

03/22/05

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE**

SUMMARY REPORT

**HILTON HAWAIIAN VILLAGE
HONOLULU, HAWAII
JANUARY 11-14, 2005**

OVERVIEW

The Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee (MAFAC or ‘the Committee’) was pleased to be joined by its formal Chairman, the Undersecretary for Oceans and Atmosphere, Vice Admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher, who chaired the meeting until noon the first day before visiting NOAA’s Tsunami Warning Center to discuss the recent tragedy in Indonesia.

The agenda issues under the Committee’s consideration were ecosystem-based management, reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and management of cold water corals. The Committee was joined for the first time by the Chairs and Executive Directors of the eight regional Fishery Management Councils (FMCs or ‘the Councils’) for the first day and a majority of the second. A large number of guests and members of the public also attended and participated in the meeting.

The Committee established three working groups to address the key agenda issues – ecosystem approach to management (EAM), Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA) reauthorization and cold water corals. Due to the depth and breadth of the subject matter, increased participation and interest in this meeting, and the timeline of pending forums and initiatives, there was insufficient time for the working groups to flesh out broad recommendations for full Committee consideration and acceptance. As such, the working groups met briefly with the intent of drafting preliminary recommendations for full Committee approval and preparing for longer-term efforts at the next meeting. In addition, a second national conference, “Managing the Nation’s Fisheries II – Look Toward the Future” will occur in March 24-26, 2005, in Washington D.C, the Committee felt it would be premature to develop recommendations without benefiting from the broader public discussions anticipated at the conference.

The three working group reports are attached. Of particular note is the Committee’s recommendation for the Administration not to introduce reauthorization legislation MSA until **after** the national conference “*Managing our Nation’s Fisheries II: Focus on the Future*” so the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries Service) and the Councils can benefit from the public discussions.

Below is a brief summary of the agenda items, discussions and their corresponding pages within the accompanying transcripts (posted on line at www.nmfs.noaa.gov/mafac/).

TUESDAY January 11, 2005

Full Committee Convened at 8:30 AM, South Pacific Ballroom #1

Vice Admiral Conrad Lautenbacher, Under Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere and MAFAC Chairman, called the Committee to order and welcomed members and guests to Hawaii. Guests included representation from all eight regional FMCs who joined the meeting to participate in the Committee's discussions of EAM, MSA reauthorization and cold water coral management.

The Admiral began by thanking Dr. Bill Hogarth for his leadership, acknowledged the importance of the Committee as a national representative advisory body, thanking the Committee for its work in recent years on key issues of marine resource management.

The Admiral introduced the three newly appointed Committee members: Dr. Manuel Valdes Pizzini, Director of Sea Grant Program at the University of Puerto Rico, Mr. Eric Schwaab, Resources Director with the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and former Director of the Department of Natural Resources with the state of Maryland, and Tom Billy, President of International Food Safety Consultants.

Admiral Lautenbacher introduced his presentation (pgs.15-62) by pointing out that the NOAA constituency is a relatively small group compared with the size of the nation and the many other issues facing it as a whole. As such, he emphasized the importance of working toward common ground between the diverse groups and opinions that comprise NOAA's constituency. Referencing the Councils' letter to NOAA and his response (Attachments A&B), the Admiral emphasized NOAA's commitment to working with the Councils and building on their work to incorporate ecosystem principles into fisheries management.

The Admiral segued into an in-depth presentation on his initiative to break down the bureaucratic stove pipes within NOAA and move it toward a multi-disciplinary (matrix management) approach that better reflects and responds to the strategic issues such as ecosystem management contained within NOAA's mission. Through matrix-management the agency will be better poised to respond to the challenges and recommendations of the U.S. Ocean Commission report, released in September 2004, and the Administration's response contained in the President's Ocean Action Plan released in December 2004. A key initiative contained in the Ocean Action Plan is the President's establishment of a new cabinet-level body within the administration to guide national ocean policy. The Admiral detailed the make-up and function envisioned for this new body noting that a primary responsibility will be to prioritize and address the 212 recommendations of the Ocean Commission. The Admiral further noted that the Ocean Action Plan provides NOAA and its constituents with the opportunity to elevate issues of mutual concern and importance onto the national agenda.

The Admiral focused on the Ocean Commission recommendations dealing with fisheries management issues including the Council system, market-based approaches and

ecosystem management, noting that NOAA's mission encompasses the concept of ecosystem management and has developed functioning definitions:

- An *ecosystem* is a geographically specified system of organisms (including humans), the environment, and the processes that control its dynamics.
- An *ecosystem approach to management* is geographically specified, adaptive, takes account of ecosystem knowledge and uncertainties, considers multiple external influences, and strives to balance diverse societal objectives. Implementation needs to be incremental and collaborative.

The Admiral referenced the inherent complexities of an ecosystem approach and the evolutionary accumulation of knowledge required to address them. He acknowledged that fishery management plans have increasingly begun to include many ecosystem factors into their management regimes and referenced a number of 'real-life' fishery management issues occurring around the country that underscore the progress that has been made as well as the challenges to be addressed and some of the technical advances in science that can improve the collection of better data on which to base management plans, including vessel monitoring systems, standardized sampling, and NOAA's initiative for a global monitoring system. The Admiral also referenced the important role that marine aquaculture will play in the future, noting the current globalization of aquaculture cannot be ignored and that the U.S. must be engaged and ensure both the environmental considerations and economic opportunities and addressed appropriately.

An open discussion with members followed. Some key areas of interest included whether or not new legislation was required for the ecosystem approach for management to be implemented. A general consensus was that the current legislative framework is already providing for ecosystem management to continue to evolve but that modifications and improvements within the law are necessary to improve the process.

The concept of pilot projects where the ecosystem approach to management can be clearly demonstrated was discussed, noting that although it is occurring in fisheries management in various degrees around the country, no single area has been defined in terms of a comprehensive ecosystem management plan and that for purposes of public relations it is not fully recognized as such. Dr. Hogarth noted that the Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement process could serve as the basis for establishing an ecosystem management plan by folding fisheries management plans into it and that on going dialogue in this area needs to take place.

State jurisdictional issues and the involvement of non-traditional partners such as the Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Department of Agriculture was also discussed. Admiral Lautenbacher acknowledged this would be a new coordination issue. He re-emphasized the need for NOAA to present its definition to these non-traditional partners and begin the dialogue, noting that the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources on which he sits has been an opportunity for him to begin such dialogues with his counterparts in other agencies. In addition he noted that internal organization within

NOAA under the matrix management plan will help to establish an internal coordinating network between NOAA's divisions to deal with issues of ecosystem management.

A key point of discussion was what can NOAA do to begin strategically working with the councils to identify the priorities and next steps necessary to keep this evolutionary process toward ecosystem management moving, and what can be done to encourage learning across the various councils as the process moves forward. Admiral Lautenbacher redirected the question back to the Committee and the Councils as an area where NOAA needs MAFAC and the Councils to advise and help develop answers. The Admiral noted two forums where such coordination can and should occur – the Science Advisory Board's review of ecosystem research and its solicitation of outside experts, and the national fisheries conference to be held in Washington, D.C. in March 2005. Both are opportunities to begin discussing what mechanisms can be established to provide for and encourage strategic prioritization and sharing of information for ecosystem management initiatives and progress.

Lastly, the Admiral noted the Ocean Commission report is an opportunity to build on what has been learned through the regional fishery management process and that NOAA needs to move forward by including other factors and non-traditional partners in the process. The Admiral is encouraging NOAA to reflect this process and establish regional groups representing the various facets of NOAA and develop regional 'resource pools' within NOAA that can be contacted and facilitate the necessary coordination.

ECOSYSTEM APPROACH to MANAGEMENT – Panel (pgs. 62-196)

- **Dr. Michael Sissenwine, Director for Scientific Programs, NOAA Fisheries Service**, gave a presentation on the status of science, the long-term evolution of ecosystem management, the various initiatives underway and next steps ahead (pgs. 62-80).
- **Jack Dunnigan, Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, NOAA Fisheries Service**, gave a presentation on the organization and work of the Ecosystem Goal Team within the matrix management structure of NOAA (pgs 84-122).
- **Kitty Simonds, Executive Director, Western Pacific Fishery Management Council** gave a brief history and status of activities within the region and other councils that are actively incorporating the principles of ecosystem management into fishery management plans and plans to move from fishery management plans to fishery ecosystem plans (pgs. 123- 133).
- **Stephanie Madsen, Chair, North Pacific Fishery Management Council** gave the Committee a brief review of the Council's progress in ecosystem management and the need to build-on the extensive work already being conducted (pgs. 133-139).

- **Dave Whaley, Senior Majority Staff, House Resources Committee, U.S. House of Representatives** gave the Committee an overview of the Committee's structural changes, legislative agenda anticipated for the 109th Congress, and a summary of legislative points of interest with regard to MSA, the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the U.S. Ocean Commission recommendations, including ecosystem management, FMC reform and Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) (pgs. 157-170).

Summary of Issues Raised:

- The need to establish formal, routine mechanisms by which the Committee, Councils and stakeholders are involved in NOAA's development of ecosystem management policy.
- Build on previous ecosystem work – including 1986 joint report between NOAA Fisheries Service and the FMCs, and a recent report issued in 2004, "Ecosystems Monitoring and Fisheries Management".
- The need for a systematic evaluation of the various laws and points of conflict with an EAM, including MMPA, ESA, and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).
- Consideration of Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) and Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) as fundamental processes already reflective of the EAM and on which a more formal EAM process can build.
- The need for NOAA to work with the FMCs and other partners to identify priorities within NOAA's strategic plan that can help break down objectives of an ecosystem approach more achievable components with a long-term vision of 10 or 15 years down the road to guide the effort.
- The EAM lends itself to broader cooperative research with stakeholder's investment and participation.
- The need for performance measures of public awareness and education regarding the stewardship of marine resources.
- The need for ecosystem indicators capable of detecting changes to the ecosystem and ascribing them to anthropogenic causes.
- The need to develop operational models sophisticated enough to assess fishery management alternatives.
- NOAA needs to work with Councils and develop national guidelines for EAM to be incorporated as part of the fishery management plan process.

- Awareness not to establish mandates that result in unintended consequences such as litigation, decision delays in management and conflicts with other mandates and timelines.
- Involved with the long-term development of EAM are the initiatives of the Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS) and International Ocean Observing System (IOOS). There is a need to ensure that fisheries issues are actually being served and not just being used as a justification to gain support for some of the other issues on the agenda of these entities. In addition, ensuring that state and regional entities at the table include fish and wildlife representatives and expertise, not just coastal zone management authorities.
- Separation of science from management and the problems with unintended social-economic impacts.
- The need for consensus on the definition of EAM and a long-term envisioned goal, 15-20 years out.

Specific request of MAFAC: Bill requested MAFAC to establish a subcommittee or working group to follow this process over the long-term and help to get the word out on what the agency has done and revisit the ecosystem report produced by MAFAC in 2003 (pg. 194).

MAGNUSON-STEVENSON ACT REAUTHORIZATION - Jack Dunnigan, Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries. Jack gave a presentation and led a full Committee discussion regarding key issue areas and various alternatives to be considered for legislation. Jack indicated that the agency has placed all the issues on the table for a fresh look. Jack highlighted major issue areas but acknowledged many more including the various ‘fixes’ that were included in the Administration’s bill for the 108th Congress. Jack also indicated that the Administration would not introduce legislation before the national conference in March 2005 so that the agency could benefit from the public discussions (pgs. 196-276).

Summary of Issues:

Jack requested MAFAC to comment on the pros and cons of various alternatives under consideration and to identify any additional alternatives that should be included. Below are the key issue areas and the associated transcript page numbers containing the discussion.

- Whether MSA should be amended to be more compatible with EAM? What does EAM mean in the context of fisheries management – specifically how would it differ from the way we do business today? (pgs 196-231)
- National Standards 1 Guidelines (pgs. 231-232)
- Separation of science and allocation (pgs. 232-243)

- Council Appointments process (pgs. 243-265)
- MSA compliance with NEPA requirements (pgs. 265-275)

Bill requests MAFAC and guests to think out of the box and evaluate what needs to be done to improve the Act. Dr. Hogarth also identified Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) guidelines as an area of real opportunity for MAFAC and the Councils to work on and provide guidance and recommendations to the agency.

5:00 PM Committee Adjourned for the day

WEDNESDAY January 12, 2005

Committee Reconvened 8:00 AM – South Pacific Ballroom #1

‘STATE OF FISHERIES’ - Dr. Bill Hogarth, Assistant Administrator for Fisheries.

Dr. Hogarth provided the Committee with a detailed overview of the progress that has been made in implementing the Sustainable Fisheries Act and the various initiatives being undertaken by the agency to continue that progress including regulatory NEPA streamlining and training. Also covered were the reduction in lawsuits and the increased cases being won by the agency, the level or restored habitat, increased observer coverage, fishery surveys, and accomplishments in bycatch reduction as a result of cooperative research with fishermen and gear technology developments, and increased efforts gain international participation and enforcement for the conservation of living marine resources. Dr. Hogarth also addressed some of the initiatives to maintain the highest standards for accredited and peer-reviewed science to ensure the public trust, and the status of reorganizing and improving coordination within the agency to deal with international activities and intergovernmental overlaps between the agency and the Department of Interior. (pgs. 3-30)

For MAFAC’s further consideration:

- Better data collection and coordination for the Atlantic Highly Migratory Species program.
- Concern over the need for succession plans for the various international commissions which the agency is responsible for, including the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas, the International Association for Tropical Tunas Commission, and the International Whaling Commission.
- Need to develop criteria guidelines for Individual Transferable Quotas.
- Development of a national permit program that will provide one-stop shopping and bar code scanning for compliance purposes.

- Council Training program. Contract may be issued soon.
- Coordinating with Councils to develop a five-year plan with annual updates to better prioritize and plan for budget needs between the agency and the Councils.
- Aquaculture pilot projects regarding off-shore rigs and cage-culture.
- Pending workshops to look at the prospect of moving toward fishing-mortality based management rather than biomass. It is much better understood by the public and can provide good results.
- Two initiatives with the National Academy of Science will be looking at collection of recreational fishing data and to look at the level of fish contaminants.

Summary of Issues Raised:

- Need to increase pressure for international rebuilding plans and capacity reduction.
- Improve tribal recognition and participation in the Council process.
- Reminder to include Sea Grant in the State Directors meeting planned for spring 2005 and continues to keep on the agenda the development of MAFAC interaction for review of fishery enhancement grants.

COLD WATER CORALS – Panel (pgs. 60-128)

“Status of the Science: What do we know?” - Dr. Tom Hourigan, Ecosystem Assessment Program, Office of Habitat Conservation, NOAA Fisheries Service (pgs.60-81)

“Management in Action” – Dr. Richard Grigg, University of Hawaii, Western Pacific Fishery Management Council (pgs.81-97)

“What are the Policy Issues?” - Dr. Michael Sissenwine, Director of Scientific Programs, NOAA Fisheries Service (pgs. 97-108)

Dr. Sissenwine summarized the science and the policy issues that have been identified requesting and then suggested a number of areas for MAFAC to consider providing input and guidance to the agency.

Summary Research Priorities –

- Scientific priorities for mapping and a need to understand the functional aspects of cold water coral communities and how they function and contribute to the ecosystem.
- Need to assess vulnerability, resilience and recovery.

- There is a high degree of endemism (unique species) associated with these communities that will have important implications for policy regarding ecosystem management and biodiversity.

Summary Policy Issues –

- Nearly universal agreement that some degree of protection for these communities is needed but what level and for what results and objectives (i.e. biodiversity, species production, etc.) is confused and unclear.
- Biodiversity has been the focus of the international community for cold water coral protection.
- Domestically, Essential Fish Habitat under the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA) has been a convenient and appropriate tool for extending protection but whether that is a means to a greater end, or whether it is the objective end itself has not been decided.
- The MSA’s bycatch provisions have been discussed as a mechanism, even perhaps applying the fishery management plan process with an inclusion of a total allowable catch (TAC) level of a particular species or group of species not targeted by the fishery.

Specific Requests for MAFAC’s Comment -

- Are there additional legislative needs to protect cold-water corals?
- What are some of the approaches that could be used to protect these communities from trawling and heavy bottom fish gear – closures, gear restrictions?
- What are some of the ways to monitor and assess bycatch – (although this adversely affects a particular community, on the positive side is a way to map the distribution of these communities)?
- What about planning for areas that are relatively pristine in terms of fishing activities and that we suspect cold water corals are present – restrict or regulate them in some manner?

Summary of Issues Raised:

- Do cold water corals meet the criteria for EFH? - The presence of species does meet the low threshold criteria. Although the evidence isn’t ‘hard proof’, the scientific literature proposes that these communities provide shelter and food for juvenile species. The evidence for the importance of cold water corals as EFH is as strong as any examples the agency has.
- Although cold water corals have been included in the U.S. Coral Task Force, its focus has been on tropical corals. However, the threats to cold water corals are more associated with fishing activities and EFH and may be better addressed there.

- There is no funding specifically dedicated to cold water coral protection as oppose to the \$26-28 million annually dedicated to shallow coral reef protection. Cold water corals are being taken up under the auspices of ecosystem research and habitat conservation.
- It was suggested MAFAC take up consideration of recommending that cold water corals be clearly defined and established as an element under the MSA and managed under fisheries versus the tropical, shallow coral reef management.

BUDGET FY05 & FY06 – Gary Reisner, Management & Budget, NOAA Fisheries Service. Gary presented the Committee with a status update on FY05 implementation and FY06 pending request. Some areas of focusing included the continuing development of meaningful performance measures, improvements in transparency and predictability between fiscal years, and funding priorities such as regulatory streamlining and National Environmental Policy Act compliance. Other points included the need to develop a forecasting capability for stock assessments and populations - managing what is caught not just determining what is out there to be caught. A brief review of progress and future buyback plans in the works, including a non-pollack groundfish buyback in Alaska and a Gulf of Mexico reef fish buyback plan. Also noted were agency plans to structure FY07 request along a species-by-species basis as it has been proving successful for building transparency with Congress and stakeholders. (Pgs 130- 155)

Summary of Issues Raised:

- Suggestion to consider breaking out the cost of rebuilding fisheries that are in trouble versus the cost of proactively managing fisheries – this could help clarify the need for the increased costs requested for rebuilding fisheries and make the case that it is more cost effective to manage proactively (vessel monitoring, IFQ’s, and other alternatives).
- Consider measuring in the budget the proactive stocks that have not been overfished, are not being overfished or needing to be rebuilt.
- Need to articulate to the Administration that a more stable and predictable level of funding lends itself to better management and sustainability of a public trust resource rather than funding by crisis management.

OUTREACH & CONSTITUENT SERVICES – Gordon Helm, Director (Acting), Office of Constituent Services. Gordon provided a brief presentation on the structure, staffing and mission development of the agency’s Office of Constituent Services which has expanded staff to include liaisons for recreational fisheries, environmental and non-governmental, and trade and industry stakeholders, is in the process of developing an over-arching national outreach plan and agenda, and working with stakeholders to identify priority services and products. (pgs. 165-184)

Summary of Issues Raised:

- Constituent Services needs to be better integrated throughout the agency to proactively work with the agency on issues important to external stakeholders and the public and strategically develop outreach programs capable of addressing the perceived needs.
- The Office of Constituent Services should take over the organization of the NOAA Fish Fry.
- Increased staffing for outreach products and activities to better provide access and services for constituents and proactively get ahead of messages helpful to the mission and budget of the agency.
- Better utilization of Sea Grant as a mechanism to expand outreach influence and, more importantly, education.
- Prioritize ecosystem management as an outreach and education campaign, focusing first on educating the educators in order to control against some of the ignorance, miss-use or misunderstanding of terms, etc.
- Dr. Hogarth summarized the outreach discussion referencing the need for more support and staff in the office and plans underway to develop a strategic plan and mission with measurable outcomes, increased use of Sea Grant, and improved utilization of MAFAC with increased support for the Executive Director position and continuing dialogues and small subcommittee meetings between full Committee meetings.

RECREATIONAL FISHERIES STRATEGIC PLAN – Forbes Darby, Recreational Fisheries Coordinator, Office of Constituent Services. Forbes presented the Committee with a detailed update on the status of the development of a national Recreational Fisheries Strategic Plan, key issue areas of constituent input through nine regional constituent meetings, projected timeline for final introduction of the plan, and long-term implementation plans through regional teams. (pgs. 209-221)

Summary of Issues Raised:

- The plan needs to have the 'Who', 'What' and 'When' articulated if it's going to be real and stand a chance of success. Forcing regional and science center staff to take on additional duties to implement the RecFish strategic plan is not in the best interest for the success of the plan and will take dedicated staff to be successful. As for the what – real achievable performance measures are needed accompanied by time-lines and funds for achievement.
- Dr. Hogarth indicated the funds are not there right now to fulfill the fundamental needs for 20 additional staff (14 between the seven regional offices and science centers and five staff within the national Constituent Services Office). As such, the Southeast and Southwest areas where this is a dedicated Recreational Fishery Coordinator will be looked at as two pilot study areas.

- Appointing a recreational person to the newly established Pacific Islands region and center is a unique opportunity to make a difference at the onset.
- Caution that the agency may be setting up the program for failure by establishing expectations that cannot be made due to lack of dedicated funding and staff to conduct the necessary outreach and coordination activities. Sets up skepticism between the agency and the stakeholders involved.
- The inclusion of stewardship into the strategic plan needs to be made stronger. Rather than the agency ‘facilitating’ stewardship the agency should be actively promoting stewardship. Substitute the word facilitate with the word promote.
- MAFAC could consider helping to articulate how constituents can help develop mechanisms for better data collection – what are their ideas.
- Caution against further split between recreational and commercial users over the resource when the issues of resource management are the same. Perhaps MAFAC can help advise as to how to heal some of these wounds and help avoid a further deepening of the split between the two groups.
- Utilize the Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council as one of the pilot project areas. They have nine states engaged, N.C. among them and can begin to coordinate with Mike Bailey and work together regarding ACCSP and help deliver on some of the plans objectives toward improved data collection.
- Reach out to the membership-press to better educate them and their use of rhetoric and help build toward more cooperative efforts.

MAFAC ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES - Laurel Bryant, Executive Director for MAFAC, Office of Constituent Services. Laurel Bryant lead a discussion along with Dr. Hogarth, Maggie Raymond and Alvin Osterback to establish three ad-hoc working groups to provide the agency with input and advisory recommendations on three topics anticipated to be key issue areas for the pending 109th Congress – Ecosystem Approach to Management (EAM), Magnuson-Stevens Act reauthorization (MSA) and Cold Water Corals. In addition, future administrative issues and the next meeting were discussed, including: pending nominations for vacancies in September 2005; amending the Charter to stagger appointments; conducting a strategic planning session and restructure Committee operations to better reflect priority issues; and selecting the dates and location for the next meeting (pgs.246-281).

Three Ad-Hoc Working Groups were established:

- **EAM Working Group:** Ken Roberts, Peter Leipzig, Kate Wynne, Mel Moon, Rob Kramer, Scott Burns, Vince O’Shea, Dr. Sissenwine will sit in part-time.

- **MSA Working Group:** Jim Cook, Tony DiLernia, Randy Fisher, Jim Gilmore, Don Kent, Maggie Raymond, Eric Schwaab and Dr. Hogarth sat in part-time.
- **Cold Water Corals Working Group:** Bob Fletcher, Tom Billy, Ralph Rayburn, John Forster, Manuel Valdes, Chris Dorsett, and Dr. Sissenwine will sit in part-time.

Next Meeting Time and Location:

Dr. Hogarth expressed his preference for conducting the meeting in conjunction with the NOAA Fish Fry in June. As of the writing of this report the NOAA Fish Fry will be held June 8. The next MAFAC meeting will be held *June 7-10, 2005, Washington D.C.* Logistical specifics will be determined later and communicated to the Committee.

5:00 PM Committee Adjourned for the day

THURSDAY January 13, 2005

6:00- 7:45 AM Fishing Village and Auction

9:00 AM Full Committee Convened in Honolulu Suite #3

NOTE: There are no corresponding transcript pages, as the Committee did not discuss

AQUACULTURE

- **Dr. Hogarth – Status of Legislation (pg. 3-10)**
- **Randy Cates of Cates International, Inc – Presentation on the first commercial offshore aquaculture operation in the U.S.** Mr. Cates gave the Committee a presentation on the development and status of his operations in raising moi – a species of coastal fish with historical and cultural importance in the islands but whose populations are no longer commercially viable due to historic overfishing long ago. As an enhancement species, Mr. Cates was able to secure permits to raise submerged pens off shore in approximately 180 feet of water. This has allowed hands on research and observations providing data that some of the environmental concerns associated with older coastal operations have not proven to be an issue. In addition, Mr. Cates emphasized the need for any offshore aquaculture operation to work with and coordinate extensively with the fishing communities in an area. He suggested that better public education occur as to the realities of aquaculture and its benefits, and for NOAA to move forward with aquaculture, expanding permits for research and consideration of species beyond those in need of enhancement only (pgs. 10-77).

REASEACH ACTIVITIES IN HAWAII

- **Dr. Samuel Pooley, Director, Pacific Islands Fishery Science Center, NOAA Fisheries Service – Overview of research to be covered during field trip of the Oceanic Institute and Hawaiian Institute of Marine Biology (pgs. 79-85).**
- **Dr. Brandon Southall, Acoustics Program, Protected Resources, NOAA Fisheries Service (pgs. 86-123)**

1:15-5:00 PM Full Committee toured the Oceanic Institute and the Hawaiian Institute of Marine Biology

5:00 PM Committee Adjourned for the day

FRIDAY January 14, 2005

Working Groups met for Ecosystem Approach to Management, Magnuson-Stevens Act Reauthorization and Cold Water Corals.

11:00 AM Full Committee Reconvened to receive and discuss Working Group reports.

It was determined that the Working Groups did not have sufficient time to provide comprehensive advisory recommendations prior to the national conference on fisheries management to be held in March or other pending timelines with regard to introduction of the Magnuson-Stevens Act reauthorization. As such, preliminary reports on the discussions and points made at by the Working Groups were presented and approved with the understanding that more formal reports would be developed during post-meeting e-mails and possibly conferences. Below are the transcript page numbers containing the oral reports and discussions along with links to the final reports developed post-meeting. These post-meeting reports were reviewed, commented on and voted on via e-mail.

Ecosystem Approach to Management Working Group

- Oral report and open discussion (pgs. 3-23)
- **Final Interim Report** (Attachment A)

Cold Water Corals Working Group

- Oral report and open discussion (pgs. 23-44)
- **Final Interim Report** (Attachment B)

Magnuson-Stevens Act Reauthorization Working Group

- Oral report and open discussion (pgs. 44-60)
- **Final Interim Report** (Attachment C)

ADJOURNED SINE DIE

ATTENDEES:

MAFAC Members

Vice Admiral Conrad Lautenbacher, Under Secretary for NOAA, (Chair)

Bill Hogarth (Co-Chair)

Tom Billy

Scott Burns

Jim Cook

Tony DiLernia

Chris Dorsett

Bob Fletcher

John Forster

Jim Gilmore

Don Kent

Rob Kramer

Pete Leipzig

Mel Moon, Jr.

Alvin Osterback (Industry Vice Chair)

Manuel Valdes-Pizzini

Ralph Rayburn

Maggie Raymond (Industry Co-Vise Chair)

Dr. Ken Roberts

Eric Schwaab

Kate Wynne

Randy Fisher (non-voting)

Vince O'Shea (non-voting)

Absent:

Elizabeth Sheehan

Larry Simpson (Non-Voting)

NOAA Fisheries Service:

Nicole Bartlett, Office of Science & Technology

Laurel Bryant, Executive Director, MAFAC

Jennifer Costanza, Office for the Under Secretary

Forbes Darby, Office of Constituent Services

Gerry Davis, Pacific Islands Regional Office

Jack Dunnigan, Director, Sustainable Fisheries

Wende Goo, Public Affairs Officer, Pacific Islands Region

Gordon Helm, Director (Acting), Office of Constituent Services

Dr. Tom Hourigan, Ecosystem Assessment, Office of Habitat Conservation

Dr. Rebecca Lent, Deputy Administrator for Regulatory Programs,

John Longenecker, LCMDR, Office for the Under Secretary

Michael Payne, Office of Protected Resources

Dr. Sam Pooley, Director, Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center

Gary Reisner, Management & Budget

Sue Salveson, Alaska Regional Office

Dr. Mike Sissenwine, Director of Scientific Programs

Guests & Attending Public:

Steven Atran, Gulf of Mexico FMC
Frank Blount, New England FMC
Ralph Brown, Pacific FMC
Randy Cates, Cates International, Honolulu, Hawaii
Andy Collins, Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Task Force
Louis Daniel, South Atlantic FMC
Dan Furlong, Mid-Atlantic FMC
Meghan Gambos, NOAA Ocean Service, Hawaii
Dr. Richard W. Grigg, Oceanography, University of Hawaii
Joe Hendrix, Gulf of Mexico FMC
Tom Hoff, Mid-Atlantic FMC
Paul Howard, New England FMC
Stephanie Madsen, North Pacific FMC
Bob Mahood, South Atlantic, FMC
Roy Morioka, Western Pacific FMC
Chris Oliver, North Pacific FMC
David Ortmann, Pacific FMC
Linda Paul, Audubon Society, Hawaii
Eugenio Pinsiro, Caribbean FMC
Malia Rivera, University of Hawaii Sea Grant
Miguel A. Rolon, Caribbean FMC
Ricks Savage, Mid-Atlantic FMC
Janis Searies, Oceana, Hawaii
Kitty Simonds, Western Pacific FMC
Dave Whaley, U.S. House of Representatives, House Resources Committee
Paul Wong, Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale Marine Sanctuary

Respectfully Submitted,

Laurel G. Bryant
Executive Director, Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee
National Marine Fisheries Service
March 22, 2005

**Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee
Ecosystem Approach to Management (EAM) Report
March 22, 2005**

The Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee (MAFAC) approved on March 22, 2005 via e-mail, the Ecosystem Approach to Management Working Group-report as submitted below and based on the oral report submitted to MAFAC on January 14, 2005.

EAM Working Group Members:

Scott Burns
Rob Kramer
Pete Leipzig
Mel Moon
Vince O'Shea (Recorder)
Ken Roberts
Kate Wynne
Michael Sissenwine, Advising

Overall concerns expressed by the Work Group:

It is not possible to manage an ecosystem. Rather, it needs to be emphasized as an approach to fisheries management.

Concern that the regulatory process not become too cumbersome. The need to involve many new, non-traditional partners and jurisdictions can threaten any effective implementation.

Declarations that Councils are already doing EAM will not satisfy the public's perception for a needed change.

Recommendations:

- MAFAC embraces the ecosystem approach to management (EAM) and agrees with the definitions being utilized by NOAA as an accurate shift in focus toward an 'approach' and adaptive or evolutionary process rather than a new concept.

“An *ecosystem* is a geographically specified system of organisms (including humans), the environment, and the processes that control its dynamics.”

“An *ecosystem approach to management (EAM)* is geographically specified, adaptive, takes account of ecosystem knowledge and uncertainties, considers multiple external influences, and strives to balance

diverse societal objectives. Implementation needs to be incremental and collaborative. “

- The EAM should continue to evolve, building on current successes and incorporating generalities, guidelines and principals into current law. Specifics and mandates should be left to regulations only.
- The EAM should be kept as a regional, FMC-driven process through Fishery Ecosystem Plans or other means to meet standards and ensure inclusivity.
- The agency should identify existing FMC actions and examples of successes and processes that work, beginning with existing resources and pilot projects.
- Although current actions may be working and ecosystem principles are being incorporated into the current process consideration should be given to developing national standards and operational guidelines for systematically incorporating EAM into the fishery management process. Some issues identified by the EAM Work Group include what are the objectives of an EAM in fisheries management, who sets the objectives, what are the limitations, how will state sovereignty be involved?
- Councils should review their structure and constitution. Consideration should be given to establishing fishery ecosystem panels within the Councils. Examples include Gulf of Maine and South Atlantic regional partnerships.
- Build on previous work conducted by the agency, including the 1999 Report to Congress from the Ecosystem-Based Approach to Management Advisory Panel and the E-b Task Force report sponsored by MAFAC, 2003.
- Evaluate existing laws and mandates, such as the Marine Mammal Protection Act, for inherent conflicts with the principles of an EAM.

This is an interim final draft to be further discussed at the next full committee meeting.

**Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee
Cold Water Corals (CWC) Report
March 22, 2005**

The Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee (MAFAC) approved on March 22, 2005 via e-mail, the Cold Water Corals Working Group-report as submitted below and based on the oral report submitted to MAFAC on January 14, 2005.

CWC Working Group Members:

Tom Billy
Chris Dorsett
Bob Fletcher
John Forster
Ricky Grigg
Gordon Helm
Tom Hourigan
Alvin Osterbeck
Ralph Rayburn
Mike Sissenwine, Chief Science Advisory, NOAA Fisheries (portion of discussion)

SUMMARY DISCUSSION:

Discussion began with a focus on the earlier presentation by Mike Sissenwine, specifically slides 24-26 of his PowerPoint.

Topic #1 – “Research Priorities”

1. Discussion on research targets and priorities.

- Considered mapping of known or suspected habitats with high concentrations of cold-water coral communities was seen as a first priority. This is consistent with the Ocean Commission Report Chapter 21 and the first item of the Oceana Petition. A sub-priority in this area is recommended to be areas of known exploitation or damage.
- Considered dropping the use of “commercially” from the term “commercially-exploited species” and leave only “exploited species.”
- Considered adding the understanding of keystone and exploited targeted species as well as the deepwater corals’ contribution to species diversity.
- Considered addition of interaction between mobile and sessile species. Felt this was included in the “Understanding of ecological function” target item.

- Considered need for a comprehensive review of previous research (past 200 years) to be undertaken and vigorously incorporated into current documents and activities on this issue.
- 2. Priorities are appropriate with consideration of the comments noted above.**
- Issues also addressed on need for financial resources to support cold water coral research.

Topic #2 – Policy and Management

3. Discussed the use of terms protection v. conservation. Discussion centered on whether “protection” means an absolute abstention of activity.

- Primary reasons for protection. Some feeling that there may be insufficient information to make a distinction for the reasons, but based on input received it appears appropriate to protect these resources as more information is assembled on this issue.
- Change charismatic to “intrinsic value” as possible reason for protection.

4. Discussed the need for precaution and when it should be applied.

- Questioned how to minimize impact to coral as an inclusive or an exclusive protection initiative. – i.e. – restrictions on expansion in bottom tending gear areas until data indicates no coral is present or allow expansion into new areas and take action when coral is found.
- Considered the use of experimental fishing permits with conditions (e.g. requiring ROVs, observers, side scan sonar, etc.) to manage expansion of bottom tending gear into areas previously un-fished. In areas of known cold-water corals, considered establishing conditions on activities that will protect these assemblages.

5. Discussion of potential legislation initiatives.

- Look at legislative options for highlighting cold-water corals.
- Consider stand alone legislation, or an appropriate vehicle scheduled for reauthorization, that would:
- Focus attention on research and national policy on cold-water corals, but not to prescribe management measures for the protection of cold-water corals,
- Recognize the importance of cold-water corals in an ecosystem approach to management,
- Recognize that the management of cold-water corals should be done under a fishery management regime,
- Grant authority for NOAA Fisheries to exercise an international leadership role on cold-water corals, and

- Review the MS-FCMA to ensure that adequate protection for cold-water corals may be exercised under that statute.

Time expired before specific management tools could be discussed: Suggestion that work group discussion and closure on issues could be accomplished before the next meeting at an appropriate venue such as the upcoming Managing our Nations Fisheries II.

ADVISORY RECOMMENDATIONS:

The following advisory recommendations are forwarded for consideration:

1. Research area recommendations:

- a. Give first priority to mapping of known or suspected habitats of high concentrations of cold-water coral communities with a sub-priority being areas of known exploitation or damage.
- b. Drop the use of “commercially” from the term “commercially-exploited species” and leave only “exploited species.”
- c. Research the keystone and exploited targeted species as well as the cold-water corals to determine their contribution to species diversity.
- d. Conduct a comprehensive review of previous research (past 200 years) and incorporate, as appropriate, into current documents and activities on this issue.
- e. With the addition of items noted in a – d, research priorities given for cold-water corals were accepted.
- f. Assess the financial value of commercial fisheries that use bottom-tending gear in areas of suspected deep-water corals.

2. Policy and management:

- a. Based on input received it appears appropriate to protect the cold-water coral resources while more information is assembled on them.
- b. Change one reason for protection from “charismatic” to “intrinsic value.”
- c. Consider the use of experimental fishing permits with conditions (e.g. requiring ROVs, observers, side scan sonar, etc.) to manage expansion of bottom tending gear into areas previously un-fished.
- d. In areas of known cold-water corals, establish conditions on activities that will protect these assemblages.
- e. Addition legislation:
 - i. Consider stand alone legislation, or an appropriate vehicle scheduled for reauthorization, that would:
 - a) Focus attention on research and national policy for cold-water corals, and after a full and informed debate, including the review conducted under e(ii), determine whether or not to prescribe management measures for the protection of cold-water corals;
 - b) Recognize the importance of cold-water corals in an ecosystem approach to management.

- c) While recognizing that some cold water corals are managed under other authorities, such as the National Marine Sanctuaries Act, in general the management of cold-water corals should be incorporated into the fisheries management regime.
 - d) Grant authority for NOAA Fisheries to exercise an international leadership role on cold-water corals.
 - ii. Review the MS-FCMA to ensure that adequate protection for cold-water corals may be exercised under that statute.
- 3. **Additional consideration:** Since time expired before discussion was completed, suggested that work group discussion and closure on issues be accomplished before the next meeting at an appropriate venue such as the upcoming Managing our Nation's Fisheries II conference.

Future Action: This is an interim final draft to be further discussed at the next full committee meeting.

**Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee
Magnuson-Stevens Act Reauthorization (MSA) Report
March 22, 2005**

The Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee (MAFAC) approved on March 22, 2005 via e-mail, the Magnuson-Stevens Act Reauthorization Working Group-report as submitted below and based on the oral report submitted to MAFAC on January 14, 2005.

MSA Working Group Members:

Jim Cook
Tony DiLernia
Randy Fisher
Jim Gilmore
Bill Hogarth
Don Kent
Maggie Raymond
Eric Schwaab
Dave Whaley (Guest Observer)

Summary Discussion.

The Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee (MAFAC), which advises the Secretary of Commerce on marine resource issues, met in January 2005 to discuss, among other things, NOAA Fisheries' efforts to craft an administration bill for the Magnuson-Stevens Act reauthorization. MAFAC established a Magnuson-Stevens Act Working Group to consider the issue and this paper encapsulates the Working Group's discussion and consideration by the full committee.

The Working Group recommended that NOAA Fisheries solicit stakeholder input at the Managing Our Nation's Fisheries II conference scheduled for March 24-26, 2005 before drafting the administration's Magnuson-Stevens Act reauthorization bill. A number of MAFAC members also plan to attend the March conference, and the Working Group recommended that MAFAC withhold making recommendations to the Secretary on Magnuson-Stevens Act policy issues until after the conference.

Fostering an Informed Debate of Magnuson-Stevens Act Issues.

In adopting the Working Group's report, MAFAC requested that NOAA Fisheries prepare three reports to foster informed public debate on key Magnuson-Stevens Act reauthorization issues and to assist Congress in its deliberations. The three reports, which would complement reports issued by the two oceans commissions and other contributions by stakeholders, are:

1. For dissemination at the March conference, MAFAC recommended that NOAA Fisheries prepare a report card that, among other things, details the

agency's conservation and management accomplishments since passage of the 1996 Sustainable Fisheries Act (SFA).

2. MAFAC discussed whether the role of Scientific and Statistical Committees (SSCs) in the regional Council process should be better articulated in the law. MAFAC requested that NOAA Fisheries prepare a report comparing and contrasting the roles that SSCs and other advisory panels play in each of the eight Council regions. The findings of such a report would help guide MAFAC, and others, to better evaluate what changes in the law are needed, if any, to standardize and/or enhance the roles of SSCs and other panels in the management system. This report should include the necessary analysis to assist policy makers in evaluating the efficacy of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy's (USCOP's) recommendation that the Magnuson-Stevens Act be amended to require SSCs to establish Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) levels for fisheries and that regional councils be required to set Total Allowable Catch (TAC) levels at or below the ABC.
3. MAFAC requested that NOAA Fisheries prepare a side-by-side comparison of the Fishery Management Plan requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Act and the relevant requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to assist decision makers in evaluating what provisions of the two statutes are complementary, redundant or result in unnecessary delays in implementing fishery management measures.

MAFAC's Comments on NOAA Fisheries Magnuson-Stevens Act Presentation.

The Working Group's report to MAFAC in January offered the following recommendations to NOAA Fisheries as it approaches reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. These recommendations are intended to supplement the options identified by NOAA Fisheries in its presentation to MAFAC.

1. The Regional Fishery Management Council System.

Background: Among others, the USCOP suggested changes in the law regarding the operation of regional Councils. Specifically, the USCOP focused on the relationships between Councils and SSCs, which varies significantly from region to region. Also, the USCOP issued recommendations pertaining to membership composition of Councils and the appointments process.

With respect to the issue raised by the USCOP of standardizing and/or enhancing the roles of SSCs in the Council system, MAFAC (as noted above) requested that NOAA Fisheries prepare a report comparing and contrasting the roles of SSCs and other advisory panels in the eight Council regions. The findings of such a report would help guide MAFAC, and others, to better evaluate what changes in the law are needed, if any, to standardize and/or enhance the roles of SSCs and other panels in the management system.

Options:

- **SSCs set ABC Levels**—The USCOP recommended that SSCs establish ABC levels and that Councils recommend TAC levels at or below the ABC. Some Working Group members cautioned that the challenges of multi-species management and the often wide variations in probability in rebuilding scenarios needed to be considered in evaluating the efficacy of the USCOP’s recommendation. That is, some argue that authority should be reserved for policy makers to determine an appropriate course of action when science is imprecise and management measures must be determined from a range of acceptable alternatives developed by SSCs.
- **The Council Appointments Process**—A number of Working Group members expressed strong support for maintaining the current appointments process for regional fishery management Council members, specifically that Governors nominate and the Secretary appoints Council members. Working Group members agree that the USCOP recommendation for amending current law to require Governors to submit slates of nominees that include two commercial, two recreational and two other (academic, environmental, consumer, etc.) deserves additional discussion. The Working Group also offers for discussion amending the Act to require Governors to submit a slate of five (5) or more nominees with at least one individual representing the range of interests identified by the USCOP.
- **Standardized Training for Council Members**—The Working Group supports a standardized training program for all newly appointed voting Council members as recommended by the USCOP.

2. Ecosystem Approach to Management (EAM).

Background: Concern exists that current fisheries management fails to adequately account for and address the full range of challenges affecting fish stocks, including multi-species interactions and a wide range of habitat based considerations.

An ecosystem approach to management has been suggested as a means to more fully account in the management process for inter species interactions, protect important aquatic habitats, integrate current habitat constraints into the management process, and choose among management actions that balance needs of fish and user groups. MAFAC urged NOAA Fisheries to develop a wide range of policy alternatives for further advancing an Ecosystem Approach to Management (EAM), including non-legislative options for fostering EAM. The preliminary options paper developed by NOAA Fisheries did not contain an adequate range of alternatives. MAFAC offers the following additional considerations:

Options:

- **Guidelines to Councils**—The Working Group suggested as one option that NOAA Fisheries issue EAM guidelines to regional fishery management Councils, including EAM principles that would be incorporated into current and future

fishery management plans and plan amendments. Issuance of such guidelines could be based upon recommendations included in the National Research Council's 1999 report, *Sustaining Marine Fisheries* as well as the report of the Ecosystem Advisory Panel.

Guidelines could also suggest that each Council develop a broad strategic ecosystem plan that articulates key interspecies relationships and priority habitat concerns, identifies priority research and information needs and sets forth principles used by Councils in resolving discrepancies among Fishery Management Plans for species that interact within habitats, in competition for prey or through predator-prey relationships.

- **Reform the Essential Fish Habitat Process**—Recognizing that one key consideration in an EAM is adequate protection of fish habitat, and noting existing concerns with the utility and effectiveness of standards and implementation of the current Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) provisions of the current law, MAFAC notes that meaningful reform in EFH standards and practice is an important opportunity for progress. Effectively characterizing and protecting EFH would satisfy an important element of an EAM.
- **Standards for Marine Protected Areas**—An EAM, by definition, spatially explicit. In addition, any ecosystem based analysis or action must integrate actions of fishermen fully into geographic based management decisions, including decisions that involve the designation of marine protected areas. Standards and practices for the establishment and maintenance of new closure areas should be developed in conjunction with new guidelines to establish an EAM within the areas of council and NMFS jurisdiction.
- **Further Improvements in Bycatch Reduction**—Recognizing that another key consideration in an EAM is the accounting and minimization of bycatch in fisheries, MAFAC recommends that NMFS review current bycatch accounting methods and regional bycatch reduction plans to ensure that continued progress is being made consistent with relevant provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Act.
- **Set a Research Agenda**—Recognizing that EAM is an iterative, adaptive process for marine resource management, it was recommended that NOAA Fisheries' regional offices and science centers work with regional Councils to identify research priorities and address information gaps that must be bridged to take next steps in EAM.
- **Pilot Projects**—An EAM could be advanced effectively through the use of pilot projects. Authorization and funding for Councils to experiment with EAM on a voluntary basis through pilot applications should be considered.

Notes:

- Effective ecosystem based management decisions would be hampered by actions intended to “separate science and allocation decisions.” An EAM would require Council members to make policy choices prioritizing species when setting target biomass levels and fishing rates. In addition Councils would need to take into account current capacity of habitats to sustain various population levels when setting biomass thresholds and targets. While these choices must be informed by the best science advice possible, only Councils could make the appropriate policy choices in multi species and habitat dependant decisions.

3. Streamlining the Federal Fishery Management Process.

Background: Some believe that provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) are inconsistent with, or duplicative of, Magnuson-Stevens Act provisions pertaining to developing fishery management plans and plan amendments. Others cite NEPA requirements as a necessary environmental safeguard in addition to conservation and management requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

As noted above, MAFAC requested that NOAA Fisheries prepare a side-by-side comparison of the two statutes to assist decision makers in evaluating what provisions, if any, of the two statutes are redundant or lead to unnecessary delays in implementing fishery management measures.

Options:

- **Adjust Time Lines**—Where only time line conflicts exist, 1) reconcile Magnuson-Stevens Act provisions to match NEPA guidelines, or 2) in cases where NEPA time lines are not practical for fishery management purposes, establish that Magnuson-Stevens Act time lines will satisfy NEPA requirements.

4. National Standard #1—Preventing Overfishing and Achieving Optimum Yield.

Background: National Standard #1 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act reads, “*Conservation and management measures shall prevent overfishing while achieving, on a continuing basis, the optimum yield from each fishery for the United States fishing industry.*” The Sustainable Fisheries Act of 1996 provided a definition for “overfishing” and modified the definition of “optimum yield,” and NOAA Fisheries subsequently rewrote the National Standard #1 Guidelines. NOAA Fisheries is proposing further revisions of the Guidelines. Notwithstanding NOAA Fisheries’ rewriting of the National Standard #1 Guidelines, NOAA Fisheries suggested ongoing concerns about implementation of this standard, as amended under the SFA.

Options:

- **Fishing Mortality and Biomass Levels**—NOAA Fisheries posed the question of whether the Magnuson-Stevens Act should focus more on fishing mortality than on biomass levels. Several MAFAC members agreed that such a perspective reflected an EAM approach. Other Working Group members expressed caution about agency efforts to shift stock rebuilding focus from biomass targets to fishing mortality targets, if such a shift would jeopardize the ability of regional fishery management councils to “phase in” reductions in fishing mortality (F),

noting that there is evidence in existing fishery management plans that a phased F reduction strategy can be successful.

- **Simplifying the Rebuilding Standard**—In considering a range of alternatives for further amendment to National Standard #1, some argued that the guidelines, as re-drafted, failed to clarify approaches to “mixed stock” management. Others, including NOAA Fisheries, floated for discussion the notion of simplifying the rebuilding standard.
- **Stakeholder Participation**—Consider stakeholder input, including public comments received in response to proposed changes to National Standard One Guidelines, in considering further action.

5. Other Issues.

NOAA Fisheries’ presentation highlighted a number of other key issues, including Essential Fish Habitat (EFH); Dedicated Access Privileges or Individual Fishing Quotas (IFQs); and federal fishery observer program funding and program requirements. There was not sufficient time available for MAFAC to discuss and identify policy options for these and other issues, but MAFAC expects to offer recommendations on these key issues following the March fisheries conference.

Future Committee Action: This is an interim final draft to be further discussed at the next full committee meeting.