



New England Fishery Management Council

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Frank Blount, *Chairman* | Paul J. Howard, *Executive Director*

February 16, 2006

Ms. Patricia Kurkul
National Marine Fisheries Service
One Blackburn Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930

Dear Pat:

At its January/February Council meeting the New England Fishery Management Council approved by consensus a number of research priorities for 2006. These were based on recommendations forwarded by the Council's Research Steering Committee following a discussion of the information needs in the Northeast.

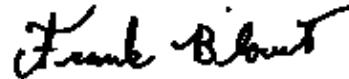
Based on their importance to management decision-making, the following were considered to be high priority projects for funding in 2006. The recommendations themselves are not listed in any order of priority.

1. A peer review of both the cod and yellowtail flounder industry-based survey (IBS) projects, given that they have been in operation for several years. The committee suggested that all east coast IBS surveys in general should be examined in a workshop format so that they might be better integrated into a coast-wide, coordinated effort.
2. Data analysis for the current cod and yellowtail flounder industry-based survey (IBS) and cod tagging programs, short-term bycatch-related projects that involve the study fleet program, fishing power experiments to address vessel calibration (if survey results are to be used to calculate indices of abundance) and other projects that might complement these long-term programs.
3. Along with the other industry-based survey projects, equal consideration of the ME-NH inshore groundfish survey as a funding priority. This recommendation was based on the high quality of the data collected in a unique area, size and age information obtained on of a range of species that is not available through other surveys and the belief that funding for this effort should not be dependent on a competitive grants process.
4. A critical review of all the recent conservation engineering projects (separator trawls, rope trawls, escape panels, sweepless nets, etc.). The suggestion was made to conduct this effort in a workshop format and include principal investigators and fishermen as participants.

5. The collection of economic and social information on the recreational sector of the groundfish fishery, particularly in relation to issues such as the impacts of potential requirements such as electronic monitoring and a national registration system for recreational fishermen.
6. Coastal pollution studies to better support ecosystem-based approaches to fisheries management.

We have made significant progress toward building partnerships through the hard work of the Regional Office and its staff, along with the Northeast Fisheries Science Center and the participation of the Research Steering Committee. As you know, the Council remains committed to supporting cooperative research and continuation of the long-term programs and appreciates the opportunity to provide input. Please feel free to contact the Council staff or me if you have any questions concerning the recommendations provided in this letter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Frank Blount". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Frank Blount
Chairman