

Update: Marine Resources Education Program (MREP) Workshop, Santa Cruz

The initial MREP Science workshop, held August 30-September 1 in Santa Cruz, CA, was designed and implemented by a broad group of partners, and focused on fisheries science as used in Pacific fisheries management. Topics included sources of fisheries-dependent and -independent data, stock assessments and modeling (with a focus on the methods and models used for groundfish and salmon), the Council's STAR panel program, and advancements in fishing gear technology -- a session largely led by fishermen.

The workshop included a half-day trip to the NOAA Fisheries Southwest Fisheries Science Center, where science center staff led hands-on mini-workshops allowing participants to learn first-hand about otolith collection and fish aging, fish tagging and tracking, trawl survey methodologies and gear, genetic analysis tools and uses, and wet lab processing of fish samples for health and fecundity. Attendees remarked on the depth and scope of the data collected and the level of caring on the part of the scientists. Presentations by Allan Hicks (International Pacific Halibut Commission) and John Field (NOAA) helped attendees understand how the data are ultimately used in assessing fish population health. We began to delve into the topic of uncertainty in stock assessments, and will expand on this area going forward.

The workshop included 49 participants composed of 32 fishing industry attendees, 12 presenters, three industry moderators, including Dan Wolford, Bob Dooley and Sherry Flumerfelt, and two program staff. Workshop attendees were primarily fishermen, 21 in total, representing both small and large boat fleets from multiple fisheries from Oregon to California. Five younger fishermen attended the program - a good sign for the future of our fisheries. The discussions reflected a growing sense of trust among presenters and attendees over the three days, and newcomers and old-timers alike cited they felt more prepared to engage with fisheries science and management as a result of their attendance.

The next session, a three-day fishery management workshop, will take place in Portland on October 18-20, where we will explore the management process and how the Council works. Participants will apply their MREP learning in a culminating mock council scenario, where they will decide the fate of our newest (fictitious) West Coast "Boss Fish" fishery. Stay tuned!

