Annotated Agenda
MAFAC meeting – June 29-July 1, 2010
Juneau, AK

1. Agenda item Title of Discussion: Protected Resources Program

2. Discussion Leader/Presenter: Jim Lecky, Director, Office of Protected Resources

3. Objective/Purpose: To respond to MAFAC's request for the Director of the Office of Protected Resources to provide background information regarding the Protected Resources Program, how priorities are set and resources allocated, the process of listing and delisting endangered species, how climate change is impacting the program's work and other related topics.

4. Background/Synopsis: The Protected Resources Subcommittee recognized that MAFAC Committee Members would benefit from understanding the protected resources (PR) program and issues it is currently facing and they requested a lengthy presentation on PR topics at the June 2010 meeting. Oil spill events overtook the request somewhat, but protected resource impacts of the spill and OCS activities are on the agenda for discussion on Day 1 of this meeting.

In making its request, the PR Subcommittee considered PR issues to be "particularly relevant and timely considering the recent influx of coral species entering the consideration process for ESA listing and ….[that it] would be of sufficient importance to merit consideration and discussion by the full committee."

The specific topics and questions the request included are as follows:

1. Prioritization of resources allocation (funding, research and staff time):
   - How does NMFS currently set resource allocation priorities for listing and designation of critical habitat, recovery planning, and status reviews?
   - Is there currently a need for a master document or plan?
   - What is the current workload of this office and how is effort partitioned between programmatic areas?

2. Climate change:
   - What is the NMFS strategy for the avoidance of misdirected resources (directed by litigation for "pet species")? For example FWS has a 4(d) regulation for polar bears that limits the responsibility of the FSW to localized impacts.
   - Is NMFS planning an equivalent for all future and existing listed species (i.e. 82 coral species)?

3. Once recovered, how are listed species down or delisted?:
   - What media strategies does NMFS have for celebrating an ESA success?

- What is the process and timeline for the delisting evaluation once recovery standards outlined by the ESA have been met? How can the public or specific user groups expedite or facilitate this process?
- We would like staff to address in particular the stalled progress of fin and sperm whale draft recovery plan in the North Pacific, as well as the Hawaiian stock of humpback whales and green sea turtles.

4. Use of Observer data:
   - Increased fisheries observer coverage is expected, in part due to increased use of catch share programs. We request staff updates regarding use of observer data in management of PR. Are the data reliable and how can it be improved?

The request also included interest in discussing the following during the PR Subcommittee meeting:

- streamlining of scientific research permitting process (level B Harassment);
- update on sea turtles, including the status or findings of the NRC report;
- how/if technology sharing is being accomplished between regions, science centers, and federal agencies to improve ecological understanding of PR species;
- if the military (Navy in particular) has been approached regarding use of acoustic data to improve large whale stock assessments; and
- how is the PR Office is working with the Aquaculture Program on the permit consultation process?

Background information

An overview of Marine Mammal Permits and Authorizations can be found on the web here.

Link here for the NMFS webpage on Interagency Consultation (ESA Section 7)

Other fact sheets on the various Divisions of the Office of Protected Resources is on the MAFAC meeting webpage under Protected Resources Program section.

5. Options listed from 1 to n (e.g., brief summary of options considered/proposed & most important pros/cons of each. State criteria used, such programmatic, policy, political, economic, biological, funding, staffing impacts and/or or expected cost/schedule/performance impacts; range of timing/quality/probability of outcomes/products/services accomplished under different options):

6. Preferred Recommendation (Include action/product/decision needed; responsible/ accountable party; date/timeline/schedule for action):

Record of Decision:
Decision, Next Step(s) and/or Action:
Assigned to:
Due Date: