

# **RSA Program Review**

## **Final Report**

*Discussion of next steps*

**June 2019 Council Meeting**  
**Portland, ME**



# Executive Committee Guidance or Terms of Reference

- RSA widely viewed as successful, but Council and NMFS agreed to conduct review as a matter of good governance.
- 24 individual questions
  1. Program Administration
  2. Program Structure
  3. Results
- Consensus not required – present all ideas.

# Review Panel Findings

*Finding 1. Research Set Aside programs performing well, and generally regarded as highly successful, especially the Scallop RSA program.*

*Finding 2. Concerns about several aspects of RSA (ten)*

*Finding 3. The role of RSA is unspecified.*

*Finding 4. Sea scallop surveys lack an overall design.*

*Finding 5. Implementing RSA programs generates a substantial administrative workload.*

*Finding 6. One or more of the current RSA programs may no longer be viable, but other species may be candidates for RSA programs in the future.*

# Review Panel Recommendations

*Recommendation 1. When it comes to making changes in NEFMC RSA programs, caution should be exercised not to “screw up a good thing.”*

- Success shouldn't be an excuse for complacency.
- Use caution to avoid making changes that would undermine what makes RSA successful.
- Changes should be designed collaboratively with stakeholders because their engagement is a major component of RSA success.

***Recommendation 2. Several ideas for improving RSA programs that emerged during this review should be considered by the NEFMC and NMFS.***

- These ideas were too numerous (over 30 specific ideas) and sometimes too detailed to be fully analyzed by the RSA review panel (see matrix).

1. Inadequacies in priority setting,
2. Lack of transparency in review processes,
3. Limited pool of RSA applicants,
4. Challenges of awards in “fish” instead of dollars,
5. Fairness in the way RSA compensation fishing awards used,
6. Timeliness of awards,
7. Lack of clarity in financial oversight,
8. Results not feeding back into management as well as they could be,
9. Access and ownership of RSA results,
10. Lack of collaboration with NMFS scientists.

*Recommendation 3. To clarify the role of RSA, the NEFMC should adopt a mission statement for RSA.*

- The RSA review panel does not have a consensus recommendation on the content of a mission statement.
- The panel identified some things the mission statement could include.
- The report also identifies possible roles RSA should not fulfill, such activities that are NMFS' traditional mission.

*Recommendation 4. A series of options for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of resource surveys for scallops should be considered.*

- Option 1. Improve the current approach, issue multi-year grants (up to 5 years).
- Option 2. Re-establishing the Survey AP to design surveys.
- Option 3. Using an RSA for a cooperative agreement (CA) to prepare a statistically rigorous survey design. The agreement should engage NMFS throughout.
- Option 4. Expand option 3 to include implementation of surveys.
- Option 5. Expand option 4 into a long term Cooperative Agreement for RSA Programs (CARSAP).

**No consensus on the options,  
and initial legal review raised potential concerns about  
some of these options**

***Recommendation 5. NMFS, in consultation with the Council, should evaluate and document RSA program administrative capacity to determine where support is sufficient and where it could or should be increased.***

Review the operational efficiency of RSA programs including:

- grant competition administration,
- compensation fishing and research permitting administration and oversight,
- pre and post award programmatic and fiscal oversight,
- access to project data and results, and
- outreach.



***Recommendation 6. The NEFMC should consider preparing an Omnibus FMP for Research Set Aside Programs that would be available for all fisheries under the jurisdiction of the Council.***

The Omnibus Plan could include:

- Codify the role of RSA and principles to guide use of RSA;
- Processes to be used for implementation (i.e. setting priorities, amount of RSA set-aside, funding vehicle, etc.); and
- A flexible procedure for deciding when and how much RSA should be available as needs and opportunities arise, for any FMP.

Preparation of an omnibus RSA FMP would assure broad, transparent participation in shaping the future of RSA in consideration of this report.

# Input from members of Scallop PDT

*Please see Scallop Share Day and Committee Meeting Materials for additional PDT Input (Tab 4).*

- Support for mission statement; but questions about what it might include/exclude
- Many opportunities to improve existing processes
  - Priority and price setting, communication, feedback loop
- Multiple survey technologies: valuable to process
- Support for longer grants – especially scallop surveys (up to 5 years)

# Input from members of Scallop AP

- **AP & Industry** – more hesitant to adopt mission statement, maybe clarify role, but important to maintain flexible and dynamic process.

## Suggestions for role of Scallop RSA:

- 1) funding surveys for biomass estimates and to inform sustainable fishing levels;
- 2) improving knowledge of issues that limit fishing (i.e. bycatch, protected resources, habitat); and
- 3) industry funded double-check of federal survey.

# Scallop PDT/AP Input

- **PDT/AP – Develop a cooperative agreement (CA) to prepare overall design for scallop surveys (Rec. 4.3)**

Support – to identify where and what kind of surveys are needed so awards can be specified each year to meet those needs. Some hope it could reduce indirect costs and be more efficient.

Opposition – concern about changing the program structure, need to tread lightly, could lose control and some CAs have not been successful. Suggestion to maybe explore this outside of RSA – concerns of allowing a competitive grant process design scallop survey - instead keep more in-house.

Details of this matter could be explored outside of RSA process.

# Scallop Committee Input

- Consensus Statement: Support further consideration of all 6 Program Review Recommendations.
- Cooperative agreements could be a tool to improve collaboration between interested parties and NMFS in key issues (i.e. surveys, wind).
- No clear direction yet in terms of which “fork in the road” makes the most sense right now.

# Herring PDT/AP/Cmte Input

- **PDT** – Full benefit of program not realized because full RSA never harvested, support consideration of increasing incentives that do not increase impacts on resource (i.e. RSA allowed on days out). Ability to carryover RSA or ability to bank up RSA may be useful to support more research.
- **AP** – Role from AI may be outdated, don't support reserving bycatch cap for RSA fishing, need flexibility to change rate for comp fishing, do not support Finding 6, expect value/incentives to improve with lower quotas, communication can always improve but some will never listen, support effort to increase incentives.

# Herring PDT/AP/Cmte Input

- **Cmte** – Focused on prioritizing which concerns to address first; most support for 2.4 (value of RSA). Also interest in 2.2 (review process), 2.3 (limited pool of applicants) 2.5 (fairness in RSA comp fishing), 2.8 (results feeding into management), and 2.9 (access to results).
- **Cmte** - Specifically mentioned support for online auction for comp fishing, multi-year grants, allowing fishing on days out, collect RSA funds from all species landed not just herring.
- **Cmte** - General comments to approach each program separately, they are all unique and have different strengths and weaknesses.
- *Note – The **Monkfish PDT/AP/Cmte** have not met on this subject yet (Sept. Council meeting).*

# Council Discussion Today

- 6 overall findings and over 50 recommendations.
- *What should the Council do next?*  
*What would an implementation plan look like?*
- Recommendations fall into two broad categories:
  - Stay the course with recommended program refinements within the confines of the same approach.
  - Begin a discussion to potentially explore a new approach.
- Which recommendations do you agree with?  
Which ones do you disagree with?  
Which ones should the Council/NMFS try to address first?  
(Matrix provided – *Doc. #5b, Tab I*)
- Correspondence (Dr. Stokesbury, *Doc. #5c, Tab I*)



# Council Discussion Today

## Implementation Plan for RSA Review Recommendations

1. Make specific recommendations **today**.
2. Task **Council staff** to develop potential implementation plan and prioritize recommendations.
3. Task the **RSA review panel** to develop potential implementation plan and prioritize recommendations.
4. Task the **Executive Committee** to develop potential implementation plan and prioritize recommendations.

*No matter which group identified, not likely available for September.  
Would require input (and in some cases approval) from NMFS/NEFSC.*