

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON
UPDATE ON RECREATIONAL FISHERY INFORMATION NETWORK DATA
IMPROVEMENTS

Mr. Russell Porter briefed the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) on recent revisions in the data collection system for the West Coast recreational fishery. The system is undergoing significant change with modifications in both design and operational details. In particular, the 23-year-old Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS) is being phased out in all of the West Coast states. The greatest degree of change is occurring in California where previously, all catch and catch per unit effort (CPUE) estimates were based solely on MRFSS-collected data. Ms. Debbie Aseltine-Nelson provided the SSC with an overview of the new California Recreational Fisheries Survey (CRFS).

While the SSC did not review the new methodology, the general design and implementation strategy appear to be reasonable. At this juncture, the SSC offers two comments:

1. In general, it is desirable to record what has been observed in the field and to maintain these data in well-established databases. For example, the MRFSS practice of observing and recording discards in two categories (dead or alive when released) should be maintained in the new system.
2. Planning for transition from the MRFSS to the new system is critically important for ensuring continuity in the stock assessments that utilize these data (e.g., linking the old and new time series of catch and CPUE estimates. This may be a more time-consuming endeavor than currently envisioned, and adequate resources should be allocated to the task.