



Recreational Fisheries Strategic Plan Regional Constituent Workshop #5 Northeast Region – Peabody, Massachusetts June 3, 2004

The fifth in the continuing series of Regional Constituent Workshops supporting the development of the new National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Recreational Fisheries Strategic Plan for 2005-2009 was held at the Newbury Street Holiday Inn in Peabody, Massachusetts on June 3rd for Recreational Fisheries constituents in the Northeast Region. The series of NOAA-sponsored regional workshops is designed to provide constituents from all regions the opportunity to share their vision of an effective and successful Federal Recreational Fisheries Program, describe the characteristics and attributes of this Program, and discuss them in the context of a review of the draft NOAA Recreational Fisheries Strategic Plan.

Frank Blount, owner of Frances Fleet Incorporated of Galilee, Rhode Island and an active member of the New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC), welcomed the workshop participants and shared his expectations and hopes for the NOAA strategic planning initiative and for improved representation of recreational anglers in the government’s management process. Opening comments were also provided by Kevin Chu of the NOAA Fisheries Northeast Regional Office. These opening remarks evolved into a short discussion on the realism of constituent expectations for positive changes as a result of the information gathered during the workshop and its impact relative to previous inputs provided by the local constituent community. The attendees agreed that this may be a unique opportunity in time to realize improvements due to the ongoing, high-level attention to ocean issues, particularly with the national visibility of the *Report of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy*. Following this short discussion, the attendees participated in a facilitated session designed to elicit ideas from each individual, share these ideas and prioritize them through small group interaction, and

Results of Affinity Diagramming Process: Characteristics and Attributes of the Future Federal Recreational Fisheries Program

| Scope | Allocation | Management Approaches | Data Collection | Ecosystem Management | Equal Representation | Economic Fairness | Outreach | Credibility |
|---|--|---|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| Other Species Than Groundfish Are Important for Recreational Fisheries (e.g., Coastal and Highly Migratory Species) | Recreational Quotas Should be Managed and Allocated Independently [of Commercial Quotas] | Change Dogfish Regulations | Better, More, and Accurate Recreational Catch Data | Forage Fish | Equal Representation on Management Bodies (Recreational/ Commercial) | Manage for Recreational Value <u>First</u> , Ahead of Commercial | More Hands-On Interaction of Government with Recreational Organizations and Clubs | Establish Credibility With Recreational Anglers |
| | Access Should Not be Closed to Sustainable Methods | Simplify Regulations by Implementing Coastwide Measures | Review MRFSS Large Pelagic Species (LPS) Strategies (For Hire) for Sampling; Utilize ACCSP | Habitat and Quality Issues Need Attention (e.g., Pollution, etc.) | Fair Representation and Greater Involvement of Recreational Fishermen in Management Process | Establish That Recreational Fishing is More Valuable Than Commercial Fishing | Better Access to Data | Common Sense Approach from Government Toward Recreational Fisheries |
| | Recreational Measures Are Independent of Commercial Measures | Use of Fishing Mortality Rates and Not Numbers of Fish | Better Identification of the Angler Universe | | Better Representation of Recreational Anglers on Regional Councils | Recreational Sector Should Not be Treated as Sector That Can Have the Leftovers After Commercial Activity is Done | Public Education | Management Measures Based on Fact and Not Perception |
| | Open Access to Fishing Areas with Reasonable Catch Limits | Consider Management Targets Other Than Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) for Recreational Species | Ensure Adequate Sample Size for Catch and Effort Estimates at the State Level | | More Partnership Between Recreational and Commercial Interests | Resources Spent Should be Proportional to Economic Benefit Provided to the Economy | | |
| | Make the Punishment Fit the Crime (Quotas/Overfishing) | Work Collaboratively With State Agencies, Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC), and Between States | | | | Recreational Buy-Backs and Subsidies | | |
| | Manage For Maximum Reproduction | | | (other) | | | | |
| | Better Management of Gamefish and Control of Longline Fishery (one billion hooks in the ocean per day) | | | More and Better Enforcement | | | | |

then jointly develop an affinity diagram representing a collection of the key attributes and characteristics of the group. The diagram above represents the product of this exercise. The current draft of the Recreational Fisheries Strategic Plan was then introduced and the attendees were afforded the opportunity to comment on the contrasts and similarities between their group product and the draft Strategic Plan.

The subsequent discussion highlighted the emphasis among the constituents on management processes mostly external to NOAA but critical to ensuring appropriate representation of recreational anglers and associated industries in management decisions. Perceptions of outcomes related to historical regulatory actions of the NEFMC stimulated much of this discussion. Many of the attendees felt that NEFMC proceedings related to recreational fishing lacked credibility due to an inequity of representation on the Council, and that past regulatory decisions had been made without due consideration of available Recreational Fisheries data, even if the data were scientifically sound and readily available. The logical extension of this discussion to the draft Strategic Plan led the group to reflect on the potential—or lack thereof—for the new Plan to effect changes in local management processes and help the recreational sector, even if, as one constituent suggested, “the science data were perfectly accurate.” In assessing this potential, the attendees generally agreed that the building of a recreational constituent community with a greater voice and an improved ability to provide indisputable economic information and accurate science data both to the Councils and to the public at large represented two important objectives that could be realized through implementation of the emerging NOAA strategy.

The economic importance and impact of recreational fishing was a major theme in the affinity diagram and in the discussion that followed. Most of the attendees believed that the recreational sector has considerably more value to the economy than the commercial sector but lacks the equal and fair representation that it should be afforded based on this value. There was agreement by the group that quantifying and articulating the economic and social value of recreational fishing should be a high priority for both NOAA and local Recreational Fisheries advocacy groups.

The group endorsed the theme of ecosystem management as a means of protecting habitat and achieving sustainable fisheries. Attention to appropriate management and protection of coastal and highly migratory species were considered priorities among the attendees.

A few of the attendees mentioned the fact of an advisory panel for recreational fisheries for their region that had existed in the past but had atrophied in recent years for unknown reasons. The idea of a regional Recreational Fisheries Advisory Panel was discussed and received enthusiastically by the attendees. A commitment was made by the NOAA representatives at the workshop and several participants to follow up on this idea and investigate establishing a panel within the Northeast Region at the earliest opportunity.

The group brought the workshop to a close by reflecting on their perceived role in bringing the new NOAA Recreational Fisheries strategy to fruition. As with previous workshops, the constituents felt their most important role would be to share information and encourage involvement and activism among the larger body of recreational anglers in the region. Improved outreach activities and strong collaboration and coordination between NOAA Fisheries, state, and local agencies were also encouraged.