

<i>NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE POLICY DIRECTIVE 04-114</i> <i>[EFFECTIVE DATE]</i>	
<i>Science and Technology</i>	
<i>Transition Plans for Recreational Fishery Catch and Effort Survey Design Changes</i>	
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<i>SUMMARY OF REVISIONS:</i>	

1. **Introduction.** When Congress reauthorized the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S.C. § 1801 *et seq.*) in 2006, it added Section 401(g) which requires that the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) establish a program to improve the quality and accuracy of information generated by the Marine Recreational Fishery Statistics Survey. *See* 16 U.S.C. § 1881(g)(3). It further required that the program take into consideration, and, to the extent feasible, implement the recommendations of the National Research Council’s 2006 report, *Review of Recreational Fisheries Survey Methods*. Accordingly, the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) has been developing new and modified survey designs for tracking recreational fishing effort and catch and to provide more accurate and timely statistical estimates of cumulative totals throughout each fishing season.

This policy directive recognizes that modifications to data collection designs may result in changes to catch estimates that render the estimates made with the new methods inconsistent with (i.e., higher or lower than) legacy estimates derived from earlier survey designs. In such cases, NMFS must appropriately transition from current to new survey methods. The difference in catch estimates resulting from use of modified data collection designs must be accounted for prior to using the results of the new methods in catch time series for stock assessments or for management accounting. This policy directs that a Transition Plan must be prepared for the implementation of any modifications of survey sampling or estimation methods that may result in consistently higher or lower statistical estimates of catch or effort. A Transition Plan must outline the steps and activities needed to ensure a smooth transition to the new survey method, while taking into account the necessary time and effort to incorporate new estimates into the science and management processes. Until such a plan is approved and implemented, the statistics resulting from use of the modified methods should not be treated as best scientific information available for use in fishery stock assessments and management actions. To coordinate development of such Transition Plans, a MRIP Transition Team has been established, co-led by the NMFS Office of Science and Technology and the Office of Sustainable Fisheries.

2. **Objective.** It is the policy of NMFS to ensure the comparability of long-term time series of recreational fishery catch and effort statistics as new, more statistically valid survey designs are implemented to replace legacy survey designs, and to ensure the efficient integration of appropriately calibrated statistics into fishery science products and fishery management

measures.

3. **Authorities and Responsibilities.** This policy directive establishes the following authorities and responsibilities.

3.1 The Office of Science and Technology (ST) co-leads the Transition Team, and is responsible for ensuring that Transition Plans are prepared whenever new or modified recreational fishing catch or effort survey designs are deemed appropriate for implementation, but produce statistical estimates that are consistently higher or lower than legacy survey design estimates. ST coordinates all aspects of science input to Transition Plans.

3.2 The Office of Sustainable Fisheries (SF) co-leads the Transition Team, and coordinates all aspects of fishery management input to Transition Plans.

4. **Measuring Effectiveness.** The effectiveness of the Policy Directive can be assessed through the acceptance by peer review of stock assessments incorporating the recalibrated time series of catch statistics produced through execution of each Transition Plan, and through orderly transition to revised catch limits and other fishery management measures affected by the change in survey design.

5. **References.** Procedural Directive 04-114-01 Guidance and Procedures for the Transition Process for Modification of Recreational Fishing Catch and Effort Methods is being issued concurrently with this policy to ensure effective implementation. Other procedural directives will be issued to implement this policy as needed.

Signed _____//s// _____12/1/2015_
Date

Eileen Sobeck
Assistant Administrator for Fisheries