

**Western
Pacific
Regional
Fishery
Management
Council**

November 23, 2015

Alan Risenhoover
Director
NMFS Office of Sustainable Fisheries
NOAA Fisheries
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Re: DRAFT GUIDANCE FOR CONDUCTING REVIEWS OF CATCH SHARE PROGRAMS

Dear Mr. Risenhoover:

The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council appreciates the opportunity to comment on the draft NMFS guidance regarding catch share program (CSP) evaluation. The Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee convened a working group of SSC members and Council staff at its 122nd meeting (Honolulu, HI; October 13-14, 2015) to examine the draft guidance, and this group reviewed the draft document over the course of the following several weeks. Most important in the guidance is the recommendation for managers to incorporate a review plan, assessment, and necessary data collection into the design of new or modified CSPs. Councils and NMFS will need to be given the resources to do this adequately.

The Council notes there are currently no federal fishery CSPs in the Western Pacific Region and the only fishery that has the prerequisite conditions for a CSP is the Hawaii pelagic longline fishery. Both the Council and NMFS have recently engaged this fishery on the pros and cons of CSPs, as well as investigated fishermen's knowledge and attitudes towards such a program. However, it is too soon to know whether the fleet is interested in taking steps towards a CSP. The Council further notes that Western Pacific region has distinct and unique sociocultural attributes that challenge western notions of allocation. The draft seems to provide the necessary flexibility for reviews in this regard (e.g., encourages longitudinal comparability in the same fishery, but not necessarily across regions and fisheries) and acknowledges that socioeconomic, bio-resource allocation, and administrative conditions change over time.

General Comments

1. Like the Caribbean and perhaps elsewhere, NMFS has not historically provided adequate funding and resources to gather the socioeconomic and cultural data required for CSP evaluation in the western Pacific. Much of the information required to construct indicators of economic and social performance, as suggested in the various citations found in the draft guidance, either does not exist in the Western Pacific Region or is proprietary in nature. Access to proprietary information, enhanced reporting requirements

and periodic surveys will have to be designed into the CSP. This could have initial and ongoing costs.

2. An appropriate “analysis of the program’s biological, ecological/environmental, economic, social, and administrative effects” will entail collection and analysis of confidential government and private data, which will require nondisclosure agreements and reduced public scrutiny.
3. The draft policy is relatively silent on the issue and importance of a developed baseline. Without a baseline, what can the initial CSP review results be compared to?
4. The draft policy should strongly encourage independent and multidisciplinary evaluation teams that conduct the review in an integrated, interdisciplinary manner. The current draft lacks this specificity. Independence is important in program evaluation and could be partially achieved by specifying outside social and economic scientist members.
5. It is generally true that “less uncertainty exists in a retrospective analysis relative to a prospective analysis.” However, CSP reviews will almost certainly make use of subjective survey data or “ex-post proxy data.” Measures of uncertainty may be required, since such data sources reflect, rather than measure directly, socioeconomic and environmental impacts.
6. The Council appreciates that the draft guidance directs review teams to consider the important issue of displacement, where fishery participants that might have provided useful information have, for one reason or another, left the fishery. However, the draft treats displacement quite generally. Perhaps the final guidance can provide more specificity on dealing with displacement?
7. The document states the NEPA/amendment framework is the best template for a CSP evaluation document, primarily because Council and NMFS staff are familiar with it. The Council does not necessarily agree that familiarity is the best rationale for selecting a template and suggests examining the program evaluation literature for the most appropriate and effective evaluative template.
8. Please consider providing a process example that illustrates how feedback from participants is to be gathered and considered in the review.
9. The Council agrees that “net benefits to the nation” are not simply economic and that other benefits should be considered. We recommend more concrete guidance be provided to evaluation planners regarding consideration of such “non-economic benefits.”

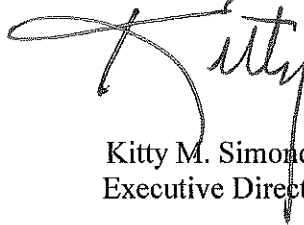
Specific Comments

1. The draft directs that pre-2007 CSP reviews should be initiated no later than year seven. Please clarify the rationale and justification for this time frame.
2. The document is confusing as to the five year review requirement. On page 2 it states that an earlier review can occur but in the next sentence seems to say it cannot.
3. Per the draft guidance, it appears that a second CSP review would be mandated just one year after the initial 5 year review if a Council conducts an FMP review in year 6. Please clarify.
4. A table would improve understanding of the timeline items and issues.
5. The draft guidance implies that NMFS is to take the lead to develop the review plan, but this should be clarified in the text.

6. The Council recommends a term other than “Interim Report” (4C), since the content and purpose of this report appear to differ from the “5/7 year review report.” As such, it is not really an “interim” report. It is more a tracking update.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft NMFS guidance regarding catch share program evaluation. The Council reiterates its encouragement to managers to review and evaluate programs such as catch shares in order to understand whether such programs are effectively addressing the issues that underpinned their adoption. We hope our input improves the draft document.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kitty", with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the left.

Kitty M. Simonds
Executive Director

cc: Michael Seki, Director, NMFS Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center
Charles Daxboeck, Chair, WPRFMC Scientific and Statistical Committee
Chris Oliver, Executive Director, North Pacific Fishery Management Council
Donald McIssac, Executive Director, Pacific Fishery Management Council
Douglas Gregory, Executive Director, Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council
Miguel Rolon, Executive Director, Caribbean Fishery Management Council
Bob Mahood, Executive Director, South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
Chris Moore, Executive Director, North Pacific Fishery Management Council
Tom Nies, Executive Director, New England Fishery Management Council
Craig Severance, Chair, WPRFMC Social Science Planning Committee
Justin Hospital, Socioeconomics Lead, NMFS Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center