

## Recreational Timeliness Presentation – Dick Brame

\*\*\* Commercial Harvest counted – catch is managed

\*\*\* Rec anglers estimated - regulate behavior rather than catch

\*\*\* New requirements in MSRA and by NMFS implementation

\*\*\* Timeliness, as used in this report, refers to lags in reporting recreational catches that limit a manager's capacity to adjust in-season harvests to prevent overages in quota allocations.

\*\*\* It also pertains to time lags in producing annual fishing effort and catch estimates. In both scenarios, timeliness must be improved to more effectively monitor the magnitude of recreational catches, both while the fishery is ongoing and for the management process as a whole.

\*\*\* Increasing timeliness will be expensive in most cases, investments should be prioritized to address “valuable fisheries,” i.e. either in terms of biological condition (overfished/overfishing or rare – salmon) or economic potential (billfish).

\*\*\* In general, it is important to improve both the availability of data necessary for management. In at least some cases, it may make more sense from both fiscal and management effectiveness standpoints to adapt management approaches, tools and strategies to reflect available information rather than doing the reverse. This may mean greater degrees of precaution are incorporated or maintained in management while long term investments are considered to reduce uncertainty and maximize harvest opportunities on time scales relevant to each fishery.

Our group's discussion on timeliness fell into 2 broad categories:

## **1. What to do with the data as collected?**

Most of the BRP discussion centered on means by which the time between data collection, reporting and analysis can be reduced.

While there are improvements in efficiency that may allow for faster turnaround times, such changes likely would add additional expenses by a currently unknown but probably significant amount, and they also may compromise data quality.

Recreational catch increases with the abundance of the stock, which can cause problems for managers. It may be possible to develop complementary indicators (e.g., tackle sales, boat traffic and bait sales) that would allow managers to detect increases in catches and/or effort and adjust catch accordingly.

When it comes to how and when to use data and the question of whether in-season adjustment can and should be a realistic goal, our group had varying opinions. Clearly, however, the degree to which data collection systems can adequately support near-real time or in-season management varies, both in cost and in suitability. But for many fisheries, it may well be possible – certainly for the for-hire sector.

## **2. What to do with management?**

Management must do a better job of determining the amount and impacts of recreational fishing effort to keep harvests below target levels. Recreational effort likely will increase as abundance increases in recovering fisheries stocks. Harvest control has traditionally been

accomplished with the season timings, closed areas, bag limits and size limits. However, management usually sets regulations for the next year based on conditions (exploitation rate, spawning stock size, etc.) in the current or even past years. Management should develop better means to project trends in recreational effort over shorter time scales (i.e., using the most recent data) to better estimate future harvests.

A key component of improved management is to match available funds with fishery goals. For example, if a primary goal is to maximize recreational opportunities throughout the year, then bag limits should be conservative to reflect the lag time in data collection and analysis. If a primary goal is to maximize catch, then a great deal more funding is necessary to shorten the lag time in data collection and analysis.

## **Ideas**

- Implement recreational management plans with goals established for a 3-5 year time horizon, recognizing that catches may vary and exceed allowable levels in one year but could fall below the next, which should mitigate the inherent volatility in recreational management measures.
- Currently management has usually implemented the longest open season possible, running the risk of an overage or, if possible, an early closure, which is very unpopular with anglers. A better strategy may be to set more conservative (shorter) harvest seasons so that adjustments only would lengthen the open season and work in the anglers' favor.