean communities.
- Conducting outreach and engagement in the U.S. Caribbean:
 - Engaging with stakeholders at the Marine Resource Education Program (MREP) Puerto Rico Workshop, August 2023, to better educate on HMS permit requirements and management and understand fishing communities' interests and needs (e.g., research and outreach).
 - Developing outreach and educational materials, in Spanish, to improve understanding of our Atlantic HMS permit and regulations.
 - Collaborating with local territorial agencies and NGOs to create outreach documents and educational videos specifically for underserved communities in the U.S. Caribbean.
 - Identifying staff liaisons to provide customer service (e.g., regarding permit acquisition, data requests) for Spanish speaking constituents, and to translate or produce documents in Spanish based on feedback from local agencies, academia, and NGOs in the U.S. Caribbean.
 - Participating in an annual local training program for commercial and recreational fishermen (i.e., PEPCO, a fishing education program run by the Puerto Rico Department of Natural Resources).
 - Providing compliance guides in both English and Spanish for training in Puerto Rico.
- Developing workshops to get feedback and input from states/territories/tribes on the data and information they have that would be appropriate to include when submitting a fishery resource disaster determination request, and will continue to expand outreach for tribal engagement and territories to support them in the fisheries disaster process.
- Providing a presentation on "Managing Fisheries in a Changing Climate" to students at Minority Serving Institutions through the Educational Partnership Program with Minority Serving Institutions.
- Engaging with the annual fishery management council appointment process with a focus on identifying and removing any barriers to broader diversity in council membership:
 - Coordinating with regional offices to ensure that council diversity, including tribal representation, is a topic for their EEJ engagement meetings/strategies.
 - Connecting with states, territories, and governors' offices to collect feedback on our ongoing work to modernize the council nomination process.
 - Partnering with regional offices and NOAA Fisheries Office of Communications to expand outreach strategies/campaigns aimed at broadening the 2024 council membership nomination process, with increased education (for increased visibility and awareness) about the councils and pathways to council membership.
 - Continuing to expand council member spotlights on our website to highlight council member diversity.

To embed EEJ into our outreach and engagement, OSF will better communicate with stakeholders and underserved communities impacted by our work. We will prioritize new and reinvigorated efforts to work more closely with underserved communities.

Public comments we received during the national EEJ Strategy drafting process and OSF engagement process included the following types of suggestions, which we have taken/are taking into consideration as we identify focal areas:

- Consider barriers for obtaining fishing permits (web interface, customer service, language).
- Consider working with local liaisons to identify appropriate methods, materials, and phrasing for relaying information.
- Consider how language barriers impact underserved communities’ ability to comply with regulations and fully participate in fisheries.
- Consider improving transparency in council member selection and communication regarding how states disburse fishery resource disaster assistance funds.

Table 4: Outreach and Engagement: Actions, Metrics, and Resources Needed

Actions	Metrics	Resources Needed
<p>1. Leverage existing information and community ties to engage with underserved communities in the U.S. Caribbean on HMS issues (such as understanding permit and reporting requirements, accessibility to permits, language barriers, outreach needs).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Updates provided to underserved communities - Y/N ● Number of individuals from underserved communities we reach through agency communication methods ● Number of outreach documents developed for underserved communities ● Number of HMS Caribbean Commercial Small Boat Commercial Fishing permits issued 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff time
<p>2. Co-develop communication strategies for underserved communities through community and local partnerships (e.g., Puerto Rico Sea Grant).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● New communication strategies co-developed with underserved communities - Y/N ● Underserved communities reached by new strategies - Y/N 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff time ● Community input ● Additional funds for engagement ● Staff training
<p>3. Learn from existing community ties (e.g., listening and learning sessions with community members and local organizations) the best methods for communication. Share this information throughout NOAA Fisheries and with regional fishery management councils and other advisory bodies, and update strategies based on new information or on-the-ground realities. Consider accessibility in terms of transparency, language, distribution method (in-person, print, video, social media, etc.), and cultural protocols.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use of new communication strategies that are responsive to cultural norms and community context - Y/N 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff time ● Community input ● Additional funds for engagement ● Staff training
<p>4. Create outreach materials, including translated materials (e.g., permit applications, species identification guides) and plan events that are accessible to underserved communities. This could help to increase awareness of NOAA Fisheries among underserved communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Number of communication products (brochures, media posts, etc.) or outreach events (meetings, presentations, workshops, etc.) ● Number of documents translated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff time ● Additional funding to hire language experts for interpretation and translation ● Additional funds for outreach materials and events ● EEJ training

Actions	Metrics	Resources Needed
5. Support educational programs and opportunities such as the MREP to engage underserved communities in management processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of members of underserved communities trained in management processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff time Additional funding to support existing education programs EEJ training
6. Provide outreach, mentorship, and public-facing online training for underserved communities regarding how to navigate OSF-administered grant program (e.g., Bycatch Reduction Engineering Program) proposal development and application process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of public outreach events targeted at underserved communities Number of underserved communities receiving access to technical expertise and subject matter experts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff time
7. Provide outreach, mentorship, and public-facing online information for underserved communities regarding how to navigate the NOAA Fisheries internship and job application process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individuals from underserved communities informed about internship and job opportunities and application process - Y/N 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff time

Equitably Distribute Benefits

- **Objective:** Distribute benefits equitably by increasing the access to opportunities for underserved communities.
- **Barriers Addressed:** Barriers to engagement and accessing services, structural barriers, System complexity.

OSF has incorporated EEJ into our benefits distribution practices by:

- Administering multiple funding and financial opportunity programs that provide direct and indirect benefits to stakeholders and underserved communities.
- Developing fishery resource disaster guidance for states/tribes/territories to improve the quality of fishery resource disaster requests. Planning upcoming workshops for West Coast and Alaska tribes.
- Making new funding opportunities available to the councils under the Inflation Reduction Act for advancement of climate-ready fisheries management efforts in support of underserved communities.
- Commissioning a study by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine; Division on Earth and Life Studies; and Ocean Studies Board to consider the data and information needs and availability for assessing equity in the distribution of benefits derived from current fisheries management practices.

Benefits can also come in the form of data and tools that communities can use to make decisions. For example, benefits relating to climate change mitigation include supporting and funding tools to increase knowledge and resilience.

To embed EEJ into how we distribute benefits, OSF will examine our policies, criteria, and processes related to the provision of funding and other benefits to ensure equitable distribution. The key challenges will be to recognize and repair inequities and to identify new opportunities to deliver benefits to underserved communities.

Public comments we received during the national EEJ Strategy drafting process and OSF engagement process included the following types of suggestions, which we have taken/are taking into consideration as we identify focal areas:

- Consider generational equity by looking at historical, cultural, and traditional participation in a fishery and access to resources and associated impacts to future generations.

Table 5: Equitably Distribute Benefits: Actions, Metrics, and Resources Needed

Actions	Metrics	Resources Needed
1. Identify and address generational inequities and potential barriers that underserved communities may face when accessing NOAA Fisheries’ benefits and services, including agency acquisition and financial assistance opportunities. Work to incorporate EEJ considerations into BREP and fishery resource disaster funding opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Number of staff trained to identify and combat unconscious bias in funding decisions ● Number of grant/funding/contracting program selection criteria reviewed and modified ● Number of fisheries disaster workshops and BREP outreach interactions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff time ● EEJ training
2. Incorporate EEJ considerations into decision-making about resource allocations to the extent consistent with applicable law. Considerations could include assessment of impacts and benefits to underserved communities and prioritization of actions that benefit or correct a disparity among communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Number of programs that incorporate EEJ into allocation decision-making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff time ● EEJ training

Inclusive Governance

- **Objective:** Enable the meaningful involvement of underserved communities in decision-making processes.
- **Barriers Addressed:** Barriers to engagement and accessing services, gaps in representation, system complexity, structural barriers.

OSF has incorporated EEJ into our governance process by:

- Encouraging HMS Advisory Panel participation, and selecting Advisory Panel members from underserved communities such as the Vietnamese pelagic longline community (Gulf of Mexico) and U.S. Caribbean fishing communities.
- Supporting accessibility to public meetings (HMS Advisory Panel, public hearings, etc.) by offering webinar options for participation.
- Implementing the National Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Implementation Plan, including more diverse representation on the HMS Advisory Panel.
- Engaging with states to promote diversity in candidates for council nominations and appointments.

To embed EEJ into our governance process, OSF will increase the diversity of voices involved in our processes, empower community participation, and support cooperative management and co-stewardship efforts wherever possible.

Table 6: Inclusive Governance: Actions, Metrics, and Resources Needed

Actions	Metrics	Resources Needed
<p>1. Increase and improve opportunities for underserved communities to engage in the decision-making process, including at the HMS Advisory Panel meeting and in public meetings. When hosting meetings in local communities, support local businesses for services (e.g., meeting spaces, travel, etc.) where possible and consistent with federal travel requirements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Number of methods implemented to increase participation in meetings ● Number of public meetings and other engagement in underserved communities and number of attendees ● Percentage of public meeting notices and documents in languages used by constituency and with translation and interpretation services available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● EEJ training for staff and advisory body members ● Staff time ● Additional funds for participants' travel ● Additional funds for facilities rental, equipment, supplies, translation, interpreters, community liaisons, etc.
<p>2. Encourage recruitment of candidates from underserved communities for appointment to regional fishery management councils, advisory bodies, and HMS Advisory Panel to facilitate broader participation and understanding. To the extent authorized by and consistent with applicable law, support efforts to collect data on demographics in order to identify any issues that may prevent council/advisory body member diversity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Data collected on demographic makeup of councils, advisory bodies, and HMS Advisory Panels - Y/N ● Availability of training and educational resources/materials for underserved communities - Y/N 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff time ● Outreach plan for new recruits
<p>3. Establish or improve relationships with state and territorial governments, other federal agencies, and non-government organizations in territories to leverage their community connections when soliciting public input.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Number of meetings scheduled to brief government officials in underserved communities ● Attendee satisfaction on the effectiveness of the outreach efforts tracked - Y/N 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff time ● Additional funding for OSF staff travel
<p>4. Continue to seek feedback from states and territories, other federal agencies, and non-government organizations on cross-cutting issues that impact underserved communities, such as climate change. Involve place-based experts on fisheries and climate issues to leverage local knowledge, as appropriate.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Number of meetings scheduled/attended, by entity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff time ● Additional funding for OSF staff travel