

## Full Council –



### Update on the Marine Resource Education Program Southeast

Council staff will provide an update on the MREP Southeast Program during Full Council. Below is background information as well as bulleted highlights taken from a recent report submitted by the Gulf of Maine Research Institute.

#### Background

In 2012 in the Marine Resource Education Program (MREP) was expanded from its roots in New England to the Southeast Region. The educational program, designed *by* fishermen *for* fishermen, is based on a series of workshops for fishermen addressing both fisheries science and fisheries management. The program is administered by the Gulf of Maine Research Institute <http://www.gmri.org/community/training.asp>. With funding secured through NOAA Fisheries, the program began in the Southeast with formation of an MREP Steering Committee to help guide development and implementation of the program. Steering Committee members include commercial, recreational, charter/for-hire fishermen from the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico as well as industry leaders, Sea Grant representatives, and NGOs. The Steering Committee met in September 2012 to help determine the targeted audiences for workshop participants, workshop dates and locations, recommendations for instructors, and general curriculums.

The first MREP Southeast Science Workshop was held April 2-4, 2013 in St. Petersburg, Florida. The 3-day workshop was held at the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Fish & Wildlife Research Institute (FWRI) facility. Instructors for the Science Workshop included SEDAR Coordinator John Carmichael as well as staff from NOAA Fisheries Southeast Fisheries Science Centers, FWRI, and other agencies (**Attachment 5B**). Participants in the workshop included fishermen, industry representatives, and media representatives from the South Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, and the Caribbean.

A poster to promote the MREP Southeast was presented during the recent Managing Our Nation's Fisheries 3 National Conference in Washington, DC held May 7-9, 2013 (**Attachment 5C**).

#### MREP Southeast Update Highlights from the Gulf of Maine Research Institute

Recruiting, website, logo and program identity work:

- The full Steering Committee was provided with quarterly updates on curriculum development progress, which written and sent by GMRI staff.
- Program awareness and recruiting for attendees for the science program took place during the months Jan – March 2013.

June 2013 Council Meeting  
Full Council  
Marine Resources Education Program Update  
June 14, 2013

- We employed a combination of tactics whereby we requested the councils include an announcement in their council meeting updates, and communications to their lists.
- We also enlisted the Steering Committee members as program ambassadors, and the response was tremendous. They reached out to their networks and helped spread the word.
- GMRI staff guided the development of a new and unique logo for the program, with the goal of being a close relative to the New England Program, but also unique enough to ensure regional applicability. The Steering Committee was provided several options for consideration and then provided feedback to arrive at the final result, which has been warmly adopted by all involved in the program thus far.
- We developed a colorful postcard that could be easily circulated and handed out by Steering Committee, and councils alike and provided each person with 20 to hand out, each council with 250.
- We obtained a mailing list of all Federal permit holders in the Southeast region, and another list of dealers and seafood processors. The total potential mailing list size was 18,000 from which we randomly selected 5,000 names to receive the postcard via bulk mail.
- GMRI staff reached out to the NGO community and other associations, including Ocean Conservancy, EDF, Coastal Conservation Association, and Charter Fisherman's association, to inform them of the effort and provide them with an opportunity to ask questions and be involved.
- A unique website page was developed for this effort. We used photos provided by Steering Committee members, and NOAA staff to ensure the proper look and feel for the Southeast region.
- The location for the science workshop implementation was selected by Steering Committee members for the centralized travel location, and for the access to a working fishery laboratory, scientists, and research vessels.

#### Implementation of science curriculum:

- Due to the high demand for the program (we had 60 applicants for an original 20 slots), we decided to increase the number of accepted participants to 32, and arrange the logistics and agenda in way that would accommodate this increased group size, without sacrificing quality of programming.
- The budget was closely monitored and funds were prioritized to support the participation of this size group. Of note, the fishing industry leaders, Bob and Duane along with GMRI staff, decided not to offer a daily stipend for fisherman's attendance, where there was no expectation of this. Instead, the funds were used to provide travel support for an additional 15 people, including two attendees from the Caribbean fishery management region. If needed in the future, we may consider a scholarship process if stipend support is needed for certain hard to reach audiences.

- The selection criteria were designed to accept a class of participants with a regionally mixed background, diverse fisheries and gear types, multiple permit holders were given priority, and we also sought a broad range of age groups. The responses to questions on the application form were used to help gauge a person's motivation to participate, and gain a sense for how they might use the learnings from the workshop to impact their own fishing network.
- A total of 32 active commercial and recreational fishermen and women were accepted into the program, and took part in the first science workshop April 2 – 4, 2013 held at the Florida Fish & Wildlife Research Institute in St. Petersburg, FL. The group included some of the individuals who already participate in the fishery management process, as well as more than half who have not previously been engaged. This infusion of new faces was a huge pleasant surprise for the NOAA staff present at the event.
- All of the program attendees, including the eleven program presenters plus other fisheries technicians from the research labs, joined in the program and discussions with fishing industry participants for multiple days, and the networking resulted in increased understanding of the challenges facing each of the sectors represented. The personal communications helped to build mutual trust, and break down barriers to communication between fishing industry, scientists and managers.
- Regional Administrator, Roy Crabtree, and his staff joined the program for the vast majority of the three days, and new and productive dialog has been initiated with many new fishing industry members. Their staff reported that this was an unparalleled opportunity for them, bridging the gap between NOAA and fishing industry in a way that no other program has yet demonstrated.
- An evaluation form was administered to all science workshop program participants and presenters, to ensure that a feedback mechanism would help us identify any shortcomings, and improve on the program going forward. The responses were collated and initially reviewed by the smaller planning team, and will also be forwarded to the full Steering Committee in the next quarterly update. A full evaluation process will take place with the full steering committee, at the conclusion of the Management workshop (i.e. part 2).
- The responses to the program have been universally positive, and the feedback indicates that this was a critical effort for the region. Specific outcomes include greater insight into the stock assessment process, better understanding of the data collected and sources of scientific uncertainty, how data are used in fishery science and management, and most importantly a significant increase in the group's intended participation level with the fishery management council process.

### **Outcomes**

- Established Program Team of Advisors (renamed as “Steering Committee”) with balanced representation of key fishery stakeholders.
- Fisheries science education program developed
- Fisheries science education program delivered
- Speaker's bureau established for science workshop

June 2013 Council Meeting  
Full Council  
Marine Resources Education Program Update  
June 14, 2013

- One of the unexpected outcomes was that we enlightened several of the Science workshop attendees to the fact that they have public representation to assist them and answer questions. This completely turned their attitude around, and they will help share this knowledge with others. They learned about the existence of the NOAA Regional Office, and the two fishery management councils, and made direct contact with people who can listen to their concerns. They were unaware of the existence of this entire Federal governance process until this event.