

Meeting Summary Report
Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee
Public Teleconference Meeting
July 1, 2019, 3:00-4:30 pm Eastern Time

Overview

This teleconference was arranged for one primary goal, to review, discuss, and approve comments on the Draft NOAA Strategic Aquaculture Science Plan developed by MAFAC's Aquaculture Task Force. Updates on project work were also provided by the chairs of the Commerce Subcommittee's Seafood Promotion Task Group and the Recreational Fisheries Subcommittee.

Erika Feller served as Chair of this MAFAC meeting. This was the first meeting of three newly appointed MAFAC members who introduced themselves: Tom Fote, Don McMahon, and Patrick Sullivan.

All MAFAC members, NOAA staff, and members of the public that listened to the meeting are attached at the end of this document.

Review of the draft NOAA Strategic Aquaculture Science Plan

Dr. Michael Rust, Senior Science Advisor for Aquaculture reviewed the development of the Draft Strategic Aquaculture Science Plan (SASP) to date and comment process. He first noted that aquaculture is a cross-line office activity within NOAA, meaning there is activity in NOAA Fisheries, the National Ocean Service (NOS), and Sea Grant in particular. NOAA Fisheries and NOS have laboratories, as scientific assets, but also science is achieved through bilateral agreements with other countries, as well as through grant programs. But comparatively, the aquaculture program is not highly resourced and there is recognition that some regions and some research needs have been lacking. Thus, it was determined that a strategic plan was needed to clearly identify science topics that are needed to help regulators and to help aquaculture ventures succeed (industry perspective), as well as to look at strengths and weaknesses of different scientific approaches to meet these needs.

Dr. Rust has engaged with MAFAC members and the Aquaculture Task Force (ATF) earlier in the process and were asked to identify research and science topics important to the broader U.S. aquaculture industry. For each topic or scientific discipline identified, the ATF was requested to develop a vision for the topic and what the key environmental, economic, and social benefits of achieving the vision would be. These were discussed and finalized by MAFAC at the November 2018 meeting. In addition to MAFAC, Dr. Rust received input from the NOAA Science Advisory Board and internal colleagues.

Dr. Rust used these inputs in this first draft of the SASP. He then shared it back with each group that provided input, and is now seeking comments and edits on this draft. Dr. Jeanette Davis of the Policy Office reviewed the input provided by the ATF; each member reviewed the draft document, submitted comments to Dr. Davis, she compiled them all and sent a singled revised draft (with tracked change) out to the group for a second review and discussion. The ATF's final compiled set of comments and edits was provided to all MAFAC members for review.

Overall, MAFAC members were complimentary of the draft, and considered it a thoughtful and broad-reaching effort. Members discussed the comments and asked several questions, particularly about some references to sections not yet written. Dr. Rust noted those sections are not complete as yet, and he was waiting on inputs from the NOAA Science Advisory Board (SAB) on tactics on how to achieve certain science outcomes.

MAFAC agreed with the detail and general comments that were compiled by the ATF, and passed two motions to support submitting these comments to NOAA Fisheries (with two abstentions). However, they also requested that they be provided another opportunity to review the next draft, after submissions by the NOAA SAB and other entities are received and before that draft is finalized.

Seafood Promotion

Dr. Megan Davis provided a short overview of the progress of the Seafood Promotion Task Group, which is part of the Commerce Subcommittee. They are working on three main questions related to a potential National Seafood Council: how deep is the support for such a Council, how it may be established and implemented, and what type of top branding it could do for seafood promotion and education. The Task Group is developing a concept paper, aiming for two pages in length, that could be a working document for the seafood industry to react to. The goal would be to get input on the concept. They are also discussing metrics that could be used to measure success and how this could be funded. They will continue working on these over the summer, will share the draft concept paper with the Commerce Subcommittee in advance of the October meeting, and there will be more discussion at that meeting. Goal is work towards developing recommendations over the next eight to ten months.

Recreational Fisheries

Bob Gill, Chair of the Recreational Fisheries Subcommittee provided an update on the two tasks that this subcommittee is working on. The subcommittee has been meeting monthly and are still in their “homework” phase. Task 1 deals with assessing participation and retention rates in volunteer and citizen science applications and projects. They have assembled a number of projects to review as well as articles. Goal is to identify what works and does not to improve rates. Task 2 is working on better identification of the universe of recreational anglers fishing in federal waters. They are focusing on the Gulf of Mexico region as a template, since those states have reporting or registry programs. A questionnaire has been drafted to serve as a common platform for discussion with the five Gulf state managers and program directors. For each discussion, they will have two MAFAC members and one NOAA staff member to assist with note taking. There will be a status update at the October meeting.

Next MAFAC meeting

Ms. Heidi Lovett provided an update on the next in-person MAFAC meeting. It’s scheduled for October 15-17, 2019, but exact location is to be determined. Members requested that the agenda minimize overlap of subcommittee meetings, and that 30 more minutes be provided for each if possible.

The meeting was adjourned by 4:30 pm.

PARTICIPANTS ON THIS CALL

MAFAC Members

Erika Feller, Chair
Sebastian Belle
Roger Berkowitz
Megan Davis
Tom Fote
Robert Gill
Robert Jones
Sara McDonald
Donald McMahon
Mike Okoniewski
Kellie Ralston
Joe Schumacker
Patrick Sullivan
Richard Yamada

NOAA Fisheries Staff

Jeanette Davis
Heidi Lovett
Mike Rust

NOAA Sea Grant Staff

Mark Rath

Public attendees

Naudelis Fernandez, Friends of the Earth (FOE)
Andrea Folds, Earthjustice
Molly Masterton, Natural Resources Defense Council, Staff Attorney
Jenni Stucker, Loyola
Richard Zarella, U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), Analyst