

MRIP HMS Working Group

Conference Call Notes

December 19, 2007

Call Participants: Ron Salz, Chair (NOAA Fisheries, Fisheries Statistics), Greg Skomal (Massachusetts Div. Marine Fisheries), Stephen Stohs (NOAA Fisheries, SWFSC), Mark Terceiro (NOAA Fisheries, NEFSC), Joe Desfosse (NOAA Fisheries, HMS), Craig Brown (NOAA Fisheries, SEFSC), Guillermo Diaz (NOAA Fisheries, SEFSC), Grisel Rodriguez (Puerto Rico Dept. Natural & Environmental Resources)

- Santa Cruz Operations Team meeting
 - All HMS projects were approved
 - Adequate funding for them
 - Still waiting for Congress to pass federal budget, but have green light from Executive Steering Committee (ESC) to start projects
 - Advice from ESC is to initiate all projects under assumption funding will come
- Discuss specific projects
 - Who will lead
 - Are consultants/contractors needed?
 - Who will do what, and how will we move forward?
 - Discuss in order ranked by Operations Team
 - HMS projects not ranked very high, but virtually all projects recommended for funding are considered high priority (HMS projects ranked in lower half, but competing with several projects which directly address NRC recommendations)
- First HMS project: Pilot to sample private recreational HMS in south Atlantic and Gulf (Rank = 9 out of 17)
 - Discussion of adding Texas HMS charter/headboat vessels to sampling frame (no objections raised)
 - Ron Salz will be the project team leader. Joe Desfosse and Craig Brown volunteered to be on the team. Ron would like to get state or federal agency folks or constituents from Gulf States more involved with the project. Dave Donaldson (GSMFC) has expressed interest and will be asked to join this project team.
 - Proposing to hire a contractor to do the calls.
 - Would it be better to solicit a new procurement bid or add on to existing contract (e.g. LPS telephone survey?) Does anyone have strong feelings either way or suggestions for getting contractual support? None stated.
 - Project team will develop questionnaire and write up statement of work, then write up report after data collection. (Also option for help w/ data analysis.)
- Second HMS project: Evaluation of sampling distribution of tournament versus non-tournament trip in the LPS (Rank = 10)
 - Ron Salz will be the project leader and project team members will include Greg Skomal and John Foster (NOAA Fisheries Statistics). Will try to get involvement from

those who conduct the Recreational Billfish Survey. Ron will contact Eric Prince for suggestions and approval.

- Ron asked if there is a contractor involved with RBS. Greg Skomal, who runs the tournament sampling in Massachusetts, said he didn't think so. Tournaments have to register and submit data directly to NOAA.
- OMB requires PRA approval for all surveys involving the public. There is one in place for RBS that we may be able to piggyback onto for additional tournament surveys.
- Third HMS project: HMS private angler telephone survey FL pilot study (Rank = 13)
 - Dave McGowan is leading the project. Team members will include Ron Salz, John Foster, and probably Russell Dunn (NOAA Fisheries SERO). Ron Coddington with Southeast Swordfish Club (not on the call) will be asked to join the team. Team will work with Dave as he gears up for implementation. Dave will recruit other staff from FL Fish & Wildlife to assist with this project.
 - Will hire field and phone interviewers for the two projects
 - Discussed sending funding through GulfFIN, then to states from there. Easier due to existing agreement between GSMFC and NOAA.
 - Next steps: (1) Develop questionnaire for phone survey of HMS Angling category permit holders. We will shoot for a wave 2 (March 1) start date.
 - Should be able to get several months (waves 2-4) of data on swordfish fishery for use at ICCAT meeting next fall.
- Fourth HMS project: Non-tournament private boat HMS landings in Caribbean (Rank=15)
 - Grisel Rodriguez is the project team leader. Ron Salz will be a team member. Hiram Quiñones (Puerto Rico Sport Fishing Association) was not on the call but will be asked to join this team. Grisel will recruit other staff from her agency to assist with this project.
 - Operations Team approved this for funding but suggested that project plan be resubmitted into two phases:
 - o Phase I: Outreach to understand who are the fishery participants, what are their preferences for submitting information, and assess the feasibility of different reporting or data collection options.
 - o Phase II: After assessing feasibility of different options (specialized survey, catch card pilot, others options), select the preferred approach and test as a pilot in 2008.
 - Grisel said they already have some characterization information on the fishery from tournament data. Ron said the proposal was not clear on how many boats participate, and the fishery appeared somewhat unknown; one possibility is to add Puerto Rico to characterization of Gulf and S. Atlantic, but open to other suggestions.
 - The project team will work on revising the project plan over the next few weeks (try for January 15th completion date).
 - Grisel said that phase one can be completed entirely with in-house staff. Phase 2 may require contractual support, depending on the data collection approach implemented

- Will try to route funding through GulfFIN. Grisel will look into this and Ron will discuss this option with Dave Donaldson.
- Fifth HMS Project: HMS for hire survey FL pilot study (Rank = 16)
 - Concern about expanding existing dockside survey methodology w/ potential biases is offset by strong management need (support letters provided by John Graves and Margo Schulze-Haugen). This pilot project will collect preliminary charter boat catch and effort data on swordfish as well as address some of the potential biases identified by NRC. Stephen suggested we highlight how this pilot differs from MRFSS and LPS and how it addresses NRC issues. A few members of the Operations Team had some reservations, but the OT as a whole approved this project for funding.
 - Dave McGowan is the project team leader and team members will be the same as those indicated for the private boat FL pilot (above). All data collection will be done in-house by Florida Fish & Wildlife and funded through GulfFIN.
 - The dockside field component entails a few more steps for field implementation than the phone surveys. Start-up will be Wave 2 (March 1) at the earliest and Wave 3 (May 1) at the latest.
 - Discussions about the timeliness of 2008 data for ICCAT. We will not submit data to the Standing Committee on Research and Statistics since they only accept 2007 data. However, data can be provided right up until the ICCAT meeting in November for compliance purposes. A Wave 2 start would provide 6 months of preliminary data, a wave 3 start 4 months of data. A wave 3 start coincides with the peak swordfish activity, so there is a useful management purpose in proceeding even with a delayed start date.
 - Project team (for both FL pilots) will convene in Florida for a start-up meeting prior to implementation.
 - Some OT members thought this was MRFSS or LPS all over again; need to be more explicit about how pilot did something different that we can take forward to fully implement catch and effort survey into areas w/ gaps.
- The work group chair (Ron) mentioned that this is the first funding stage, and there will be opportunities for future funding of HMS projects to address gaps and biases that we should be looking into. He encouraged the group to think about second phase projects to put on the back burner, particularly in regions not already being addressed.
- Meeting adjourned.