



Date: June 19, 2015

To: RMP Technical Review Committee

From: Philip Trowbridge, RMP Manager

Re: Sport Fish Processing Error for 2014 Status and Trends Monitoring

In 2014, the RMP collected sport fish samples for Status and Trends monitoring. Sport fish samples are collected every five years. Unfortunately, there was an error in processing some of the samples. The study design called for White Croaker samples to be processed as “skin-off fillets”. However, one of the contract laboratories processed the samples as “whole fish composites”. This processing error made a big difference in the results and the utility of the data for tracking trends.

The laboratory alerted RMP staff to the error in a phone call. We thought that we had communicated that the samples should not be analyzed. However, the laboratory interpreted the conversation to mean that they should not charge for the compositing but should continue with analysis of the samples. The result was \$20,700k of PCB, PFCs, dioxin, selenium, and mercury analyses run on the wrong type of samples. An additional \$19,500 had been spent on collecting these fish. The RMP was not charged for compositing the fish (\$1,860) or for selenium analyses on 10 samples that had not yet been tested (\$1,650).

In addition to the financial cost, the mistake resulted in a significant data gap. Sport fish tissue is only monitored once every five years. The compositing error means there will be a 10-year span between comparable results for White Croaker on trends graphs for PCBs, PFCs, dioxin, selenium and mercury.

The good news is that White Croaker is a secondary indicator for trends in sport fish. The data for the primary indicator species (Shiner Surfperch) was collected and processed correctly. Therefore, the final report for the sport fish monitoring will contain information for tracking trends and making management decisions. Also, the whole fish results for White Croaker have

some value, especially the lipid normalized results, which may be comparable to some past results. Therefore, the data will be analyzed and included in the final report.

Corrective Actions

In response to this error, the RMP is instituting three procedural changes as corrective actions:

- All communications with field or laboratory subcontractors regarding non-conformances with the QAPP or a Sampling and Analysis Plan will either be in writing or be documented in writing.
- Sampling and Analysis Plans will be made as explicit as possible and signed off by the RMP Lead Scientist and Quality Assurance Officer.
- For high cost laboratory analyses, RMP staff will provide greater oversight and communication with contractors to ensure that sample collection and processing instructions are followed.