

**MRIP Listening Session**  
**Southeast Regional Office**

**Summary Report**

**Location:** St. Petersburg, Florida

**Date:** March 18, 2008

**Purpose:** To gather input from Regional Office and Science Center staff, Council members and staff, state partners and constituents to assure that the MRIP design that we are developing is appropriately tailored to the specific fishery management and stock assessment needs of the region. Further, such an assessment will enable us to begin to identify and prioritize regional needs for MRIP projects for the next round of project funding, with FY 2008 funds.

**MRIP Team Members:** Gordon Colvin, Preston Pate, Forbes Darby, Rob Andrews and Scott Sauri

**Agencies/Groups Represented:** Southeast Regional Office and Science Center, South Atlantic Council, Gulf Council, State of Alabama, State of Florida, State of Louisiana, State of Texas, Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission

**Attachments:** Agenda, list of attendees, detailed minutes

**Major Points and Comments:**

1. Attendees, councils want more involvement with work groups and Operations Team to provide more complete input on regional needs. It was suggested that all councils have representation on the work groups.
2. Relative to the registry exemptions, it was noted that the shore exemptions from Florida licensing requirements are a major road block. Limitations of federal registry authority will make removing the shoreline exemption a tough sell.
3. Integration of Texas data is an issue that needs to be addressed.
4. The commercial fishing sector needs to fully understand the improvements MRIP will make to recreational effort and landings data. Outreach needs to include their trade media and they should be represented on the work groups.
5. It is important to communicate program goals and objectives. A clear explanation of expected improvements and transition from MRFSS to the new MRIP program is important.
6. Quality of license data from states is a big issue. The Registry Team needs to emphasize the importance of getting complete angler

- information, especially phone numbers. License sales at box stores (e.g. Wal-Mart) are a major source of missing and inaccurate information.
7. License buyers could be asked at the point of sale if they want to register for participation in surveys.
  8. Improvements and/or alternatives to phone survey are needed.
    - a. Suggested improvements include:
      - i. Better caller ID info
      - ii. Leaving a call-in number on answering machines
    - b. Alternatives / additional options include:
      - i. Web/Online
      - ii. Phone-in
      - iii. Fax
      - iv. Sign up for surveys
      - v. Email
  9. Need to insure consistency between assessment landings (in pounds or numbers) and those posted on the website.

**Comments specific to data needs in Gulf and South Atlantic:**

1. More coverage of tournament fishing is needed. Tournament catches and discards are major issues in the SEDAR process that need to be better evaluated with better characterization of tournament effort and catch.
2. There is strong interest in the Region in getting both wave and annual estimates earlier than at present. One concern is the need to consider in-season management of fisheries that will be under ACL/AM requirements in the future and that are under strict rebuilding schedules with hard TAC's at present (e.g. Gulf red snapper and Gulf greater amberjack). Also, there is a need to get annual estimates earlier than at present (i.e. by January/February rather than April/May as is current practice) both to supply current data for the spring SEDAR and to assure annual adjustments can be made as necessary sufficiently early in the season to be effective and to meet AM requirements. At present, data used in annual updates and stock assessments is often two years old. The consensus in the region is that , at a minimum, we should be working with data that are complete through the year preceding its use. The data delivery problem is in part related to the early dates of the SEDAR. There was discussion of the possibility of moving SEDAR to a later date to enable completion of annual estimates.
3. Faster processing of wave data, less than current 45 day turnaround, would be desirable.
4. Need to evaluate benefits of a shorter wave (possibly 1 month)
  - a. Possible benefits include:
    - i. Elimination of need to parse wave data to convert to monthly landings, which is commonly done when evaluating seasonal closures.
    - ii. Decrease of recall bias.

- iii. More accurate tracking of pulse fisheries.
    - iv. Mitigation of bias associated with assumption of even distribution across 2 month wave.
    - v. Quicker reaction time in dealing with sudden changes.
  - b. Possible negatives include:
    - i. May not necessarily reduce 45 day turn around and could in fact increase it if sufficient resources are not provided.
    - ii. May result in a lower hit rate (% of people contacted who actually fished).
    - iii. Additional cost could double current program costs.
    - iv. May result in lower sample sizes and less precise estimates of landings/effort.
- 5. Precision needs to be improved with larger sample sizes. More sampling could be funded in future once MRIP implemented.
- 6. Consider shortening wave periods during highest effort periods.
- 7. Further stratification of geographic areas may be necessary to improve capture of rare event harvest for species such as South Atlantic snowy grouper and golden tilefish.
- 8. The Gulf coast states want to have more detailed geographic sub-areas defined and sampled for each state. Both Louisiana and Florida representatives outlined sub-area needs and rationales for their states. Dave Donaldson will submit a detailed description of proposed geographical regions and rationales for all Gulf states
- 9. Spatial resolution data would be valuable
  - a. Resolution between state and federal waters is an issue because regulations are different for a few species (e.g., recreationally caught Gulf red snapper) between the two areas
  - b. Recall may be an issue for specific coordinates
  - c. LA has an issue in dry years when red drum are frequently harvested inland of survey area
  - d. Angler may be reluctant to give up "hot spots" or may otherwise misreport specific coordinates
- 10. Better discard data is necessary
  - a. Improved information on length, disposition and condition is needed
  - b. Level of detail probably too specific for survey, may require observers
  - c. Is there, and if not should there be, consistency between recreational and commercial discard estimates and estimation methods?
  - d. Homogenization of estimation systems
    - i. Would a NMFS standard actually be used?
- 11. Need better, more frequent socio-economic data because these considerations are becoming increasingly important in developing fishery management plans
  - a. Surveys are currently done every three years

- b. Conditions are changing so quickly that they need to be done more frequently.
  - c. May be better to conduct them as supplemental surveys instead of adding onto MRIP
12. Protected Resources staff outlined concerns with recreational interactions with sea turtles and bottlenose dolphins. They would like to work with the HQ PR staff and the MRIP team to explore options to obtain more and better data on interactions.

### **Comments on data needs specific to Caribbean:**

1. There are very little recreational data available for Puerto Rico and none is available for the Virgin Islands
2. There is a big problem with awareness of permit requirements and, therefore, very little compliance. This could affect registration and reporting requirements.
4. The Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico have social and economic issues similar to those in Hawaii and Western Pacific Islands (e.g., sustenance fishing, charter vessels selling their catch, etc.)
5. Fishing techniques and preferences vary among the islands.
6. Lack of landings data and fishing effort limits stock assessments.
7. Concentrating on the for-hire sector may be the best place to start improving surveys
8. There will be a lot of resistance to any regulatory controls

### **Comments Specific to Outreach**

1. Outreach to anglers/constituents – some feel constituents are well represented in WGs and should be aware of what is going on while others think that outreach to more constituents is needed
2. Advertise involvement of Gordon Colvin, Pres Pate (i.e. not an inside job)
3. Communication with the commercial sector
4. Monthly updates to councils
5. MRIP leadership will attend council meetings if invited
6. Include MRIP link in council newsletters
7. Need short-term and long-term communication plans
8. Can't let people's first impression be restrictions ("MRIP took away my fish")
9. Must communicate big picture to states
10. NMFS and states must work together to reach goal of full coverage
11. Must communicate the nature of the transition from MRFSS to MRIP:
  - a. Not a silver bullet, won't fix everything
    - i. Stress that it is a gradual process
    - ii. Some MRFSS components will continue to be in use for years

- iii. Some components of MRFSS and MRIP will run concurrently for years
  - iv. Some MRFSS components will migrate to MRIP
  - v. Must be clear about what is within the scope of MRIP and be careful about not using it for purposes for which it was not designed.
12. Education to states regarding QA/QC of data collection, especially for license data
13. Advertise extensive independent scientific scrutiny and peer review
14. Pursue all venues
- a. Face-to-face with key constituents
  - b. Bait and tackle shops
  - c. Journalism trade shows
  - d. Outdoor Writers Association
  - e. Magazines and regional publications
  - f. Chat boards (may be black holes)
  - g. Public hearings
  - h. Newsletters
  - i. Councils web sites
  - j. Presentations at council meetings
  - k. Fish News

### **Future Funding Priorities**

1. Socioeconomic needs in the region are growing and these needs need to be built into the survey
2. Tournament catches and discards are major issues in the SEDAR process. Catch, effort, and discards need to be better evaluated for this sector.