UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee

October 31, 2017

MEMORANDUM FOR Chris Oliver
Assistant Administrator for Fisheries

FROM: Erika Feller
Chair, Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee

SUBJECT: Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee Approval of the Recreational Electronic Reporting Task Force

This memo transmits approval by the Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee (MAFAC) to establish a new Recreational Electronic Reporting Task Force. MAFAC approved its establishment at our recent meeting in Silver Spring, Maryland on October 17, 2019.

This Task Force is being established to provide expert advice to MAFAC, and subsequently NOAA Fisheries Leadership, on the generation, delivery, and use of electronic private recreational angler self-reported data to assist NOAA Fisheries in fulfilling its mission activities.

The approved Terms of Reference for this Task Force is attached. We look forward to working with recreational fisheries, science, and policy staff as the Task Force gets established and its work gets underway.

Attachment

Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee
Recreational Electronic Reporting Task Force
Terms of Reference

Approved October 17, 2019

Purpose

This Task Force is established under the authority of the Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee (MAFAC) to provide expert advice to MAFAC, and subsequently NOAA Fisheries Leadership, on the generation, delivery, and use of electronic private recreational angler self-reported data to assist NOAA Fisheries in fulfilling its mission activities.

Objective

The information provided by the Task Force and MAFAC will assist NOAA Fisheries in fulfilling its central role in providing useable high quality, accurate data on recreational fisheries and will contribute to development of an Agency roadmap to advance and guide implementation, where appropriate, of electronic data collection in private recreational fisheries.

The initial actions for consideration by the Task Force include:

- Identify and prioritize known data gaps relative to NOAA Fisheries' role in supporting management of marine recreational fisheries that could be addressed through mandatory or voluntary private recreational angler electronic reporting programs.
- Identify realistic and achievable goals for voluntary (also known as opt-in) and mandatory electronic reporting for private recreational anglers, as well as associated challenges and solutions, where identifiable.
- Provide recommendations on how the aforementioned goals could be best supported or achieved by NOAA Fisheries.

The taskforce should take advantage of existing expertise, including through collaboration with the MAFAC Recreational Fisheries Subcommittee, NOAA Fisheries, federal fishery management councils, states, interstate marine fisheries commissions, university researchers, and non-governmental organizations as appropriate. The Recreational Fisheries Subcommittee of MAFAC is working to: 1) Develop recommendations on how to overcome challenges related to recruiting and retaining participation for private recreational anglers in electronic catch reporting programs; and, 2) Identify and recommend improvements to better identify the universe of recreational anglers in Federal waters. This work is directly relevant to the anticipated focus of the Task Force and should be considered by the Task Force during its deliberations and formulation of recommendations.

The Task Force should consider both catch and effort and non-catch and effort data, such as length/weight and distributional data, and citizen science applications when formulating its guidance. The Task Force's guidance to MAFAC should cover the full suite of factors that it believes are relevant and necessary to be addressed by the Agency when developing an implementation roadmap. Examples of potential factors may include, but are not limited to known challenges (e.g. angler participation, validation of reporting, sources of bias), data sharing

and ownership considerations, common data/system standards, infrastructure and programmatic needs/impacts, angler reporting burden considerations, and partnership roles (state, federal, commission). The Task Force should consider existing references on the subject of opt-in and related electronic self-reporting survey methodologies including, but not limited to, Marine Recreational Improvement Program (MRIP) angler electronic reporting project reports and other Agency reports.

Background

As the demand for more precise, timely, and comprehensive fisheries data continues to grow, so has the role played by electronic technologies in data collection. In recent years, the recreational sector has seen the development of electronic logbooks in the for-hire fleet and a transition to electronic recording and transmission of angler intercept data. The ubiquity of smartphones has stoked public interest in app-based self-reporting options to supplement or improve the onsite and mail-in surveys currently used to monitor catch and effort for private recreational fishing activity. As with any new tool, implementation challenges exist.

As required by Section 202 of the Modernizing Recreational Fisheries Management Act, NOAA Fisheries has contracted the National Academies of Science (NAS) to conduct a new study to evaluate how the design of MRIP can be improved to better meet the needs of in-season management of annual catch, and to recommend actions the Secretary, councils, and states could take to improve the accuracy and timeliness of data collection and analysis to improve MRIP. One component of the NAS study will be the evaluation of survey methods that include the use of private recreational angler and for-hire vessel electronic reporting as a means to provide more timely data for use in generating catch estimates closer to real time. Therefore, the Task Force should consider the outcomes of the NAS review when providing guidance and recommendations on electronic reporting.

Beyond recreational catch and effort data collection, there is potential for use of angler apps to assist in collection of data that can be used in various citizen science applications, whether collected via probability sample designs or via simple opt –in non-probability designs. Many examples of such programs exist in natural resources and environmental science research and management nationally, such as the: Early Detection and Distribution Mapping System (EDDMapS), a public private partnership documenting invasive species distributions, and the Marine Debris Tracker, a partnership between NOAA Marine Debris Program and The University of Georgia, which monitors trash and debris along U.S. waterways. Task Force examination of potential citizen science applications relevant to electronic reporting for marine recreational fisheries is within the scope of this Terms of Reference.

Anticipating growing public interest in app-based reporting, coupled with expanding public use of and reliance on mobile devices, NOAA Fisheries is committed to developing an implementation roadmap for private recreational angler electronic reporting to achieve the long-term potential of this emerging tool. The recommendations from the MAFAC Task Force coupled with the findings of the NAS report on data needs to support in-season management of recreational fisheries will facilitate the development of the electronic reporting roadmap.

Terms and Composition

This Task Force will consist of approximately 10 individuals in addition to MAFAC members who are interested in serving on the Task Force.

The individuals shall have expertise and experience in one or more relevant fields including, but not limited to, sampling statistics, survey methodologies, citizen science, fishery stock assessment science, electronic monitoring/reporting, fisheries management, data base development and/or management, mobile technology applications (apps), and marine recreational fishing. It is not intended that all Task Force members be scientists or researchers, however, members should have experience with issues related to the generation, delivery, and or use of electronic angler self-reported data, including angler attitudes about participating in such programs.

MAFAC's Recreational Fisheries Subcommittee and MAFAC will review all applicants, and recommend candidates for the Task Force. The full Task Force composition will be approved by NOAA Fisheries. Task Force members will be appointed for one two-year term with the opportunity for reappointment for one additional term.

Organization and Reporting

The Task Force may meet in person at the discretion of NOAA Fisheries and MAFAC with the concurrence of the members. Other meetings will be conducted by telephone or using other meeting technology. The Task Force will report to MAFAC's Recreational Fisheries Subcommittee on its activities, findings, recommendations, reports, and other deliverables at regular meetings of MAFAC and to NOAA Fisheries Leadership. Individual members of the Task Force may provide feedback on specific topics that do not require consensus input, at the request of NOAA Fisheries outside of the MAFAC approval process.

The NOAA Fisheries Policy Office will provide administrative support for initiating, inviting, and selecting members of the Task Force and adhering to Federal Advisory Committee requirements. Staffing of Task Force meetings and supporting Task Force activities and products will be provided by NOAA Fisheries technical experts in electronic reporting (Office of Science and Technology) and recreational fishing (National Recreational Policy Advisor, the Office of Sustainable Fisheries), and other staff as deemed necessary.

Funding

NOAA Fisheries will be responsible for travel and other expenses. The Task Force will be managed under the Office of Policy, with input from the office of NOAA Fisheries Chief Scientist.

Duration

The Task Force will be established for an initial period of two (2) years with a possibility of extending that term if deemed necessary by NOAA Fisheries and MAFAC.