

**Marine Recreational Information Program
Operations Team Meeting
April 18-19, 2007**

Meeting Attendees

Rob Andrews – NOAA Fisheries, Office of Science and Technology
Megan Caldwell – Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
Bob Clark – Alaska Fish and Game
Richard Cody – Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
Guillermo Diaz – NOAA Fisheries, Southeast Fisheries Science Center
Jason Didden – Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council
Dave Donaldson – Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission
Marcia Hamilton – Western Pacific Fishery Management Council (For Paul Dalzell)
Rob Kramer – International Game Fish Association
Russell Porter – Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission
Ron Salz – NOAA Fisheries, Office of Science and Technology
Jason Schratweiser – International Game Fish Association

The Operations Team met in Silver Spring, MD on April 18-19, 2007 to discuss several issues related to the implementation of an improved recreational fishing data collection program. Specifically, the objectives of the meeting were to develop regional, prioritized lists of recommendations for improving recreational fishing monitoring programs, and discuss a strategy for implementing the recommendations.

Q&A with the Executive Steering Committee

John Boreman, Chair of the Executive Steering Committee, addressed the group and provided an opportunity for questions. J. Boreman reviewed the budget scenario for the next several years; the redesign effort received the full funding request for FY07 (1.7 million), and a request for 3.5 million is included in the President's FY08 budget. This money is specifically for redesign efforts, and is in addition to requirements for conducting current surveys. There are also requests for substantial funding boosts in out years (FY09 and beyond).

The issue of constituent input into the redesign process was addressed. The current version of the Development Plan establishes a role for the Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee (MAFAC). MAFAC is FACA exempt and can be used for getting a consensus opinion on the redesign effort. MAFAC will be utilized to disseminate progress in implementing improvements, as well as an access point for collecting public feedback. J. Boreman will also be appealing to the regional Fishery Management Councils to set up advisory panels specifically for this effort, and will also address the possibility of arranging constituent listening sessions through the Councils. Finally, the Office of Science and Technology will be establishing an email mailbox to allow the public to directly submit comments.

J. Boreman also discussed the timeline the ESC established for implementing a new survey program. The ESC started with January 1, 2009, which is the deadline established

by the reauthorized Magnuson-Stevens Act for implementing an improved Marine Recreational Fishery Statistics Survey program, and worked backwards. The time between July 1, 2008, which is the target date for the OT to complete its work, and January 1, 2009 will be reserved for public review and comment. The ESC recognizes that a final, polished product will not be delivered in 2009, and that some pilot testing may take years to complete. The OT should focus on developing a system that is flexible and can incorporate new designs/components as testing is completed and/or needs emerge.

Finally, J. Boreman addressed the role of the OT in developing the Federal angler registry and outreach. Because these are such large tasks, the ESC is establishing separate, independent teams to address the registry and outreach. The OT will need to coordinate with each of these teams but will have no direct responsibility for outreach or developing the registry.

Socio-Economic Recommendations

The group agreed that additional expertise is needed to address recommendations to improve socio-economic data collection programs. However, the group could not reach consensus on whether these recommendations should be the responsibility of an independent team that reports directly to the ESC or a workgroup that reports to the Operations Team. The group agreed to rank socio-economic recommendations as a whole and defer the decision about the responsibility for implementing the recommendations to the ESC (**Socio-economics was not ranked. Therefore, the OT recommends that the ESC establish an independent team to review socio-economic recommendations.**).

Prioritizing Recommendations for Improving Recreational Fishing Surveys

A list of 120 recommendations, emanating from the NRC Report, the Denver Workshop, and the reauthorized MSA, was distributed to team members prior to the meeting. The group discussed several methods for categorizing and ranking the recommendations and ultimately agreed upon a semi-qualitative approach, based upon team members' expertise and group discussion, to provide a general ranking. As a first cut, each recommendation was ranked from 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest priority and 1 being the lowest. As the group passed through the list, several recommendations were consolidated, resulting in a final list of 29 ranked recommendations. Several other recommendations are already in progress or beyond the scope of the OT's responsibilities. These recommendations were not ranked. In addition, several recommendations were identified as general themes that are either being addressed through the cooperative nature of the Development Plan, or will be automatically incorporated into any new survey designs.

Once all of the recommendations were ranked, priorities were reclassified as high (5), medium (2-4) or low (1). The team agreed that each region should provide an additional ranking from 1-5 within each general category. Regional rankings will also use a qualitative approach. However, criteria such as impact and ease of implementation may be considered when assigning regional priorities. In addition, design and implementation of survey components may follow a logical progression that should also be considered in

ranking the recommendations. Ultimate priorities for each region will be based upon the combination of general and regional rankings. Regional priorities are due to R. Andrews by COB, Tuesday, April 24. R. Andrews will compile the lists and redistribute to the Team by COB, Wednesday, April 25.

Strategy for Developing Implementation Plan

The final task of the meeting was to discuss a strategy for developing a work plan for implementing the prioritized recommendations. The plan, consisting of milestones, deliverables and estimated costs is due to the ESC by May 21. As a first step, the OT needs to identify anticipated outcomes and work groups. Team members agreed to work on a strawman, that will be distributed to the rest of the group by COB, May 4. The entire team will convene via conference call on May 7 to review the plan and discuss next steps.

- **Action Items**
- Each region will independently rank recommendations and submit to R. Andrews (COB 4/24/2007).
- R. Andrews will compile the recommendations and redistribute to the group (COB 4/25/2007).
- Conference call to review/discuss the compiled recommendations document (Thursday, 4/26/2007 – 2:30 ET).
- Regional, prioritized lists of recommendations for upgrading marine recreational fishing surveys due to ESC (4/30/2007). R. Andrews will present the lists to the ESC at their meeting in San Diego on 4/30.
- J. Didden, R. Cody and R. Andrews will develop a draft work plan for implementing the recommendations (5/4/2007).
- Conference call to discuss/review draft work plan (5/7/2007 – 2:30 ET).