

**Joint Forage Fish/Seabird Colonies and Adjacent Waters Working Group
Breakout Group Report**

December 10

12:45 pm – 2:45 pm

Submitted by:

Linda Welch, Forage Fish Working Group (FFWG) Lead

Ruth Boettcher, Seabird Colonies and Adjacent Waters Working Group (SCAWWG) Lead

BREAKOUT GROUP AGENDA

- 12:45 Overview of goals for working group discussion
- 12:50 Update on AKN Colonial Waterbird Database (Ruth Boettcher)
- 1:05 Monitoring Common Tern Diet with Fecal DNA (Gemma Clucas)
- 1:25 Review of 2024 efforts to collect fecal DNA samples from common terns and black skimmers (Linda Welch)
- 1:35 Project Poop Group Discussion (All)
- 2:05 Review existing short and long-term objectives of the Forage Fish and SCAW working groups and discuss which objectives to tackle next

BREAKOUT GROUP REPORT

A total of 55 people attended the joint working group meeting. Below is a bulleted summary of the major topics that were discussed.

1. Initial year of Project Poop was a huge success (1,800 samples!). There was strong interest in repeating project poop next year at the same, or slightly expanded, level of effort.
2. Really good discussion on expanding project poop in the context of informing forage fish management in the NE and mid-Atlantic with a focus on herring and menhaden; two fisheries that have captured the attention of fishery managers and to some extent the public at least with regard to menhaden.
3. Discussed exploring the possibility of drafting a large-scale funding proposal to fund the expansion of Project Poop (e.g., Competitive State Wildlife Grant)
4. Discussed improving engagement with fisheries management councils or offices by providing evidence that seabirds are indicators of forage fish populations and distribution and that an exchange of info. can benefit both disciplines.
5. Discussed the development of fact sheets on forage fish in the context of garnering support for the Forage Fish Conservation Act.
6. From the SCAWWG perspective, there was an interest in developing a broad scale banding-resighting effort to (1) get a better understanding of interchange among colonies; (2) establish recruitment rates of birds banded as chicks into breeding colonies as they

reach breeding age; (3) contribute to species survival estimates; and (4) document survival and recruitment rates to serve as potential baseline for evaluating impacts of offshore wind.

BREAKOUT GROUP ACTION ITEMS

1. Ruth and Linda will send follow-up email in January to determine who is willing to participate in development of a grant proposal, helping to draft forage fish fact sheets or plan broad scale banding-resighting project. Based on results of that email, additional meetings will be scheduled for spring of 2025.
2. Ruth, Linda and Gemma have scheduled a virtual 2025 Project Poop pre-planning meeting for March 4th at 2:00pm.