

Marine Recreational Information Program Implementation Funding Process

To address MRIP's focus on implementation, the Executive Steering Committee (ESC) charged the MRIP Operations Team (OT) with the "development of recommendations for NMFS/MRIP to make additional investments in survey implementation and operations" of recreational survey methods. The goals of this process are to, 1) support implementation of certified methods that satisfy the *minimum* needs for management and science, and result in regional survey programs that achieve at least the *minimum* MRIP standards for coverage, resolution, and data elements, and 2) establish a consistent, priority-based foundation for investment of available funds for data collections that exceed minimum needs.

Implementation funds will be allotted from "new" MRIP funding, as current funding allocations (e.g. FIN funding) will likely remain level. Additionally, funding will not be used to replace existing partner funds for recreational fisheries data collection.

National Guidelines

MRIP has established National guidelines for the prioritization of NMFS' investments in implementation of new survey methods. Specifically, funding priority will be based upon the extent to which surveys, alone or in combination with other surveys being implemented in a region:

- Utilize MRIP-certified¹ survey designs or methodologies;
- Achieve MRIP standards for survey coverage and basic data elements, as well as any future standards adopted by the program (http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/Assets/recreational/pdf/National_Standards_for_Survey_Coverage_and_Data_Elements.pdf);
- Provide recreational (or non-commercial) catch estimates for fisheries managed under MSRA—including Atlantic HMS—or jointly by the states and NMFS that are sufficient to
 - Contribute to reliable stock assessments;
 - Support development of acceptable biological catch recommendations, annual catch limits (ACLs), and accountability measures that meet MSRA requirements; and
 - Support development of recreational regulations that minimize triggering of accountability measures.
 - Allow reasonably precise tracking of recreational catch against ACLs

Regional Planning

¹ MRIP certification is granted after the proposed method has undergone MRIP-led internal and external peer review and has been determined to be a statistically sound and credible method for estimating catch and effort data.

Each Regional Implementation Team² is responsible for identifying regional needs and developing a plan to implement improved data collection designs that address both regional and national needs. Regional implementation plans, which will be reviewed and approved by the OT and ESC, will provide estimated implementation costs, and will reflect consensus among partners within a region with respect to regional needs and implementation priorities.

Regional implementation plans will include:

- Descriptions of regional needs for recreational fishing statistics, including needs for coverage, resolution, precision and timeliness of survey estimates;
- A baseline assessment of current data collection programs, including the extent to which current programs satisfy needs and identification of data collection gaps;
- Recommendations and justification for a sequential, prioritized approach for implementing improved methods that address national and regional needs that are currently unmet;
- A proposed process for combining statistics derived from multiple sources³;
- Estimated costs, overall and for individual survey components.

Each year, the NMFS Office of Science and Technology (OST) will review regional implementation plans and establish agency funding priorities across regional programs. OST will develop metrics, based on the above National guidelines and subject to ESC review and approval, for assessing the Regional Implementation Plans and setting OST priorities. To the extent possible, funding for improved survey methods will be permanent, and funded survey components will not be subjected to prioritization and evaluation in subsequent years. Evaluation and prioritization in subsequent years will be limited to unfunded data collections described in the implementation plans. Exceptions will be made in the event of reduced and/or insufficient funding to cover the costs of approved data collections and/or changes to regional priorities, which will be reassessed at a minimum of every five years, coincidental to NMFS' science program review cycle⁴. Funding may also be reallocated if it is determined by the ESC or OST that expenditures are inconsistent with the approaches described in the regional implementation plans.

Program Reporting

Regional implementation Teams are expected to submit annual reports describing progress in executing Regional Implementation Plans. Annual reports will describe MRIP data collection activities, document expenditures and assess the extent to which regional goals and needs for recreational fisheries statistics have been satisfied. For regional partnerships currently funded through a NMFS grant (e.g., ACCSP, GulfFIN, Pacific RecFIN), MRIP program updates can be incorporated into existing reporting requirements (e.g., annual grant reports).

² The MRIP Executive Steering Committee (ESC) determined that regional Fishery Information Networks (FIN's) and their equivalents will serve as the MRIP Regional Implementation Teams
(<http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/Assets/recreational/pdf/2013-2014%20Implementation%20Plan%20Update.pdf>)

³ For example, regions may implement data collections that are specific to a sector or species. Implementation plans should describe how information generated from these sources will be integrated with more generalized data collections to either supplement or replace alternative estimates.

⁴ <http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/science-program-review/index>