



SUMMARY RECORD
Marine Fisheries Administrative Committee
Public Meeting
November 6-8, 2018
Silver Spring, Maryland

OVERVIEW

The spring 2018 Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee (MAFAC) meeting took place in Silver Spring, Maryland over the three day period from November 6-8. NOAA Fisheries was represented by Paul Doremus, David Hall, Public Affairs Officer, NOAA Office of Marine and Aviation Operations the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Operations, Heidi Lovett, NOAA's Senior Policy Analyst, Jennifer Lukens, the Director of the Office of Policy, Francisco Werner, Director of Scientific Programs and Chief Science Advisor.

Erika Feller served as Chair of MAFAC. The meeting opened by welcoming three new members to MAFAC, Donna Kalez, Sara McDonald, Kellie Ralston. There were an additional 12 returning members: Peter Moore, Robert Jones, Matt Upton, Jim Parsons, Ervin Schumacker, Megan Davis, Richard Yamada, Roger Berkowitz, Stefanie Moreland, Sebastian Belle, Mike Okoniewski, and Raimundo Espinoza. The Executive Directors of the Atlantic, Gulf, and Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commissions also attended: Bob Beal, David Donaldson, and Randy Fisher.

Over the course of the meeting, the following priorities and activities pertinent to NOAA Fisheries were discussed in detail:

- **Report From Assistant Administrator**
- **Fishing Efforts Survey**
- **Electronic Recreation Fisheries Reporting**
- **Saltonson-Kennedy Grant Making Process and Review**
- **Columbia Basin Partnership Taskforce**
- **Reports from the State Directors Meeting and Fisheries Commissions**
- **Reports from the Atlantic States Commission**
- **NOAA Fisheries Budget Outlook and Administrative Update**
- **NOAA Aquaculture Program**
- **Fish and Seafood Promotion Act**
- **Panel Discussion on Elevating Consumer Confidence in US Seafood**
- **Science Enterprise Update**
- **Subcommittee and Working Group Reports**

This is the order in which they were discussed but there was significant overlap.

This report summarizes the major action items, recommendations and meeting discussion for the three daylong meeting.

DAY 1 (November 6, 2018)

Welcome, Introductions and Agenda Review:

The proceedings begin with Chairwoman Erika Feller introducing herself and suggesting that all members introduce themselves on account of the members that are new and who are here for their first meeting.

The introductions begin and the participants speak a little bit about themselves, their past and current roles. Mr. Moore, Mr. Jones, Mr. Upton, Mr. Parsons, Mr. Donaldson, Mr. Fisher, Mr. Van Voorhees, Mr. Dunn, Mr. Sartwell, Ms. Lovett, Mr. Schumacker, Mr. Okoniewski, Mr. Espinoza, Ms. Davis, Mr. Yamada, Mr. Berkowitz, Ms. Moreland, Dr. Werner, Mr. Oliver, Ms. Lukens, and Mr. Belle introduce themselves as returning members whereas Ms. Kalez, Ms. McDonald, Ms. Ralston explain that this is their first meeting.

Ms. Lukens, the Office Director of the Office of Policy at NOAA Fisheries, as well as the Executive Director of MAFAC (Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee) then begins the substantive part of the meeting beginning with an announcement that a new Vice Chair position is open now that Ms. Feller has taken the role of Chairwoman. Ms. Lukens goes over the schedule of the meeting and the logistics and encourages members who are not part of subcommittees to join the subcommittee discussions that will be taking place.

After a short comment regarding the timing and logistics of speaking during the meeting by Ms. Feller, Mr. Chris Oliver begins the substantive proceedings by first announcing that three members have resigned during the year which means that a new nomination cycle is to be announced.

Report From Assistant Administrator

Mr. Oliver begins by discussing one of the three key NOAA Fisheries strategic goals is to maximize the fishing opportunities while ensuring the sustainability of the fisheries and fishing communities. This will be done, in part, by expanding the national seafood production and competitiveness of the process. This will be elaborated upon at a later presentation in the upcoming days. Mr. Oliver spends a few minutes also laying out a loose schedule of MAFAC priorities which includes maximizing recreational fishing opportunities and the Columbia Basin Partnership Taskforce and its progress which directly relates to another NOAA Fisheries priority,

to recover and conserve protective species while supporting responsible fishing and resource development.

Fishing Efforts Survey

Ms. Denit and Mr. Van Voorhees begin the first presentation about the Fishing Effort Survey. Ms. Denit first describes how total recreational catch is calculated, surveys that calculate effort and that estimate the number of fish caught per angler trip. The changes addressed in this presentation are not related to charter fishing and are instead focused on private boat and shore-based modes only. The focus will be on the Atlantic Coast and the Gulf.

Ms. Denit explains that since few people have landlines anymore, the Coastal Household Telephone Survey no longer was effective. As such, the survey is now dispersed and conducted by mail. Response rate has tripled since this change has been implemented. Both surveys ran concurrently for a period of three years to accurately gauge any changes or differences.

Mr. Van Voorhees explains, through graphs, that the implementation of the mail surveys, as opposed to phone surveys, has been very good for results. In addition to yielding higher response rates, the response rates for the mail survey have also been able to focus on the intended audience. Mr. Van Voorhees explains this phenomenon by concluding that any given individual in a household can pick the phone up and answer the survey while the mail survey is much more likely to reach the relevant member of the household who is doing the fishing.

Next, Mr. Van Voorhees talks about the positive correlation between effort estimate and total catch estimate. He uses the increase of these factors in the Bluefish, Summer Flounder, Black Sea Bass, and Gulf Red Snapper populations to illustrate this example. These fish populations differ from each other slightly when other factors such as private fishing and shoreline fishing are taken into account.

The shore based mode experienced the most substantial change with the transition to mail based surveys. The data gathered by these methods will be used to gauge the stock assessments in order to inform management moving forward.

Some time is spent discussing the different types of survey methodologies and any discrepancies that might come from two surveys trying to gauge the same thing. The method with which this data will be aggregated is something that is being worked on by various members.

There is a brief question and answer component after Ms. Denit and Mr. Van Voorhees' presentation. The data methodology is asked about in the context of how much data are available. The specific fish species that Mr. Van Voorhees and Ms. Denit spoke about are very data rich. A point is made about how Texas' sampling techniques are lacking and how the plan

is to exchange in dialogue with Texas to ramp up their sampling methodology to increase the amount of data. New funds have been identified that can help with this starting in 2019. It is explained that an incentive of two dollars for the mail surveys is the optimal way to get the best feedback. One dollar is insufficient and anything beyond two dollars does not yield results commensurate with the resources spent. A question about sampling methodologies is asked and it is explained that the list of mailing addresses from the post office is cross referenced with the list of license holders and then a subset of the remaining addresses is also polled. It would appear, based on the numbers discussed, that the relevant survey yield is about 60%. A little bit is also spoken about future surveying techniques that will involve measuring fishing trips more directly. This appears to be in its nascent stage so more time will be needed to address this.

The meeting enters a recess.

After the meeting reconvenes, Chairwoman Feller introduces the next speaker, Rich Cody who will be giving an overview of MRIP's involvement in electronic reporting.

Electronic Recreation Fisheries Reporting

Mr. Cody has worked closely with state and regional partners to help different states design surveys that meet their specific needs, which vary from state to state. He explains that, like the presenters before him stated, total catch is a function of effort and catch rate. The MRIP surveys work in tandem with other independent surveys to supplement the overall information. There is a dockside component for these specialized surveys that serves to validate what's reported by the anglers allowing those in charge to get an idea of what corrections or adjustments need to be made. Mr. Cody speaks about various methods of reporting catch employed by different fishermen, depending on what they actually fish. He emphasizes that there is more than one way to report things. This data is used by scientists and law enforcement agencies alike in that they use the information to determine if there is overfishing and the such. In order to reach a hundred percent matching of trips, each trip is given its own identification number which pertains only to that trip. This way, the data must be reported before that identification number is closed out and another number can be given out for another trip. Non-compliance to this system would result in a ticket which is another way to get funding.

A similar process exists in Alabama and compliance is in the 30 percent. There are issues with states that do not give these reporting numbers as there are issues with any scenario where someone might under report to take advantage. Irrespective of this, the methodology seems to be at least somewhat effective. More work needs to be done to further these methodologies as they are a work in progress with a goal of being able to use an aggregation of this data to summarize regionally whether enough information exists. In addition, sustained use of the various reporting apps is lower than ideal. This segment seems to have gone a bit longer than

expected so questions will be deferred to a later time. Next up, Mr. Namur will conduct his presentation on the Saltonson-Kennedy Grant Making Process and Review.

Saltonson-Kennedy Grant Making Process and Review

Mr. Namur begins by explaining that the National Marine Fishery Service does large investments of somewhere in the ballpark of 400 million dollars a year, which equates to a third of the budget. The proceedings begin with Chairwoman Erika Feller introducing the first topic, the Science Enterprise Update. These grants come in the form of competitive grants and non-competitive grants. Aquaculture is getting more and more attention. Mr. Namur also explains the bureaucratic red tape that is inevitably involved in getting out these grants which slows the disbursement of the grants.

Mr. Namur then shifts his focus to the Saltonson-Kennedy Grant (SK). The SK is not appropriated and is based on the SK Act, signed in 1954, and is based on the duties and tariffs on fish products that are imported into the United States. The ideal objective of the SK Act is to import less fish and push U.S. fish into the market for purchase. The SK Act mandates that 30 percent of the funds collected by the US Department of Agriculture from the Promotion and Development Account go to NOAA. A segment of these funds are then used for the grants. The remainder of these funds go to programs such as WIC, it would appear. Some of these funds go to universities for research and Mr. Okoniewski seems to think a reallocation might be appropriate. The crux of the SK Act is promotion, development and marketing at the commercial and recreational level.

Mr. Namur talks about the process in which the grantees are selected via an industry panel that prioritizes relevance and need. There is significant tracking of these funds since they are obviously quite large and since many different organizations want funding from the SK Act. Other members point out that the SK Act has been amended multiple times before and this is a good thing.

Mr. Namur explains that the evaluation criteria changes from year to year to fit the needs of the US. Data sharing is an important requirement for these grants because the data can be used by other agencies for various purposes. This data is also available to the public. Mr. Espinoza and Mr. Namur briefly discuss strategies to make these grants more accessible to the Caribbean, the US Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico.

Mr. Namur explains the grantee selection process with the panel as having a review phase with three independent subject-matter experts for each individual application. He notes that some grants have been awarded for marketing efforts. One specific examples involves whether the spiny dogfish species should be called something else without the word “dog” to better market it.

After a few wrap comments, a recess is taken for lunch.

Columbia Basin Partnership Taskforce

Mr. Thom starts this part of the meeting by discussing quantitative goals and how they are characterized. Harvest and hatchery goals were not reached in this piece but will be addressed in phase two. Mr. Thom's segment of the presentation serves as an overview for the remainder of this segment which is continued by Mr. Heikkila.

Mr. Heikkila begins talking about the 13 ESA listed stocks of salmon and steelhead in the Columbia River Basin. The goals will be related towards natural abundance. Mr. Heikkila alludes to handout that was dispersed earlier in the meeting. He does not speak in specifics as to what the charts contain presumably because everyone at the meeting can see the charts. He does explain that stronger natural production, counterintuitively, also yields increased hatchery production. In addition, hatchery production can inorganically be reduced if there is stronger natural production assuming that there is no change in demand. Basically, they can readjust supply accordingly.

Ms. Anders continues this presentation and speaks about qualitative goals that are associated with these quantitative goals of generating stronger natural production and other targets outlined in the charts. She explains four categories of qualitative goals, the first being natural production. The main goal is to restore the salmon and steelhead in the basin to harvestable fishable levels. This is to be done by rebuilding the special distribution and run timing of these species. The goals are expressed temporally as 25 year, 50 year or 100 year goals.

The second goal is to provide diverse and productive and dependable tribal and non-tribal harvest and fishing opportunities for the salmon and steelhead at the Columbia Basin.

Goal three focuses on harvest and fisheries and salmon and steelhead production to support the conservation of the natural populations.

The fourth and most recently added goal which is social, cultural, economic, and ecological considerations that are to be taken into account when people involved with the management of the species make decisions within a broader context that reflects and considers effects to the full range of social, cultural, economic and ecosystem values and diversity in the basin. The quantitative goals will be used to measure the success of the qualitative goals.

Mr. Thom goes over the schedule of the future and explains that a taskforce group meeting will occur in November to reach a final agreement on the goals themselves and to get final edits on recommendations.

A question and answer segment is held where the impact of these goals on orca whales as well as tribal groups is acknowledged. Since the goals are not finalized yet, no analysis of this is

made at this time but it is something that will be considered. Additionally, funding is brought up and it is addressed by saying that first the first the correct action must be chosen and then funding can be allocated based on what that would entail. The report is discussed and it is expected to be completed by January.

Breaking up into Subcommittees

The committee will break up into subcommittees. Logistical matters are addressed including when the subcommittees will adjourn and the plans for a gathering are also addressed. The meeting for the day is then adjourned.

DAY 2 (November 7, 2018)

Reports from the State Directors Meeting and Fisheries Commissions

Mr. Donaldson begins the discussions by talking about how funding has been secured through February of 2020. This will certainly help with data collection efforts. Efforts to train fishermen and oystermen on how to do aquaculture as a business have also been made. The premise being that if it is treated as a business, it will be more likely to be successful. Projects are being reevaluated as are the proposals for next year's funding. Mr. Donaldson gives a brief update on red snapper populations and explains that most states stayed within their quota.

The meeting moves on to Mr. Fisher who will be sharing his annual Randy Fisher's top ten list in no particular order. The first thing on the list is to get the new disaster grant approved. 190 million dollars were granted this year to solve issues that happened from 2014-2016 on the west coast of Alaska. The money is anticipated to be disbursed in January.

Second on the list, the initial phase of aquaculture contracts are completed. Third on the list is to address issues with sea lions and a low number of fish for them to feed on. Fourth on the list is to get the Alaska Disaster Funds spent out. The grant cannot be extended because it is on its fifth year. The fifth thing on the list is to continue the three commission lobbying efforts which will be continued on this very day, presumably after the meeting. The sixth thing on the list is to complete the restoration phase of the Klamath. There are four dams and restoration planning is being conducted if those dams were removed. Seventh on the list is to get a confidential data summary or data sharing agreement with California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Eighth on the list is to contract for a hatchery and genetic management plan on the west coast. Ninth is to continue work on reducing whale entanglements which happen when fishing for Dungeness crab. The number of whales is increasing, which is a good thing overall, but makes the whales more susceptible to getting entangled. The tenth and final thing on Randy's top ten list is to

provide camera review services, the alternative being having a third party live person on the boat which would cost 1,500 dollars a day.

Questions are asked about the funding of disaster relief which happened in 2014 and is still being paid out now. In addition, several members echo their concerns as they pertain to the top ten list that Mr. Fisher has spoken about. The control of the seal population and the steelhead population is spoken about as well. Mr. Schumacker points out that tribes have been making a lot of noise about the pinniped issue. Mr. Fisher also explains that hatcheries combine EISes for the system.

Mr. Beal begins to talk about his top five issues. The right whale issues is the first thing he talks about. The right whale has only 440 animals in the population with only 150 females and 17 mortalities in 2017. There is indication that these mortalities are associated with fishing gear, fixed gear, US gear, Canadian gear and some ship strike issues where the whales collide with ships. Mr. Beal talks about the American Lobster Fishery, a half a billion dollar industry. The lobster gear also gets in the way of these right whales. Herring quotas apparently will be cut going into next year about 75 percent. The herring are the primary bait for lobster fisheries.

Mr. Beal explains that the water temperature changes in New England are extending up through the southern Gulf of Maine and that they productivity of the lobster fishery may be going down. All these factors must be balanced out delicately to resolve all issues including maintaining the lobster fishery while preserving the endangered right whale.

Next, Mr. Beal talks about the recalibrated MRIP data, something that was also mentioned in the previous day's meeting. A peer review of assessments on striped bass and summer flounder will be available in a few weeks.

Climate change is next on the agenda and Mr. Beal explains that it affects virtually everything that is done along the east coast. Climate change also affects how fish move around and where they move to which obviously would affect fishing.

Fourthly, Mr. Beal talks about off shore energy. There is a lot of off shore energy activity up and down the east coast, mostly p in the southern New England area. It is important to balance out the needs of fishermen with those of the power companies.

The fifth and last thing is the Secretary of Commerce support for ASMFC. There are some uncertainties in the ASMFC process with the interstate fisher management plan and how the secretary is recommended in taking action.

After Mr. Beal's report, a question and answer segment ensues with both Mr. Beal and Mr. Fisher who presented before him. Mr. Fisher explains that there are a number of methods being looked at to prevent whale entanglement when crab fishing including different color

ropes and using pots with no ropes. The sea lion problem is expounded upon. The sea lion population has risen dramatically and poses a serious threat to the fish in the area as apparently sea lions are very effective fish hunters and consume a large quantity of fish.

NOAA Fisheries Budget Outlook and Administrative Update

Mr. Doremus begins by stating that fisheries have enjoyed bipartisan support for the most part and that NOAA is in the long term line of business. The budget planning extends to three years and budget proposals are already in the works for fiscal year '20 and discussions have already begun for fiscal year 21. Continuing resolutions continue to happen. The presidential budget proposal in '19 will be \$837.3 M. Mr. Doremus expects the budget of '19 to be similar to that of this year but explains that there is always budget uncertainty. There are economic dimensions involved such as trade deficits as well as environmental dimensions. Seafood is nutrient rich and sustainable as well as a great source of protein. Mr. Doremus explains that though the budget has been increasing, Congress has altered the way that these funds are allocated, which makes it a bit more difficult for NOAA to do what needs to be done as they instead have to allocate the funds as Congress wishes.

Mr. Doremus continues with talking about the actual numbers of the budget, pointing out that the SK grants are now a combination of 21.5 and 3.5 million dollars. Congress demands that shellfish be prioritized in conservation, growth rate, and genetic variation. Significant funds are also being allocated to deal with algal bloom. Some money is also allocated to R and D. Mr. Doremus also talks briefly about SBIR, explaining that it is an effective program. Phase I of this program is demonstrating technology, phase II is evaluating commercialization potential and Phase III is getting over that lab to marketplace kind of transition. Mr. Doremus explains also that despite budget uncertainty, the necessary steps to essentially prepare for a variable budget have been taken. There is mention of feed inputs and how to sustain aquaculture generally within the budget and how the budget can be leveraged to achieve the goals in the best way possible. Considerations on generating funding are also made. Some members suggest monetizing the data in order to have better funding. On the same light, new research methods for data collection are being considered since the cost of business is going up while the budget size is uncertain. After a few short comments about market development strategies, Mr. Doremus' presentation comes to an end and there is a recess.

NOAA Aquaculture Program

The primary focus here is to continue to look for avenues for advanced aquaculture in the gulf and elsewhere. Also of importance is the legal regulatory uncertainty which is a bad thing for NOAA. US aquaculture has dropped significantly from being in the top 13 to now being number 17 or 18. There is a lot of room for improvement in US aquaculture.

Some concerns regarding aquaculture include the use of antibiotics in salmon aquaculture. Strategically, the best route is to provide a one stop shop for US aquaculture as an effort to streamline permitting and to create a predictable environment. The good news is that the Department of Commerce's strategic plan prominently features aquaculture so the issues regarding US aquaculture are being treated with the deference required to improve.

In the Senate, there are two bills to do a variety of things including designating a regional aquaculture coordinator in each region. The senate wants to focus five million dollars on off bottom oyster research, 2.5 million dollars for pilot projects while also emphasizing funding the Fisheries Science Centers. The House wants NOAA to support up to 10 million dollars in shellfish aquaculture research.

Mr. O'Brien explains that they are looking to invest five million dollars in grants across regional pilots in oyster research. Around 1.7 million dollars will be going to increase permit allocations at NMFS Science Centers. The fiscal year 2019 budget is uncertain so these figures could vary when the budget is released. One strategy mentioned is funding a smaller number of larger, longer term projects. Roughly 3 million dollars are being used on the variety of oyster consortia. Some of these RFPs will be coming out shortly after this meeting took place. Mr. O'Brien regrets that this meeting was not a bit later so that he could provide more concrete info on them after they would have come out.

An upcoming review, also weeks away from release, gives NOAA science very high marks in terms of existing capabilities. Both regulatory and industry customers are addressed in the context of NOAA science and development. These two obviously have conflicting interests in different spaces. A regulator would obviously be more inclined to care about how something affects regulation while the industry customer would be more cost cutting driven. The northwest poses significant issues and impedes US aquaculture. One of these issues is plastics in the water. A significant portion of the investments are on the research side so they help everyone involved. This was stated as an answer to a question about efficiency of resource allocation. This was asked again by other members of the committee to really hammer the point in.

The program looks at wild fisheries, trade opportunities and aquaculture as different prongs to promote seafood security and to increase seafood supply. There is a call for the program to work in tandem with private players to achieve mutually beneficial goals. The fear of overlapped resources in order to achieve the same goal multiple times is a recurring theme. Focus on the research side as well as focus on things beyond the scope of private players are some ways to prevent this needless overlap.

Some time is spent talking about how the industry has changed to plant based alternatives to feed fish in captivity. Soy has been used, as well as other things, to prevent waste of fish

products. In addition, parts of fish that would be discarded now have newfound purpose in generating Omega 3s. After this presentation, the break for lunch takes place.

Fish and Seafood Promotion Act

How can US fish be promoted in the marketplace? Ms. Lukens begins her talk by explaining what the government cannot do to promote fish and seafood. First, she explains, one cannot use their public office for private gain meaning that one cannot use their position or title to endorse a product or service in furtherance of a statutory authority. Secondly, they cannot lobby Congress. Since the act, 22 different promotional boards are overseen by USDA. Each of these boards is required to market their plan and to come up with an economic effectiveness study to look back and see how effective they have been.

The Act created councils that were to be around for five years and sunset in 1991. These councils had 15 different voting members, three from the northeast, three from the southeast, and other from other parts. The Act allows the setup of a marketing council for one or more species of fish. In addition, it requires marketing plans to be able to increase product profits instead of harvest.

The Fish and Seafood Promotion act focuses on species specific boards but other acts, such as the National Seafood Marketing and Development Act sets up regional marketing boards. In addition, the Magnuson Act also gives ways to generate funding for marketing. This can be done from quota set asides, Congress appropriated funds or through gifts by states, public or private sources. Though there is direction, the actual fund is empty. FACA amends the SK Act and sets up a committee that would look at running the SK grant program.

Panel Discussion on Elevating Consumer Confidence in US Seafood

This is a panel involving Mr. Connelly, Ms. Cornish, and Mr. Markenson. Mr. Connelly provides an analogy involving New Zealand to illustrate how a problem can be solved. Mr. Connelly explains that one way to elevate consumer confidence is to aggressively defend the processes that NOAA employs. He also suggests that awareness of NOAA's hard work should be bolstered to gain consumer trust.

Next Ms. Cornish speaks about the health benefits of seafood. Seafood helps with brain health, liver health, heart health, eye health, and even lowers the risk of Alzheimer's. Ms. Cornish continues to explain the problems associated with not eating seafood and explains that the average American eats 15.5 pounds of seafood a year and 600 pounds of dairy a year. The money spent on treating diseases associated with obesity is very high and a lot of this could be avoided if more seafood was eaten, Ms. Cornish suggests. In addition, deficiencies in Omega 3s also have staggering impacts including 55,000 deaths last year. She also explains that seafood consumption is on the rise since significant efforts have been taken to educate the consumer

on the advantages of eating seafood. Beyond the cost of seafood, other issues that keep consumption low are not knowing how to prepare seafood, not being able to find it in the grocery store and a consumer ignorance as to differences within the food group since there are hundreds of seafood species and most people will not know where to start.

Mr. Markenson of the Food Marketing Institute then begins speaking about his research which is survey based. Two thousand people have been surveyed. The frozen, fresh, and grocery seafood market is 12 billion dollars a year. Grocery seafood includes jarred, pouched, canned and other non-fresh, non-frozen seafood.

The research shows that baby boomers are the likeliest to eat seafood while within the millennial population; college graduate males with no children are the likeliest seafood consumers. Those that buy groceries online seldom buy seafood, only 12 percent of people have bought seafood online. Shrimp, salmon and tuna are the most commonly bought seafood. Thirty percent of consumers said that where they buy their groceries is not the place where they would buy their seafood. Many consumers shop at multiple banners for food and most people discover new seafood from restaurants. For seafood, product quality is more important than price. This is not the case with meat.

About 25-29 percent of people polled labeled themselves as very knowledgeable in regards to seafood while 8/10 people in this subset said they wanted to know different ways and methods to cook seafood. This would suggest that the interest is there. Out of the whole sample, 4/10 wanted more knowledge. This study will be coming out in full after the first of the year.

Some comparisons are made between the seafood industry and the fruit and vegetable industry. There are more similarities between these two than there are between beef and seafood in that seafood and fruits and vegetables all sold fresh, frozen, even canned while also being under consumed by the American public while providing some of the highest nutritional value.

The message is that the US is a leader in sustainable seafood and if it's US, you can buy it. Several of the aforementioned strategies are revisited. Sending letters to CEOs of buyer companies asking why American seafood was deselected is also presented as a new strategy as is pushing forth the idea that the US has excellent fisheries management systems. The general consensus is that through marketing and awareness, including using celebrities, the confidence in US seafood will be raised. A great point is made on labeling US seafood as US seafood since this would likely make someone more likely to buy it.

Public Comment

Chairwoman Feller opens the floor for public comments but neither anyone present nor anyone on the conference call has any comments to make. A 10 minute break is announced whereupon the members will be split between subcommittees.

DAY 3 (November 8, 2018)

Science Enterprise Update

Dr. Werner begins by talking about CAPAM, established in 2012. CAPAM stands for the Center for the Advancement of Population Assessment Methodology and works toward improving the methods that we use in our stock assessment models by improving the quantitative methods and it is also supposed to make sure that these improvements are community based, both in terms of community getting together and making these improvements as well as getting the information out.

Dr. Werner talks about the Saildrone survey which was successfully completed after 100 days. The data is beginning to be looked at now so it is not yet available to present. The target is to have the final report by March. Four drones are in and they are supposed to help with the assessment of the hake and the Coastal Pelagic species which includes sardine, tuna and others. A fifth drone is still out and it is measuring the migration of the fish.

The saildrones are very accurate but their cost at the current time is comparable to a ship. They are multifunctional but for now are being used only for acoustic surveys. Dr. Werner seems to think that over time, the saildrones will be not only more cost effective but generally better for surveying purposes. This transition will take substantial time and will involve reevaluations with the people that operate the saildrones. The saildrones are owned by a third party and operated by them at a cost of 2,500 dollars a day per saildrone. The data are then sold by the company to NOAA or whomever commissions them.

Dr. Werner alludes to two proposals that he spoke about last meeting, the otolith counter and the environmental DNA. These were fully funded while another four proposals were not but are interesting and will be discussed.

The first of these is the Transform NIR Infrared Spectroscopy technology which ages otoliths differently and six to eight times as quickly. This instrument is cheap and effective in some, but not all, cases. It is being worked on.

Another one is the OMICS, which is a much longer term investment that shows a lot of promise. It collects samples in the water and gives you an idea of what is there. There are a lot of things to be worked out for this.

Next is the ACLIM which is a very advanced system that allows looking at making these management strategy decisions with consideration of physical climate forced factors down to eco system factors to social and socio economic variability.

Dr. Werner also discusses Stommel plots which graphs time and space and is used to monitor weather cycles. Dr. Werner explains the different color blobs and how they monitor various things. Some of these blobs measure marine heat waves which obviously would impact the aquaculture they come in contact with and therefore the fisheries that attempt to fish these species. These heat waves affect both the fish metabolism and their food sources. He uses the pollack population to illustrate this. Dr. Werner points out that if people are aware of the patterns of these marine heat waves, they can use this information to fish elsewhere if need be. The implications are not just how the fish are affected but what strategies must be taken to address these movements. In addition, possession of the fish can be contested as the fish move from area to area.

The Weather Act is mentioned as a weather equivalent to the Magnuson Act. It singles out specifically sub seasonal to seasonal and it affects agriculture. It is codified. Also, Dr. Werner talks about the formulation of a working group that revisits all the surveys. No comprehensive evaluation or surveys have been conducted since the 1998 publication of the NOAA Fisheries Data Acquisition Plan which means it has been 20 years since surveys have followed the pattern that they have done for the last two decades. Budgetary issues are also brought up with some confusion as to what is deemed important and what is not. Dr. Werner explains that the two things that were funded were not per se more important but perhaps more ready to be funded.

Subcommittee and Working Group Reports

First, the Commerce subcommittee will speak. Mr. Berkowitz talks about how it is important to get the information to consumers and subcommittee members agree that another meeting between them is needed to digest the information that they have gathered and shared. It is proposed that more work is done to arrive at a great product in the end. This is voted upon and unanimously approved. A conference call will be held in the future to discuss these things further. Before Ms. Jeanette Davis talks about the NOAA Science or Strategic Science Aquaculture Plan, some discussion is had about various things discussed the previous days. The logistics of how information has been or will be dispersed to the committee members is discussed. Everyone will get a transcript so even information that was discussed but not finalized or published will be readily available.

The NOAA Science or Strategic Science Aquaculture Plan is presented and the members seem to have copies. It is not discussed since it has been presented to the members to review. An issue is raised about GMOs and how they were not addressed as much. Some committee members are concerned if there will be any objections to the plan. The document is discussed vaguely, presumably because everyone has reviewed it to a degree.

Mr. Yamada moves to adopt the intent but explains that future revisions obviously are to be made. It is unanimously approved.

Next, there is a report from the Recreational Fisheries Subcommittee. Two major areas are going to be investigated but the subcommittee is still working on it. One is going to be electronic reporting which will entail doing a broad survey across the country of electronic reporting, getting a handle on different types of programs and doing some kind of evaluation of that and reporting the findings to help other programs that want to develop electronic reporting programs to the Secretary.

The second project will consist of trying to identify the universe of offshore anglers. More meetings and conference calls already have been scheduled. The main area of focus will be on the Gulf States and Atlantic Coast.

The review process is a standalone type of effort that involves the use of statistical consultants that are independent from NOAA.

Next is the Strategic Planning Subcommittee. Their discussion was more of a brain storming session to find topics that have been in front of MFAC and see what issues there are. They spoke in length about issues related to seafood trade, mitigating impacts of tariffs and how to better represent US seafood abroad, developing the US position and thinking holistically about the role that commerce plays within sort of the federal family in terms of addressing these trade issues.

Also, they discussed steps relating to increasing production, particularly focused on data and science based decision making and credibility of the science process behind that. Thirdly, they spoke about a kind of dovetail with what the Commerce Subcommittee has been working on. A point is made about the surveys mentioned earlier by Dr. Werner and how the Strategic Planning Subcommittee might address the process of the surveys. It is also suggested that alternate methods of funding the survey are looked at.

Approval is sought from MFAC to the Strategic Planning Subcommittee to develop a program of work that gets at some of these areas of recommendations to the Secretary on addressing how NOAA could help with the seafood trade deficit. It is approved unanimously. Stephanie Moreland, Kellie Ralston, Peter Moore, Mike Okoniewski, Matt, and Megan Davis join the subcommittee by presumably raising their hands.

Mr. Upton comments that MFAC is concerned about NOAA's proposed reduction in the frequency and length of surveys because this data is critical for managing fisheries. MFAC recommends that NOAA fisheries modeling efforts focus on enhancing and optimizing data collection. It is seconded and discussed with great support. It is suggested that a qualifier be added that says whether to potentially expand in response to recent ocean conditions. In addition, it is suggested that something is added noting the importance that these surveys are a necessary component of stock as well as something connecting it to the health and sustainability of the US fisheries. It is then voted upon and approved unanimously.

Close out Review

A brief discussion is held about the date of the next meeting but no date is officially set since there are members who are not present that would need to be asked. Other agenda items for future meetings will be addressed in later emails.

Some general logistic matters are spoken of and some acknowledgements are made as well as an invitation for anyone to join subcommittees that may have piqued their interest through the course of these three day meetings.

The meeting is then adjourned at 11:38 am.