

**Fourth Recreational Fisheries Data Task Force Meeting,  
Western Pacific Fishery Council Offices,  
1164 Bishop Street, Suite 1400, Honolulu, HI 96813  
8.30-5.00 pm, Wednesday, March 22 2000**

## **1. Introduction**

Richard Shiroma opened the meeting at 8.45 am.

## **2. Economic and Social Aspects of Charter Fishing Patronage in Hawaii**

Ed Glazier presented an interim report on charter vessel patronage in Hawaii. Ed explained the methodology of the project which involved distribution of 1700 questionnaires to charter vessel skippers, who then asked patrons to complete and return them to the NMFS Honolulu Laboratory. In pre-test trials the project had achieved a 60 % return rate. For the actual project the return rate at present was about 14%. This was thought typical of this type of survey but Glazier thought it may improve during the peak holiday season later in the year.

Glazier presented profile information on the charter patrons, ie race, gender, income bracket etc. There were several similarities of the profiles to an earlier survey of this type conducted by NMFS in the 1980s. According to the survey, most people made the trip to Hawaii for a vacation regardless of the fishing opportunities. Catching fish was, however, high on the reasons for taking a charter trip although collateral aspects of the trip such as crew friendliness and comfort were also important.

The presentation stimulated a lively discussion during which questions were asked about the sampling regime and the type of outputs that the final report would contain. There were suggestions from the TF to draft a letter to the appropriate state agencies noting that the TF had reviewed the preliminary results of the project and noting the value of this work. TF members connected with the recreational fishing industry also suggested that they could assist in getting charter skippers to distribute surveys to patrons. The TF looked forward to reviewing the final project report when completed

### **3. Chairmans report on SSC and Council meetings**

TF Chairman Richard Shiroma stated that he and AP Chair Bill Mossman had reported to the Council the various recommendations generated to date by the TF. These had been well received by the Council, which had encouraged the continued efforts of the TF.

### **4. Report on Task Force Working Group**

Paul Dalzell reported on the Working Group meeting that was held on February 9, 2000, that was concerned primarily with the need to have an outreach program dedicated initially to going to fishing clubs and tournaments to spread the word about the TF, MHLC and the need for recreational data. Dalzell noted that the WG felt it was important to emphasize the positive role of the TF in alerting the clubs to possible allocation and the need for data to ensure they continue to get as big a slice of the pie as possible. An important initial task was to identify as many fishing clubs and yacht clubs as possible and the principle contacts therein. It was important to stress to recreational fishermen that they have a voice and in interactional management of pelagic fish stocks it was essential that they have their say if not always having things their way.

Dalzell noted that the WG had discussed the materials for presentations including a video on MHLC that could be shown during a TF presentation. Other important ancillary details such as refreshments were also noted. Dalzell stated that the WG recognized that clubs did not constitute the entire recreational fishery community in Hawaii, but there may be a

multiplier effect by using the clubs as a springboard to reach the other non-members.

Dalzell noted that Bill Mossman had asked Carol Shé from Department of Boating and Ocean Recreation (DBOR) to attend the WG meeting. Shé's had reported to the group that there were some 16,000 vessels registered with DBOR, and that the registration differentiated pleasure craft from commercial fishing craft. Dalzell reported how the WG had assessed the idea of using the DBOR database to identify the recreational fishing universe. There was a general discussion on any initiative to get fishermen to report must show the benefits for them of catch reporting..

Dalzell then summarized Bill Mossman's idea of changing the recreational/commercial fishing paradigm, by using a third category, rec fishermen who sell catch, with some form of threshold, perhaps \$4000 to distinguish them from true commercial fishermen. Recreational fishermen could maintain their status and not have to buy the additional \$5000-10,000 in equipment required by the USCG for a commercial fishing vessel. Dalzell noted that conversations with colleagues in DLNR suggested that there would be stiff resistance to this type of change since apart from other considerations, it would have to involve other government agencies.

There was also discussion about technical solutions to reporting catch, including a phone in data-base with vocal prompting, and a web site. Calls could be based on the recreational license number allied to a PIN to ensure privacy, so that vessels could not call in catches on licenses other than their own.

Dalzell noted that the WG had produced a task list, some of which was supposed to be accomplished by the TF4 meeting, but which clearly had not. The tasks were as follows

1. Compile a list of fishing clubs and yacht clubs
2. Develop handouts in the form of a brochure and investigate possibilities of a video on MHLC
3. Write to fishing clubs and yacht clubs introducing the TF and seeking approval to address club at the most appropriate time and venue.

4. Develop matrix of visits to clubs based on response to 3.
5. Generate additional publicity for visits once schedule is established.
6. Include some provisions for “refreshments” in outreach budget
7. Conduct some background research into interactive telephone databases
8. Place boat registration-recreational sales threshold and phone database on TF4 agenda. Report to TF4 on outreach program progress.

Dalzell noted that none of these tasks had been completed or started prior to TF4

## **5. TF Discussion, where do we go from here?**

The meeting then discussed future action, noting that essentially the group had passed an initial milestone with its general list of recommendations to the Council. The overarching need was prior to the advent of the MHLC management commission was to have an up to date estimate of the recreational vessel catch of pelagic fishes for Hawaii.

The TF discussed a time line with a focus on mid-year 2001, assuming that a. the MHLC convention would be completed for signing at MHLC 7 in August 2000, and b. that the new Commission would generate TACs for the four tunas within 12 months of the establishment of the interim regime. It was noted, however, that the US may want all facts and figures pertaining to catches by April 2001, in preparation for August 2001. Given this as milestone, the TF needed to develop an outline of a potential sampling instrument, work out the cost and a time line for conducting the work in a timely manner.

Given the time and budget constraints some form of phone and mail survey would likely be identified as the preferred instrument for this work. Some cost figures were bandied about but it was thought possible to make a

strong case for an amount in the region of \$50-250K. It was noted too that the justification could be couched in terms of an 'emergency measure', where the MHLC convention is almost in place and yet a considerable portion of the state's fishing activity continues to go unreported. Further, without this type of rapid survey, NMFS and the Council are continuing to default on their obligations under the revised Magnuson Act to report catch trends in all fishing sectors including recreational fisheries.

There was also discussion by the TF concerning the short comings of surveys, particularly if they occurred over a period of especially high catch rates. The ahi season was quoted as a good example when many people would be fishing. The TF also discussed some empirical methods of generating total recreational catch based on published information and readily available data. It was suggested that average and potential maximum values could be generated by these methods to get a 'feel' for what a survey may eventually report. It was thought that there were in the region of 13,000 vessels in Hawaii out of the total registered 15,000 vessels that were used to catch fish. This did not include those vessels documented by the USCG. Even with commercial data there were examples of non-reporting and one estimate, based on personal observations suggested this may be as high as 20-40% of catches.

Time and money constraints meant that the survey design was critical to be as successful as possible. It was suggested that the TF form a working group comprising mainly those persons familiar with surveying convene and develop a package which can be included in a report to the Council on where to go from here. Again it was emphasized that approaches to NMFS for money should emphasize that this is an emergency and a response is needed immediately. It was felt that the Council should go straight to the top for funding, i.e. to Penny Dalton. Although funding had not been earmarked for the survey, the amount was thought to be small enough to be obtainable. Bureaucratic institutions were noted for hanging on to money initially then having to spend surplus funds rapidly before a new financial year. The bottom line for the TF was that they had carried developed the momentum for the survey but that the responsibility for making it an actuality rested squarely with the Council.

Carol She was asked if there would be any problems using the DBOR database to identify the sampling universe. Ms She thought that DBOR

would be favorably disposed to the idea. There was some discussion about the survey and need to receive Office of Management & Budget (OMB) approval, which all federal survey instruments must have. The TF discussed ways and means to overcome this obstacle. There was also discussion about the limits of the survey. Should it be totally inclusive of all management unit spp or only the four tunas, since they would be the focus of the first MHLC TAC. It was decided to be inclusive of all the main “flag” species to get the maximum out of the survey. The suggestion to include some socio-economic data in the survey provoked some discussion. There was some thought that DBOR data might adequately cover economic data. However, people are spending more money now to catch less fish, so there is a need to cover socio-economic factors and how much people are prepared to catch fish. These issues would be further discussed in the working group.

On funding, Walter Ikehara stated he would check about availability of any DJ funds as possible seed money. There was also the suggestion that individual TF members might independently try to make a recreational catch estimate based on existing data and bring this to the next TF meeting, and to look at the ways the estimates were computed and the range of values derived. This method is known as a ‘Delphi’ exercise. To sum up this part of the meeting the following tasks were to be undertaken:

1. A small working group would be assembled to develop a survey instrument, time line and probable cost. The group would comprise: Dave Hamm, Sam Pooley, Marcia Hamilton, Craig Severance, Walter Ikehara, Jo-Anne Kushima, with Paul Dalzell as staff coordinator.
2. The working group package would then be incorporated into a report to the Council which emphasized the need for this work as an emergency measure, noting the advent of MHLC and Magnuson responsibility shortfalls.
3. Funding possibilities would include checking availability of DJ funds through the State.

## **6. NMFS Recreational Fisheries Meeting June 2000**

Paul Dalzell stated that a party from Hawaii would be attending the NMFS meeting: Managing Marine Recreational Fisheries in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. He asked for suggestions from the group on what might be a good theme for any presentations on Hawaii's recreational fisheries, perhaps differences between here and the mainland. Subsequent comments received later suggested that the Hawaii delegation takes to this event is a positive picture of Hawaii's recreational fishery. For example, tag and release is at an all time high, blue marlin and other game fish numbers are strong, Hawaii has a sport fishing history and tradition dating back to at least 1914, its economics are significant to Hawaii's economy and the industry is an integral part of our tourist economy.

There was also further discussion on regulations of commercial versus recreational fishing in terms of vessels regulations. There were concerns from the additional hardware required on commercial vessels by the USCG have implications for fish tournaments in terms of the weight class of vessels. Further, these concerns were driving people out of commercial fishing, to fishing without a license from recreational craft. Apparently, USCG inspections are more frequent these days and are being more rigorous in following the rules for commercial fishing vessels. Disparities in the regulations were noted, for example a whale watching boat with 20 people on board was less regulated than a charter fishing vessel with 6 patrons.

There was also some discussion of the changing the definition of commercial fishing being dependant on the sale of one fish, and on USCG exemptions or equivalencies. It was thought that tackling the definition was a big task, due to the number of different government agencies involved. USCG equivalencies were usually given for specific regions rather than for whole areas such as the State of Hawaii

## **7. Electronic tagging symposium**

Paul Dalzell drew the meetings attention to the draft article on the recent symposium convened by the PFRP in Hawaii on electronic tagging of fishes. This meeting represented the state of the art in this field and the proceedings will be available later this year.

## **8. MHLC 6**

Paul Dalzell briefly noted that MHLC6 would be shortly convened next month (April). Dalzell stated that he thought this may be the 'make or break' meeting, i.e. whether MHLC7 would be the final meeting and signing of the convention. He promised to report on MHLC to the next TF meeting

## **9. Percent of WESPAC resources devoted to recreational fisheries**

Paul Dalzell noted the request of Rick Gaffney on how much time and effort the Council expended on recreational fisheries. Dalzell had responded by using Council agendas and minutes to get a "quick & dirty" estimate of this. It transpired that about 40% of Council staff time had been devoted to recreational fisheries. A similar percentage of PFRP projects also focused on recreational fishing or included recreational fishing in their studies. Subsequent discussion also noted whether the Magnuson Act dictated what percent of Council resources were devoted to recreational fishing. The Magnuson Act does not specify. Dalzell offered to make available an electronic file of the MSFCMA plus supporting documents to ease searching for answers to questions such as these

## **10. Other business**

The TF recognized that even with a survey in place there was a need to mount an outreach campaign to gain the trust and cooperation of fishing clubs and tournaments. TF members such as Rick Gaffney, Mike House, Jody Bright and Craig Severance noted their willingness to hello with outreach programs.

No Tf5 meeting was scheduled but another Working Group meeting will likely be called following MHLC6 to put together the "script" for visits to clubs etc. Paul Dalzell volunteered to draft a letter to the club and tournament presidents for review by the TF and to be circulated with these minutes.