

Marine Interests Group Working Committee Reviews Fisheries Workshop Results & Collaborative Research and Plans Next Workshop on Marine Resources & Water Quality

Summary Minutes from Wednesday, April 30, 2003

Overview of Progress and Accomplishments

The Committee reviewed the key steps to date and discussed the accomplishments. [See the list at the end of these notes.]

Summary of What Learned from the Fisheries Workshop

The Working Committee members identified new information or insights they gained from the April 16th Fisheries Workshop. The following are a few highlights of various members' and public attendees' comments about what they learned:

- Survival of embryonic fish and the impact of warming waters on them.
- Importance of the Central Coast as a transition zone—uniqueness of the area.
- Fishermen's perspectives on what and where the resources are.
- Concern that need more information about NMFS and Cal. F&G process.
- There is a massive amount of information and complexity to understand fisheries issues.
- Fisheries are heavily regulated. Process is confusing and data to support are unclear.
- Establishment of baseline is a moving target with shifts in currents, temperatures, etc.
- Long-term cycles have a major effect.
- Some fish are very long-lived with difficulty in estimating populations.
- This was a real first in getting scientists and fishermen from this area together.
- Direct and indirect fisheries issues impact a broad cross-section of the community.
- Impact of marine mammals—well-intended regulations may not have intended results.
- Different people and interests have different perspectives when looking at the same information.
- Clarification of the “promise” about fishing regulation in Monterey Bay NMS.
- Helpful clarification of terms, e.g. “overfished” vs. not caught (may have moved).

Further Fisheries Issues and Questions

- Desire for a more comprehensive picture of fishing industry (methods, gear, return of “by catch,” etc.).
- Perspectives of sport and recreational fishing (How does it operate, etc.?).

- More details on data available, methods used by researchers & regulators, and reliability. How do agencies share data? Have F&G and NMFS presented data they use to regulate?
- Are there data that fishing can be a contributor, a tipping point, to decline in fish?
- What are man-made impacts on fisheries (e.g. fishing, mineral extraction, pollution, sonar testing, dumping, etc.)?
- Further discussion of what sanctuary might add to fishing regulation.
- Historical records on catches (size, quantity, etc.). Interplay of history, regulation, and current conditions.
- Impact of marine mammal increases.

Reactions to Fisheries Workshop and Suggestions for Future Workshops

The Committee reviewed the results of the feedback forms from participants and discussed the session. Positive comments included: value of written questions, gained huge amount of information, very successful, valiant attempt and a good start, and positive experience for the public. Suggested improvements included: longer time for each speaker (20 minutes), clarify opportunities for public participation so that people are prepared to speak, have more interaction with speakers (e.g. regulators), and narrow focus for more depth.

Support for Collaborative Research Project

The Committee discussed the pilot collaborative research project. The members present unanimously approved the following:

1. Support for a Collaborative Research Project with the participation of scientists (including John Stephens, Ph.D., Vantuna Research, and Dean Wendt, Ph.D., Cal Poly), fishermen (including Steve Moore, Patriot Sport Fishing and Darby Neil, Virg's), and regulators (including Cal. Dept. of Fish and Game and NOAA) to obtain valid scientific data about the types and abundance of fish species along the San Luis Obispo County Coast. This study will
 - a. follow mutually agreed upon protocols to ensure an accurate comparison with existing data
 - b. properly train observers to discriminate fish species
 - c. obtain funding from available government resources and third-party sources
 - d. use existing liability coverage of commercial sport fishing participants to cover participating researchers

The Committee would like this study to proceed as quickly as possible with a potential start in the summer of 2003. The objectives are to prove the efficacy of such a collaborative research program and to obtain some early results that are relevant for fisheries management.

2. Request that California Dept. of Fish and Game immediately release the database from the 1988-1998 study employing commercial sport fishing vessels to John Stephens and Dean Wendt for them to review the data and assess the prospects for a credible follow up study.

3. Request that California Dept. of Fish and Game and NOAA identify appropriate personnel to provide input and review of this project.

The Committee is looking initially at the commercial sport fishing vessel project because of the potential to use ten years of historical data for comparison. If the group can prove effective collaboration and relevant management input in that area, it has an interest in branching into other areas, including areas of interest to commercial fishermen.

Next Workshop -- 6-9 p.m., Wednesday, May 28th, SLO Vet's Hall

The Committee reviewed the Issues List for the next workshop on Marine Resources and Water Quality. It agreed to focus on two panels with 3 to 4 speakers per panel to provide more in-depth discussion.

Marine Resources Panel

Overview of marine resources, distinctive Central Coast attributes, health of the ecosystem (indicator species, etc.), range of economic uses

speaker from NOAA biogeographic assessment or other source

Inter-tidal resources--characteristics, trends, and current areas of concern

Pete Raimondi, UCSC

Marine mammals--what's their role, how have populations been changing, etc.

Steve Shimek, Otter Project (or Wayne Perryman, NOAA whale count)

Bird life and other near shore life--what's distinctive about the marine resources for these species

Greg Smith, State Parks

Greg Saunders from Fish & Wildlife was mentioned as another possible resource. We need a heavy emphasis on SLO Coast specific data and perspectives.

Water Quality Panel

Overview of factors affecting water quality

speaker from RWQCB (Michael Thomas) with possible involvement of County Environmental Health

Impact of water quality on the food chain (indicator species)

speaker from Mussel Watch

Future issues and concerns, e.g. oil drilling, etc.
speaker from federal Minerals Management Service

The Committee recommended the preparation of PowerPoint notice for the workshop to run free of charge on local cable TV channels 20 and 21 to alert the public to the workshop.

The Committee envisions a later workshop on measures to enhance and sustain the marine resources. Target time frame is September or October.

Other Items

Potential Additions to Working Committee Membership

The Committee discussed the possibility of adding members to address gaps in the Committee's coverage. Two new applicants came to the Committee's attention: Barry Cohen (trawler, processor, and conservationist) and Nancy Dalman (Stanford Ph.D. in marine biology teaching at Cuesta). The Committee members expressed an interest in being clear about what holes need to be filled on the Committee and having a clear selection process before taking any action. This will be a topic for further discussion and possible action at the June 5th Committee meeting.

Recent Resolution from Morro Bay City Council

Several Committee members had requested information about Morro Bay's action on April 14 concerning marine sanctuaries. After the Committee meeting, interested members viewed a videotape of the Council session.

Summary Comments from Committee Members

Committee members offered the following brief concluding comments about this meeting: worthwhile, collaborative research will be an important contribution, the group is finding common ground, pleasantly surprised at the openness and progress, very impressed with the sharing of information, grateful to WWF for providing resources to help the community meet and reach its own decisions, and looks good.

Next Scheduled Meetings

Pre-Workshop Committee Meeting with Speakers
4:00 - 5:30 p.m., Wednesday, May 28 at SLO Vet's Hall

Marine Resources & Water Quality Public Workshop
6:00 - 9:00 p.m., Wednesday, May 28, SLO Vet's Hall

Working Committee Meeting
3:30 - 6:30 p.m., Thursday, June 5

NOTES:

1. Minutes of prior meetings and additional information about the Marine Interests Group is available at www.mbnep.org/mig.
2. This meeting was videotaped. Check www.slo-span.org for the rebroadcast schedule or contact AGP Video to obtain a copy (805-772-2715).

Don Maruska
Independent facilitator
Public information contact

Actions and Accomplishments Time Line
Marine Interests Group Working Committee

January, 2003

- Formed the Working Committee and established Guidelines
- Identified Hopes and Process for Community Dialogue

February, 2003

- Completed Initial Membership of Working Committee
- Discussed Hopes for Future of Marine Resources
- Prepared Issues and Information Requests

March, 2003

Issues Subcommittee

- Refined specific issues and information resources
- Recommended 3 key public workshops
- Planned Fisheries Workshop

Public Outreach Subcommittee

- Reviewed ways to reach interested constituencies

- Identified media contacts
- Established link for cable TV coverage
Hopes Subcommittee
- Reviewed submissions and summarized broadly shared hopes

April, 2003

Collaborative Research Project

- Identified key players—fishermen, researchers, and regulators
- Reviewed issues and potential ways to improve available data
- Developed draft proposal and shared with players.

Fisheries Public Workshop

- Widely disseminated information about the workshop.
- Attracted broad mix of speakers and attendees.
- Received press coverage and continuing rebroadcast.