



MARYLAND - VIRGINIA  
 "Potomac River Compact of 1958"

Potomac River Fisheries Commission

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**Potomac River Fisheries Commission  
 Final Performance Report  
 Grant # NA 16FG2692  
 3-ACA-133  
 Report Period: January 1, 2003 – June 30, 2003**

**June 23, 2003**

**STATEMENTS OF WORK:**

During this reporting period the following jobs have been completed or were in progress.

**Job 1 Marine Recreational Fishing Survey (MRFS) Add-On**

- a) Introduction – The Potomac River is managed as a separate entity for fishery matters, and as such must provide separate harvest estimates from either Maryland or Virginia for its recreational, charter and commercial fisheries. Data on charter and commercial fisheries is obtained from mandatory weekly harvest reports required by the Potomac River Fisheries Commission (PRFC). However, PRFC has no method of its own to collect recreational harvest data.

Funding under this job allows PRFC to negotiate an “add-on” to the National Marine Fisheries Services’ Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS). Data collected through this survey enables PRFC to effectively implement provisions of Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) fishery management plans.

- b) Purpose – Maryland, Virginia, PRFC, and ASMFC are using information gathered with the add-on to better estimate the recreational striped bass harvest within the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries, in addition to other species commonly found in the mid Atlantic estuaries.

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**Job 1** (continued)

- c) Approach – During 2002 National Marine Fisheries Service was negotiating for a new Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey contractor to conduct the phone calls for the National Marine Fisheries Service Marine Recreational fishing Statistics Survey. NuStats was contracted for the Potomac River add-on phone calls for Wave 4 (July - August 2002). During Wave 4 NuStats completed 1,400 calls in Virginia and 2,300 calls in Maryland. For Wave 5 (September - October 2002) and Wave 6 (November - December 2002) MACRO was contracted for the Potomac River add-on phone calls. During Wave 5 MACRO completed 2,700 calls in Virginia and 4,500 calls in Virginia. During Wave 6 MACRO completed 2,100 calls in Virginia and 1,800 calls in Maryland. During Wave 3 (May - June 2003) MACRO completed 1,400 calls in Virginia and 2,300 calls in Maryland.
- d) Results – At this time, we have not been provided with the specific data obtained from the add-on calls, however, both Maryland and Virginia are using the data in calculating the respective statewide information.

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**Job 2 ANALYSIS OF POTOMAC RIVER MRFSS DATA**

- a) Introduction – For several years, the Potomac River Fisheries Commission has been “adding - on” telephone calls as part of MRFSS. Questions unique to the Potomac were added to the standard list of questions so as to enable analysis of the data to estimate a Potomac River component of the Maryland and/or Virginia totals. Although the data have been collected, limitations on personnel, time and funding have prevented the analysis of the data. This job will contract with a firm capable of and experienced in working with MRFSS data sets.
- b) Purpose – The purpose is to analyze the data, develop a protocol for future years and to make recommendations on refinements to the number, timing and placement of the calls. Recommendations to improve the overall accuracy of the Potomac River’s estimated recreational catch and landings for most of the finfish species will also be developed.
- c) Approach – A request for proposals (RFP) will be developed with the assistance of NMFS staff that work with MRFSS data and are familiar with our needs. A copy to the contractor and/or letter of agreement will be submitted when completed. It is estimated that this particular job would be a one-time event because the protocol developed would enable us to “run the numbers” in future years.
- d) Results – We will continue this project next year. We require more time and data for this job. PRFC contracted with NuStats for the add-on to include Wave 4 of 2002. PRFC contracted with MACRO for Wave 5 and 6 of 2002 and for Wave 3 of 2003 year.

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**Job 3 YOUNG OF THE ELVER SURVEY**

- a) Introduction – The ASMFC American Eel FMP mandates each jurisdiction monitor the elver migrations onto the coast each spring at a minimum of two sites (later changes to one). This type of coordinated coast-wide monitoring is designed to begin building a coast-wide young-of-the-year database for eels.
- b) Purpose – The grant is to fund the mandated sampling for the Potomac River Fisheries Commission in a manner consistent with that of Maryland and Virginia so that a Potomac River young-of-year (Y-O-Y) index can be developed as a component of a Bay-wide and Coast-wide indices.
- c) Approach – An American eel Y-O-Y is mandated to '...characterize trends in annual recruitment of the young of the year eel over time [to produce a] qualitative appraisal of the annual recruitment of American eel to the U.S. Atlantic coast.' During the first year of the y-o-y elver survey, the PRFC contracted with Maryland Natural Resources (MdDNR) and Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) to develop agreed upon common protocols and strategies for capturing elvers to achieve these goals. The main stem of the Potomac, which is under the jurisdiction of the Potomac River Fisheries Commission, does not lend itself to the protocols and strategies of elver sampling being used throughout the coast.

The results from the first year survey indicated the virtual lack of any elvers on the Maryland shore of the Potomac. Based on experiences during the first year of the survey, and the over-all cost of the project; a decision was made to drop the sampling on the Maryland side of the river and concentrate the effort on the Virginia side of the Potomac river using two sites. This year PRFC contracted with Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) to conduct the survey of y-o-y elvers. VIMS selected sites within the Virginia tributaries of the Potomac for sampling. Final site selection was based on known areas of glass eel recruitment, accessibility and specific physical criteria that are demonstrated causes of glass eel concentration. Sites will be sampled a minimum of four days per week, starting on or around March 1<sup>st</sup>. Sampling will need to continue throughout the glass eel run (approximately June 1<sup>st</sup>). At each site a pigment sample of sixty (60) eels will be collected twice weekly. Lengths, weights, and pigment stage are to be collected from the samples.

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**Job 3** (continued)

- d) Results – As of the end of this reporting period, the actual fieldwork was completed at the end of May and the final report is included.

**Job 4** **PUBLIC EDUCATION OF FISHING REGULATIONS**

- a) Introduction – Effective fishery management is largely dependent on public knowledge and acceptance of the fishing regulations.
- b) Purpose – The purpose of this job is to defray the printing costs of regulatory changes in the commercial, charter and recreational seasons, creel and size limits.
- c) Approach – The fishery management plans approved and/or adopted by the ASMFC/MAFMC change the regulatory requirements for a number of important commercial and sport fishing species found in the Potomac. The rate and number of changes in these regulations make it necessary to publish notice to various industry segments several times each year.
- d) Results – During this reporting period, provisions of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's management plans for striped bass and summer flounder required this Commission to adopt new regulations pertaining to seasons, size and catch limits for those particular species. This required the printing of new commercial and recreational fishing information charts to notify the fishermen of the changes. This grant does not fund printing of the commercial size limit chart.

During this reporting period the regulations for gill net marking requirements and illustrations of the gill net marking requirements were printed for distribution to commercial fishing license holders. The illustrations and regulations for gill net marking requirement were also posted on the Potomac River Fisheries Commission website.

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**Job 5 PUBLIC INFORMATION WEBSITE**

- a) Introduction – Effective fishery management is largely dependent on public knowledge and acceptance of fishing regulations.
- b) Purpose – The purpose of this job is to timely communicate via a PRFC website the regulatory changes in the commercial, charter and recreational seasons, creel and size limits. The website will make fishing regulations available at all times.
- c) Approach – The fishery management plans approved and/or adopted by the ASMFC/MAFMC change the regulatory requirements for a number of important commercial and sport fishing species found in the Potomac.

The rate and number of changes in these regulations make it necessary to publish notice to various industry segments several times each year. A web based information system will assist in the effective notification of these changes and will improve public understanding of the current regulations.

- d) Results – We received three website design proposals. The website designer chosen has experience with fisheries and web based public information sites. The PI Computer Consulting Company completed the first generation website design. The design includes fishing regulations for both recreational and commercial interests. The website provides information twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. At this time we secured VIPnet (Virginia Information Providers Network) to host the website. The website was made available on the world wide web on May 31, 2003. The website is found on [www.prfc.state.va.us](http://www.prfc.state.va.us) for viewing.