



# Report In Brief

APRIL 5, 2013

## Background

We sent this survey to 292 fishery management council (FMC) members, member designees, and staff. Seventy nine percent of survey recipients (235 persons) responded.

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is responsible for the management and conservation of living marine resources within the statutorily prescribed areas in the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone: the area extending from 3 to 200 nautical miles offshore. NMFS provides scientific and policy leadership in the international arena and plays a key role in the management of living marine resources in coastal areas under state jurisdiction while implementing conservation and management actions aimed at sustaining long-term use and promoting the health of coastal and marine ecosystems. NMFS and FMCs work together to develop fisheries management strategies and rules for the commercial and recreational fishing industries.

In the fisheries management process, FMCs partner with NMFS, state agencies, and other federal agencies.

For the 5-year period from January 2010 to December 2014, NOAA awarded nearly \$100 million in grants and cooperative agreements to the FMCs.

## Why We Did This Review

The purpose of the survey was to obtain an FMC perspective on fishery regulatory requirements, rule-making, and improvements in fishery management.

This is our second report in response to a request from Congressmen Barney Frank and John F. Tierney to review fisheries management at NMFS and at the eight regional FMCs.

## NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

### Results of Commerce OIG's Online Survey of Fishery Management Council Members and Staff

OIG-13-022-1

## WHAT WE FOUND

Below are highlights of the survey responses by topic.

*Interactions with NMFS.* We asked FMC members and staff to describe the effectiveness and frequency of verbal and written communications with NMFS and fishery management planning activities and assessed whether respondents are satisfied with NOAA's replies to FMC inquiries on fisheries management and rulemaking. Forty-three percent rated NMFS written guidance as effective, and 6 percent rated it as ineffective. Other respondents either were neutral or said they did not know. In addition, 70 percent of survey participants said they were usually satisfied with responses they had received from NMFS.

*Regulatory requirements.* We solicited respondents' views on compliance with the requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Seventy-two percent of respondents rated the FMCs as effective, and 3 percent rated the FMCs as ineffective. Also, 53 percent rated their NMFS Regional Office and Science Center as effective, and 6 percent rated them as ineffective.

*Interactions with the fishing industry and nongovernmental organizations.* We asked respondents for their opinions on communication between the FMCs and advocacy groups. Sixty-eight percent of respondents said their region was effective at reaching out to the public in the development of fishery management actions, and 7 percent rated the region as ineffective.

*FMC operations and training.* We asked respondents to evaluate whether the training and guidance they receive are effective and prepare them to accomplish their work. Nineteen percent of FMC members rated the NMFS regulatory training program as effective, and 4 percent rated it as ineffective. When questioned about the effectiveness of training received after joining the FMC as a council or staff member, 29 percent indicated that training was effective, and 8 percent found training ineffective.

*Rules of conduct, conflict of interest, and ethics.* We asked respondents about compliance with the rules of conduct and whether practices relating to ethical behavior and detection of undisclosed potential conflicts of interest are effective. Forty-six percent of respondents said they were confident that current procedures detected and prevented conflicts of interest, and 14 percent were not confident. Similarly, 47 percent were confident that procedures detected and prevented code of conduct violations, and 8 percent were not confident.