"WHAT CAN COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH DO TO HELP YOU?"

a discussion summary

Maine Fishermen's Forum
Rockport, Maine
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Panel: Paul Anderson, Maine Sea Grant
Chris Glass, Northeast Consortium
John Hoey, NOAA Northeast Cooperative Research Program
Earl Meredith, NOAA Northeast Cooperative Research Program
Peg Petruny-Parker, Commercial Fisheries Research Foundation
Ryan Silva, NOAA Northeast Regional Office

Facilitator: Rachel Feeney, Northeast Consortium

Rapporteurs: Ken La Valley, New Hampshire Sea Grant/Cooperative Extension
Carolyn Woodhead, NOAA Northeast Cooperative Research Program

Overview:

This session (1.5 hours) at the Maine Fishermen's Forum was an opportunity for public discussion of the role that fishermen-science partnered research plays in helping maintain and manage marine resources. After introductory comments to frame the session by the facilitator, each panelist gave brief updates on program activities and perspectives. The floor was then opened for a facilitated discussion of how collaborative research might be more effective and include fishermen more broadly in research programs within the region. Emerging issues such as ocean energy development, marine spatial planning, data provision and technology transfer to industry were explored.

Focus Questions:

- What are the key areas (current and emerging) that industry-science collaboration could contribute data? How?
- How can links between fisheries research and management improve?
- How can research in the region be better networked and partnered with fisheries extension activities?

Initial Panel Comments:

John Hoey, NOAA Northeast Cooperative Research Program

The New England region has been fortunate to receive a sizeable amount of funding for cooperative research over the past decade ($4 to $10M annually) compared to other regions in the U.S. Recent budget realities are forcing us to think innovatively of how we can better leverage expertise within the region to address management priorities. In FY09, $6M was received, of which $1M was added to winter flounder research, $3.5M was distributed to the Northeast Consortium and the Commercial Fisheries Research foundation, and $1.5M is funding eight projects through the Cooperative Research Partners Program. There is $1.2M for boat contracts to investigate the catchability of flounder and skate species relative to the NMFS survey vessel. An Request For Proposals will be announced soon for FY10 dollars. Only a few multi-year projects will likely be funded; greater effort will be placed on funding projects of a short duration.

Chris Glass, Northeast Consortium

The research needs today are much different from ten years ago when the Northeast Consortium was established. Our goal is to work with the fishing industry by pairing them with the science community to conduct research that promotes the sustainability of the research. We require that industry comes to the table as an equal partner with researchers and encourage equal involvement from proposal writing through research design and data analysis/report writing. We are currently asking how we can run our programs more efficiently. Over the years, the NEC has funded approximately 200 projects including more than 230 scientists and 500 fishermen, 45 industry groups and 70 research groups/institutions, with projects focused on Georges Bank and Gulf of Maine fisheries. The funding of nine more projects will be announced in the coming week.

Peg Petruny-Parker, Commercial Fisheries Research Foundation

Established in 2004, this is the newest collaborative research funding program in the region. It is based in Rhode Island, and is focused on supporting collaborative research projects aimed at addressing research needs as they pertain to the commercial fishing industry based in the Southern New England area (i.e. Cape Cod through southern Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and eastern Connecticut on down to Montauk, New York). The CFR Foundation's Board of Directors is comprised entirely of fishermen or businessmen involved in supporting businesses, and the projects the Foundation funds are required to be collaborative/cooperative ones involving both scientists and members of the commercial fishing industry. Awardees do not necessarily have to reside in the region, and the field work does not necessarily need to take place in the region, but the subject area must be important to the fishing industry based in the region. Under the CFR Foundation's "Southern New England Collaborative Research Initiative," six projects were funded in 2009, and five were funded in 2010 with an additional project pending. Another funding opportunity under this program will be announced in the late summer of 2010. In addition, the CFR Foundation is administering a "Challenge Grant Program for Conservation Engineering Projects – Winter Flounder Bycatch Reduction," with funding on the order of $1.2M for the entire program. Part I of the program, the "Proof of Concept Program", began in February 2010 with the issuance of an RFP for relatively small scale proposals to investigate ideas about gear designs aimed at reducing winter flounder bycatch in the southern New England fishing area. These are $30,000 grants. Based on the results, projects will be able to apply for full scale multi-year awards. Overall, two factors are important in determining project funding in all of the CFR Foundation's programs: scientific merit and management relevancy. Industry input, as well as the perspectives of managers and scientists, is important in identifying research needs and priorities. The CFR Foundation is seeking to establish ways to provide for a continued dialogue on this subject, as well as how research results can be integrated into the fisheries governance system in the New England and Mid-Atlantic regions.

Earl Meredith, NOAA Northeast Cooperative Research Program

The Research Set-Aside program is not federally funded; certain fisheries designate a portion of their annual allocation for research (e.g. scallop, monkfish, summer flounder, scup). The first RSA program started in 2000. This is a Council-based program. Over 50 projects amounting to $31M dollars of research have been industry-funded. The Mid-Atlantic council established a similar program in 2002. Money comes from 2-3% of a species annual catch and/or landings value. RSAs have funded age/growth life history research, conservation engineering and survey work.

Paul Anderson, Maine Sea Grant

The Maine Fishermen's Forum started 35 years ago as a means of breaking down the wall between science and industry, to make processes more inclusive. A key mission of Sea Grant is to bring stakeholders together. Sea Grant is a nation-wide science funding agency as well as an outreach/extension program which brings science-based information to communities (about $60M of funding per year nationally). Funding schedules are typically a two-year cycle. Four key program areas are sustainable seafood, coastal resiliency, coastal communities and marine literacy/education.

Ryan Silva, NOAA Northeast Regional Office

The Northeast Regional Office has expanded its capacity to serve as a liaison between collaborative research programs and the management process. Particular focus has been placed on highlighting regulatory changes that may have implications for the collaborative research community, coordinating the regulatory process with the collaborative research programs to facilitate program implementation, and further streamlining the vessel permitting and environmental review processes.

Public Discussion:

Following the panel comments, there was about an hour for discussion of the key questions: what are the most important current and emerging needs that collaborative research could address and how can research programs be better linked with fisheries management and extension. In addition, the public was encouraged to expand from the key questions and remark on any aspect of collaborative research. The comments are summarized below, organized by general topic area.

Marine Spatial Planning.

- Providing data on important fishery locations is a needed contribution to marine spatial planning efforts.
- The Island institute and Maine Sea Grant are working with fishing communities to begin to "map" where fishing activities are occurring and Rutgers University has led the "Atlas" project, mapping communities at sea throughout the Gulf of Maine.
- Innovative energy technologies need to be coordinated with fisheries (i.e. wind farms, current generators). There are many unanswered questions related the potential effects on fisheries. This is an impending issue in southern New England and on Monhegan Island.
- Citing of wind turbines has generally been driven by aesthetics and the potential for power generation. What about fishery impacts? There are likely to be lost fishing opportunities and insurance risks. Should the industry be compensated for these loses? Will weather events damage equipment, which may in turn damage habitats? What are the acoustic impacts? This is a big opportunity for collaborative research.
- When liquefied natural gas terminals were installed in Boston harbor, there was extensive research and mitigation efforts, funded by the gas industry.

- The role and voice of the fishing industry in decision-making should be examined (e.g Massachusetts Oceans Act implementation and emerging federal ocean planning processes).
- There should be a closer examination of how other regions have dealt with user conflicts. In California, people are exploring if power generation should be co-located with already established marine protected areas.

Seafood Marketing.

- Research and development for seafood markets is needed, including the marketing capacity of local fishery products.
- The value of shrimp and dogfish products could be increased.

Fisheries and Ecosystem Research.

- Research on forage fish and juvenile/spawning habitats is needed, particularly in rivers and estuaries.
- There are several "data-poor" species in the Gulf of Maine (e.g red crab, wolf fish, red fish, cusk). Research programs have focused on species of concern (e.g. cod), but data-poor species should also be a priority. Some of these species may allow economic opportunities for fishermen and/or may impact regulations of other fisheries.
- The Northeast Consortium has seen more proposals in recent years regarding data poor species.
- There needs to be more capacity-building to fund truly fisherman-identified research questions, rather than mostly top-down, management-driven priorities. The Commercial Fisheries Research Foundation board of directors is comprised largely of industry.
- Fishery socioeconomics is a topic that needs consistent and continued research effort.

Fisheries Science-to-Management Links.

- Allow gear innovations to be used if they meet or exceed the bycatch reduction of regulated gear. This will allow the industry to further modify and improve conservation engineering designs.
- Links between project partners and potential management end-users needs to be made upfront.
- Responsiveness of science to management needs is an area that always can be improved.
- There should be more opportunities for the public to be involved in decision-making.

Fisheries Extension and Education.

- Education and outreach is critical for the success of collaborative research, i.e. management change, new opportunities etc. There should be significantly more investments made in outreach.
- Extension and outreach organizations need to be brought to the table at the beginning of a research project. This can be accomplished by setting strict guidelines for extension/outreach/program evaluation and technology transfer within the proposal writing requirements.
- Students should be more broadly exposed to marine science and research opportunities.
- The Northeast Consortium has involved over 130 students in the past decade.
- There is a new graduate fellowship program in collaborative research, an initiative of the University of New Hampshire, Virginia Institute of Marine Science, and the School of Marine Science and Technology of UMass Dartmouth.
- The Commercial Fisheries Research Foundation will be administering a student assistantship program in the near future. Under this program, three internships per year will be offered in the areas of fisheries science, gear technology, social/economics.
- State legislators need educating. Perhaps the Marine Resources Education Project or similar program could include them.

- The fishing gear workshops led by fishermen could include a broader range of students (beyond managers and scientists).

Other Comments.

- A potential partnership could develop between the collaborative research community and the tourist industry. Is there a means to promote the importance of fisheries research and the involvement of industry in science to the tourist industry that would raise public awareness and support for the continuation of science?
- With reforms in health care, there may be new avenues for collaboration.
- There should be more research on the development of more energy- (and thus, cost-) efficient fishing gears and vessel designs. Energy audits should be encouraged.

Summary:

Several key themes emerged from this lively discussion and interaction with the panel on a wide range of issues relevant to collaborative research. The public viewed marine spatial planning, particularly the citing of wind and tidal generation sites as an important emerging topic, where fishermen-contributed data is critical, not only for where important fishery grounds are, but on the potential impacts to habitats, and acoustics. Support is needed for the industry to creatively enter new, local markets. Significant additional investments in outreach should be made, not only in transferring research results to the industry and management, but in educating a more diverse stakeholder group (e.g. tourists, state legislators, students). New avenues of research, such as the data-poor stocks and the energy-efficiency of fishing should be explored. The past investments in collaboration have shown that much can be achieved through industry-science partnerships. Those attending this session expressed support for the continuance and expansion of research programs to more fully address current and future needs of the region.