

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 | |
| 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? |

| Project Title | Cost | Funding Recommendation | Comments |
|---|----------|------------------------|---|
| 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).