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# **Advancing Equity and Environmental Justice in Underserved Communities of the Southeast Region**

April 5, 2023

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

# Southeast Region Efforts and Engagement

- Helping to finalize and roll out National EEJ Strategy
- Preparing for regional implementation
- Establishing connections with underserved communities
- Amplifying and advancing EEJ goals and objectives as opportunities arise (e.g., Gulf Council IFQ Focus Group, Habitat Restoration grants)
- Developing and applying new tools and data (e.g., Community EJ Explorer Tool, Regional Crew Survey, tribal consultation guidance)

# NOAA Fisheries EEJ Strategy

## Objectives

Equity in research and monitoring

Incorporation of EEJ into policies and plans

Inclusive governance

Equitable distribution of benefits

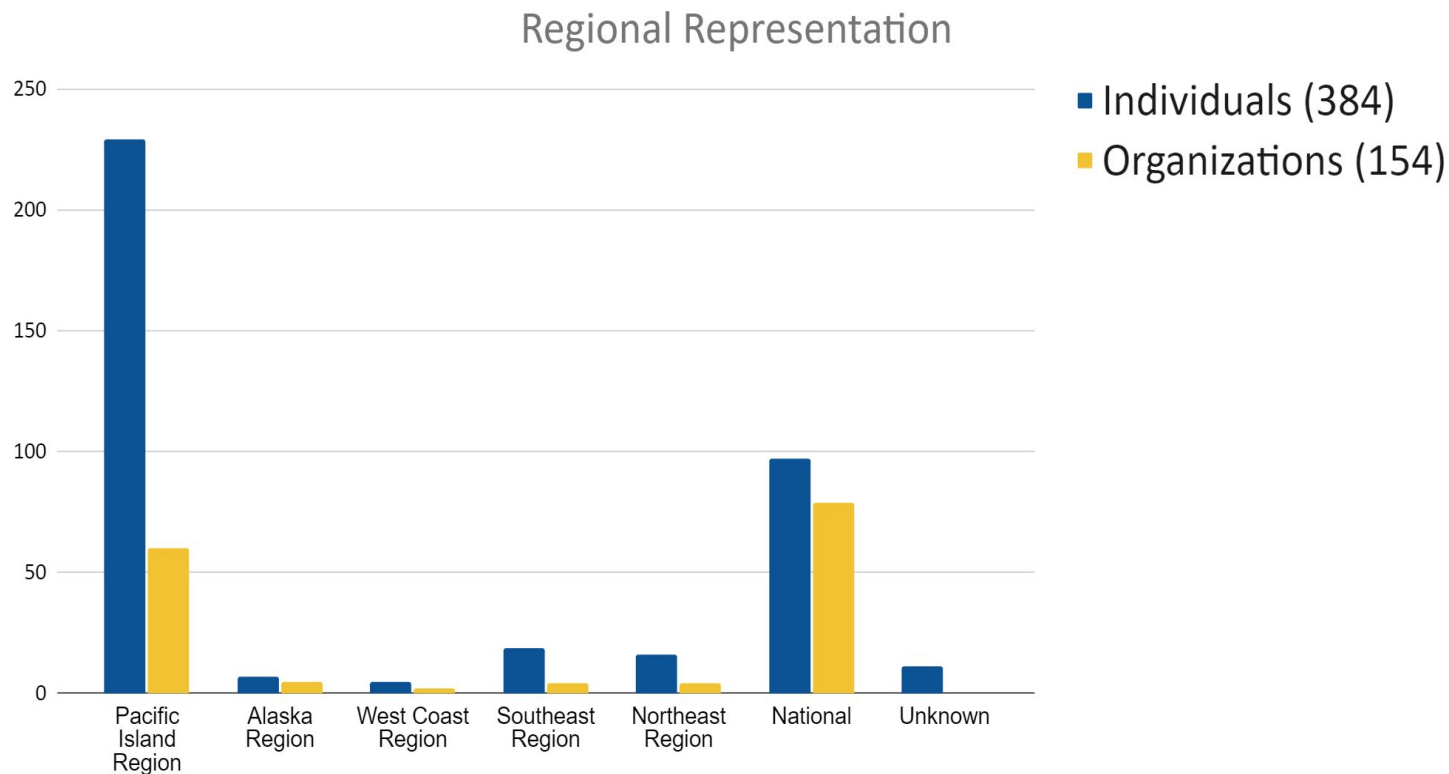
Equitable outreach and engagement

Empowering environment

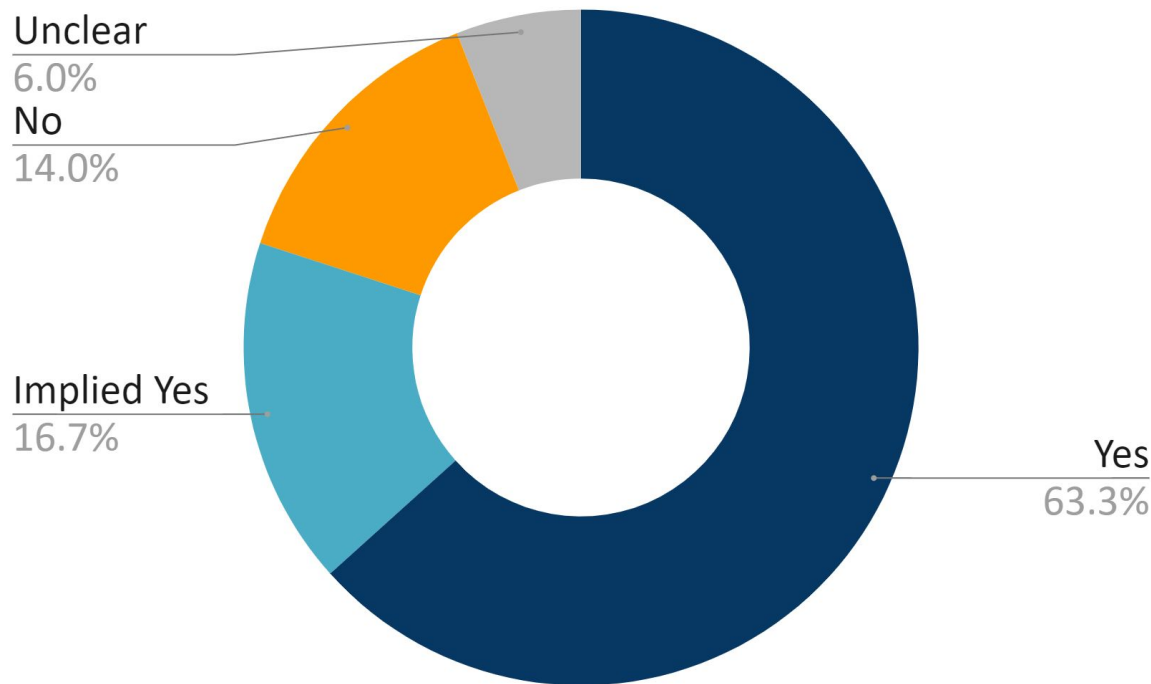


Photo by Barry Yeoma

# Public Feedback: Who Responded



# Public Feedback: Do Stakeholders Support the Strategy?



# Public Feedback - Key Messages

- Align NMFS work with local needs
- Engage with more diverse groups
- Support autonomy of Territorial and Tribal governments
- Collect demographic data
  - Fisheries, council, agency
- Measure success by feedback from communities
- Concern with catch shares, aquaculture, and protected species
- Implementation recommendations
  - Communicate early and often with stakeholders
  - Work with the Council and other agencies
  - Support capacity for EEJ work

# Public Feedback - Key Messages from SE Stakeholders

- Council support ranged from enthusiastic to measured
- Data, data, data
- Need boots on the ground
  - Spend more time on the docks
  - Work with and resource councils, states, and other liaisons who are already well positioned to advance outreach and engagement objectives
- Improve accessibility to Fisheries Finance Program and other federal funds
- Support and expand training programs like Marine Resources Education Program, Gulf Commercial Fishermen's Program
- Ensure equitable Council representation - underserved populations and fishing sectors
- Show me the money!

# NOAA Fisheries' EEJ Strategy

- Framework to incorporate EEJ into our daily activities
- Requires step-down implementation plans at the regional level
- Seeks to remove barriers to EEJ
- Seeks to promote equity in all we do



# Process and Plans: Our National and Southeast Regional Timeline



# Focus Groups

- One of a suite of ethnographic methods used to consult and collect data from local stakeholders
- Bring together a small group of people selected based on predefined experience or knowledge in order to answer questions in a moderated setting designed to shed light on a topic of interest
- Each will include up to 15 stakeholders from underserved communities that are impacted by our work to help us understand how to advance our 6 national EEJ objectives in the Gulf of Mexico

# *Tentative* Plan for Gulf Focus Groups

# Central Gulf

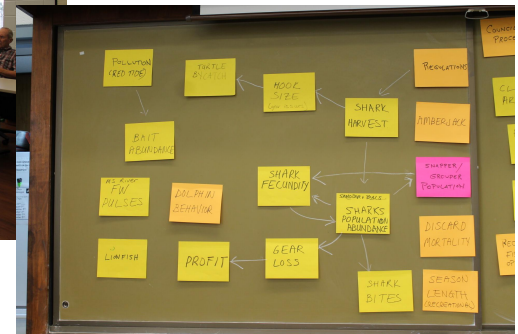
- July 17-21
  - New Orleans
  - Gulfport
  - Vietnamese-Only

# Texas

- July 31-August 4
  - Galveston
  - Port Aransas

# West Florida

- August 28-September 1
  - Tampa
  - Pensacola



# National Strategy and Regional Implementation

## National Strategy Rollout

- Fishery Bulletin
  - English
  - Spanish
  - Vietnamese
- Council presentations
  - Gulf - April
  - Caribbean - April
  - South Atlantic - June

## Regional Implementation Strategy

- 20 Focus Group meetings
  - Caribbean: 4
  - Gulf: 7
  - South Atlantic: 7
  - South Florida: 2
- Council coordination (CCC reps)
- Other internal and external partners

# Basic Needs To Accomplish the EEJ Strategy



- Staff training, time, and training
- Community liaisons
- Demographic data collection, analysis, and reporting
- Collaboration with partners and other agencies
- Language translation services

# Example SE-Specific Strategies

**Research and Monitoring:** Expand collection of demographic data; incorporate indigenous traditional or local ecological knowledge into the data and information supporting our work

**Policies and Plans:** Continue reviewing EEJ impacts of management decisions using indicators; evaluate and address fairness and equity issues in catch share programs, disaster response protocols

**Inclusive Governance:** Hire multilingual staff in Permits Office; offer simultaneous interpretation services for Gulf and South Atlantic Council meetings; expand the Marine Resources Education Program

**Benefits:** Improve accessibility of regional grants processes (design, recruitment, review, selection processes)

**Communication and Outreach:** Translate permit applications and all other relevant materials to appropriate primary languages; use web and Google analytics data to increase accessibility to online materials; update or develop new communication plans and strategies based on targeted feedback from underserved communities

**Empowering Environment:** Address personnel needs - biologists for the Caribbean and anthropologists for all regions; organize regional workshop with federal partners to share information/lessons learned and leverage resources; support scholarship/internship opportunities for local residents

# We need your input

- What are your thoughts on the tentative dates and locations of the Gulf EEJ Focus Groups?
- Do you have other suggestions for engaging partners and communities in developing Southeast-specific implementation strategies?
- How can you inform that work?
- How can we best collaborate in developing our regional implementation plan?

# Upcoming IFQ Marketplace Transparency Focus Groups

Discussions indicated a variety of factors may inhibit existing participants from fully participating in the IFQ program.

IFQ market transparency and effectiveness for shares and allocation was one identified theme.

Currently, there are limited tools or information available.

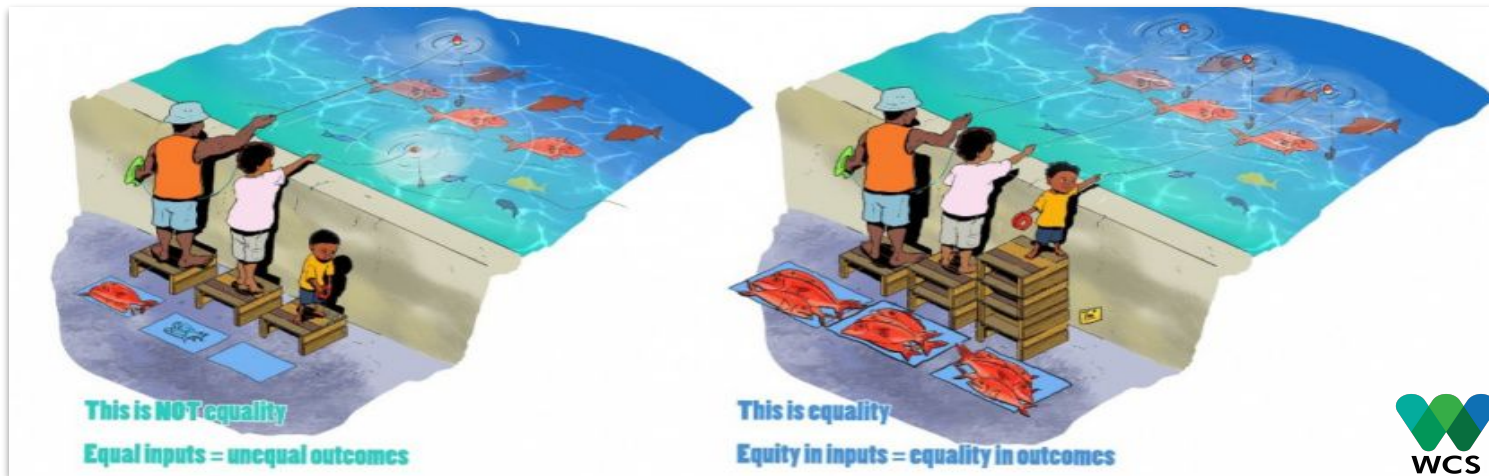
- Focus theme: Are there tools or products that SERO could create that would improve the understanding, knowledge, and access to available shares and allocation in the IFQ marketplace?
- Discussion will be focused on current practices, limiting factors, and potential tools to create market transparency and effectiveness.
- Anticipating holding meetings in the late summer to early fall 2023.

THANK YOU!

EXTRA SLIDES

# Key Terms: Equity

*Equity* means the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment.



Definition from Executive Order 13985.



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# Key Terms: Environmental Justice

*Environmental Justice* is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of race, color, gender, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies including but not limited to:

- Equitable protection from environmental and health hazards
- Equitable access to decision-making processes
- Equitable opportunity for disadvantaged communities that have been historically marginalized



Definition from the Environmental Protection Agency.



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# Key Terms: Underserved Communities

*Underserved communities* have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life.



These include geographic communities as well as populations sharing a particular characteristic such as: women and girls; Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons\*, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and other persons of color; persons facing discrimination or barriers related to gender identity; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.

Definition based on Executive Order 13985



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