

Northeast Consortium Progress Report
Marine Resource Education Project; Subaward #PZ06082

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Major accomplishments and milestones

1. **Workshops:** We expanded the scope of work to include two sessions for 2006 – each session a full three-day science module and a three-day management module - as has been the program in the past five years. This was made possible through additional Northeast Consortium funding provided by this grant.

NMFS/MARFIN funds primarily supported the first pair of modules held in January in Newport, Rhode Island. The training in January was a great success and there were more applications than we were able to accommodate. A second set of modules were held in May in Portland supporting primarily through NEC funds (this grant). Although equally successful, the participation in May was lower than expected. This is most likely due to the May 1 start date of the groundfish fishery combined with a great deal of uncertainty about the regulations due to Framework 42. However, participant evaluations continue to be universally positive and strongly supportive. Evaluations from the January and May sessions will be provided in the final report. Key agency partners, NOAA Fisheries Northeast Fisheries Science Center and Northeast Regional Office, and the New England Fishery Management Council, indicate that the program is valuable for quality interaction with the user community, and pledge ongoing participation.

2. **Board Communications:** On-going e-mail communication continues with the Board to help in recruitment of participants and to keep them updated about the program. The annual all-day MREP Board meeting was held on September 13, 2006 at the New England Fishery Management Council offices in Newburyport, MA. The following issues were discussed at the meeting:
 - a. Update on MREP Funding -
GMRI has secured partial funding from NMFS/Cooperative Research Partners Program and has a verbal commitment from NEC to fund the remaining portion in order to carry out another two set of modules. We continue to receive tremendous support from both of these organizations. The Board asked several questions about the level of funding needed for the program, the number of people who are interested, etc. The program currently costs roughly \$200,000 annually for two, three-day modules (including room, meals, stipends,

etc.). By varying the location last year, we spent a considerable amount of time negotiating for competitive packages with hotels. In the late fall of 2005, GMRI did a mass mailing to all federal license holders (roughly 5,000) and we received a tremendous response. We also designed a new logo for MREP and created a brochure to hand out at various venues. We budgeted for a website and it is still high on the priority list to achieve in the coming months.

b. Check-in on Board Vision -

- *What is MREP Structure?* – core program of 3-day science and 3-day management modules; other offerings?
- *What is the Program Focus?* – Fisheries managed by NEFMC; Others?
- *Who is our Target Audience?* – groundfish fishermen; 15/5 split; Others (scallop, monkfish, etc.)
- *Other Ideas?*

The Board discussed the structure, focus and audience for future MREP trainings. The consensus was that the current structure works and should be maintained. The focus on fisheries managed by the NEFMC is appropriate and efforts should be made to tie in fisheries other than just groundfish. (A separate program has been proposed by GMRI in partnership with the Gulf of Maine Foundation to design and implement a program focused on the lobster industry which is managed on a state-by-state basis and interstate level.) The Board determined that the target audience should continue to be commercial fishermen with federal permits in order to have a more engaged and better informed constituency. With that said, the Board also discussed the importance of recruiting people from the recreational fishing industry, environmental community and others involved in marine resource issues (e.g. state, federal, non-profit partners). The current ratio of roughly $\frac{3}{4}$ to $\frac{2}{3}$ commercial fishing industry and the remainder as “others” seems to work well and should be the goal (though not hard and fast). We also discussed the need to get a broad distribution from various locations and from different fisheries and gear types to encourage learning across fisheries/communities.

c. Curriculum/Evaluation Review - *Is the current curriculum meeting our needs?*

The Board discussed the current curriculum and the evaluations received. For the most part, the curriculum is serving the audience and the marks were high. A more focused discussion on biological reference points was discussed as one topic that needs to be explained more given the strong link to the management process. The concept of ecosystem-based science and management was tested this year with a presentation by Mike Fogarty. The Board agreed that this was an important topic to keep and Paul Howard agreed to discuss the management implication more thoroughly in a revamp of his talk. Also, Mary Beth agreed to rework her opening piece on management to include more about the importance of the state management in the process and a few other tweaks.

d. Program Logistics

- *Dates/ time of year for MREP*
- *Locations*
- *How do we design a sustainable program (i.e. new people involved in leadership and presentations)?*

There was an active discussion about where and when to hold the two sessions in the coming year. This is always difficult as different fisheries have different seasons, regulations

can change people's plans, and weather is always a driving factor for participation in the program. The January 2006 sessions in Newport, RI drew a large crowd and GMRI did not have any problems recruiting. However, the May sessions in Portland, ME were less predictable and more difficult to fill with several cancellations.

The Board decided to hold one session (science and management) north of Boston and one session South of Boston.

3. **Outreach:** We are currently preparing a mass mailing for all federal groundfish permit holders in New England to make them aware of MREP. This was done last year and the response was overwhelming and it was the first time many fishermen had heard of the program. We currently have a waiting list for participation for 2007. The change in venue to southern New England in January helped us recruit a different mix of participants from the region and it was the largest group we have had to date. The Board decided not to continue to offer a May training in 2007 due to the lower than anticipated turn-out, but rather look to the fall for the second session.
4. **Program Replication:** We continue to field inquiries from other regions of the country about the MREP model to engage fishermen and other stakeholders in fisheries management issues. Materials about the program have been forwarded to the South Atlantic Fishery Council, though they have not been able to secure the funding to offer the program to their constituents. The Oregon Sea Grant program at Oregon State has also requested information and is interested in 'auditing' one of the sessions in 2007.

Next steps, tasks for next 6 months

The MREP dates are set for 2007 – Science Module is Feb. 13-15 and then Oct. 23-24; Management Module is March 13-15 and November 13-15. A brochure and application was mailed to all federal groundfish permit holders in November. We've received a few applications already.

The program website has languished and will be the focus of attention in the next six months.

Impacts of the project to fishermen/fishing community, and scientist/science community

In order to document the success of MREP in New England, John Williamson is working on collecting a series of profiles of past MREP participants to highlight how the training they received has impacted their involvement in fisheries management and collaborative research. Interviews are planned for January through March of 2007 under an award by NOAA/CRPP.

Submitted by Laura Taylor Singer
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