

Meeting Summary
MRIP Executive Steering Committee Conference Call
Monday, December 15, 2014; 4:00 – 5:30 pm EST

In Attendance: Executive Steering Committee (ESC) members and participants: John Boreman, Chair; Gordon Colvin; Kitty Simonds; Randy Fisher; Russ Dunn; Ned Cyr; Dick Brame; Alan Risenhoover (for Emily Menashes); David Donaldson; Miguel Rolon; Bob Beal; Bonnie Ponwith; Doug Mecum. Others: Dave Van Voorhees; Galen Tromble; Pres Pate; Rob Andrews; April Bagwill; Chris Wright; Lauren Dolinger Few; Leah Sharpe; Steve Williams.

Chairman Boreman opened the meeting at 4:00, and reviewed the agenda.

1. Review and action on OT and IMT FY 15 Project Proposals (Rob Andrews, Lauren Dolinger Few)

Rob Andrews reviewed the report on the November 18 – 19 meeting of the Operations Team (OT) (Attachment 1 below). The OT received 14 project funding proposals for FY 15. They determined that two of the proposals were for implementation, and therefore did not qualify for new method research and development funding. The remaining 12 projects are recommended by the OT for funding in the order of priority shown in Attachment 1, with final decisions to be determined by the availability of funds. The 12 recommended projects total \$1.75 million. Five of the projects are conditionally recommended pending successful resolution of OT questions and recommended revisions by the Project Teams.

There were no objections or concerns expressed by ESC members or participants regarding the OT project funding recommendations.

Lauren Dolinger Few reported on project proposals received by the Information Management Team. The IMT received three proposals, all dealing with development and implementation of a new database for the Pacific RecFIN survey and its state members. All three proposals were recommended by the IMT for funding in the order indicated in Attachment 2. The total requested is \$375,000.

There were no objections or concerns expressed by ESC members or participants regarding the IMT project funding recommendations.

2. Fishing Effort Survey: Roll Out of new Fishing Effort Mail Survey and Discussion of pending approval of Final Project Report and certification (Gordon Colvin and Leah Sharpe)

Gordon Colvin reviewed the status of the review and public communications regarding completion of the Fishing Effort Survey (FES) Pilot Project Report and the associated commencement of transition planning. Leah Sharpe outlined the status of communications and the development of a more comprehensive long term communications plan as the FES is implemented and a Transition Plan is completed and executed. This plan will include a complete re-design of the MRIP website. The FES Project Report has been approved by the OT and is before the ESC for final action as of cob Dec 15th. ESC discussion centered on four subjects:

- Feedback on the Project Report: The ESC members and participants did not offer questions or comments on the draft report. John Boreman noted that, unless any comments were received

by cob this date, the ESC would clear the report for agency final action and public release as a final report.

- MRIP certification: The ESC discussed whether, upon acceptance of the final Project Report, to recommend to the NMFS AA for Fisheries that the methodology be certified and prepared for implementation, or to defer that recommendation pending completion of benchmarking and further determination of the causes and magnitude of differences between the results of the current telephone survey and the FES. Following discussion, the ESC preferred to complete certification of the methodology and its addition to the MRIP toolbox now, but to convey to the leadership that implementation must be limited to side-by-side sampling with the telephone survey until sufficient benchmarking data has been collected to allow for effective quantitative comparison of the results of the two methods and for development of calibration tools. The Transition Plan in development will address these considerations and should be referenced in the advice to leadership. The ESC would also emphasize the importance of providing advice to leadership and information to partners and stakeholders that fully and clearly describes the transition process and its expected timetable. A Decision Memo will be prepared that will address three recommendations: (1) recommend certification of the FES mail survey methodology; (2) identify additional studies to be conducted during the benchmarking period that will test ways to improve the performance and timeliness of the mail survey and that will add to our understanding of the basis for the different results of the mail and telephone surveys; and (3) recommend implementation consistent with the FES Transition Plan that will be referenced and attached to the Decision Memo.
- Feedback received on the Roll Out to date: ESC members and participants offered observations on the partner and stakeholder responses and advice on future communications. Comments included the following:
 - Overall, the reaction to the initial roll out process was positive, in that partners and stakeholders expressed appreciation for the early notification. Most are likely to remain guarded about the details of the FES until the implications are better understood.
 - It is very important to communicate clearly that the FES results cannot be considered best *available* scientific information until benchmarking and calibration have been successfully completed.
 - Similarly, it is essential to completely and effectively communicate what the transition process and timeline will be. The details of the timeline are of particular concern to the states as well as stock assessors.
 - It is also essential to be pro-active in getting these key messages out in order to forestall the spread of misinformation.
- Website: The ESC would like to have an opportunity to review the content for the updated website. Leah Sharpe will provide review copies (or access to the development site for the NMFS members) of the webpages for ESC review, probably in January.

3. Transition Team status report. Status of: General Transition Plan; Fishing Effort Survey Transition Plan; 2015 Benchmarking of CHTS and FES (Dave Van Voorhees and Galen Tromble)

Dave Van Voorhees briefed the ESC on the work of the new MRIP Transition Team (TT). He reviewed the team's Terms of Reference and the status of recruiting its members. The TT is co-chaired by ST (Dave Van Voorhees) and SF (Galen Tromble) and has members from each NMFS Region and Science Center, each Council and Commission, and a number of the states. The full team has met several times, has developed a draft General Transition Plan, and has established an Atlantic and Gulf sub-group. The

Atlantic and Gulf sub-group is meeting weekly to develop a detailed Transition Plan for the FES and related implementation issues for those regions, including the calibration of the new intercept survey design, following the results of a workshop co-sponsored with SEDAR this September.

The TT Chairs reviewed the draft of the General Transition Plan (Attachment 3 below) and the progress of the Atlantic and Gulf sub-group.

In general, the ESC expressed support for the direction the TT is taking and the progress to date. ESC discussion covered two points. One member asked about the process for “socializing” the information in the general and FES transition plans and the process for adopting and building support (especially with the states). Leah Sharpe stated that this will be a large part of the Communication and Education Team’s plan for the FES and Transition Plan on a continuing basis. The ESC also noted that there are few state members for the Mid-Atlantic and New England regions. Dave Van Voorhees stated that the Chairs are open to adding members and would like to recruit state members from the Greater Atlantic Region. Perhaps the Councils and Commissions can assist in that effort.

4. FY 15 Budget and Spend Plan Priorities (Dave Van Voorhees and Gordon Colvin)

Gordon Colvin and Dave Van Voorhees reviewed a spreadsheet that outlined a rough draft of the FY 15 MRIP spend plan. The draft assumes an appropriation level of \$9.836M (based on the FY 14 amount), generally level-funding for staff, MRIP Teams and Consultant support, \$1.871M for projects (note: cf. \$1.75M recommended per item 1 above), \$4.684M for support to Atlantic and Gulf intercept surveys, \$222K for RecFIN, and \$1.400M for the FES benchmarking. At this level of spending, there would be a budget shortfall of \$2.832M. Major unknowns that remain to be established include the actual appropriations level, the cost of the FES once bids are reviewed (in progress now), and the level of support from other sources that can be made available on a temporary (2-3 yr) basis to support the FES benchmarking. A number of potential areas for reduction of MRIP spending were identified for discussion purposes only and the ESC was asked to give thought to this analysis for development of recommendations at its next meeting.

The ESC had a number of questions about operational funds for the base survey, and requested that an updated proposed spend plan, which includes both base funds and the additional MRIP funds, be made available for the next ESC meeting.

5. Additional issues that were discussed briefly

- Scheduling the next ESC meeting. We will plan a meeting in early 2015, with the intent that it be an in-person meeting.
- Regional Implementation status, and status of Operations Team development of an Implementation Funding Process. A draft proposal is under review by the OT and will be forwarded to the ESC for review/approval prior to its next meeting.
- Funding needs and strategies for building funding moving forward. This will be part of the budget priorities discuss at the next meeting.

Attachment 1

MARINE RECREATIONAL INFORMATION PROGRAM OPERATIONS TEAM ANNUAL MEETING

Andaz San Diego, San Diego, California
November 18-19, 2014

Tuesday November 18, 2014

The meeting commenced with brief remarks and introductions. The morning focused on a review of recent MRIP activities and regional project updates. After lunch, presentations from the Communications and Education Team, Information Management Team, and the newly formed Transition Team were presented, along with an overview of the new Fishing Effort Survey.

Recent MRIP Activities (Rob Andrews)

The first presentation reviewed MRIP activities over the past year, including brief updates on

- the re-estimation of catch estimates,
- the 2013 implementation of a new Access Point Angler Intercept Survey (APAIS) design,
- the APAIS Design Change Evaluation Project – regarding ongoing work to refine and evaluate calibration methods to account for temporal coverage differences in the APAIS and historic catch estimation design
- efforts to address species specific survey designs in the Gulf coast, and
- the establishment of the Transition Team to ensure that, moving forward, transitions to new survey designs are as smooth as possible.

Caribbean Update (Graciela García-Moliner)

The project team for the FY13 project *Pilot study of the queen conch (Strombus gigas) and spiny lobster (Panulirus argus) recreational fishery in Puerto Rico* requested additional funding (\$43,720) to continue data collection and complete project objectives. The request was approved by the Operations Team. Per OT standard operating procedures, funding for this project will be provided before consideration of FY2015 proposals, contingent upon available funding.

Western Pacific (Josh DeMello)

Ongoing projects in both Hawaii and Guam were reviewed. The Hawaii project is moving forward to pilot test a roving creel survey for onsite catch and effort data collection, a mail survey for effort data collection, and an aerial survey for additional validation of both methods. In Guam, two projects are ongoing. The first is currently conducting data collection surveys using creel methods and have developed incentive and outreach programs to increase participation in the survey. The second project which is comparing fishing activity in public access areas to restricted military base fishing activities is near completion and found that fishing from military areas accounts for less than five percent of all fishing activity in Guam.

Pacific Coast Update (Steve Williams)

An overview was given for several ongoing projects on the Pacific coast. Much of the discussion centered on how to integrate and best manage the development of electronic data collection that is being developed in multiple regions. Along with this, two of the FY15 proposals requested funding for implementing improvements to existing survey designs that were tested in previous MRIP pilot studies; it was determined that this is not currently within the purview of the Operations Team Request for Proposals, which focuses on developing and testing improved methods. The OT is developing a process to prioritize investment in implementation projects.

Atlantic Coast (Mike Cahall)

The majority of the update centered on the transition from NMFS to state conduct of the Access Point Angler Intercept Survey, set to occur in 2016. The central coordinating body of this effort will be the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP). ACCSP also administered an MRIP project to assess precision needs of recreational fisheries statistics to support assessment. Results from this project will be available in early 2015.

Gulf Coast (Gregg Bray)

The Gulf update centered on the FY14 funded project results of an application-based reporting mechanism for determining red snapper catch data. The group was informed that further conversation about the results and the survey design will be discussed at a workshop in December. It was noted that utilizing species specific data could be difficult to integrate into the general survey.

Fishing Effort Survey (Rob Andrews)

Results from the completed series of projects aimed at improving the effort survey were presented showing that response rates to a mail survey were much higher than that of the current telephone survey. Discussion focused on why the estimates were much higher than the telephone survey, the timeliness of mail surveys, the feasibility of 'ground-truthing' the results, and the cost of implementing a mail survey. An FY15 proposal was submitted to further investigate measurement error and the possibility of using a mail survey to provide one month wave estimates.

Transition Team (Dave Van Voorhees)

MRIP created a Transition Team to develop and oversee the process of transitioning from current survey methods to improved methods. The Transition Team is a cross-disciplinary group consisting of managers, stock assessors, scientists, and state partners. Their purpose is to assess impacts of proposed survey design changes on stock assessments and fishery management. The team has already started developing a general transition plan, as well as a plan specific for transitioning from the Coastal Household Telephone Survey to the mail-based Fishing Effort Survey (FES), if the survey design is approved by the Operations Team and Executive Steering Committee.

There was much discussion on transitioning to the FES, focusing on the proposed plan for moving forward and the recent release of the project report. Operations Team members

expressed concern over the current language which does not fully impart the importance of regional and state partners to the process, also expressing that more partner involvement would have been beneficial to the planning that occurred prior to releasing the report. Additionally, it was added that going forward, communication to partners and stakeholders needs to be clearer, specific, and not undersell the potential implications. Overall, there was general consensus that the plan presented was a good outline and that everyone is supportive of the new design and attempt to address partner and stakeholder concerns early on in the transition process.

Communications and Education Team Update (Leah Sharpe)

The presentation and discussion targeted ongoing efforts to engage partners and stakeholders in 2015 by

- Expanding the Communications and Education Team to include regional representatives – the goal is to improve the flow of National messages to regional audiences, improve coordination, better understand regional needs, and develop communications tool to meet those needs;
- Redesign the MRIP website – improve the organization and messaging; and
- Communicating both APAIS and Effort survey design improvements

Information Management Team Update (Lauren Dolinger Few)

The presentation and discussion targeted the following listed topics, with additional discussion on the three IMT submitted proposals

- Federal initiative for improving the use of and access to data from Earth-observation systems – this includes all research efforts for NOAA
- Transition from MDMS (MRIP Data Management Standard) to PIMS (Program Information Management System) – MDMS is a successful tool and will be expanded to include RFPs and other reporting mechanisms for the entire NMFS Office of Science and Technology
- Overview of the Vessel Directory and recent improvements

OT RFP Focus

The first day of the meeting concluded with a discussion about whether or not Operations Team RFP funding should be utilized to support implementation of improved survey designs. Traditionally, the OT RFP has focused on developing and testing new designs, and implementation projects were not considered in prior years. It was determined that, for FY15, the OT will not consider implementation projects for funding. It was also suggested that the Executive Steering Committee should make the final decision on how to allocate funds between implementation and research and development in future years. The development of a process to support implementation of improved survey designs was discussed during the second day of the meeting (see below).

Wednesday November 19, 2014

The morning and part of the afternoon focused on evaluating and ranking the FY14 project proposals; the remainder of the meeting focused on creating a framework for prioritizing MRIP investment in implementation of improved survey designs and other additional topics.

Implementation Process

At the 2013 Operations Team meeting in Jacksonville, FL, the OT discussed its revised charge to, “establish a cross-regional process for prioritizing options for NMFS/MRIP investment in implementation of improved recreational fishing data collection methods.” It was determined in 2013 that

- The responsibility of the OT will be to identify criteria and outline the process for prioritizing implementation of survey designs, not to establish a second RFP or make specific implementation project funding recommendations.
- Develop a set of metrics to evaluate and assign priorities.
- Establish an objective process based on regional needs for identifying how to allocate money and target effort where it is needed.

A proposed Implementation Process was presented to the Operations Team for discussion. The process outlines the following:

- Regional Implementation Teams will identify needs, priorities, and costs for sampling catch and effort effectively and the Operations Team and Executive Steering Committee will review and approve these Regional Implementation Plans.
- NMFS Office of Science and Technology will develop prioritization metrics and conduct an annual assessment of funding priorities based upon the Regional Implementation Plans.
- Approved implementation funding would be permanent – but still subject to annual federal budgets.
- The Regional Implementation teams would evaluate the Plans at a minimum of every three years and adjust to reflect evolving needs and budgets.

The Operations Team will continue to develop a framework for implementation. OT members are currently reviewing the draft implementation process. A draft will be presented to the ESC in early 2015.

Additional Topic: How to effectively manage electronic reporting

During the discussion of several proposed projects, it was suggested that the Operations Team further deliberate on how best to integrate the cross-regional efforts to develop and utilize electronic reporting mechanisms. It was suggested that MRIP develop national standards and guidelines to ensure that all reporting tools are comparable. The OT will collaborate with the Information Management Team to address this issue.

Proposal Evaluation

The Team received 14 proposals for consideration. Individual OT members evaluated all proposals prior to the meeting (evaluation criteria are included as attachment A). However, the team agreed at the meeting to only consider research and development projects for funding (see

discussion above). Consequently two proposals, documented in the table below, were excluded from further evaluation and ranking.

The Team recommends the remaining 12 projects for funding, with funding for several projects conditional upon follow-up by the project team. Funding recommendations and conditions for funding are provided in Table 1. Project teams will be asked to address OT comments/questions in the follow-up project plans, which will be due in early 2015. Projects are listed in priority order. In the event of insufficient funding to cover the costs of all recommended projects, the OT recommends funding projects at 100% of requested funding levels beginning with the highest priority projects and funding as many projects as the budget permits.

Table 1. OT funding recommendations and funding conditions. Projects are listed in order of priority. Prioritization was conducted by Operations Team members, not participants.

Project Title	Cost	Funding Recommendation	Comments
Electronic Data Collection in Atlantic Coast Access Point Angler Intercept Survey	\$101,800	Yes	
Addressing Preliminary Recommendations from the MRIP Sponsored Review of Monitoring of Washington's Ocean Sampling Program – Testing Electronic Data Capture	\$118,212	Yes	
Recall Error in a Recreational Fishing Effort Survey - Testing the Impacts of 1-Month Waves	\$383,040	Yes	
Estimating Recreational Fishing Effort through Onsite and Follow-Up Mail Surveys	\$265,000	Yes	
Developing an Electronic Logbook To Census For-Hire Angler-Trip Effort, Catch and Harvest in Alaska	\$216,450	Yes	

Project Title	Cost	Funding Recommendation	Comments
NC For-Hire Logbook: Implementation, Validation, and Survey Standardization	\$274,800	Yes (Conditional)	Request more detail about costs (e.g., what specific elements of the NC logbook will MRIP funds cover?) as well as status of the For Hire Survey in 2015 and plans for benchmarking. Will validation sampling be an independent data collection or part of MRIP dockside sampling?
Test the new sampling design for the onsite intercept survey of private boats in HMRFS	\$55,000	Yes	
An Evaluation of Differential Recreational Landing Rates from Public and Private Access Sites	\$59,843	Yes (Conditional)	It seems unlikely that the design will result in probability samples of recreational fishing trips (ie., there is no assurance that convenience samples collected by enforcement agents will represent actual fishing activity). The OT requests that these concerns about the design, as well as additional details, such as expected sample sizes, be addressed after the upcoming red snapper workshop and with input from MRIP consultants.
For-Hire Electronic Census Reporting of Red Snapper Catch in Alabama - Year 2	\$28,665	Yes (Conditional)	The proposal provided very few details about how the proposed data collection would differ from the FY13 MRIP project. The OT requests that additional details be provided after the upcoming red snapper workshop. Specifically, the OT requests additional information about the validation component, including a description of how validation will be independent from census reporting.

Project Title	Cost	Funding Recommendation	Comments
Recreational Angler Electronic Census Reporting of Red Snapper Catch Data in Alabama- Year 2	\$55,000	Yes (Conditional)	The proposal provided very few details about how the proposed data collection would differ from the FY13 MRIP project. The OT requests that additional details be provided after the upcoming red snapper workshop. Specifically, the OT requests additional information about the validation component, including a description of how validation will be independent from census reporting as well as estimated sample sizes for validation sampling and at-sea intercepts.

Project Title	Cost	Funding Recommendation	Comments
An Evaluation of Recreational Discard Collection Methods for Selected Federally Managed Species	\$150,982	Yes (Conditional)	The OT has many concerns about the proposed design: 1) The Onboard Observer Survey (Method 1) and the Captain/Deck Hand Self Reporting Log (Method 2) utilize two different sample frames (volunteer participants for Method 1 and everyone else for Method 2). How will these two methods be compared if they sample two different populations and what inference can be made from these samples? 2) The sample sizes are extremely small. 3) Providing post cards to anglers at the beginning of trips might alter fishing behavior, confounding comparisons to LA Creel sampling. 4) How will the different methods be evaluated? The OT requests additional details that address these concerns following the upcoming red snapper workshop. Given the scope and importance of the project, would the project team consider a two-phased project that included a design phase followed by a testing phase?
Improving Louisiana's Angler Contact Information Going Into the National Saltwater Angler Registry	\$48,917	Yes	
Oregon Ocean Recreational Boat Survey Expanded Sampling Coverage	\$81,412	No	Implementation project.

Project Title	Cost	Funding Recommendation	Comments
Addressing Preliminary Recommendations from the MRIP Sponsored Review of Monitoring of Washington's Ocean Sampling Program – Implementation of "Shoulder" Month Sampling	\$48,207	No	Implementation project.

Participant	Affiliation
Pres Pate	NOAA Affiliate, Office of Science and Technology (CHAIR)
Rob Andrews	NOAA Fisheries, Office of Science and Technology
Mike Armstrong	Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries
April Bagwill	NOAA Affiliate, Office of Science and Technology
Gregg Bray	Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission
Mike Cahall	Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program
Pat Campfield	Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
Richard Cody	Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
Josh DeMello	Western Pacific Fisheries Management Council
Jason Didden	Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council
Lauren Dolinger Few	NOAA Fisheries, Office of Science and Technology
Mark Fisher	Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
Graciela García-Moliner	Caribbean Fishery Management Council
James Hasbrouck	Alaska Department of Fish & Game
Gary Shepard	NOAA Fisheries, Northeast Fisheries Science Center
Leah Sharpe	NOAA Affiliate, Office of Science and Technology
Cindy Thomson	NOAA Fisheries, Southwest Fisheries Science Center
Dave Van Voorhees	NOAA Fisheries, Office of Science and Technology
Steve Williams	Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission

Attachment A
Marine Recreational Information Program, Operations Team
Call For Proposals
FY 2015

The Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) is soliciting proposals to support the continued development of improved data collection designs for monitoring marine recreational fishing catch, effort, and participation. If the proposal is approved and recommended for funding by the MRIP Operations Team, the project team will be asked to provide a more detailed project plan*.

Proposals that address one or more of the following priorities (in no particular order) will receive preference for funding consideration. Additional scoring criteria are provided below.

1. Projects that further develop or test recommendations from MRIP-funded reviews of existing data collection designs or previous MRIP pilot studies (i.e. follow-up studies)
2. Assessment of data needs (e.g. precision, resolution, timeliness, etc.) to support science and/or management;
3. Development of methods to estimate catch and effort at greater levels of temporal and spatial resolution, including both design- and model-based approaches;
4. Assessment of non-sampling errors, such as non-response error, coverage error, and measurement error, in recreational fishing surveys;
5. Development and testing of new technologies, such as electronic data capture and online reporting, to support recreational fisheries data collection;

Proposals should have clear objectives and describe how project results will address MRIP priorities. Proposals that do not clearly address research priorities may not score well. All proposals must identify a single project leader who is affiliated with a government agency or not-for-profit organization. Project leaders are the point of contact for the project and are required to submit monthly status reports. In addition, proposals must identify a specific mechanism (e.g. grant, cooperative agreement, contract, etc.) for transferring funds from the NOAA Fisheries Office and Science Technology (ST) to an entity that will administer the project. Project leaders are encouraged to consult with OT sponsors and/or ST staff to identify an appropriate funding mechanism.

Expectations: MRIP projects are expected to result in a final project report that provides substantive and meaningful discussion of project results, including recommendations for follow-up action when appropriate. All completed project reports will be reviewed by the MRIP Operations Team and Executive Steering Committee and will be posted to the MRIP website. In addition, project results that are deemed “influential” as defined in the Information Quality Act, and/or that recommend implementation of new methods, or request MRIP certification, may be subject to an independent peer review at the agency’s discretion. Project Teams will be asked to provide written responses to comments and recommendations resulting from such reviews as a part of the final project report.

All proposals must be submitted through the Fisheries Program Information Management System (PIMS) (<https://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/apex/f?p=mdms>). Instructions and support will be provided. To gain access to PIMS contact April Bagwill april.bagwill@noaa.gov.

Proposal Elements:

1. Overview

- a. Project Name
- b. MRIP Operations Team Sponsor: Each project must be sponsored by an individual member of the MRIP Operations Team.
- c. Keywords
- d. Project Description: Description of the project including benefits, relationship to MRIP priorities, and intended outcomes.
- e. Objectives: Concise list of project objectives.
- f. Background: Description of the circumstances necessitating the proposed project, including prior research and the current state of relevant knowledge. Project teams are encouraged to review relevant reports from completed MRIP projects, which are available on the MRIP website (<https://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/mdms/public/public.jsp>).
- g. References

2. Methodology

- a. Methodology: Description of the methods that will be used to achieve project objectives.
- b. Region
- c. Geographic Coverage: Geographic area in which the project will be conducted.
- d. Temporal Coverage: Time frame in which the project will be conducted.
- e. Frequency: Frequency of data collection.
- f. Unit of Analysis: Level at which data will be collected (e.g. angler, trip, fish, etc.).
- g. Collection Mode: Method of data collection (e.g. in person interview, telephone, mail, web, etc.).

3. Assumptions/Constraints

Are there any assumptions about the completion of other projects or external factors that may constrain the success of this project? In general, the portion of scope that deals with the limits of the projects should be identified here.

- a. New Data Collection: Is this a new data collection that may require approval from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB)? For information about the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) and a description of data collections that require OMB approval, please visit: http://www.cio.noaa.gov/services_programs/pragg.html. Project teams are responsible for ensuring that OMB/PRA requirements are satisfied.
- b. Funding Vehicle: Specific mechanism for transferring funding from MRIP (NOAA Fisheries Office of Science and Technology) to the project team. Project teams are encouraged to identify existing funding mechanisms (e.g. direct transfer of funding to NOAA Fisheries regional office or science center, existing grant or cooperative agreement between NOAA Fisheries and another entity (state, commission, council,

etc.). Project teams should work with OT sponsors and/or ST staff to identify potential funding mechanisms.

- c. Data Resources
- d. Other Resources
- e. Regulations
- f. Other

4. Final Deliverables

Describe any deliverables, including reports, improvements to other MRIP projects, or other outcomes which will be produced before the completion of the project. Parts of the scope that deal with the ultimate outcome of the project should be identified here. NOTE: A final report describing project results and implications is required for all projects funded by MRIP.

- a. Additional Reports
- b. New Data Set(s)
- c. New System(s)

5. Leadership

Identify members of the project team, including name, role and affiliation

6. Schedule

Identify relevant project tasks and milestones and provide estimated start and completion dates for each. Please consider time constraints associated with the transfer of funding in the proposed schedule. In recent years, project funds have generally been distributed from ST in May. Additional time may be required to distribute funds beyond the immediate recipient (e.g., funds are distributed to a NMFS Regional Office or Science Center and then passed along to a grantee).

7. Cost

Provide item-level costs for project components. Examples of specific items include travel, consultant support, supplies, data collection costs, etc. Adjustments to project costs may be possible following project selection and will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Evaluation Criteria

All proposals will be evaluated on the following criteria (30 pts).

1. Importance and Applicability (15)
 - *Does the project address one or more MRIP priorities?*
 - *To what extent will the project have a measurable impact on the issues identified?*
 - *If successful, will the project result in improved data collection or analysis methods?*
2. Technical/Scientific Merit (10)
 - *Are the methods a sound approach to investigating the issue?*

- *Are the proposed methods generally accepted by the technical and scientific community?*
- *Are project team members qualified to complete the project?*

3. Project Cost (5)

- *Is the budget appropriate for the project?*
- *Will the proposed project require future funding?*

Tentative Timeline

August 5	Call for proposals sent to Operations Team
October 17	Proposals Due
November	Operations Team meets to discuss proposals and make recommendations
November 28	OT presents funding recommendations to ESC
January 31	Project Plans Due
February 21	Operations Team call to discuss project plans and make recommendations
February 28	Final funding recommendations to ESC
May 15	Funds transferred to project teams

For more information or further questions please contact April Bagwill, NOAA Fisheries Office of Science and Technology (301-427-8111 or april.bagwill@noaa.gov).

Attachment 2

IMT FY 15 Project Recommendations:

The IMT has approved and ranked their 3 projects, as follows:

- 1) RecFIN Database MS-SQL Migration
- 2) Washington Marine Recreational Sampling SQL Server Migration
- 3) California Recreational Fisheries Survey (CRFS) Data Access

Attachment 3

1. Survey Design: Any new survey design should either be developed with the help of expert consultants or reviewed by expert consultants prior to testing. State agencies and regional science centers should also be consulted during development of the survey design.

2. **Pilot Studies:** The survey design should be further developed and tested for feasibility in one or more pilot studies limited in scope.
3. **Side-by-Side Testing:** The new survey design should be piloted alongside the current survey design in a way that allows measurement of any consistent differences in performance and/or statistical results between the new design and the current design. Side-by-side comparative testing should occur over a period of several years.
4. **Review and Evaluation of Results:** The results of each pilot study should be reviewed and evaluated by experts (NMFS staff, state agency staff, and hired consultants) to determine if design modifications are needed to improve performance relative to statistical accuracy and/or precision. To conduct the appropriate review, the following are needed:
 - a. Final report of the pilot study, or series of pilot studies, that fully describes sampling and estimation methods, as well as quality assurance/quality control protocols.
 - b. Databases with raw data and statistical estimates of fishing effort and/or catch in data formats that are fully described.
 - c. Fully documented sampling and estimation programs used to implement the design. This makes it possible for NMFS staff to reproduce survey estimates with these programs
 - d. Fully documented programs used to correct errors in raw data or to replace missing values with imputed information.
5. **External Peer Review:** If internal review recommends implementation without further testing, an external peer review should be conducted to certify that the new survey design is statistically sound and meets Information Quality Act requirements. If external peer review identifies needs for improvement, then we should consider making further modifications to the design prior to implementation improvements.
6. **MRIP/NMFS Approval Process:** If final design was supported by the external peer review and needed modifications are made, then MRIP can potentially certify the specialized design as an acceptable alternative for use in appropriate circumstances.
 - a. The MRIP Operations Team (OT) must review and recommend the new design for approval.
 - b. The MRIP Executive Steering Committee must review the OT's recommendation and recommend for Science and Technology (ST) approval.
 - c. The AA must review ST's recommendation and approve for implementation.
7. **Transition Planning:** If NMFS decides to implement the new survey design, the MRIP Transition Team should develop a transition plan for its implementation to replace the current design. Multiple design changes shall be clustered together, whenever possible, to minimize the number of survey design changes and corresponding calibrations.
8. **Benchmarking to Evaluate Differences:** The transition plan must consider the likelihood of causing a significant disruption to the historical time series of catch statistics based on the current survey design.

- a. If the new design has been shown to produce similar results to those produced with the current design for all covered geographic areas and time periods, then benchmarking may not be required prior to implementation of the new design to replace the current design.
 - b. If the new design has been shown to produce consistently different catch statistics than those produced with the current design, then benchmarking of the two designs side-by-side for one or more years may be required to accurately measure the differences prior to full implementation of the new design in place of the current design.
 - i. Under this scenario, the current survey design should be continued at full sampling levels and used to produce catch statistics used in stock assessments and monitoring of catch relative to ACLs.
 - ii. The new survey design should be conducted at sampling levels deemed to be sufficient for measuring consistent differences in statistical estimates.
9. Further Experiments: The transition plan must consider whether or not consistent differences between the results of the new design and the current design can be fully explained.
- a. If the differences can already be fully explained from the results of pilot studies, then further experiments may not be needed. Further experiments would only be needed if it is not yet possible to determine how historical catch statistics based on the current design would have to be modified to be comparable to statistics produced by the new design.
 - b. If the differences can only be partly explained, then further experiments should be conducted during the benchmarking period to gain a better understanding of what is driving the differences. The experimental studies should help to understand how historical catch statistics based on the current design would have to be modified to be comparable to statistics produced by the new design.
10. Calibration: Benchmarking and further experiments should continue until it is possible to reliably develop a calibration model that can be used to adjust prior year estimates to be more comparable to estimates produced with the new design.
- a. Backward Calibration: ST should take the lead on developing appropriate calibration factors that can account for expected differences between the new and current survey estimates back through time.
 - b. Forward Calibration: ST should also develop an appropriate calibration method for converting new design estimates for future years into estimates that would be more comparable to those produced under the design to be replaced.
 - c. Workshops involving survey statisticians, stock assessment scientists, and fishery managers should be held to identify alternative calibration methods.
 - d. A Working Group should be formed to test and evaluate alternative calibration methods and recommend the most appropriate for use in backward or forward calibrations.
 - e. The Agency should conduct an appropriate peer review of the recommended calibration methods. If external statistical consultants are utilized to help with the testing, evaluation, and recommendation, then an additional external review may not be required.

11. Revising the Time Series: Once a reliable backward calibration model has been developed, that model should be applied by the Working Group to revise the historical time series of fishing effort and catch statistics based on the survey design to be replaced. In addition, it may be necessary to also use the revised historical estimates to adjust the historical time series of MRIP fishing participation statistics.
 12. Incorporation into Stock Assessments: The revised time series of catch statistics should immediately be made available for use in stock assessments.
 - a. Stock assessments due for an update should use the revised time series and set new ACLs for use in fisheries management.
 - b. Stock assessments not immediately due for an update should use the revised time series and set new ACLs when scheduled.
 13. Incorporation into Economic Assessments: The revised time series of fishing effort and participation statistics should at the same time be made available for use in economic assessments. It will be important to coordinate stock assessment updates with updates to stock-specific economic assessments as much as possible.
 14. Monitoring of Catch relative to ACLs: It will be important to produce catch statistics that are comparable to the time series of catch statistics that were used to set the ACL.
 - a. If the ACL was set by a stock assessment that did not use the revised time series of catch estimates, then cumulative catch statistics based on the old design (if available) should be used to monitor catch relative to the ACL.
 - b. If the ACL was set by a stock assessment that used the revised time series of catch estimates, then cumulative catch statistics based on the new design should be used to monitor catch relative to the ACL.
 - c. Alternatively, in the former case (14a), it may necessary to use a forward calibration method to convert cumulative catch statistics based on the new design into catch statistics comparable to those based on the old design after it has been replaced. This approach could be used when monitoring catch relative to ACLs after the design to be replaced has been terminated.
 15. Incorporation into Allocation Decisions: It will be important to make revised time series available to fishery managers for possible use in allocation decisions.
 16. Full Implementation: Once the Calibration model has been used to revise the historical time series, it should no longer be necessary to continue the current survey design for benchmarking purposes. Instead, the new survey design should be fully implemented at sampling levels deemed appropriate to provide needed statistical precision of survey estimates.
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