

General Information
March 2003



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910
THE DIRECTOR

JAN 17 2003

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JAN 27 2003

PFMC

Dr. Donald McIsaac
Executive Director
Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place
Portland, Oregon 97220-1384

Dear ^{Don} Dr. McIsaac:

Thank you for your letter regarding proposed changes in our cooperative Pacific marine recreational fisheries survey program. I have reviewed your proposal, and I agree that we need to develop methods that are better suited for the Council's current in-season monitoring of annual recreational groundfish catches. Therefore, I generally support your proposal.

I agree with the proposed formation of a policy level Steering Committee to oversee the recreational fisheries data collection program, including the allocation of available state and federal funds to carry out the program. I agree that this Committee should consist of National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries), Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC), Pacific Fishery Management Council, and state representatives, and I believe that the Committee should operate by consensus. I will appoint a NOAA Fisheries representative who has local knowledge of fisheries along the Pacific coast, as well as scientific knowledge and experience pertinent to survey design and data needs for scientific analyses. This person will have administrative responsibilities for the cooperative agreement between NOAA Fisheries and the revised recreational fisheries data collection program to facilitate translation of Steering Committee decisions into cooperative agreement funding arrangements. Also, I feel that the Steering Committee should make use of existing technical advisory groups, such as the RecFIN Committee and its Statistics Subcommittee. While I fully support the need to redesign the program to meet changing needs, such as those arising from the Pacific groundfish problem, I am sure you agree that care must be taken to assure that the redesigned program is scientifically sound.

In order to protect the integrity of the 23-year time series of recreational fisheries data, I believe it will be necessary to calibrate new methods for effort estimation with the current effort survey methodology. This will require an overlap period during which both methods are used. NOAA Fisheries will accept responsibility for conducting the effort survey using the current methodology. The temporary funding of \$270-\$300K required for this purpose will not be taken from the redesigned recreational fisheries data collection program (i.e., all of the funds that would have been allocated to support the program were it not to change, will be allocated to the Cooperative Agreement to support the redesigned program).

The redesigned program should meet both the short-term and long-term management needs of the state and federal partners, both regionally and nationally. The various state and federal

THE ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR
FOR FISHERIES



components will need to be designed and coordinated so that data can be combined to obtain complete annual, coast-wide estimates of effort and catch by species. The new program will also need to provide data and statistics to all state and federal users in a timely manner. I believe the new program should maintain a website from which state and federal users can download data with various degrees of temporal and geographic detail. I assume that the Steering Committee will consider these needs as it redesigns the program.

With regard to funding, the traditional Pacific coast share of the RecFIN line item is \$1.02M. In addition, NOAA Fisheries typically allocates \$270K for the Pacific portion of the MRFSS telephone survey, and, in FY 2002, the new party/charter boat survey cost an additional \$125K. In recognition of inflationary pressures, we planned to allocate about another \$300K (i.e., the FIS line item share for PSMFC) to the program in 2003, for a total annual cost for Pacific recreational fisheries data collection of about \$1.7M. This is the amount that you should anticipate (realizing that the Agency current fiscal year budget is still pending before Congress) being available from NOAA Fisheries to support our share of the cooperative program. I will consider providing additional funding in the future should the Agency budget situation allow it.

We look forward to working cooperatively with you to design and implement a revised data collection program by July of 2003. We appreciate the significant contributions that each of our state partners are making to help in this effort, and we look forward to significantly improving the quality of information available for effective management of our Pacific marine recreational fisheries.

Sincerely,



William T. Hogarth, Ph.D.
Assistant Administrator
for Fisheries