



159th Council Meeting

March 17-21, 2014

Fiesta Resort and Spa, Garapan, Saipan
Hilton Resort and Spa, Tumon Bay, Guam

Synopsis of Issues for Program Planning and Research

Report from P* Working Group

Council staff will present on the meeting results of the P* Working Group held at the Council Office on December 11 to 12, 2013. The third meeting of the working group focused on reviewing the Model Information and Scientific Uncertainty Dimension. As well as reviewing the scores for these dimensions, the workshop finalized the scores for the Stock Status and Productivity and Susceptibility Dimensions. The comparative results between the current model-based approach and stock assessment showed it to be conservative with the MSYs being underestimated 50% of the time. At the same time in the remaining 50%, the MSYs are over estimated (one slightly and the other severely).

Significant discussions were given to addressing key points that will be looked at by NMFS:

- averaging time frame for stock status determination;
- the method in predetermining the range of k values;
- species aggregation/groupings, and
- level of P* values relative to known tier 1 stocks

Council staff will present on the SSC's determination of the recommended level of risk for the Council to adopt without exceeding the MSY, based solely on scientific uncertainties. The range of P* values for each jurisdiction are as follows:

- American Samoa - 30.8-39.5%
- Guam – 30.2-37.9%
- CNMI – 34.6-39.42%
- Hawaii – 32-42%

The Council needs to deliberate the risk level recommended by the P* working group and endorse a final risk level.

Report from the SEEM Working Group (Action Item)

Council staff will present results of the SEEM working group meeting held at the Council Office on February 26-28, 2014. The SEEM WG member received a presentation from PIFSC HDRP staff on the recent project conducted in Saipan involving fishermen interview aimed to determining important social, ecological, economic and management factors in the coral reef fisheries. These factors were then used for establishing the criteria for SEEM evaluation. The SEEM WG recommends ACL be set X% (will be filled in after the SEEM WG meet) lower than

the SSC's specified acceptable biological catch to account for management uncertainties. **The Council needs to deliberate and endorse the recommendation of the SEEM working group.**

Specifying Annual Catch Limits for the Coral Reef Species in the Western Pacific Region (Action Item)

Council staff will present on the alternatives for the Council to consider in setting the multiyear ACLs for the Coral Reef management unit species. Based on the P* analysis, the SSC chose a range of risk levels that would prevent from exceeding the MSY (in this case the proxy for OFL) for various species complexes. Those risk levels have a corresponding catch which is the acceptable biological catch. The Council must choose between the following alternatives (listed as tables 1-4 in the Council meeting briefing book):

Alternative 1: (status quo) The Council will retain the current ACLs which were set equal to the ABCs based on the 75th percentile of the entire catch time series. Previous ACL specification only considered catch information from one data source hence the ACLs were severely underestimated. The Council recommended exploring other methods and data sets in future ACL specifications. This alternative will maintain the underestimated ACLs and Council will continue to deal with justifying the overages occurring in the fishery.

Alternative 2: The Council can set the ACL equals to the ABC. This alternative assumes that the catch relative to the ABC is relatively small and the risk of exceeding the ACL is small. This is true for most of the coral reef stock complexes. This also assumes that the management uncertainties are negligible and the difference between recent catch and limit has enough buffers to avoid exceeding the ACLs. This provides more room for the fishery to expand and increase economic benefits without significantly impacting the stock.

Alternative 3: The Council can set the ACL lower than the ABC based on the recommendations of the SEEM working group accounting for uncertainties from social, economic, ecological and management factors. This will provide additional buffer from exceeding the ACL and would avoid additional regulatory procedures tied to exceedance of ACLs. Depending on the reduction, it may provide enough room for fishery economic gain.

The Council needs to choose an alternative at which the ACLs will be set relative to the ABC.

Social Science Program Plan

The Social Scientist on staff will provide an overview of the social science program directions and activities. Immediate tasks are to update the Social Science Research Planning Committee (SSRPC) membership roster; determine the status of the Council's Five Year Human Communities Research Priorities (2009-2014) and to update these priorities in concert with the SSRPC; develop annual and five year activities outlines; and develop a strategic program plan that is responsive to the Council's mission, vision, FEPs, and its various activities and programs.

5 Year Program and FEP Review

The Western Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) programs and activities are funded through a 5-year cooperative agreement and supplemental grants through NOAA, Department of

Commerce. The primary document detailing the Council's program and activities is the Council's 5--Year Program Plan. The Staff have been meeting to discuss and update the major themes that will be integrated into the Council's next 5 year program plan and multiyear budget. To update these documents to support FY2015-2019 Council activities, staff will engage the Council family to review and assess past programs, accomplishments and develop the new 5--Year Program Plan.

Education and Outreach

Council staff will summarize outreach and education efforts at the regional, national and international level that have occurred since the 158th meeting. On the education front, updates will be given on the Council's Education Committee and associated initiatives, the Maluiwa from a Ta`u Perspective educational project in Manu`a, the National Marine Educators Association and related activities, the International Pacific Marine Educators Network 2014 conference, and the COSEE Island Earth Communications Committee and related activities. Outreach updates will include activities regarding the NOAA FishWatch website, the Pacific Basin Development Council and the North West Indian Fisheries Commission. Council staff will also provide an update the Council's Marine Planning and Climate Change Committee and other efforts regarding climate change, including the First Stewards 2nd Symposium on Climate Change and Traditional Places as well as the White House Task Force on Climate Preparedness and Resilience.