

**Pacific Insular Fisheries Monitoring, Assessment & Planning Summit
(PIFMAPS) Draft Report
Ala Moana Hotel, Garden Lanai Room
August 19-23, 2019**

Executive Summary

The Pacific Insular Fisheries Monitoring, Assessment, and Planning Summit (PIFMAPS) was held over the course of five days from Monday, August 19, 2019 through Friday, August 23, 2019 in the Garden Lanai Room of the Ala Moana Hotel. A panel of experts was invited to provide impartial opinions and recommendations including Robert Ryznar and Jennifer Suter from the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission, and Dr. Steve Tuner from the Southeast Fisheries Science Center. The goal of the summit was to review data collection elements from the United States (US) Pacific Island Territories, including American Samoa, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) to better understand their utility in fisheries science and management. The long-term goal of the summit was to establish a comprehensive data collection program in the territories that can provide data, scientific information, and monitoring systems necessary for robust stock assessments and to support in-season fishery management in the Western Pacific Region (WPR).

Fishery data collection has been occurring for the past 37 years in the territories. The 1996 Sustainable Fisheries Amendments (SFA) to the Magnuson Stevens Act (MSA) required both an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management as well as management of individual stocks based on maximum sustainable yield (MSY). There have been six other data workshops held since 1996 to address the requirements, but there was little traction in implementing changes from the previous workshops. Outcomes included some small, short-term projects that did not address overall systematic issues in data collection.

The planning of PIFMAPS was spurred due to several prevalent issues with territory fishery data collection. Federal information needs associated with regulations (such as the SFA of 1996) have evolved over time, especially considering fisheries and their management, but the associated data collection systems have remained relatively stagnant. There have also been issues in identifying consistent funding sources for long-term projects. In addition to more data being needed over the years and a deficiency in funding, there is a general absence of local buy-in for data collection improvement projects, as fishers can be hesitant to provide information due to fear of giving away their best harvesting locations, their welfare benefits being reduced, additional taxation, lack of understanding as to the need for accurate data, and lack of incentive. The lack of local buy-in coupled with inadequate sampling mechanisms and survey coverage has led to large gaps in various facets of the data that make them hard to utilize for necessary assessments and stock status determination.

It was anticipated that PIFMAPS would facilitate the discussion necessary to create actionable items for the territory data collection systems to move forward with for the benefit of territory and federal managers as well as the local fishing communities. Workshop objectives were to

determine if the current data collection processes are optimal for both territorial data needs and federal science data needs; to determine how the current data collection processes are being used in territorial fisheries and federal fisheries management; to evaluate whether the processes meet the associated management needs; to understand the catch/effort and life history data collection processes in each territory; to achieve a common understanding of goals and expectations as well as associated responsibilities and timelines for achieving those goals; to determine what data are needed to support effective monitoring of management unit species (MUS) and ecosystem component species (ECS); to ascertain if the limited resources (i.e., both fiscal and personnel) are being used in an effective manner; and to agree how data elements are added to data collection processes.

Key discussions held by summit participants emphasized the main issues in the territories' data collection preventing both federal and territory managers from monitoring and assessing the fish stocks in their jurisdiction in an appropriate manner. The most notable data gap is at the level of species identification while surveying catch and the manner of subsampling done during these catch interviews, however the biosampling program captures species information from the markets that could be used to back-calculate species composition for commercial receipt books. Creel surveys have a good sample design, but have gaps in the time series from more rare species and gear types utilized in the fisheries. Trip identifiers were highlighted as being highly important to track fish flow from boat to vendor going forward.

Additionally, self-reporting may be an option to help increase coverage of data collection and would likely be bolstered by the introduction of e-reporting as well as additional incentives for participation in reporting. Mandatory reporting supported by e-reporting would also be ideal to ensure complete coverage of the commercial sectors of the fisheries in the territories, but there are concerns about compliance and enforcement regarding the potential regulations. Participation in the fisheries and reporting has been variable over the years, but there exists an opportunity with the younger generation to encourage reporting as they begin to comprise a larger portion of the effort. Additionally, the commercial sector is not always explicitly distinct from the recreational, cultural, and subsistence fisheries in the same territory, which are much more difficult to track. Non-commercial data may be gleaned through a closer engagement with the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP), as has been done in Hawaii.

The panelists presented their recommendations for data collection improvement, critical decision points, agency commitments, and tasks and timelines. Organizational recommendations included removing duplicity and increasing alignment between the creel survey, biosampling, and commercial receipts with the stock assessment program in order to obtain the best estimates of catch and effort, and size composition. The concept of a unified territorial approach was suggested in several capacities. Creel survey recommendations were encouraging strong engagement with MRIP as well as the employment of a survey statistician to provide guidance for optimizing survey design to meet stated needs. There were two main recommendations for the Commercial Receipt program including implementing mandatory reporting as well as

implementing electronic reporting. Biosampling recommendations were mostly associated with updating the list of species that need further sampling, defining an appropriate biological sampling framework to optimize those sampling efforts (e.g., focusing sampling on bottom fish; focusing sampling on size/age), redesigning the data entry form, and developing a visual monitoring system. Communication and outreach recommendations focused on promoting the importance of reporting accurate data as well as communication planning in each territory to engage the appropriate audience.

Once the panelists' recommendations were collated with the recommendations from federal staff, the participants agreed as a group to several program changes and enhancements that will be carried out over time. For the shore-based creel survey, WPacFIN support will be phased out, and funding support will continue through US Fish and Wildlife Service – Sportfish Restoration Program funding . MRIP review and certification for the shore-based creel survey will be pursued, with the goal of augmenting the funding for this program. For the boat-based creel survey program, focus will shift to MUS stocks (e.g., bottomfish) and a review of the survey design will be carried out with consideration towards a directed or targeted data collection of methodology. Consideration will also be given towards mandatory self-reporting by fisher with the potential of electronic reporting as an option. For the Commercial Receipt Program, the group agreed to move towards mandatory reporting for all territories, prioritizing bottomfish fisheries. Additionally, there was focus on continuing improvements to this Federally-supported program including electronic reporting, image technology, and species identification. Lastly, for the Biosampling Program, the focus will be on MUS species as well as expanding the number of vendors to sample.

Following PIFMAPS, working groups are being created and action items are being reviewed. Representatives from both the Council and the Science Center will lead the effort to follow-up on all of the tasks identified.