

Cooperative Research Working Group Terms of Reference

September 8, 2010

Agency Needs

Cooperative research is an important scientific approach that allows National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) scientists, managers, and stakeholders to work together to resolve outstanding issues related to the underlying ecosystem dynamics of federally managed fisheries in support of stock assessment, bycatch reduction, and other science-management research needs. NMFS science centers and regional offices are involved in a variety of successful cooperative research programs, and the demand for such programs is high. NMFS is committed to ensuring a vigorous cooperative research enterprise. There are several key research and development areas — such as innovative monitoring tools and gear technology advancement — that well designed and targeted cooperative research projects can and should support during the transition to Annual Catch Limits (ACLs).

By establishing the Cooperative Research Working Group (CRWG), the NMFS Science Board recognizes the need for the agency and its scientists and managers to demonstrate leadership in ensuring cooperative research as an integral part of the business of collecting data to support stock assessment and management activities.

Mission

Enhance the data upon which fishery management decisions are made as well as to improve communication and collaboration among partners by:

- Provide a forum for national coordination of cooperative research activities and use of cooperative research results.
- Develop funding allocations for national cooperative research funds to augment regional cooperative research programs.
- Coordinate policy development to enhance regional cooperative research programs.
- Enhance communication and outreach to showcase the benefits and successes of regional cooperative research activities.
- Conduct national outreach activities to enhance regional outreach efforts on cooperative research activities.

Legislative Background

Section 318 of the MSRA, requires the Secretary of Commerce (Secretary), in consultation with the Fishery Management Councils, to establish a cooperative research program to address needs identified under this Act and under any other marine resource laws enforced by the Secretary. According to the MSRA, this program will:

1. be regionally based;

2. be developed and conducted through partnerships among Federal, State, and Tribal managers and scientists (including interstate fishery commissions), fishing industry participants (including commercial charter or recreational vessels for gathering data), and educational institutions;
3. promote and encourage efforts to utilize sources of data maintained by other Federal agencies, State agencies, or academia; and
4. be funded on a competitive basis and based on regional fishery management needs.

Section 318 also identifies priority areas that should be addressed by projects conducted under the cooperative research program. Priority areas include:

1. collecting data to improve, supplement, or enhance stock assessments, including the use of fishing vessels or acoustic or other marine technology (Section 318(c)(i));
2. assessing the amount and type of bycatch or post-release mortality occurring in a fishery (Section 318(c)(ii));
3. conducting conservation engineering projects designed to reduce bycatch, including avoidance of post-release mortality, reduction of bycatch in high seas fisheries, and transfer of such fishing technologies to other nations (Section 318(c)(iii));
4. identifying habitat areas of particular concern as well as conducting projects relevant to the conservation of habitat (Section 318(c)(iv)); and
5. collecting and compiling economic and social data (Section 318(c)(v))

In addition, MSRA Section 408 (a)(4) requires the agency “to conduct research, including cooperative research with fishing industry participants, on deep sea corals and related species, and on survey methods.”

Core Membership

- Each NMFS region is required to have *at least* one representative with a maximum of two derived from the Center and Regional Office.
- One representative from the NMFS Office of Science and Technology (required).
- All representatives must be NMFS employees.
- The Chair is elected from and by the core membership of the CRWG, subject to approval by the NMFS Science Board.
- The Chair will preside for a maximum of 3 years with a one-year renewal for special circumstances.
- Provided the nominee is willing, the Chair shall be elected by a simple majority.
- For the purposes of electing a chair, each NMFS region has a maximum of two votes. In cases where there is only one regional core member, both votes are conferred to that single representative.
- Successive chairs are to come from different NMFS regions.
- The new Chair is nominated at the Annual Meeting and begins their term at the beginning of the new fiscal year.

Additional Participants

- For additional input and advice on cooperative research issues, participation and consultation will be provided by the following:
 - NMFS Bycatch Reduction Engineering Program (BREP) representative
 - The NMFS Office of Sustainable Fisheries' Highly Migratory Species Division
 - The NMFS Office of Protected Species
 - The NMFS Office of Habitat Conservation
 - The NMFS Sea Grant Liaison
- Experts invited on an *ad hoc* basis.

Meeting Schedule

- One meeting per year, between July and September with *preference* for the meeting to be held at NMFS headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland.

Committees

- Committees or study groups shall be established as necessary to address specific needs or achieve specific tasks.
- Such committees may include persons who are not Members, but all committees will include at least one Member.
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- The CRWG may terminate committees at will.
- Committees will submit a written report to the CRWG, following completion of the assigned task.

Responsibilities

Core Member Responsibilities

- At the minimum, one Member from each NMFS region must be present at each meeting.
- Submit an annual accounting and progress report to the Chair prior to the Annual meeting.
- Conduct tasks as assigned by the Chair.
- In addition to communiqués from the Chair, Members are responsible for disseminating CRWG decisions and information to their respective Center/Regional Office, including informing or briefing their respective Center Director/Regional Administrator on all important issues, particularly proposed spending plans. If there is only one Member representing a region, then it is incumbent on the Member to inform both the Center and Regional Office.
- Consult and coordinate with the appropriate Fishery Management Councils and Fisheries Commissions on their regional cooperative research programs.

- Member from the Office of Science and Technology will organize and schedule meetings. Additionally, this Member will serve as Meeting Rapporteur to record meeting minutes and action items.

Chair Responsibilities

- Report to Science Board and others as needed.
- Collate annual accounting and progress report and submit to the Office of Science and Technology Director and Member.
- Participate in the Programming, Planning, Budgeting, and Execution System (PPBES) process as required.
- Disseminate CRWG decisions and information to Science Center Directors.

Working Group responsibilities

Specific responsibilities of the CRWG include:

Provide National Coordination

- Develop and implement operational guidelines to enhance regional cooperative research programs and provide consistency, where possible.
- Provide a forum to develop solutions to regional and national issues.
- Provide guidance on peer review and use of cooperative research results to support the NOAA and NMFS mission and goals.
- Serve as a point of contact between NMFS management and the regional cooperative research programs.

Funding Allocation

- Develop funding allocations in annual spending plans for distribution of funds based on the approved budget and spending plan process.
- Facilitate the timely distribution of funds to enhance implementation of cooperative research activities in all NMFS regions.

Coordinate Policy Development

- In coordination with the Legislative Affairs Office, conduct Congressional briefings in conjunction with regional cooperative research programs and stakeholders.
- Provide coordination with other national initiatives that may impact cooperative research, including NMFS regional and national fishery grant programs where applicable.
- Represent cooperative research in NOAA and NMFS budget processes and strategic planning activities.

Enhance Communication

- Compile and distribute information on regional cooperative research programs to showcase the benefits and successes of cooperative research activities to constituent groups, fishery managers and scientists, and other organizations with an interest in fisheries research.

- Communicate information regarding the agency’s cooperative research activities to constituent groups.

Conduct Outreach Activities

- Enhance outreach for cooperative research activities in coordination with the Office of Constituency Affairs, regional outreach programs, and Sea Grant Extension. Promote educational activities such as constituent workshops, seminars, etc.
- Provide long-term support for the agency’s cooperative research website as well as regional sites to house information on cooperative research opportunities and other relevant information.

Decision Making Process

- For the purposes of voting on issues, each NMFS region has a maximum of two votes. In cases where there is only one regional core member, both votes are conferred to that single representative.
- Issues are decided by majority vote.

Duration

The CRWG is intended to be a long-term standing committee of the NMFS Science Board to support cooperative research activities.

**Cooperative Research Working Group
Cooperative Research Working Group Membership List
Effective as of 9/8/2010**

| Employee Name | NMFS Office/Center or Agency/Affiliation |
|----------------------|---|
| Vacant | Chair |
| Members: | |
| John Hoey | Northeast Fisheries Science Center |
| Ryan Silva | Northeast Regional Office |
| Guy Davenport | Southeast Fisheries Science Center |
| Dax Ruiz | Southeast Regional Office |
| John C. Clary | Alaska Fisheries Science Center |
| Patty Burke | Northwest Fisheries Science Center |
| Meghan Donahue | Southwest Fisheries Science Center |
| Craig Heberer | Southwest Regional Office |
| Gerard DiNardo | Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center |
| Scott Bloom | Pacific Islands Regional Office |
| Lee Benaka | Office of Sustainable Fisheries |
| Jackie Wilson | Office of Sustainable Fisheries HMS |
| Teri Rowles | Office of Protected Species |
| Tom Hourigan | Office of Habitat Conservation |
| Terry Smith | Sea Grant Liaison |