COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
May 21, 2013
Randy Fisher, Executive Director, Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission

OPENING STATEMENT

Good Morning. My name is **Randy Fisher** and I am the **Executive Director of the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission.** The Commission represents the States of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, California and Alaska.

The Commission manages a number of large projects that focus on scientific, inventory and economic research and data collection.

Today I will focus on three data collection activities, and I will offer some thoughts on the future, based on activities in which the Commission are involved.

The **first Data Collection activity** I will focus on is our Recreational Fisheries Information Network or RecFIN.

RecFIN is a cooperative effort between the state fishery agencies in Washington, Oregon, and California, the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (the Commission), and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). The four goals of RecFIN are:

- Develop and implement a State/Federal cooperative program for a coastwide marine recreational fisheries data system;
- Coordinate collection, management, and dissemination of Pacific coast marine recreational fishery data;
- Provide the data in a central location on a timely basis in the format needed to support state and federal work on Pacific marine recreational fisheries; and
- Reduce and avoid duplication of data collection efforts between RecFIN members.

The database contains recreational fishery data for the years 1980-89 and 1993 to the present. The primary source of data in the RecFIN database comes from the following five state sampling programs: Oregon Recreational Boat Survey and the Oregon Shore and Estuary Boats Survey; Washington Ocean Sampling Program and the Washington Puget Sound Boat Survey; and the California Recreational Fisheries Survey. These programs are funded by NMFS along with state agency funding in all three states. The survey is spread out over about 800 fishing sites coastwide in the three states. Of these sites, about 57% are in California, 10% in Oregon and 33% in Washington State.

The number of marine anglers in these states total 1,400,000. Total cost of this program is $5,700,000 with the National Marine Fisheries Service contributing $2,000,000 or 36% of the cost. Each of these states have marine licenses with an annual average cost of $43.54 and a daily cost of $14.24.

Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission provided partial funding for sampling in Oregon and Washington through the RecFIN. Sampling was conducted by the states. A total of about 40% of all ocean boat angler trips were sampled in Oregon in 2011, where sampling occurred from March through October. A pilot survey funded through the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) from National Marine Fisheries Service, allowed for winter sampling and sampling of minor ports that has not been done in a few years. As a result sampling occurred year round in 2011 in Oregon.

The State of Washington conducted their Ocean Boat survey and the Puget Sound Boat Survey in 2011. Sampling occurred throughout the year in Puget Sound and also year round on the coast. Sampling rates were at about 40% of all ocean boat trips.

In California, in 2011, over 90,000 angler trips were sampled during the 12 month sampling program.

Two states utilized their angler license frame for estimation of fishing effort in certain modes of fishing. These include Puget Sound Boat trips in Washington and shore and private access and night boat effort in California. All other modes of fishing in the three states are estimated from direct field counts.

All catch and effort information for each sampling month from the various surveys are loaded into the RecFIN database maintained at PSMFC with a one-month lag time. Detailed explanations of the sampling conducted, sampling methodology and estimation statistics of the various sampling programs along with catch and effort information and estimates by month are available for all three states (Oregon, Washington, and California) and the Pacific Fishery Management Council.

The **second Data Collection activity** is our Pacific Fisheries Information Network or PacFIN. This network is the nation's first regional fisheries data network. PacFIN is a joint federal and state project focused on fisheries data collection and information management. PacFIN provides timely and accurate data to aid effective management of fisheries and fishery resources.

Data from fisheries occurring in ocean areas off the coasts of Washington, Oregon, California, Alaska, and British Columbia are provided to the PacFIN central database.

The PacFIN central database includes fish-ticket and vessel registration data provided by the Washington, Oregon, and California state fishery agencies. In addition the data sources supply species-composition and catch-by-area proportions developed from their port sampling and trawl logbook data systems.

The National Marine Fisheries Service, Northwest Region, supplies the central database with limited-entry permit data and also incorporated is the vessel data provided by the U.S. Coast Guard. The National Marine Fisheries Service, Alaska Fishery Science Center inputs weekly aggregates developed from their tow-by-tow observer database.

The data for the Alaska groundfish fishery are provided by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and the National Marine Fisheries Service, Alaska Region in the form of monthly aggregates, for fish caught in Alaska waters but landed in Washington ports.

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Canada also makes a contribution to this West Coast fisheries data system.

The best estimates of catch for each groundfish species by month, area, and gear-type are developed from the source data just-mentioned.

PacFIN staff provides historical landings data since 1981 as well as support with data retrievals, analyses and review of the National Marine Fisheries Service's catch share calculations for the West Coast trawl rationalization/Individual Fishing Quota program. This information is used to provide Quota Shares/Quota Pounds to the fleet.

On the West Coast we have 272 federally licensed vessels, 119 of those are in the Catch Share Program.

The annual cost of this program is has been around $6,000,000. Historically the National Marine Fisheries Service has contributed close to $3,000,000 or 50% of the cost, however in 2013, this will drop to $2,400,000.

The third **Data Collection Activity** is our Alaska Fisheries Information Network of AKFIN.

AKFIN was established in 1997 with the goal to acquire and consolidate the vast quantity of data generated by the Alaska fisheries, to provide quantitative analyses and interpretations of these data, and then to disseminate the processed information to fishery analysts, scientists, economists, and other administrative agencies.

AKFIN maintains an extensive data library from which information is used to fulfill data requests. AKFIN provides direct access to much of the information maintained in the data library via a secure connection.

The primary purpose is to provide complex data sets to fisheries analysts and economists to support the Council's decision-making process.

AKFIN consolidates the agency data sources into a single, comprehensive database, applying value-added information to provide a standardized view of the Alaska commercial fisheries data for analytic purposes.

AKFIN supports the data needs of fisheries analysts and economists by consolidating commercial fisheries data and dispensing that data upon request using custom programming service and on-line tools. Information is aggregated from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Commercial Fisheries, Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission, National Marine Fisheries Service Alaska Region, Alaska Fisheries Science Center, North Pacific Science Center, North Pacific Fishery Management Council and Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission.

AKFIN reports catch data, harvest and value from commercial fisheries in Alaska using the best available data from data source agencies. Once these data are incorporated into its system, AKFIN reports information from several critical perspectives, which are used to identify and quantify impacts related to changes in fisheries management. These include species, area, gear, vessel, processor, community, and fishery participants by season.

AKFIN has an online reporting tool that provides authorized stock assessors, social scientists, and economists with direct access to AKFIN's analytical database and metadata resources. This tool allows users to access prepared reports and to formulate ad-hoc queries that can be saved and shared with other analysts.

Concerning the future and new technology, I will discuss three that we are involved with:

First – Electronic Fish Tickets and Electronic Compliance Monitoring
Second – Electronic Log Books
Third – Electronic Monitoring – i.e. Camera's

First – Electronic Fish Tickets and Electronic Compliance Monitoring:

The Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission continues to develop and support the expansion software applications for the current West Coast Electronic Fish Ticket Reporting and Compliance Monitoring Program. E-ticket software is provided free to registered fish buyers in all here states and can capture data for any of the 27 West Coast tickets. A web portal was developed to simplify creation of reporting organizations and provide download access to software, updated and submitted tickets. In addition, software was developed to simplify the installation process and automate the process of submitting the data. The submission updates shifted data access by email to a direct web-reporting process.

This application has been in use since 2007 when it was adopted by the National Marine Fisheries Service as the official landing records for the whiting fishery. With the introduction of the Catch Shares program in 2011, Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC) electronic tickets were identified as the official record for all catch share landings.

In 2012 Oregon adopted the PSMFC electronic fish ticket as the official record for all its different fish tickets. Oregon dealers who submit tickets electronically are no longer required to submit paper copies of these tickets. This program has been fairly successful in use. 23% of the fish tickets, representing 70% of the landed pounds are captured electronically in Oregon.

Washington is next, adopting the electronic ticket for one of its six ticket types. In 2012, electronic tickets accounted for less than 1% of the total number of tickets submitted but captured almost 19% of the pounds landed.

With respect to the Compliance Monitoring program, an electronic data capture application was developed to capture the data from the monitors and submit it to PSMFC.

This program has been in place since the beginning of the West Coast Catch Shares program.

Second – Electronic Log Books:

On the West Coast, Log Books are a state requirement and each state has its own set of log books. The exception is the Trawl logbooks which is a single logbook adopted by all three states.

In 2008, PSMFC developed an electronic log book at the request of the trawl fleet.

Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission is considering adopting one of two electronic logbooks currently in use, one developed in Alaska, the other in the Northeast. PSMFC has a grant to adapt the Northeast logbook for use with the highly migratory fleet fishing primarily out of the Southwest.

We believe electronic log books will be a tool in the future especially in IFQ Fisheries. For this to be effective it will require a Federal Log Book program by regulation.

Third – Electronic Monitoring – i.e. Cameras

Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission has been very involved in developing an Electronic Monitoring Compliance Monitoring Program for the West Coast and Alaska. This program does not replace the current 20% biological sampling program that has existed on the West Coast for some time. The focus is on compliance that is accounting for all the fish that are caught and those that are discarded.

In 2013, we will have cameras on 7 fixed gear boats, 2 whiting boats and 13 trawlers.

Goals:

The goals of the projects are simple. First, we want to first maintain the integrity of the existing system that gathers biological data, second we want to save some money for the fishermen and management, third, we want to insure the confidence of the landing and discard data.

Fourth, we want to integrate with electronic logbooks and,

Fifth, we want to look for opportunities to add to stock assessment interaction.

We have looked closely at the Canadian system and it works. Basically, it compares camera footage to the skipper's log book. Any differences are the basis for further investigation and possible enforcement action.

We are currently comparing observed data to camera images to insure we are confident in accounting for catch and discards.

In order for us to move to cameras the Pacific and North Pacific Councils and the National Marine Fisheries Service have to be confident that cameras can work.

Fishermen may have to change how they fish.

We will have to work out definitions, i.e. “what is a discard”. We have to work out enforcement issues, i.e., “what happens if someone puts a bucket over the camera”, and we have to work out cost issues i.e., “if you carry a camera instead of an observer, how much will that cost the fisherman”.

We have had many discussions with the fleet, with enforcement, and with the scientists and the bottom line is that these are show stoppers.

Concerning amendments to the Act that could provide better data collection activities, I do not have any specific recommendations.

I believe the Act provides the framework that can result in better data collection.

Our experience has been that better data collection is usually related to better funding.

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