

New England Recreational Fisheries



NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE

Improving New England Recreational Fisheries Management

Workshop Summary Report

November 13, 2017

NOAA

Workshop Summary

Charter and party boat captains, private anglers, state fishery management partners, and others came together with NOAA Fisheries staff for a workshop on improving recreational fisheries management in New England. After agreeing on a common set of issues, workshop participants discussed potential ideal scenarios for each of the key issues. Participants then highlighted the hurdles or challenges that are preventing us from achieving the ideal state and possible approaches for overcoming those challenges. Time constraints left some issues without a full list of hurdles or solutions. However, we hope this will be the beginning of a productive effort to advance these issues into meaningful change.

The table at the end of the report summarizes the discussions.

Key Issues

The key issues with New England recreational fisheries management were summarized into seven categories: Stability; timing; consistency; data; communication; effectiveness; and accounting for different needs among user groups. These issues are connected and should be addressed holistically, where appropriate.

Stability, Timing, Consistency, and Effectiveness

Regulations that change annually, that are not final in advance of the fishing season, and different regulations in different parts of the ocean make planning difficult for businesses and customers alike. The ability of the for-hire fleet to market and book trips in advance of the fishing season is paramount to long-term business planning and security.

Workshop participants suggested the following ideal scenario: Multi-year management measures that maximize the season length and

provide for pre-planned adjustments, if necessary, that are announced at the start of the calendar year, and that are designed with a high probability to prevent overfishing but achieve long-term stability of the fishery. Participants suggested that the current management plan, the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, competing priorities among the public, the risk of over- or under-utilizing a species, and data limitations are key hurdles to overcome to get to the ideal scenario. Recommended solutions were Council action to revise management, and redirecting resources from surveying for-hire boats to improving private angler surveys, while using validated vessel trip reports as a census of for-hire information.

Data

Underlying our entire fishery management process are the recreational catch data. Primarily, recreational data come from the Marine Resource Information Program, or MRIP, a federal-regional-state partnership to collect recreational fisheries data and estimate total recreational catch. Concerns about the validity of the data make coming to consensus on management measures difficult. Participants identified a transparent, fine-scale dataset built on electronic reporting and as much data as possible as the goal scenario. Challenges include cost, fishing community and scientific

buy-in on various data collection tools and sources, the scale of the fishing community, and a sense of “not knowing enough to know what to ask” to understand the data and the collection process. Potential solutions include using recreational fishing license fees to increase data collection, a review of the current survey methods with an eye towards cost effectiveness, real-time public data input, education and outreach on the importance of accurate data, training on reporting tools, and several suggestions on outreach materials or workshops on improving the understanding of how MRIP works and how the estimates are calculated (i.e., “show your work”).

Communication

Transparent and frequent communication between fisheries managers and for-hire captains and private anglers is critical to the success of our management program. The ideal scenarios suggested by workshop participants included regular, formalized, and representative mid-season engagement with captains to understand not only what they are catching, but what they are seeing on the water, enhanced coordination between NOAA Fisheries and our state partners, increased scientist participation in discussions with fishery participants, and support recruiting participants (captains and anglers) into the fishery. Challenges include time and resources,

complicated topics that are hard to summarize and distill, the regulatory process, and business uncertainty, among others.



Accounting for Differences in User Groups

One of the more controversial aspects of recreational fisheries management is trying to ensure fair and appropriate management measures for user groups with different needs and preferences. Private anglers, charter/6-pack captains, and party boat captains likely have different ideas on what “successful” management looks like. The ideal state to accounting for these differences may include increased enforcement (patrols and penalties), accounting for stock movement and jurisdictional issues, and designing different regulations for each sector of the recreational community. The Magnuson-Stevens Act, lack of money, and value judgement differences were noted as challenges. An agreed upon standard probability of achieving a catch target across all modes and an agreed upon percent contribution to the overall target were suggested as potential solutions.



Summary of Participant Discussions

Issue	Ideal State	Challenges	Solutions
Stability	Multi-year plan * Fixed or Decision Tree * % change w/in plan	* FMP Structure/Council Process * MSA Limitations * Risk of under/over-utilization	Amendment Council Action
	Maximize season (at least for for-hire)	* Need better data for better decisions * Low/inaccurate quotas * Public tolerance/competing priorities	Census of for-hire catch, with validation; redirect resources to private angler surveys
	Time Horizon * Set number of years * Between stock assessments	* Need to change FMP * Risk of under/over-utilization * Data limitations/no confidence	
Timing	By January 1 (no later than March 1)	* Data availability/cycle * NEPA	* Electronic reporting * Adjust cycle by 1 quarter
Consistency	Strive for consistency		
	Between Feds and States	* Communications * Timing * Process/bureaucratic inconsistencies	* Ensure measures available soon enough for all parties to implement for start of fishing year * Communication * Coordination
	Across States	* State sovereignty * Competing needs between states	
	Between stock assessments	* Sufficient data quality for projections and harvest monitoring * Assessment prioritization	
	Balance between stocks (ecosystem accounting)	* Too many data gaps * MSA single species focus	
	Transparency	* Regulatory Process	
Data	Enhanced ability to use MRIP at finer scale	Cost	* Use rec license fees to improve data * Cost efficiency review of current methods (both state and Fed)
	Census	* Scientist buy-in on data * Cost prohibitive/scale for private anglers * Accurate self-reporting	* Real-time public data input

Summary of Participant Discussions

Issue	Ideal State	Challenges	Solutions
	Validity -- quality vs timeliness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Scale/cost * Ability to validate self-reporting on private boats 	Educate captains on the importance of accurate data
	Multi-year aggregation		
	Use electronic reporting appropriately <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Training (how) * Understanding (why) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Accurate reporting (completeness) * Scientist buy-in * Industry buy-in 	Require training and reporting to be issued license
	Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Each state and Fed have a unique process * Don't know what to ask for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Workshop on MRIP and high-level resource manual on how MRIP works * Make formulas available * Clear estimation method * Show your work in an accessible manner * Release all data (to allow for recreation of estimates) * Use plain language
Effectiveness	Perception of/actual opportunity	No/low quota	
	Slot limits, where appropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Enforcement/lack of compliance * Year class fluctuations 	
	Point-system (each sps = # of points, limits on total points)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Complicated enforcement * FMP/MSA limits * Projection complications 	
	Provide more model output options to Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Time * NEPA 	
	Flexibility in the bag limit by season (vs closure)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Analyses * Compliance * Risk of overfishing 	
	No unlimited bag limits	* Arbitrary (need a reasoned decision)	
	Higher probability options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Inaccurate predictions of success * Changing conditions * Less popular options 	
	Strive for effective measures to prevent overfishing, maintain access		



Summary of Participant Discussions

Issue	Ideal State	Challenges	Solutions
Communication	Manager/captain engagement * What are you catching? * What are you seeing? * Representative survey--not all the highliners in one week	* Federal time and resources * Ensuring use of data, formalizing process	
	Explain how data are assembled and catch estimates	* Broad base with different background knowledge * Hard to summarize	
	Better outreach--enhanced coordination with states	Regulatory process is not transparent	
	Recruit anglers	* Hard to do because of a lack of faith in an improving future * Business uncertainty	
	Increased center/modelers participation in discussions	* Limited staff time * Language/communication skills	
Accounting for differences among user groups	Account for stock movement better in management body (CT, RI, MA on MAFMC)	MSA	
	Increased enforcement -- more patrols and higher penalties	* Lack of money * Lack of people	
	Potential for different regulations between private, charter, and party	Value judgement on targets	* Agreed upon standard probability of achieving catch target across modes * Agree percentage contribution to the overall target