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## **Scientists Discuss Ecosystem Risk Assessment for Fisheries in Hawaii and Other US Pacific Islands**

HONOLULU (29 February 2008) Members of the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), advisors to the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, and fish scientists and ecologists from the US Pacific islands concluded a three-day workshop on ecosystem risk assessment (ERA) for Western Pacific Region fisheries. This meeting was convened by the Council in response to the 2007 reauthorized Magnuson-Stevens Conservation and Management Act that requires regional fishery management councils to establish annual catch limits (ACLs) for all fisheries by 2011, or earlier if fisheries are overfished or subject to overfishing.

The ACL requires Councils to assess the range of species within their jurisdiction that are at most risk of being overfished and that should be a priority for ACL development. The workshop was chaired by Paul Dalzell, the Council's Senior Scientist, assisted by Dr. David Kirby, from the Secretariat of the Pacific Community's Ocean Fisheries Program based in Noumea, New Caledonia. Kirby is leading a project for the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission on risk assessment methodology for pelagic tuna fisheries.

Kirby reviewed methodologies used to develop risk assessments, including an Australian approach known as a Productivity-Susceptibility Analysis (PSA). This approach includes distinguishing targeted and non-target species caught and discarded, and the fate of those discards. He also reviewed a preliminary PSA analysis of fish species caught by both the deep and shallow segments of the Hawaii longline fishery.

The meeting participants discussed ways in which the PSA analysis could include better information on overlap of fish distribution in the water column with hooks suspended from a longline. Other factors such as night or day fishing, seasonality, reproductive behavior, and gender specific differences in fish growth and mortality were also discussed.

The second day of the meeting focused on nearshore reef and bottomfish. A methodology has yet to be developed for these species. While it was clear that there were many data gaps that would have to be addressed for reef and other nearshore fish, there was some guarded optimism that current fishery data monitoring programs may be collecting some of the information necessary to generate a risk assessment. Other aspects considered by the meeting included habitat impacts since many reef fish abundances is tied to the extent of healthy coral reef area. The meeting also considered the risk assessment process, which allows the consideration of social, cultural and economic importance of different fishes.

The other workshop participants included Pierre Kleiber, Bob Skillman, Bruce Mundy, Ed DeMartini, Bob Schroeder, Alan Freidlander, Dave Hamm, Keith Bigelow, Minling Pan, Justin Hospital, Don Kobayashi, Bob Moffitt, Chris Boggs, Mark Nelson (National Marine Fisheries Service); Jeremy Claisse, Katie Howard and Jim Beets (University of Hawaii); Dan Polhemus, Bill Walsh and Ivor Williams (Hawaii Division of Aquatic Resources); Michael Trianni (Northern Mariana Islands Division of Fish & Wildlife); Judith Amesbury (Micronesian Archeological Research Services); Chuck Daxboeck (BioDax Consulting Tahiti); Marlowe Sabater (American Samoa Marine & Wildlife Resources Department); Ken Longernecker (Bishop Museum) and Karl Brookins.

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