

MEETING SUMMARY
MRIP Executive Steering Committee Conference Call
January 24, 2014; 2:00 – 3:30 pm EST

In attendance: ESC members and participants: John Boreman, Ned Cyr, Randy Fisher, David Donaldson, Emily Menashes, Doug Mecum, Bonnie Ponwith, Kitty Simonds, Miguel Rolon, Gordon Colvin. Other MRIP Team Leads and staff: Lauren Dolinger Few, Preston Pate, Rob Andrews, April Bagwill, Leah Sharpe, Dave Van Voorhees. John Boreman introduced Emily Menashes as a new member of the ESC. Emily is deputy director of the NMFS Office of Sustainable Fisheries.

1. FY 14 Appropriations and preliminary MRIP Spend Plan (Van Voorhees/Colvin)

A draft FY 14 MRIP Spend Plan was provided to the ESC members prior to the meeting. We do not yet have final appropriation numbers from Management and Budget, but, based on the language in the Omnibus Budget Act, we are expecting to receive slightly less than the pre-sequestration FY 13 funding level, i.e. approximately \$8.5 to \$9 M. We are planning to fully fund all of the approved MRIP FY 14 project proposals. The current draft spend plan has an uncommitted balance of approximately \$2.6M, which will be available for pre-funding 2015 survey work. Once final appropriation numbers are received, a revised budget and options for assignment of the uncommitted balance will be provided to the ESC.

Randy Fisher asked about the position of the Atlantic coast states regarding state conduct of the surveys. Dave responded that ACCSP has developed a proposal which, if approved by its Coordinating Council next week, would lead to state conduct of the intercept survey on the Atlantic coast as early as CY 2015. At present, we believe all of the east coast states are on board with this concept.

2. Updated Terms of Reference for the Operations Team (Andrews/Pate)

Pres Pate and Rob Andrews reviewed the OT's response to the charge from last July's Regional Implementation Workshop. The OT met in November and the members were receptive and supportive of taking on the expanded role outlined by the ESC's workshop results. The OT developed expanded Terms of Reference (ToRs) that incorporate the team's new expanded role, including recommending implementation priorities and establishing a process for assessing survey needs beyond those met with current efforts. The ESC approved the revised ToRs, which will now be posted to the MRIP website.

Rob noted that an initial step in carrying out the task of recommending priorities will be to carefully craft survey standards to help determine implementation priorities, building on the current standards reviewed at the July workshop. ACCSP and GulfFIN have also provided standards for consideration. We will have suggested standards for OT review in March, and will provide them to the ESC for review following the OT's review and action on the proposal.

3. Communications and Education Team Reboot (Sharpe)

John Boreman introduced Leah Sharpe as the new Chair of the MRIP Communications and Education Team. Leah Sharpe outlined the attached proposed CET “reboot”, which was initially described in the MRIP 2013/14 Implementation Plan Update.

Randy Fisher and Dave Donaldson expressed concern that the proposed makeup of the national CET did not include state representatives. Randy also suggested the need for a mechanism to assure the CET and OT were coordinated and on the same page. Other CET members noted that the proposal should result in improving the MRIP communications effort, not to “reinvent the wheel” or add an unnecessary layer of bureaucracy. The ESC members will provide additional comments on the draft by Friday, January 31, and the CET will revise the draft and send it back to the ESC for further action.

4. Development of an ESC Protocol for MRIP Implementation (Boreman/Colvin)

John Boreman suggested that the ESC consider next steps in fulfilling its expanded role in providing oversight of MRIP implementation. The ESC needs to assure that implementation goes according to plan, that the regions are appropriately involved, and that gaps are identified, and the agency is made aware of those gaps and of the priorities for addressing them. He suggested the ESC consider conducting an annual workshop that might include: Team status reports; feedback from Regional Implementation Teams (FINs, etc.) on progress and gaps/additional priorities; and spending the last half day in an *in camera* session to draft an annual implementation assessment report to the Director of Science and Technology to review with NMFS leadership. Such a workshop would need to be scheduled to dovetail efficiently with the other MRIP team meetings, and may need to be scheduled to coincide with other ESC member travel commitments such as CCC or MAFAC meetings. The ESC members and participants generally agreed with this suggestion, and suggested it be fleshed out for further consideration.

Gordon Colvin outlined a charge ST has received from the F Suite to develop a standardized process for transitioning from use of estimates produced with current survey design and estimation procedures to the use of estimates resulting from new or modified survey designs and estimation methodologies. The Team Leads discussed this charge last week, and felt that it needed to be considered in the context of the ESC’s regional implementation strategy. Ultimately, the Team Leads recommend establishing a new fifth MRIP team, a “Transition Team” to undertake the charge from F Suite in consultation with the Regional Implementation Teams, and to take on other such tasks as may arise in the regional implementation and decision-making process. Initial next steps will include finalizing the charge from F Suite and conducting a coordinating meeting between ST and SF to sort out how best to address the charge’s emphasis on incorporation of new estimates in setting ACLs and in acting on AMs. The ESC members and participants agreed in concept with this suggestion, and asked that draft ToR and Team membership be developed for their review.