

**Coordinating Council Facilitated Session
Executive Summary
August 15, 2005
Radisson, Old Town Alexandria, Virginia**

Attendees:

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Committee members not in attendance: Douglas Austin (PA F&B), David Cupka (SC DNR), Dan Furlong (MAFMC), Paul Howard (NEFMC), Howard King (MD DNR), Gil McRae (FL FWCC), Ira Palmer (DC F&W)

Staff: Shannon Bettridge, Abbey Compton, Maury Osborn, and Geoff White

A. EXPECTATIONS FOR THE FACILITATED SESSION

- ACCSP's Role in Fisheries Management
 - Where does the ACCSP fit within the context of the ASMFC and ISMFP programs? And federal partnerships.
 - Where do the federal programs fit in?
- Commitment/Participation
 - There are five states who still are not at the meeting, concerned about their commitment. Some of the states are receiving considerable sums of money.
 - Ownership needs to be clarified. Important to develop and establish commitment to the program. Always looking at programs as if someone else owns it, but is it our program?
 - Find out if process leads to Partner involvement. What level of buy-in is there? How should we improve the process to improve buy-in?
 - Are Partners following through in data collection? Are they sticking to the standards?
- Return on Investment?
 - How has the ACCSP contributed to management of fish stocks? This is the key to future funding.
 - Are we providing managers the information that is helping them make sound management decisions and helping the constituent groups to better understand those decisions?
 - Who is using the ACCSP?
 - Perception of use, data needs arise that should be satisfied by the ACCSP. How do stock assessment people feel we are meeting their needs? What else do they want?
 - What is working well? Can we claim success in some areas?
- ACCSP Strategies and Practices
 - Are we meeting the goals? If not, why not?
 - Do we have the right strategy?
 - Are we being true to ACCSP documents and principals in terms of Partners commitments?
 - Need to review goals, as well as process, funding and governance.

B. SUCCESSES - When you reflect over 10-year ACCSP term, what accomplishments stand out? Where can we claim success?

- Standards and Infrastructure
 - Creation of complete coast-wide standards for fishery dependent data collection program needed for management. Set the stage so Partners know what is expected.
 - Have a basis to evaluate Partners implementation of new programs.
 - Standard approaches have eliminated overlap in data collection.

- Standard definitions help prevent reinventing the wheel.
 - Established infrastructure to go forward and decided exactly what the priorities are.
 - First five years were spent building a better business model. Next 5 years spent on implementation of centralized data warehouse and web access.
 - Built excellent staff.
- Funding
 - Obtained major funding for a new program in tough funding times.
 - Provided a significant amount of funding to get some states started in this process, recognizing some states had virtually no programs ten years ago.
 - Implementation Plan – Know what resources will be needed. The plan provides coordination and prioritization of jobs
- Improved Data
 - SAFIS – Speeding up NE implementation
 - Developed trip level catch and effort reporting up and down the Atlantic seaboard where it never existed before.
 - Filling in data gaps in the SE and being initiated in NE where they did not exist at state level.
 - Establishing the new For-Hire Survey was a major improvement in statistics for that sector.
 - Data Warehouse gradually getting populated – soon at critical mass.
 - Improvements in timeliness and availability of data for management decision.
- Collaboration
 - Providing forum for Partners to discuss issues and priorities.
 - Forum for communication at operational level.
 - Played nice without fighting. Strong collaborative effort.
 - Implementing the new standard approach for for-hire fisheries was a significant improvement. Without the cooperation of all partners, that wouldn't have been possible.

C. WHERE ARE AREAS WE NEED TO IMPROVE?

In the context of ACCSP mission, vision, and goals, where have we fallen short? What have we not accomplished? What issues must be addressed? What needs to be addressed now?

Business Model

- There is no real authority to make implementation happen. Lots of coordination, but once you leave the meeting, everyone is on their own. No central authority to make change happen.
- Do we have an adequate governance mechanism? Cannot respond quickly to the actual environment to address core and evolving needs.

- Goal 2, if we find something wrong with our product, can we fix it? Not right now, getting negative reaction from the public.
- Need to look at staff organization structure and how it relates to the ASMFC.
- Don't think we've been successful at focusing strategically on the priorities to address the Interstate Fishery Management Plan needs.
- Current business model has brought us a long way towards establishing mission, but goal 1 is where we seem to have a concern. Goal 1 is really about having an important fish with an upcoming stock assessment, but we are always two years behind that ball and often the data are weak. This results in heavy administrative costs. Is this ACCSP's fault?

Customer Perceptions

- There are different customers and priorities, stakeholders, industry, public. Who is the most dissatisfied?
 - Managers and fishermen are the users who do not have 1 stop shopping – so scientific fishermen and public do not look at the same data. May be because we are not fully implemented.
 - Is data user-friendly to user-groups? If users are frustrated by non-smooth process, they will abandon. How are we surveying those groups to see if we are user friendly?
 - Have we designed the program to meet their needs? Try to overdrive management with data that does not exist. Need to be honest about what data we can support. Cannot always deal with public. When they hate the regulations, they blame the data.
- Some think we are disconnected from the science community. Do not have 1-stop shopping from the data warehouse. In some cases, states have 10 years of data, but cannot get easy access to that.
 - Metadata are also critical to have. What kind of lengths were collected, etc.
 - How do we coordinate data collection programs with stock assessment? There is more disbelief on biological samples than landings data.
- What does full implementation mean?
 - Look at the mechanisms of plan. Full implementation means all processes in program design have been implemented. All partners monitoring all aspects and data are available in warehouse.
 - There may be a problem with customer perception. Seems the goal is to implement across all modules. Need to have successes along the way. We should have an objective analysis of what we generated as expectations and try to calibrate. Should try to “under-promise and over-deliver.” What are we doing to create and manage expectations by segment?
 - Trying to please everyone at once. Maybe satisfy one set of customers. For example catch and effort does not satisfy those who want biological data.
 - Do we want to look at that whole issue and need to reexamine our priorities overall? Issue again is to validate the strategy of doing all, or doing some more quantifiable accomplishments and start checking the boxes. Look for low hanging fruit.

- There is a shortfall on all 4 goals. In doldrums – First had high energy to develop standards, not now at establishment – in dry spot between development and usefulness. Establishment will not happen overnight. Need to communicate that better, or program could be in jeopardy in terms of false hopes.
- We are not three or four years down the road where we have a database with a series of years in it that stock assessment scientists begin to draw on. They usually say they need ten years, fifteen to twenty years before they really make use. We need to communicate better that there will be some time before stock assessment scientists will be able to use ACCSP routinely.
- It is very likely that we will never have happy customers. Always dealing with weak information and variable advice, and then have to set allocations. We do not want to create illusion that we will always have happy customers.
- Need to have an educational program. Cannot always expect satisfaction. Do we have a way to get the word out?
- Are we where we need to be with training people to use the system? How do we handle turnover and training of new staff on the data warehouse?
- MRFSS is still an issue.
 - What does the public really want? Have we done that work? Do not want to keep a static view of needs.
 - NMFS is having NRC study the recreational monitoring programs. They will be doing that analysis.
 - There is no one MRFSS line item, its funding is cobbled together.
 - Use of the MRFSS and the newly implemented for-hire survey data as standard, still has lots of controversy, generates high level of distress and disbelief among public. We have not increased public confidence in MRFSS and other programs. How to get beyond that? Management boards also contribute to lack of confidence.
- Need Operations to work with low enforcement to deal with compliance standards. Assure those reporting data that we are doing what we can to assure level playing field.
- There is a perception that we have not involved very small dealers and fisherman dealers. In implementing SAFIS.

Program Content

- Data for diadromous species, in particular, are incompletely collected due to insufficient geographic coverage or interstate split jurisdictions.
- ACCSP funded increases to MRFS in NE, what will be done for the mid-Atlantic?
- The ACCSP Vision and Goal 1 says ACCSP will be the source of fishery statistics and will produce complete and timely statistics. Evidence from stock assessments is that we do not see that yet.
 - There are some expectations that are out of sync with goals. Some things we can do, some things we cannot do yet.
 - Successes are partial to some extent. How far have we gone to implement standards? How has \$20M played into management? – have we gotten full value?

- Short on Goal 3 – Most northeast data collection programs are not seen as having any connection to an ACCSP. VTR requirements from fishery management plans are implemented by the Service; in some cases being extended by the states into other fisheries; in some cases, not. The Northeast Observer Program has no connection yet to the at-sea sampling module of ACCSP. If ACCSP disappeared tomorrow, all those programs would stay, and what does that mean to ACCSP? What should ACCSP be bringing to those statistics programs and others that enhances them and enhances support for them across the board?
- See a disconnect between the needs of the catch and biological information and the requirements of the fishery management plans. We are not meeting biological sampling targets. If we do meet them, we do not have the capacity to process them.
- Need to develop new strategies to get at 1) Compliance, 2) At sea observers, and 3) Biological sampling. Discard/protected species and biological sampling modules are linked well, but not being collected to make a difference yet.
- There's outright non-compliance, and then there's a lot of mis-compliance that are creating problems for us (late reports, incomplete reports and made-up reports. A lobstermen says they don't accept any of the data because he knows they're all lying. We haven't really strategically addressed that.
- Need to revisit implementation of data collection versus data integration.
- Are there some mechanical things we should do? If we have FMP for species that have specific needs for biological sampling, they should be represented in targets. There should be feedback to the boards. Same with bycatch.
 - Why not identify money for these priorities? Have identified needs for observers for specific species. State have to do it? How? Submit proposals? ISMFP coordinators should be able to provide those priorities for funding.
 - Centers do have list of out-year stock assessments. Gather list of needs. Incorporate into biological and bycatch targets. More coordination is needed.
- When will we have enough? ACCSP is supposed to have its own identity, yet line item is not identified as ACCSP. May cause difficulties with Congress.
- As we talk about solutions, hope we do not go towards requiring even more from industry.

Governance

- Need better implementation by all Partners and improved buying in and support of the individual partners to the program.
- Operations Committee has quite a lot of input into this process. Also wanted ACCSP to be separate program, but it set up oddball structure, and thinks it is worth revisiting.
- Do we have the ability to look at things, see if they are going well and be able to change things? Operations Committee puts in a lot of time and then give it to the

Council – 2 times a year, 4 hours a time. Big gap. ASMFC has more of a policy vetting in their process.

- Central authority – Very intricate processes and responsibilities involved in creating the SAFIS complex. Once we agreed to priority, then we go back to Partner, need more central management. Saw difficulties with dealer reporting, now we see dealer reporting being even more complicated. The group would meet and agree on principals, then it dispersed the interpretation changed.
 - Are people being empowered to do things who did not have power to make them stick? That level of group should have representation across agencies.
 - Group of tech, mid to senior managers agree to timetable collectively, but individuals cannot make it happen at home, for a variety of reasons. Want to implement a compulsory program, but some Partners cannot do that, or it takes a while. An example is New York. They are not authorized to compel permit holders to carry observers.
 - All the partners have different ideas of SAFIS evolvement. Was a problem of policy execution. Started as RI, then NMFS need went ahead of policy. Tried to adopt with unreasonable timetable. Policy people – Never sat down and said we want to elect dealer reporting by such and such a date.
 - Did not mean as implied criticism – Would not be where we are without ACCSP, but could use a czar for coordination. How to make all technology pieces fit into one can project management?
 - If SAFIS is an important policy tool should have ACCSP in charge to take care of planning and timetable. Org/Structure – Form follows function. What roles support the mission? Depends on 5-year strategies and priorities.
- Look at Operations Committee and Coordinating Council and how staff operates. Are the right pieces in place to operative as aggressively as we can? At Council meetings in the past, the amount of information is voluminous. Can we use the Operations Committee as a filter?
 - Executive Committee – Has some general direction, group has potential, need to reexamine their role and clearly articulate their duties.
 - Make sure projects being selected are in line with priorities. Instead of whole Coordinating Council, have a smaller advisory board.
 - Supports smaller bodies as an offshoot of the Coordinating Council. Evaluate the current staff resources to get the job done.

Funding/ Project Selection

- Have limited resources with a list of needs that exceeds resources. Need funds to implement programs. Not successful in getting an increase, which is needed (Have 2-3 million dollars, need 8 million dollars).
 - To some extent, funding will spill from priority setting. Need to know where we want to go in next 5-10 years. Also, are we start-up or maintenance? Then decide how to go about funding – really explain why this is important, several year commitment.
 - Need buy-in from a key legislator. Need to tell them what problem will go away as a result of this? Constituents need to communicate.

- Under-funding is not just an ACCSP issue, but exists for all aspects of fishery management. For a long time, but now to a level we cannot do responsive management. See our role increasing in terms of dealing with environmental issues – gas terminals, wind farms. Go after more money, but as a larger initiative on a national level.
- Efforts for funding need to be opportunistic, tied to ocean stuff, important for us to respond to ocean issues – 1st priority to support existing infrastructure instead of sexier issues. Opportunities exist for states to speak to Congress.
- Break down funding to: User pay, state pay, and/or federal – may leave with empty pockets. We’ve been pushing for the 1st, the 2nd may help with the 3rd. When going to the Hill, statistics are not sexy. One thing you worry about is offsets to other programs.
- The Gulf is different. They do not have the ACFCMA role, only do statistics. They also have more influential representatives and senators. Need buy-in from key legislators.
- Another key is constituent support. 90% of increases are to items <5 million dollars. If we say will solve the problem, we had better be able to deliver.
- Council needs to be making decisions on priorities.
 - ACCSP had a Finance Committee. Under ASMFC. Chairs will work with the Admin Oversight Committee. Do not rely on one to two people to do all the work. We need to re-examine their role. Could be more effective than it has been. The Council has two large group meeting two times a year. Wants director to work with entities to bounce direction off a representative group of Council members,
 - The ASMFC has an Administrative oversight group. Address this to the Executive Committee before FY06 decision.
- Need to evaluate the current staff resources. Do we have enough to get the job done?
- There is the issue of start-up versus long-term operations and maintenance. The funding was clearly intended as “Start-up”, but budget climate has changed since 1999. It has changed by necessity, and is not a function of refusing to re-program from obscure priorities.
 - Also had in minds that Partners would look for other funds after start-up. Look at other models, look at Gulf model. They got money allocated for operations.
 - We are using fishery management funds to do statistics because that is all we have. Suggested model: Phase 1: Design and Implementation. We’re not quite done with it, but we see the light at the end of the tunnel. Phase 2: Lessen the role of design and implementation and you start to reprogram and look for new funds for the operational needs of the partners.
 - One point of view was that a useful first priority would have been to enable the partners to develop capability to do certain things. Then having provided that lift, allow them to leverage their limited resources more effectively and more efficiently.
 - The program should help the states build something or the partners build something and then run it thereafter. But, in reality, at least in some states, we are putting a lot more resources into these programs today than we were ten years ago, in addition to what we get through ACCSP. It’s become a much more

- expensive business that we're in. It's definitely start up and it's operations and maintenance. I think that we're all investing above and beyond what we used to.
- If we are operating inconsistent with our guiding documents and the sentiment around this table is that what we're doing is right, then I think we need to go back and look at our guiding documents to determine whether or not they need to be modified to reflect this longer-term strategy that everyone now seems to be comfortable with. If the longer-term strategy is to accept reality of lack of funding at state levels and provide these monies for operational expenses, we need to be up front and say that's okay, so that all the partners can take that into consideration when we're making our proposals each year, and so this council can make the decisions each year to fund the proposals.
 - Business has become more expensive. Who has not benefited? All but Delaware and PRFC (PRFC had system in place).
 - Everyone has benefited, but is it adequate? No. Relative to meeting needs funding has not kept pace. Need a 2-prong approach. If we continue as is, it will take 20 years. We will have to continue to make decisions with
 - inadequate resources and can not meet goals 1 and 2. Prong 2 – Some issues need immediate work – more short-term.
 - Did not envision that NMFS would require the amount of money that they have received. Whose responsibility is it to do what? For example, bycatch is a catch 22, have a plan in FMP, but no resources to do it. Think we need some start up and some maintenance.
 - One of the challenges is that some of the states are able to summon resources, while others do not. Reward the “haves” or help the “weaklings”? Why would the weak be motivated to put money in? What about the fisheries industry? Shouldn't they pay? Do not have an ACCSP policy on whether fisheries should pay.
 - Some states (North Carolina) have made an enormous investment. They may find it hard to continue support. What do we see as base versus above and beyond that due to ACCSP, and whose responsibilities need to address that? First put together funding model that looks at equity and base versus supplemental.
 - Consider a third business model. Franchise independent operations that have coordinated, established standards. Here, not all of the franchises are supplying the same cheeseburger. Will have lowest common denominator. Need to support these fundamental programs. Franchise also develops new products and field tests them. ACCSP needs to account for the totality.
 - By using the proposal-driven mechanism, we tend to focus on short-term projects. Those are guided by the overall priorities of ACCSP, but technical considerations often have been very influential in the decisions. I think perhaps we need to take a step back and look at the proposal process as a way to deal with the priorities in a more strategic fashion. Need to re-evaluate priorities as part of the strategic plan.