

## Foreword

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National  
Oceanic and  
Atmospheric  
Administration



U.S.  
DEPARTMENT  
OF  
COMMERCE

# NOAA Fisheries Service Northeast Cooperative Research Partners Program

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries Service), Northeast Cooperative Research Partners Program (NCRPP) was initiated in 1999. The goals of this program are to enhance the data upon which fishery management decisions are made as well as to improve communication and collaboration among commercial fishery participants, scientists and fishery managers. NOAA Fisheries Service works in close collaboration with the New England Fishery Management Council's Research Steering Committee to set research priorities to meet management information needs.

Fishery management is, by nature, a multiple year endeavor which requires a time series of fishery dependent and independent information. Additionally, there are needs for immediate short-term biological, oceanographic, social, economic and habitat information to help resolve fishery management issues. Thus, the program established two avenues to pursue cooperative research through longer and short-term projects. First, short-term research projects are funded annually through competitive contracts. Second, three longer-term collaborative research projects were developed. These projects include: 1) a pilot study fleet (fishery dependent data); 2) a pilot industry based survey (fishery independent data); and 3) groundfish tagging (stock structure, movements and mixing, and biological data).

First, a number of short-term research projects have been developed to work primarily on commercial fishing gear modifications, improve selectivity of catch on directed species, reduce bycatch, and study habitat reactions to mobile and fixed fishing gear.

Second, two cooperative research fleets have been established to collect detailed fishery dependent and independent information from commercial fishing vessels. The original concept, developed by the Canadians, referred to these as "sentinel fleets". In the New England groundfish setting it is more appropriate to consider two industry research fleets. A pilot industry-based survey fleet (fishery independent) and a pilot commercial study fleet (fishery dependent) have been developed.

Additionally, extensive tagging programs are being conducted on a number of groundfish species to collect information on migrations and movements of fish, identify localized or subregional stocks, and collect biological and demographic information on these species.

For further information on the Cooperative Research Partners Programs please contact:

National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries Service)  
Northeast Cooperative Research Partners Program

(978) 281-9276 – Northeast Regional Office of Cooperative Research  
(401) 782-3323 – Northeast Fisheries Science Center, Cooperative Research Office, Narragansett  
Laboratory

[www.nero.noaa.gov/StateFedOff/coopresearch/](http://www.nero.noaa.gov/StateFedOff/coopresearch/)

**STUDY FLEET  
&  
INDUSTRY-BASED SURVEY**

**MEETING SUMMARY**

**November/December, 2000**

**Organized by the**

**NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE  
CONNECTICUT D.E.P. MARINE FISHERIES OFFICE  
MAINE DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES  
MASSACHUSETTS DIVISION OF MARINE FISHERIES  
NEW HAMPSHIRE FISH & GAME DEPARTMENT MARINE DIVISION  
RHODE ISLAND DIVISION of FISH & WILDLIFE**

**Funded by the**

**NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE**

**Submitted by the**

**GULF OF MAINE AQUARIUM**

**February 1, 2001**

## STUDY FLEETS & INDUSTRY-BASED SURVEYS

### **Executive Summary:**

The Gulf of Maine Aquarium (GMA) was commissioned by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to conduct a series of day-long workshops with the groundfish industry in November and December, 2000 to discuss issues associated with two industry/science collaborative research programs:

Study Fleets: A sample of fishing vessels from which high quality data on catch, fishing effort, gear characteristics, area fished and biological observations are collected. These vessels fish in “normal” commercial mode, and are selected to be representative of the larger fleet, over time.

Industry-based Surveys: A scientifically-designed fishery research project to monitor the abundance and biological health of target populations of fish through the use of test fishing with specific gear(s) in specific locations.

Meetings were held in Rockland, Portland, Portsmouth, Gloucester, Chatham, New Bedford and Narragansett to encourage broad industry and science participation; 130 people attended.

The study fleet and industry-based survey concepts were discussed thoughtfully and seriously at all seven meetings. Both fishermen and scientists were deeply interested in study fleets and industry-based surveys as a means to increase industry involvement in fishery research and increase the spatial and temporal data informing the stock assessment process. Moreover, such collaborative programs will provide an opportunity to improve the industry/science working relationship. Both fishermen and scientists were concerned that study fleets and industry-based surveys not be allowed to fail. They will require a long-term commitment by both communities and cooperation securing continued funding.

The fishing industry expressed a deep mistrust of the science institutions that are tied directly to the management process, though they recognized the importance of trying to develop a successful industry/science relationship. Industry emphasized that NMFS must make a long-term commitment to collaborative research. Industry was deeply concerned that data be analyzed and made available promptly. Industry is starved for public recognition of its significant past research and conservation efforts and of any future contributions to collaborative research.

Scientific representatives were concerned that study fleets and industry-based surveys be used to provide better data for the existing assessment process, not to create alternative assessments. They noted the necessity of sustaining consistency in equipment and technique and/or calibrating new equipment/techniques with old in order to develop the valid long-term data sets that are so important to the assessment process.

Discussion of study fleets focused on the importance of carefully defining the goals of any study fleet program, separating study fleet data collection from the enforcement process, experimenting with different data collection strategies, making data easily accessible yet protecting the proprietary aspects of data, and motivating industry participation with non-cash compensation such as free vessel monitoring systems and relief from vessel trip reporting requirements.

Discussion of industry-based surveys focused on increasing the spatial and temporal resolution of data used for assessments beyond the NMFS spring and fall trawl survey, calibrating the NMFS survey vessel with industry survey vessels and using fishing vessels to survey closed areas before and during closures. Cash compensation will be required for industry-based surveys. There was deep concern that the permit process be amended to facilitate collaborative research and avoid the forced discard of research catches. At each meeting along the coast, a unique set of possible industry-based survey projects were identified to address local research and management concerns.

With the benefit of attending all seven meetings and reflecting on their results, GMA offers the following recommendations, in addition to those made by industry and scientist participants:

- Develop a diversified portfolio of projects (projects with short-term payoffs, projects requiring multi-year funding and equipment/infrastructure that will support continued collaborative research);
- Develop incentive systems that recognized the economic realities of the fishing industry;
- Use vessel communications technology investment as the primary incentive for study fleet participation;
- Provide practical permitting solutions that facilitate the use of fishing vessels as research platforms and that do not require that research catches be discarded;
- Make data rapidly available and develop an open approach to data analysis, with industry representation, as a means of cultivating industry/science trust and communication;
- Encourage the involvement of state and non-governmental research organizations to increase the separation between science and enforcement and cultivate the development of local science infrastructure that will facilitate communication between the fishing and scientific communities.