

Report of First Recreational Fishery Task Force Meeting, Western Pacific Fishery Council Offices, 1164 Bishop Street, Suite 1400, Honolulu, Hi 96813 8.30-5.00 pm, Tuesday, September 21, 1999

### 1. Introduction

Recreational Task Force Chairman Richard Shiroma opened the meeting at 8.45 am and welcomed participants to the first Recreational Fishery Task Force Meeting. He noted that there were several TF members who were fishermen who could not make it to the meeting and who had sent their apologies. It was hoped that future meetings would be graced by a larger turn out of recreational fishermen.

### 2. The need for recreational fisheries data

Sam Pooley gave a brief review of why recreational fishery data was necessary for a variety of reasons. Apart from the requirements under the Magnuson Act to report recreational data and estimate the impact of fishery regulations on the recreational sector. This type of information was also essential for determining the social and economic impacts of events such as oils spills, coastal construction, quota allocation and the value of the recreational sector. Pooley noted that the State promoted Hawaii as a center for ocean recreation yet is handicapped by not knowing the true value of recreational fishing activity. It was noted that in an allocation issue, that commercial catches were usually well documented but recreational catches were not, to the disadvantage of the recreational fishery sector.

The meeting discussed holes in the data record for catches using a simple box model presented by Pooley. Pooley recounted the NMFS Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistical Survey (MRFSS) and the reasons this was no longer conducted in Hawaii. It was noted that action at the political level would be need to source funds to return MRFSS to Hawaii.

The recreational fishermen in the TF noted the concern fishermen in general had with catch records being seized by the taxation authorities. This was due to the large number of recreational fishermen who would sell catches to augment income or to cover expenses of fishing. It was noted that fishery data in Japan can not bey law be made available to the tax authorities. Although there were some tax cases with the State of Hawaii, there have been more with Federal data.

There was also discussion about the commercial catch data reporting system run by HDAR under the aegis of Reggie Kokubun, who explained the plan to decouple catch/effort reporting from economic data, which would be provided eventually through dealer reports. There was some discussion on the time it was taking to get the dealer reporting system in place and the ongoing testing and evaluation of the commercial catch data forms. Fishermen were looking for improvements in the reporting system. It was explained how within two years as the dealer reporting system improved, fishermen would not be required to provide sales data and would report only catch and effort information.

There was also discussion of the need for recreational catch data with respect to allocation under the management commission being developed under the MHLC conference series.

## 3. Profile of recreational fishermen

Marcia Hamilton reported on the results of a project creel survey sampling small vessel fisheries at boat ramps around the State of Hawaii. The results of this project showed that it was possible to identify and profile recreational fishermen (no catch sales), expense fishermen (catch sales to cover costs, fishing primarily for pleasure), part-time fishermen (fishing to supplement income) and full-time fishermen (most income from fishing). The project concerned primarily pelagic small vessels fishermen. Hamilton showed that 24% of the fishermen surveyed did not sell any catch. The remainder sold all or part of their catches, facilitated by easy market access ands no bag limits. It was noted that the sample in Hamilton s study may be unrepresentative of the true population due to avidity bias (it was an unweighted intercept survey).

Catches and catch rates of recreational and expense fishermen were low but the size of the recreational and expense populations were large, with the inference that these sectors may generate substantial catch volumes. There was some discussion of the need to augment this study with additional information such as cultural, social and economic data. There was also discussion of seasonal influences, e.g. ahi season, when one is likely to encounter more recreational fishermen. There was also discussion about the complexities of sampling fishermen at the boat ramps, including not missing portions of the fishing population and looking for simple approaches to expanding sample data. Apart from economic data there was also a need to obtain information on participation and social equity.

Phone surveys were noted for being good to adjust creel survey data for avidity bias. From a biological perspective creel surveys were not thought to be very useful for tracking trends in fisheries, but good for collecting information on the catch itself, i.e. species composition and fish measurements.

### 4. Review of recreational fisheries studies in Hawaii over the past 20 years

Ed Glazier reported on his own work sampling from boat ramps in Hawaii for a PFRP project. As a Waianai resident he noted that it was unusual for fishermen there not to sell fish. His data showed a similar percent of pure recreational fishermen in samples, i.e. fishermen who did not sell fish. Glazier s work provided additional information on the characteristics of people fishing including gender, with few females fishing and with a majority of military fishermen not selling catch. There was also discussion on subsistence fishermen. Hamilton noted only two people had reported subsistence fishing in her survey. There was additional discussion about the fuzziness of subsistence fishing and the misguided perception from NMFS HQ that did not believe in the subsistence category.

Glazier reviewed his draft document that summarized the various surveys of recreational and small vessel fisheries in the State over the past 30 years. He noted a 1972 study that contacted almost 4000 people and was a very comprehensive phone and contact survey of recreational boat and shore line fishing. Sampling from recreational tournaments was also discussed and thought to be a good idea. Tournament sampling might also provide access to fishing club data. There was also discussion about collection of information during boat permit renewal. Referring to Glazier s report, it was asked if this included a

review of State archives. The report only included synopses of published documents, but could be expanded to include unpublished reports, especially those by the HDAR.

The meeting also discussed the problems of trust and credibility during sampling. NMFS and HDAR were instinctively distrusted by fishermen. There was also the need to ensure fishermen were aware of how the data would be used. For example, many fishermen thought that tagging studies were conducted to shut down fisheries. An education campaign was deemed to be essential before recommending any particular recreational sampling strategy. Some discussion was also devoted to whether the various surveys in Glazier s report could indeed be used to track trends over the past 30 years. This had not been planned, but a meta-data analysis could be conducted to establish the level of compatibility between surveys. The report methodologies should also be reviewed by the social scientists in the TF for methods that may be employed in any future surveys.

## 5. The impact of international management of pelagic fisheries in the Central-West Pacific on recreational fisheries

Paul Dalzell briefly explained the background to the management arrangement being developed for the tunas ans tuna like species in the Central West Pacific. He explained to the group the nature of the participants (fishing nations and coastal states), the regional organizations, their functions and political affiliations. Dalzell outlined the progress made to date through the five Multi-lateral High Level Conferences (MHLC) that had been convened between Dec. 1994 and Aug. 1999. Dalzell noted that the target for establishing the new management commission was June 2000.

The new commission would, within one year of its establishment, develop TACs for skipjack, yellowfin, bigeye and South Pacific albacore. This had implications for Hawaii with its large recreational fisheries component. Dalzell also noted that the new management commission would likely set TACs for a number of other species including marlins. Marlins were of major concern to the island coastal states, which view game fishing opportunities as integral to their push to develop tourism in the region.

The discussion which ensued included questions about the way allocations are developed on the East Coast, among and between commercial and recreational fisheries. Paul Dalzell stated he would follow up on this and hopefully have some answers for the next meeting of the TF. The possibility of recreational fisheries in Hawaii simply opting out of MHLC was not an option once an international treaty had been signed, although Dalzell explained that an opt out provision within the treaty was a pre requisite for the US to be a convention signatory. It was also noted that recreational fisheries in Hawaii are more similar to those in the Pacific Islands, rather than the East Coast, where there is far less retention of fish and more mark and release. Dalzell then summarized the MHLC Chairman s report and noted where progress had been made in the articles of association.

## 6. Management of recreational pelagic fisheries in the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico

Paul Dalzell gave a brief overview of state and federal regulations in the Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico and West Coast for recreational pelagic fisheries. He noted that of the 22 maritime states, 13 required some form of recreational license. A few states had no regulations concerning HMS species, while the remainder had a mix of regulations including size limits and bag limits for various HMS species. Some states also had regulations concerning catches of sharks and the landing of shark fins.

# 7. Logistics of recreational data collection a. who will collect, archive and analyze recreational data b. how will recreational data collection be financed c. overcoming resistance to reporting

Reggie Kokubun and Sam Pooley gave their perspectives on the logistics of recreational data collection and the impediments thereof. Kokubun outlined the resources his section in HDAR requires to process 2200-2500 catch repots per month. This included acknowledging receipt of forms, data checking and key punching data. These activities are supported both by State funds and money received under the auspices of WPacFIN. Kokubun noted that clients for this data include other government departments such as DBEDT, DBOR, the AG s office, NMFS, Council and UH.

Sam Pooley envisaged a cross linked series of surveys, some already accomplished or ongoing that would help define a portrait of the recreational fishery population. Phone surveys can be used to mitigate aviditity bias. To conduct an intercept survey at boat ramps in Hawaii may cost between \$700,000 to 1,000,000, and would require a much larger sample size than in Marcia Hamilton s PFRP project. Although the PFRP might not be a suitable source of funding for part of the funding for such a project, the Program had offered seed money in the past to kick start such a project. Alternatively, NMFS might e-initiate the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistical Survey (MRFSS) in Hawaii if funding were available.

One of the solutions to overcoming resistance to surveys by fishermen was to pick the right type of project personnel, particularly those interested in fishing and are sympathetic to people and fishermen. A rapid phone survey to get some initial numbers and the percentage of people who were purely recreational fishermen may be as low as \$25,000. It was noted that once fishermen had initially got over their distrust of an enumerator, they were often very voluble and readily volunteered information. It was also noted that port agents who enforce regulations are also very knowledgeable about the fishery activity within their area. Other problems such as the increase of unlisted telephone numbers were also discussed.

The question of who would collect the data was discussed. One solution was to emulate the North Pacific albacore fishermen and form a foundation to collect the information. Further questions about who would collect and archive the data, and the cost of supporting the data collection effort were also discussed. Strategies for data collection were also discussed and it was noted that data collection as

close to the point of catch, i.e. at the boat ramp is probably the most accurate, with people s memories becoming less reliable after the event.

There was discussion about the part time fisherman category and whether this group could be properly defined, with a view to obtaining exemptions from USCG regulations for commercial fishing vessels. This may be difficult due to problems with income assessment. It was noted that the USCG had been conducting ramp inspections in Hilo to ascertain if part-time commercial fishermen were in full compliance with safety regulations. Some form of compromise had been achieved in Guam between the USCG and the small vessel fishermen in terms of safety requirements for fishing.

The meeting then focused on what was really essential information from fishermen. Chief among these was catch and the size of the recreational fishery. Could really simple information on catches be solicited and expanded from the vessel database? Avidity bias was a problem but could be used to advantage since repeat surveys would contact the same keen individuals and my assist in establishing trends and historical patterns. Follow up phone surveys might be conducted on an annual or biannual basis. The meeting also considered the notion of voluntary data collection. Dalzell noted that there were some voluntary programs in other states which he had noticed during his compilation of regulations, and which he would follow up on. The possibility of voluntary data reporting by fishermen and dropping the forms off at landing sites was discussed. In general this approach did not appear to find much favor with the group. Experiences in the past had proved disappointing (e.g. FAD program reporting), and fishermen are likely to be more focused on washing up their gear and setting off for home at the end of a days fishing than on the need to fill in a data form/card.

The need to develop focus groups was emphasized to determine survey questions and pre-testing of survey forms was essential. Fishermen needed to be shown the benefits of a survey and care needed to be taken with using reasons such as MHLC in a too heavy handed approach. Catch was certainly an important target for any survey but so was the need to determine how much recreational fishermen value their being able to go fishing. The overarching goal of the recreational survey was to achieve equity for all sectors of the fisheries in Hawaii. The meeting then listed its recommendations arising from discussions. These were as follows:

### 8. Recommendations

TF 1. Council staff to prepare for the next Task Force meeting a summary of the methods used to allocate catches between recreational and commercial pelagic fisheries on the East Coast.

TF2 Recommend that Council seek sources of funding to conduct a Hawaii small boat phone or mail survey to estimate the percentage of vessels that catch Management Unit Species, but do not sell to obtain estimates of avidity, catch and motivation. TF3. Explore the possibility of a new part-time commercial fisherman category in Hawaii in connection with definition of part time category as an incentive for fishermen to report non-commercial portion of catch.

TF4 Explore the possibilities of conducting ongoing phone or mail recreational fishery surveys in conjunction with vessel registration

TF5 Develop an education program to impart the benefits of recreational reporting before any sampling/survey initiative is begun.

TF6 NMFS Honolulu Laboratory to obtain a better understanding of the methodologies employed by the USFWS recreational fishing and hunting survey in Hawaii.

**TF7.** Any new recreational fishery survey should involve focus groups and pre-testing in pocket areas of the State prior to implementation

TF8. Council staff and/or NMFS staff to obtain the source by zip code and gear type of the tax moneys that generate Dingell-Johnston and fishing restoration funds for Hawaii.

**T9.** Council will continue to try to get NMFS MFRSS survey and other sources of funds for recreational surveys.

T10. Council, NMFS, HDAR, UH and other agencies to ensure coordination of various surveys within the State to avoid duplication and overlap

# 9. Conclusion

Paul Dalzell noted that recreational fishermen were probably under-represented in the Council process, with most focus on commercial fishing. He suggested that the TF might also serve as a forum for discussion of other issues relating to recreational fishing and asked for the groups comments. There was consensus that the TF could indeed serve in a such a capacity. Dalzell read out some suggested topics forwarded by TF member Rick Gaffney, which could be placed on the agenda for the next meeting. These were as follows:

1) A review of the history of and current levels of support for recreational fishing in Hawaii by WESPAC, NMFS, DAR, DOBOR, DBEDT, JIMAR, etc.

2) Review of the Council's plans to analyze the economic impact of recreational fisheries in the western Pacific region, who will be involved, methodology which will be followed, conclusions from similar studies undertaken elsewhere and a timetable for the effort in our region.

3) Discussion of the current and possible future impacts of current and proposed FMPs on recreational fishing in Hawaii.

The date and duration of the next meeting were discussed. A half day meeting was favored now TF members had covered the materials in the first agenda. A meeting date of 16<sup>th</sup> November 1999 was chosen for TF 2. The meeting finished at 4.15 pm.

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#### State Fisheries & Wildlife WEB Pages

Alabama - Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources: Marine Resources Division www.dcnr.state.al.us/mr

Connecticut- Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection dep.state.ct.us

Delaware- Delaware Department of Environmental Protection and Environmental Control www.dnrec.state.de.us

Georgia- Georgia Department of Natural Reources: Coastal Resources Division www.dnr.state.ga.us/dnr/coastal

Florida- Department of Environmental Protection: Division of Marine Resources www.dep.state.fl.us/marine

Louisiana - Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries www.wlf.state.la.us

Maine- Maine Department of Marine Reources www.state.me.us/dmr

Maryland- Maryland Department of Natural Resources: Fisheries Service www.dnr.state.md.us/fisheries

Massachusetts- Massachustts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife www.state.ma.us/dfwele/dfw/dfw\_toc.htm

Mississippi- Mississippi Department of Marine Resources www2.datasync.com/dnr

New Hampshire- New Hampshire Fish and Game Department www.wildlife.state.nh.us

New Jersey- New Jersey Division of Fish, Game, and Wildlife www.state.nj.us/dep/fgw

New York- NYS Department of Environmental Conservation: Division of Fish Wildlife and Marine Resources www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dfwmr/index.html

North Carolina- North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries www.ncdmf.net

Rhode Island- Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management www.state.ri.us/dem

South Carolina - South Carolina Department of Natural Resources water.dnr.state.sc.us

Texas- Texas Parks and Wildlife Department www.tpwd.state.tx.us

Virginia- Virginia Marine Resources Commission www.state.va.us/mrc/homepage.htm

Alaska Department of Fish & Game www.state.ak.us/local/akpages/FISH.GAME/adfghome.htm

Washington Department of Fish & Game www.wa.gov/wdfw/

Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife http://www.dfw.state.or.us

California Department of Fish & Game http://www.californiafishandgame.com/