

Meeting Summary
MRIP Operations Team Webinar/Conference Call
11/29/2011

Pres Pate convened the meeting at 12:00 EST. OT members present included: Preston Pate, Richard Cody, Russell Porter, Jason Didden, Mike Cahall, Cindy Thomson, Graciela Garcia-Moliner, Dave Donaldson, Dick Brame, Rob Andrews, Bob Clark, Ron Salz, Josh Demello, Mark Fisher, Mike Armstrong, Pat Campfield. Other participants included: Gordon Colvin (MRIP Program Manager), Forbes Darby (Communications and Education Team), Scott Ward (Communications and Education Team)

1. Project Updates: Representatives from several high profile MRIP projects provided updates on the status and/or results of several projects. The following projects were discussed:

Fishing Effort Surveys (Rob Andrews): Several sequential projects have been implemented to design and test improved surveys of fishing effort. Sampling exclusively from databases of licensed saltwater anglers is not yet feasible. Consequently pilot studies have focused on designing and testing dual-frame surveys that sample from both license databases and household frames (address-based or RDD samples) and utilize either telephone or mail data collection. Mail survey designs have demonstrated greater coverage and response rates than dual-frame telephone surveys. An upcoming pilot study will be implemented in 2012 to make direct comparisons between telephone and mail in terms of data quality, timeliness and cost. The project team is also considering an alternative single-frame, address-based design that will maximize coverage and eliminate the complications and complexity of dual-frame designs. A report describing the results of completed pilot studies, as well as recommendations for future studies is expected in January or February 2012.

Intercept Survey (Ron Salz): A pilot study was implemented in NC in 2010 to test a revised sampling design for Access-Point Angler Intercept Surveys (APAIS) that incorporates many of the recommendations from the NRC Review. The project is currently in the analysis and writing phase. Analysis is focusing on both estimates and interviewing productivity. Much of the final project report will be developed from documents that have already been drafted from the project, including a procedures manual and a sampling design document.

- A request was made for access to the materials that have already been developed for the project. OT members will be provided with access upon request.
- Concern was expressed about the timing of the final project report given the need for peer review and pre-implementation planning for data collection partners. The project team is aware of these concerns and will complete the report as quickly as possible. ST1 has also begun working with partners to plan for implementation.

Logbook Reporting Program for the Gulf of Mexico (Dave Donaldson): Data collection for the project, which included electronic logbook reporting by Federally-permitted vessels in the panhandle region of Florida and Corpus Christi area of Texas, was completed on August 31, 2011. Participants in the study were asked to provide weekly reports of all fishing activity. Effort and catch data provided by participating captains was validated through dockside sampling. Compliance with the reporting

requirements was required to renew Federal fishing permits. In TX, reporting compliance rates were 100%, while compliance rates in FL ranged from 75-90% by the completion of the study.

Preliminary project results suggest that logbook data cannot be used as a direct census due to missing trip reports. However, logbooks may be suitable for estimating average effort and/or catch. A final report with a complete analysis is expected in January or February 2012.

- A question was asked about pressure from the Gulf Council to implement a census. There is still some pressure, but they are still looking at options.
- The team discussed resources required to support a logbook reporting program. The cost of the pilot study was \$400K. It is estimated that Gulf-wide implementation for all Federally-permitted vessels would cost approximately \$2M+.
- Compliance reflected reported independent of requirements for timeliness. The majority of vessels reported within 2-4 weeks of reporting periods.
- As far as is known, the vessels that never reported are active for-hire vessels.

Timeliness Project (Ron Salz): In response to changing fisheries management approaches, as well as demands from stakeholder groups, MRIP implemented a project to examine the feasibility and consequences of increasing the timeliness of producing recreational fisheries statistics. The objectives of the project were to 1) Identify, and evaluate trade-offs among alternatives for improving data timeliness; 2) Provide MRIP recommendations related to estimation lag time and estimation frequency, 3) Identify/evaluate recreational catch and effort forecasting approaches; 4) Identify management alternatives for addressing uncertainty associated with time lags in recreational catch availability; and 5) Engage primary MRIP data users and constituents in an informed dialogue on this issue. The project team conducted a workshop in March 2011 and submitted a final report to the OT that includes recommendations for both data collection and fisheries management.

- One of the recommendations included in the project report is for MRIP to develop an optimal sample allocation tool. It was pointed out that “optimal” allocation has single-species implications and that what is optimal for one species may not be optimal for other species.
- The report suggests that the risk of exceeding an ACL can be reduced by setting Annual Catch Targets (ACT) below the ACL level and that ACT control rules for setting buffers should consider precision, accuracy and timeliness of recreational data. It was pointed out that the cost of conservative ACT's is foregone catch.

Status of Re-Estimation (Gordon Colvin): Gordon Colvin provided an update on the status of NMFS' efforts to publish revised catch and effort estimates for 2004-2011 that are based upon the estimation method that the OT endorsed in early 2011. This is the first new MRIP method that is being implemented, so the roll-out is being conducted in a very careful, deliberate way. The current schedule is to release estimates internally within NMFS in early December, followed by a public roll-out in early February, 2012. The roll-out will include access to a new comparison tool that provides side-by-side estimates in either tabular or graphical format. NMFS will assess the implications of revised estimates on both management actions and scientific advice. In the long term, this will occur on a species-by-species basis and benchmark assessments are completed. In the near term, NMFS is planning a “Calibration Workshop”, likely in spring 2012 to provide scientific advice for using revised estimates.

This will potentially be followed by a management workshop. The project team is working to produce revised estimates for 1998-2003 in mid-2012.

2. Communications and Education Team Update (Forbes Darby): The CET showed a video it produced to support the Video Discard Project. The team encourages the OT and project teams to consider utilizing the CET to support cooperative communications for MRIP projects. Increased outreach and communications is a priority of NMFS leadership.

3. FY 2012 Project Development: The remainder of the meeting was devoted to a discussion about FY12 priorities and project development. As with FY11, OT members will have an opportunity to work within their regions to identify research priorities and develop projects to support those priorities. We are not planning to issue a broad RFP to announce MRIP funding opportunities. Rather, **OT members should collaborate with partners within their respective regions to identify research needs or gaps and subsequently develop project proposals to address those needs.** Rob Andrews developed a spreadsheet that shows that relationship between ongoing and completed MRIP projects and categorizes the projects into broad research areas. The intent of this spreadsheet is to demonstrate where we have focused our efforts to date, as well as help identify new research areas and research areas that need additional attention.

As in FY11, proposals will be submitted through the MRIP Data Management and Standards (MDMS) reporting tool (<https://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/pls/apex32/f?p=270:1:3384145865660400>). All OT members have an MDMS account, which provides access to project proposals, project plans and monthly reports. MDMS accounts are set up for project leaders on a case-by-cases basis, so please contact Rob Andrews (rob.andrews@noaa.gov) and Lauren Dolinger Few (lauren.dolinger.few@noaa.gov) to set up MDMS access for new project leaders (or if you have problems accessing the site). **Project proposals are due by January 31, 2012.**

For FY12, we are requiring an OT sponsor for all projects. This should ensure that proposed projects are consistent with the general MRIP priorities of addressing recommendations from the NRC Review and/or improving the accuracy of recreational fisheries statistics, and also ensure that completed project reports are suitable for public dissemination. We are also requiring that all proposals include a proposed funding mechanism (e.g. ST1 contract, FIN grant, transfer of funds from ST1 to regional office, etc.). Both of these features have been added to address problems that have been encountered during previous funding cycles.