



Council Coordinating Committee (CCC) Meeting Summary May 25-26, 2016

Recreational Fisheries Update

An overview on the National Recreational Fisheries Policy Implementation Plan was provided to the Council Coordinating Committee (CCC). Based on NMFS' 2013 economic estimates, saltwater recreational fishing plays an important driver of regional and national economies. It is the policy of NMFS to foster, support, and enhance a broadly accessible and diverse range of sustainable fishing activities. The agency has completed year 1 of a 4-year timeline for its implementation plan that includes a total of 69 projects to date. Projects for each of the 5 regions and Atlantic highly migratory species were developed in consultation with the recreational fishing community. An update on the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) transition was provided and a draft timeline for transition based on the recommendations provided by the National Research Council were discussed.

In June, the recreational fisheries initiative will co-host a workshop on an artificial reef program in Washington D.C. The group will focus on steps for employing artificial reefs as a management tool.

FY 2016-2017 Budget Updates

The Councils will be receiving funding next week. For the 2016 budget, line items of interest to the Gulf Council include an increase to \$7 million in funding for electronic monitoring and reporting. Funding to expand annual stock assessments for Gulf of Mexico reef fish was also increased by \$5 million for a total of \$75 million. Chairman Anson requested a breakdown of annual stock assessments for the \$70 million line item and the agency representative stated he would get back to him.

Executive Director Gregory asked about the 2016-2019 budget cycle and noted the Councils have budgeted for a 10% increase annually; however, in 2015 we have only received a 3% increase in level funding from 2014. The agency representative stated that 3% was a more realistic increase than the 10% originally suggested for budgetary purposes. (Note: The Gulf Council staff will review the 5-year budget and bring any needed adjustments to the Council in August 2016.) An overview was provided of the Saltonstall-Kennedy (S-K) priorities and Federal Funding Opportunities. In the Southeast Region, 6 out of 18 proposals that made it to the review panel were funded at \$1.5 million. They are currently anticipating \$10 million will be budgeted for S-K proposals. The agency anticipates adding a pre-proposal process and then soliciting full proposals/applications. The agency found Council involvement in the S-K pre-proposal process to be helpful.

Legislative Update

Dave Whaley provided an overview of the process for legislation, from markups to final regulations. The Senate has held two hearings and two markups on Magnuson-Stevens Bills and amendments to the Magnuson-Stevens Appropriations Bill, but the full Senate has yet to take action. A number of provisions within the House were reported. Some of these issues are described in the House report, and include hatchery and genetics, electronic reporting and electronic monitoring, stock assessments, and Gulf stock assessments. Mr. Whaley will provide a written information update when further action occurs. There was a recent Hearing on the National Ocean Policy at which Mr. Bob Zales testified. Mr. Whaley announced a Natural Resources Committee field hearing will be held in Maine during June. The Committee will focus on Marine Protected Areas (MPA) and be attended by the advisory committee and NMFS Office of Marine Sanctuaries. Mr. Whaley stated that even with the 2016 election year changes could still be made to the Magnuson-Stevens Act this year.

Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management

The agency presented the Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management (EBFM) Roadmap to accompany the previously reviewed EBFM Draft Policy and they are requesting comments by July 10, 2016. The agency felt that all Regional Councils are currently conducting aspects of the policy. The Councils expressed concerns about the resources needed to accomplish the EBFM roadmap. Priorities in the roadmap are defined as short, medium, and long term. The agency requested specific comments on Figure 2 of the Roadmap. It was suggested that consideration be given to integrating climate change and essential fish habitat into the new EBFM roadmap.

Relationship between OY and ACLs and ACTs

In the proposed NS1 guidelines there was a discussion about using OY. The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) brought up OY and the differences in ACLs applied at a sector level. Other Councils do not establish separate sector-level OYs that are estimated reductions in some fisheries that resulted in lower quotas due to socioeconomic considerations.

Catch Share Policy

The CCC was very receptive to the modifications on the catch share program review policy (CSP). Even though many improvements were made to the draft guidance, the section pertaining to identifying the effects on historical participants, by contacting them through a survey, who were previously involved in the fishery prior to implementation of a CSP was suggested to be removed. The NEPA-type language was also removed from the CSP. The Allocation Policy that the Councils completed was maintained in the CSP. NMFS Allocation Policy should be finalized next month and states that within 3 years or as practicable the Councils should identify appropriate review triggers for FMPs with explicit allocations. The agency is requesting the Councils review the revised CSP and provide comments by the end of July 2016.

Bycatch Discussion

The comment period for Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology has closed and NMFS is working on addressing the Regional Councils' comments. The agency is requesting comments

on the Draft National Bycatch Reduction Strategy. One member of the CCC requested some guidance as what to focus on, since it is a high-level national strategy. The regional strategies will be developed in the upcoming months and it was suggested it was most important for the Regional Councils to be closely involved in development of the regional strategies.

Regional Operating Agreement

A presentation was provided by the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC). Some Councils have already signed off on a Regional Operating Agreement (ROA) and received a signature from the Science Center director. Some members of the CCC questioned the role of NOAA GC in frontloading the Council documents. The Gulf Council's ROA was finalized in March 2014. The Councils need to review their ROAs and resubmit any revisions to NMFS (Alan Risenhoover) by September 2016. The Southeast Regional Office may want to remove language regarding the PPI review, since this process has been removed.

Electronic Monitoring and Report

The CCC was given an update on the FY 2016 NMFS funding by region for electronic technologies implementation. In the Southeast region, approximately \$768,000 was appropriated in FY 2016 and the base funding is \$341,000 totaling \$1.109 million. An additional \$3 million will be awarded by the National Fisheries Wildlife Fund (NFWF); the call for proposals is currently open. The Electronic Monitoring and Electronic Reporting program funds will go to the Office of Science and Technology to identify the goals of reporting. The agency is planning a second National Electronic Monitoring Workshop in Seattle. Ownership of the electronically reported data will be discussed at the workshop, such as whether the data needs to be encrypted. The agency is going to use the regional Electronic Monitoring/Electronic Reporting priorities plan to decide on funding priorities for the regions. A list of current projects are available upon request.

EFH Summit Update

An overview of the 3-day Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) summit was provided. Seventy-five people attended the meeting in May 2016, including Council members, staff, SSC and advisory panel members, NMFS staff, and industry representatives. The Terms of Reference (TORs) and objectives were reviewed. Practicability and effectiveness were discussed. Regional use of habitat areas of particular concern (HAPC) designation was discussed and provided on their website. The summit focused on challenging EFH questions and provided a cross regional approach for engaging in non-fishing activities. One member of the CCC asked about habitat degradation and how that was incorporated into the EFH summit. On the last day there were regional breakout groups to help the Councils more clearly understand the baseline and changes in current status of EFH. The CCC passed the following motion:

The CCC moves to keep the EFH working group involved in agency discussions in the next two meetings of the CCC.

Update on Conflict of Interest Regulations Project

Conflict of Interest provisions were briefly discussed. NOAA General Counsel provided a brief review of the requirements in the Magnuson-Steven Act. NOAA GC advised that Council members can participate in deliberations at the Council level even if you recuse yourself from voting based on Congress' intent.

Communications Group Report

In February 2016, the public information officers from each Council attended a meeting hosted by the Western Pacific Fisheries Management Council. They focused on updating the US Regional Fishery Management Councils' website and developed a process that made it possible for each Council to update their own information. The materials of the CCC will be hosted on this website.

<http://fisherycouncils.squarespace.com/>

Compliance with National Standard 2: Best Scientific Information Available

An overview of concerns were provided by the Executive Directors of the New England Fishery Management Council and the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council. Dr. Methot has been working with the Councils on Best Science Information Available (BSIA). The agency agreed there is still some gray area on the BSIA. The agency is working with stock assessment scientists at the Science Centers to develop a white paper to address the concerns. A presentation was made with an overview of the building blocks outlining the science that goes into the assessments. Typically, the SSC has made recommendations and the Council develops the draft regulations and transmits them to NMFS. Then NMFS makes a final determination the amendment is based on the best available science. The scope of the white paper is limited to stock assessments, status determinations, and harvest levels for managed fish and shellfish in the Magnuson-Stevens Act and Fishery Management Plans. The cooperative process used by NMFS and the Councils to develop amendments confirms that the BSIA is being used. The white paper is anticipated to be released this summer.

Other Business

The CCC drafted and signed a letter to the President noting the successes of the Magnuson-Steven Act after 40 years of successful management and requesting that any closed areas in the U.S. EEZ be made through the Magnuson-Stevens Act rather than through the Antiquities Act of 1906 which is done without any transparent public process. The CCC reiterates its support for the public, transparent, science-based process and management required by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

National SSC Meeting

The PFMC will host the next meeting at the end of 2017. Potential topics include the management strategy evaluations (MSE), possibly include anthropologists, and how to integrate stakeholder comments in the regulatory process. A draft topic list is located on the CCC website. All Councils are going to talk to their SSCs and come back to the PFMC staff with a list of

potential agenda items. A call will be needed to finalize the agenda items for the National SSC meeting, tentatively scheduled for late October.

Tax Exempt Credit Cards for Councils

The Councils have recently been excluded from using the GSA tax exempt credit cards. Businesses in some of the states will not accept the Councils' tax exempt status without the GSA credit card. NOAA General Counsel has contacted appropriate officials at GSA headquarters in Washington, D.C. to work on this issue, as it is costing the Councils additional funds that could be applied toward other expenses.

Next CCC meetings

DRAFT DATES:

February 27-28, 2017, Washington. D.C.

May 15-18, 2017, Bar Harbor, Maine