
**Report of Third Recreational Fishery Task Force Meeting,
Western Pacific Fishery Council Offices,
1164 Bishop Street, Suite 1400, Honolulu, HI 96813
8.30-1.00 pm, Wednesday, January 19 2000**

1. Introduction

Recreational Task Force Chairman , Richard Shiroma opened the meeting at 8.45 am. He asked the TF to review the minutes of the last meeting and suggest any comments or changes. Sam Pooley noted that a Pelagic Fisheries Research Project (PFRP) letter of intent suggested doing a project similar to the NMFS MRFSS, but for 25% of the cost associated with MRFSS. Pooley suggested that the TF track this proposal if successful.

2. Review of feasibility of a marine recreational license in Hawaii

Jo-Anne Kushima of the Hawaii Division of Aquatic Resources (HDAR) reviewed the HDAR initiative to develop a marine recreational fishing license. The previous Chairman of the Department of Land and Natural Resources had promised the Governor that a marine recreational license (MRL) would be developed. Several contractors were either engaged or identified under this initiative. One suggested approach was to impose a recreational license in an incremental manner, starting with charter vessels.

The HDAR staff brain-stormed various ideas and ways to get government support for a MRL. Also included in the feasibility review were the requirements for additional human, financial and material resources. These were submitted to Budget and Finance who disapproved of these additional demands on State resources. It was deemed foolish to start a new project without additional resources.

HDAR also contacted several other states, including inland states, to determine how they implemented their recreational license systems. It was concluded that in the absence of a MRL there were other ways to obtain recreational fishing data, through for example the creel surveys of the MHI/MRI project. The outputs from this project were small but expanding. There were also constraints, however, in getting personnel and office space.

The final assessment of the MRL was that the development and operational costs of a MRL would exceed income, unless all persons are licensed. Questions were also asked if the work load might not be too much for present conditions. It was also noted that some states have recreational licenses in place for environmental reasons, and could the same pretext be found for Hawaii. It was also important to realize that a MRL meant different things to the various branches of government. For the Governor, the MRL would be an additional income source. HDAR, however, looked on the MRL as a management and monitoring tool. Funds from licensing would go into a sportfishing fund, which was already established for the inception of a MRL. The meeting made some "quick and dirty" estimates of possible income, based on number of fishing vessels and fishermen, coming up with a range of \$250,000 - 500,000 per year. However, there would be problems in enforcing a license with the present level of resources in DOCARE.

Would the implementation of a license require additional legislation or could it be achieved through an administrative rule from HDAR? It appeared that a MRL would require legislation, as HDAR does not have the specific authority to issue an MRL, according to the State AG. However, if a MRL is introduced into legislation then HDAR would have to argue against it due to the lack of resources and funds to conduct the work. Open access to ocean resources was also a sensitive sovereignty issue associated with Hawaiian sovereignty. This would create problems establishing regulations if different Hawaiian sovereignty organizations had differing views on recreational licensing.

The TF then discussed whether a private contractor might be the way to proceed with a MRL. (The Governor was pushing Access Hawaii, and 3rd party private contractors). Issues such as differing charges for senior citizens, military were also discussed. It was noted that the State had an

obligation to maintain State resources through whatever means necessary. A request for proposals (RFP) could be developed to get biological and quantitative information on recreational fishing as a contract. Because the issue is one which is close to everyone in the State the approach might look at the various groups of people who are going to be impacted by an MRL. The more effort put into this type of exercise and in communicating clearly what was being planned would save problems later on with implementation.

If the State decided to pursue this course of action it might consult the TF to assist in designing a program and for advice on how to better manage recreational fisheries. People need to be convinced of why money should be spent on a MRL, what were the tangible benefits, i.e. some incentives to make the MRL more acceptable. With respect to the sovereignty issue some coastal areas could be set aside for Native Hawaiian preference. In summary, there must be a good understanding of the constraints and benefits of an MRL.

The TF also discussed the 'paranoia' among fishermen associated with surveys and how to get beyond that. This was discussed with respect to a state-wide creel survey which was the logical progression of the MHI/MRI project. Education was a key element but all players should know what is going to happen, then it will be easier to sell this to the public. Part of the education program is to 'socialize' the issue, i.e. through TV shows, radio and the Hawaii Fishing News. The idea is to get the public to not look at the idea of a recreational license as a restriction.

The TF then debated whether a creel survey was the answer to the data gap problem. Were there any other ongoing methods that could be used? It was noted that the MHI/MRI creel surveys were ongoing and expanding. Florida was cited as an example where 82 people are used full time to collect creel census data, with a 2.5 million dollar budget to support this activity. If a groundswell of acceptance could be generated then the momentum could perhaps be used to persuade legislators to provide additional funding and circumstances under which a recreational license could be introduced.

Mike Nelson briefly outlined the progress of the MHI/MRI creel surveys and the objective of going beyond shoreline fishing by July 2002 and including

trolling. This would include voluntary logbook systems, intercept surveys and possibly mail surveys. A key issue is who is going to conduct all this work and act as the repository and archive for the data. Bill Mossman circulated a proposal for a recreational boating license for vessels of \$14ft that did not hold commercial fishing or ocean tourism licenses/permits. The license would accommodate 'expense and subsistence' fishermen who occasionally sell portions of their catch to cover some of their operating expenses. This would be done by establishing a fish sales limit (as yet undetermined) beyond which a commercial fishing license would be required..

There followed a mixed discussion during which the question of a recommendation from the TF for HDAR to develop a MRL was discussed. The shortcomings of the Council's pelagics annual report were also noted, given that it did not report on charter vessel activity although this was perfectly feasible. **The TF recommended that the State of Hawaii put resources into studying the MRL issue.** The Council could support this through a dialog in Hawaii Fishing News and the other media, particularly now as the Council had a media and education specialist.

Sam Pooley drew analogies between the MRL issue and the limited entry program for the longline fishery that was implemented in the early 1990s. During that period persons with experience in limited entry programs were brought to Hawaii to provide input during public meetings with fishermen. In the same way fishery officers from California, Florida and Alaska could be brought to Hawaii to provide their perspectives on an MRL during public meetings. There would also be a need to bring in native and indigenous fishing rights experts as well. It was noted that in some parts of the US northwest, Native American tribes were working with the government with respect to recreational fishing access and licensing. There were, however, major differences between the situation in Hawaii and the Native American reservations on the mainland. In planning for a forum it would be essential to include representatives from the Hawaiian community.

This agenda item was wrapped up with a discussion of what documentation and projects were actually generated by HDAR's initial attempts to develop a MRL. There were no formal studies although Walter Ikehara noted that he had created a database on licensing in other states and this could be made available to the TF. A contract to market the idea of the MRL was

proposed and an individual to do this identified, but this never finally eventuated.

3. Recreational licensing in other States

Paul Dalzell showed an overhead which summarized which coastal states in the US had MRLs. Out of 22 coastal states 13 had MRLs, 8 did not. North Carolina did not have an MRL but had a special license for recreational fishermen wishing to use commercial gear for subsistence purposes.

4. PRFP recreational data project proposal

Sam Pooley covered three agenda items. He apologized that Ed Glazier was not able to present results from his study: *Economic and Social Aspects of Charter Fishing Patronage in Hawaii*.

He then outlined the project detailed in the letter of intent to the PFRP request for proposals. This was two part project to gather all the recreational fishery data collected in Hawaii in the past 50 years. This would include all the data archived by fishing clubs on tournaments and competitions. The project would develop two databases. One containing actual data and the other meta data, i.e. descriptions or catalogs of the various data sources. The project would require a full time individual to identify and collect the data and to enter it into a database. The project would also try to determine the utility of the data and encourage others to make use of it.

Discussion of the data project suggested that it could also identify the universe of fishing clubs. It could also include an educational component about the need to keep good data. It was noted that fishermen generally like to keep and provide good data. Trolling clubs tended to be more tournament oriented . This might also be an opportunity to assist by providing databases to the clubs for their records. WpacFIN may be able to do this through their website.

5. A study on the economic value of recreational fishermen similar to what was done on the whale cruises by NOAA--can it be done?

Sam Pooley suggested that the answer to this question was that it had already been accomplished through a number of various PFRP projects. He added that most people come to Hawaii not to go charter-fishing or whale watching, but these were activities that people chose to do while in Hawaii. Only 1.5% people coming to Hawaii go game fishing. The answer to inflating this volume may be better marketing of gamefishing through media such as websites. Pooley discussed the perceptions of value of charterfishing to overall cost of a vacation, and the value of a gamefish in the water, and hanging on a wharf. A shift in the perception from hanging fish on the wharf to mark and release was discussed.

6. Recreational fishermen's response to MHLC

Mike House reported on meeting he had convened at the Waikiki yacht club on MHLC and its implications for recreational fishermen. A total of 30 persons attended the meeting and more would likely have come but for the foul weather that night. The basic response to the development of this international management arrangement was absolute surprise and shock. It was thought that other fishing clubs would welcome people to go and speak about the MHLC process. The short-term message for the clubs was not to be nervous about catch data reporting.

7. The development of a briefing schedule for identified fishing clubs on the MHLC and potential impacts.

It was thought useful to prepare a briefing package for visits by TF members to fishing clubs and also for the captains briefings for fishing tournaments. Various TF members volunteered to form a special working group to develop a briefing package. Mike House offered his own documents used in his meeting, while the recent synopsis on recreational data needs used in Council public meetings throughout Hawaii in December and January. Paul Dalzell would contact TF volunteers about a suitable date for a meeting to develop the briefing package

8. A briefing on the enhanced dealer reporting system

Reggie Kokubun gave a briefing on the enhanced dealer reporting system. He stated that this was a three phase project. Phase 1 was to collect information from dealers already possessing computer facilities. The primary benefit is that the data quality control is largely conducted by the dealers. Phase 2 is to input all the written dealer reports, which amount to 225 per month. New staff had recently been acquired to do this data inputting. Phase 3 was to work with the high volume dealers who presently transcribed trip tickets onto dealer reports. To minimize this duplication HDAR would prefer to receive the trip tickets and develop entry routines the trip tickets so they can be sent directly to HDAR.

One immediate benefit from this system are that prior to 1999, and still ongoing, commercial fishermen had to report their fish sales. The objective is to have commercial fishermen report only catch and effort data, but a specific timeline for this objective is not yet available. Other benefits include the ability to cross-reference sales from fishers with purchase data from dealers which will assist HDAR to implement the new catch and effort forms.

Do part-time commercial fishing license holders need to fish from a commercial registered vessel?

Reggie Kokubun reported that HDAR is not concerned if commercial marine license is used in conjunction with a recreational fishing vessel. DBOR asks if a vessel is to be used for commercial or recreational uses at registration but do not require commercial registration per se for commercial fishing. Further commercial fishers are not required by HDAR to register their vessels with DBOR as commercial vessels in order to obtain a commercial marine license. Commercial fishing vessels have to have higher safety standards than recreational fishing vessels.

Reggie noted that DNLR was in the process of reviewing how the marine vessel license should be issued. In addition to issuing the commercial marine license to individual fishermen, HDAR is considering the option of issuing the license to the vessel owner in the form of a "vessel" commercial marine license. There were various implications with respect to licensing. For example, federal law contained rules on vessel crew nationality. Walter

Ikehara thought that the Coast Guard may be cracking down on the re-registering of commercial fishing vessels to recreational vessels to get around the safety requirements for commercial fishing. It was felt that safety gear should not be part of the licensing. There was a general consensus that the one fish sale/year = commercial fishing was a bad definition, and that the USCG was going to push more people into the 'recreational' fishing category.

The down side of new licensing system is the loss of data. Was there a way to document crew participation other than with a license. Reporting requirement may require the person reporting to include his own license number and those of all his crew for each trip. A review of licensing elsewhere might be useful, to see how they work and if they pass legal scrutiny. As was usual with these discussions, the meeting had drifted into the commercial fishing sector. However, aspects of commercial and recreational fishing differed. Perhaps the key to this issue was to define a recreational fisherman in Hawaii. Care was needed not to push recreational fishermen into commercial fishing , and not to drive commercial fishermen to recreational fishing.

Update on the bottom fish closed area concept---stock growth, amount of violators cited, etc...

Walter Ikehara made a brief report on the status of the nearshore closed areas, implemented to rebuild the bottomfish stocks in the MHI. Ikehara noted that bottomfish were seen during three eight hour submarine dives along the closed areas, but it was too soon to state authoritatively if the stocks were recovering.

Ikehara stated that he had tried to get information from DOCARE on the violations but was unsuccessful. He had heard of some citations for not having a BF number on the vessel hull, or failing to have a marine license. There was some anecdotal information that over the Xmas season many fishermen entered the closed areas on Penguin Bank.

Ikehara also updated the group on the BF registration program. Most bottomfishing vessels on the neighbor islands were commercial vessels. Only on Oahu were there large numbers of recreational bottomfish vessels.

Update on who does what to get the funding for the survey of recreational fishermen.

Paul Dalzell explained that the Council still was waiting for an answer from NMFS HQ concerning the national MRFSS survey. The Council would take this up again with Senator Inouye's office.

Other business/future agenda items

Mike House reported on a small survey he had conducted on fishing tournaments. This was available on his website (www.sportfishhawaii.com) and a hard copy would be included in the Council mailing of the TF3 minutes. House suggested that this could evolve into a good database. He cited a couple of key statistics. In 1999 there were 1500 vessels involved in gamefish tournaments in Hawaii, worth some \$1,000,000 in prize money.

Paul Dalzell noted that Rick Gaffney had suggested some possible agenda items:

1. Update on any plans for satellite tagging of pelagic game fish (esp. blue marlin) in WESTPAC waters.
2. Request for a budget analysis of what percent of the total budget the WESTPAC has spent on recreational fishing in the past 10 years
3. Request a detailed explanation of the Council's legally mandated commitments to recreational fishing (% of staff time, budget, effort, Council membership etc required by law) under the Magnuson Act.

Dalzell stated that he would report on the upcoming satellite tagging workshop to be held in the second week of February 2000 at UH, which should answer question 1. For questions 2 & 3 he would try to put something together for the next TF meeting.

The next TF meeting was scheduled for Wednesday March 15. The TF working group was scheduled to meet on Wednesday Feb 2, but this was later changed to Thursday Feb 3 to avoid a clash with another Council advisory body.

In attendance at the meeting were:

Task Force Members: Richard Shiroma, Bill Mossman, Mike House, Craig Severance, Gary Eldridge, Mike Nelson, Ed Ebisui.

Council/NMFS/HDAR/USCG: Marcia Hamilton, Roy Morioka, Sam Pooley, Reggie Kokubun Walter Ikehara, Jo-Anne Kushima, Dave Hamm, Paul Dalzell