



**WESTERN
PACIFIC
REGIONAL
FISHERY
MANAGEMENT
COUNCIL**

Fishery Data Collection and Research Committee

Monday, June 24, 2019

8:30 p.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Council Office

Honolulu Hawaii

DRAFT REPORT

1. Welcome Remarks and Introductions

Chair Dr. Michael Seki welcomed the committee members to the meeting. Chair asked the committee to introduce themselves. Attendees of the meeting were Tom Ogawa of the Hawaii State Department of Land and Natural Resources, Chelsa Muna-Brecht of the Guam Department of Agriculture, Henry Sesepasara of the American Samoa Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources, and Michael Tenorio of CNMI Division of Fish and Wildlife. Monica Guerrero of Guam BSP was present via teleconference. Kitty Simonds, Council Executive Director, Marlowe Sabater, Council staff, and Thomas Remington, Council staff, were also present.

2. Update on previous FDCRC recommendations

Council staff provided the committee with an update on the status of the previous FDCRC recommendations from the previous meeting in 2018.

3. Regulations for mandatory license and reporting

A. Guam

Muna-Brecht presented updates for mandatory licensing and reporting on Guam. There was a letter submitted to the Guam Attorneys General (AG) about this issue. The AG's response stated that Guam has to adhere to the requirement of passing of any regulation to go through the Guam Fishing Council, which has never convened. There are political deliberations as to the best way to go about implementation of mandatory licensing and reporting, and there have been considerations to repeal the entire act that established this council. The Guam fishing community will be included as much as possible after meeting with the AP on the issue so they do not feel blindsided. The associated timeline is on the scale of months. The Guam Department of Agriculture is prioritizing laws that need to be updated, such as the fishing council, but want the community's input going forward.

B. CNMI

Tenorio provided an update on regulations for mandatory licensing and reporting. There have been three public hearings in the CNMI, and public comments have been received and forwarded to the AGs. The DLNR will take the lead on revising the regulations based on the feedback. There were no questions or additional discussion.

4. Data collection improvement updates

A. American Samoa DMWR

Sesepasara presented on data collection in American Samoa. He noted issues in the outer islands, with Sesepasara having fired the data collector on Swains Island. He is working with the fishermen's co-op to potentially fill the data gap. There have been a few more data collectors hired on Tutuila.

B. Guam DAWR

Muna-Brecht provided an update on data collection on Guam. Creel surveys are being conducted, but there are issues with fishers releasing information. The NOAA biosampling program supplements this information. Additionally, DAWR has received reports recently from fishers that are outside of regular creel data times as well. All three current DAWR data collection staff passed a species identification test with greater than 95% accuracy, suggesting that it is still mostly an opportunity for fishers to volunteer data more than anything else (which focuses on larger fish that are caught).

Data showing fish not captured by creel survey data in the past are likely based on anecdotal information that indicates a gap in data collection.

C. CNMI DLNR-DFW

Tenorio presented on the data collection in CNMI. The shore-based creel program progress included continuing scheduled data collection, procuring a vehicle, and continuing to look to fill positions that will be vacant in the near future. Tenorio also attended a data collection meeting at the IRC to see the direction the region was moving toward on this front. DFW staff have started providing incentives to fishermen who provide information to the office, and the creel surveys have continued as scheduled.

Regarding issues with data entry and lack of a data manager, DFW staff have been more consistent. The commercial purchase invoice system continues to collect samples with the same number of vendors but with more invoice submissions, marking a notable improvement. Future surveys hope to capture data from roving vendors.

For the tagging project, two different fishing companies were contracted to carry out the work (especially before the fishing derby in July). Target species have shifted to the grouper family for the most part, but there are still some acanthurids and lethinids that need more data. Species of focus are the lethrinid complex nearshore, as they tend to be more robust than other species. Other popular species, like some acanthurids, are caught more frequently at night. It was noted that this project is particularly to glean movement patterns and growth rates. Incentives for participation include a shirt depending on the information provided, but there have not been that many returns yet. There have been 500 tags with approximately five returns. He estimated a 10% return rate over time. A "tagging category" for the upcoming fishing derby was suggested.

D. Hawaii DLNR-DAR

Ogawa provided an update on data collection in Hawaii. He focused on non-commercial data. An MRIP Certification Workshop was completed at the end of May. There were three new survey designs proposed for MRIP Certification, as it has funding specifically for improving non-commercial surveys. The overarching changes in data collection that apply to all surveys include

capturing gear hours and including invertebrate data. The three types of surveys were (1) private boat angler access intercept surveys, (2) a fishing effort mail survey, and (3) a roving survey that is generally thought to be able to cover more ground and capture more data than stationary surveys. The next step is to develop transition plan timeline and funding before calibrating pilot surveys alongside current ones to back-calculate historical data in the new program.

Surveyors usually do not measure all fish in the cooler when collecting data. They usually take a subsample, but getting data for the entire catch is always ideal. It helps to have surveyors that have been on the team for some time to develop a relationship with the fishermen.

Seki added a few items to the presentation regarding Hawaii DAR. Kim Harding, “Nikki” (sp?), and “Brian Okizuku” (sp?) have left, leaving them relatively short-staffed. In addition, the online dealer reporting database continues moving along, and PIFSC expects to rely more on it moving forward.

Council staff noted that HMRFS had undergone a review and that the region needs to develop a transition plan, requiring staff from each of the agencies. MRIP works by doing a review before undergoing a Certification process that needs a transition plan about going from the old methods to the new. Committee members were asked to give their Directors a “heads up” that this may be coming down the pipeline, however it is dependent on the results of the August workshop. The territories are involved in the transition plan at this point by giving intent. American Samoa is interested in MRIP Certification for their data collection, but they are very sensitive to any changes to what is happening to their indigenous fishermen. It was noted that MRIP is already relatively restrictive, and it took work to get where they are now for Hawaii DAR.

One notable challenge is identifying the true commercial fishermen and ones that are not indigenous just providing for their family and selling leftovers. There is often a mix of what is traditionally considered subsistence and commercial. There is a similar group in Hawaii called “expense fishermen”, who sell just enough to cover their shipping expenses and take the rest home. There does not seem to be any “true commercial” fishermen that harvest in coastal areas (bottomfishing, spearfishing, etc.), and they are all pelagic fishers.

E. Guam BSP

Guerrero presented on data collection improvement updates from Guam BSP. They administer two fisheries activities, the first of which is monitoring tuna transshipment. BSP has been working with PIFSC to upgrade their data systems to MySQL environments from Visual FoxPro. A fisheries import/export monitoring project, in partnership with customs, looks to establish a database for storing this collected information. There are issues in species identification during reporting, as well as problems with fishers bringing in shark fin and stingray parts. Data collection has been going from September 2017 to present for this platform.

Council staff asked what their plan is since having received a small SK funding extension until the end of August. There are local staff on-board that they are looking to deploy at the port, and hope to work with customs to bring additional data to the port as well.

F. WPRFMC

Council staff presented on Council activity associated with data collection improvements. Under MRIP, a non-commercial spear fishery survey online reporting form was developed in collaboration with spearfishing clubs to estimate non-commercial catch, effort, and CPUE for this gear. This has been used more on CNMI (72%) than Guam (28%), and there are incentives via quarterly raffles to prompt participation. There have been issues with fishers submitting “data” consisting only of photos with no numeric information.

The larger participation from fishers was due to fishing groups in particular, with Council staff confirming that the spearfishing clubs and their extended contact lists were very helpful for this project. The club is the one spearheading participation and promotion. Most of the data in Guam is collected from folks calling the island coordinator, whereas self-reporting is more popular on CNMI and may have led to the greater participation there. It was asked about the noted fishing area on the southwest side of the island, and if the survey considered whether the fishermen in an area are from the area; Council staff said it is a possibility to do so. Fishers are spearing both from shore and from boat. Perhaps this discrepancy may be due to more boat trips on Guam than CNMI.

It was asked if there is any intention to continue to survey for an additional year, and if there is any permanent use of the developed software. The budget from MRIP was for one year, but they got an additional year in Guam. The software itself can be converted for self-reporting for a wide range of fisheries. Muna-Brecht wondered if successful implementation may be factors of properly teaching staff how to use the online portal.

Council staff continued its presentation on data collection updates focusing on TSI, which collects commercial receipt book data mostly from Guam (24% of total poundage captured by TSI) and CNMI (62% of total poundage captured by TSI). Outreach was carried out via radio ads to support the data collection system.

Tenorio clarified that the vendors that the TSI program are sampling are not being sampled by CNMI DFW to reduce redundant efforts. DFW focuses more on restaurants, and backed off of these vendors to allow TSI to take over. The situation is slightly different in Guam. The commercial receipt book data collected in Guam are exclusively from the co-op, and the TSI data come from different Micronesian vendors. There are imported fish captured in the data collection, but it is noted if the fish are local or if from elsewhere. It was suggested that TSI misses a large amount of data if the hotels are not considered, but there has been no ground broken with the hotels yet in that they refuse to participate. Some of the hotels buy direct from fishers, but imports for these vendors are likely larger despite not being reported. There is a larger demand for fish locally than can be supplied, but their job is to manage what is captured locally.

Next, Council staff reviewed updates for electronic reporting developments. Machine learning software is being developed to support data collection by automatically identifying fish and recording their length. Examples were shown of annotated videos done by the working algorithm. The weight can be derived from the length and species. The algorithm gets “trained” to look at certain dimensions of a certain species to identify which assigned name it would be. Once this is finalized, the system could be set-up anywhere via a camera and computer with software to allow the data to be accessible to the vendor. There was some concern about system

and financial requirements, and committee members wondered how to incentivize the vendors to implement it. Currently, the hope is to begin implementing the system by the end of the year. It will take some time to train the system for the numerous species relevant in the region. The hypothetical end result is that all vendors could access to this software if they had a standardized camera, etc. While the system could do a sub-sample of landings, it would ideally allow for sampling of a majority of the catch. However, it is likely that a simple sub-sample would be a good compromise for fishers.

Lastly, Council staff provided updates on the bottomfish e-reporting application, which allows bottomfishers to remotely input and transmit relevant fishery catch and effort data. To finish this project by the end of the year, there are fishers in Hawaii, Guam, and CNMI that have agreed to test the application. There is also a training component included in this project for local fishermen, and the Council has 150 tablets ready to provide to the fishermen.

G. NMFS-PIFSC

Seki presented on updates to data collection by PIFSC. Many of the items are works in progress. Electronic monitoring continues to be evaluated, especially for Hawaii. Electronic reporting is further along, with 38 tablets distributed accounting for 140 completed trips. Efforts will focus on requiring electronic reporting. WPacFIN, in general, has been undergoing changes over the course of the past year that continue even now. The WPacFIN website was launched at the end of 2018 to allow anyone to query non-confidential data. The Pacific Insular Fisheries Monitoring and Assessment Planning Summit will be a focus in the near future as well. Lastly, a lot of the PIFSC reef fish data have come from the Rapid Assessment Monitoring Program (RAMP), which has had a data stream analysis completed. The RAMP surveys are going to become more focused as a result at the more stable remote islands, so the three-year cycle does not have to be adhered to. Rusty Brainard is going to be leaving PIFSC, which will change the Center's approach to coral reefs in general. In addition, one of NOAA's research vessels for the region has been decommissioned. It had been scheduled to look at coral reefs in the Marianas, but the RV Rainier will be taking its place.

Tenorio asked where the surveys around the Mariana Archipelago will be taking place. The first year will focus on areas around Saipan where mapping as well as coral surveys can be completed. The RV Setti is scheduled to go to American Samoa next year, but there is concern that the new territorial bottomfish assessment may impact the ACL such that they may be limited in the scope of their fish collection for research.

5. Pacific Insular Fisheries – Monitoring and Assessment Planning Summit

Council staff provided an overview of the upcoming workshop August 19-23, 2019 at the Ala Moana hotel. The goal of the workshop is to review the territorial data collection system with respect to utility. Ultimately, we want data collection that addresses the rigorous needs of both scientists (i.e., scientific assessments) and managers (i.e., in-season management). The tasks are to scope what the different science needs are, and brainstorm what would an ideal data collection system look like. Data workshops of this nature have been held every few years since the 1990s. The reason why these workshops may not be as successful as possible is because there is little in the way of follow-up or commitment to issues or solutions identified in the meetings. Now that it is Council, Territory agencies, USFWS, people from sportfish restoration grants, and NOAA

working together, hopefully they can commit to agreed-upon strategies that need to move forward as well.

There are going to be approximately 40 participants at the workshop. Travel for the two individuals invited from each jurisdiction is funded by the Council; additional attendees would have to be paid for by the local agency.

6. Interview of FDCRC members for the PIF-MAPS

Council staff addressed this agenda item during agenda item number 5.

7. FDCRC Strategic Plan and MRIP Regional Implementation Plan Updates

Council staff provided an update on the FDCRC five-year strategic plan. Each of the agencies provided input on the plan, as they are all involved in implementing the tasks described within its contents. This is the first attempt to determine where the region is at in the current strategic plan, eliminate what has been accomplished, and incorporate recommendations that are coming out of the workshop in August 2019. Council staff will be in close coordination with PIFSC to build-in some of the outcomes of the workshop into the next phase of the plan. Perhaps another strategic planning process will happen around April of next year.

8. Report on FDCRC-Technical Committee

Council staff provided the report on the FDCRC-TC. They met on May 2, 2019, and spent much of the time doing interviews with the technical committee staff to get information in preparation for the August workshop. The FDCRC-TC only came up with one recommendation:

Regarding data collection, the FDCRC-TC recommends the Council requires DMWR to include the time series of the number of commercial permit holders and number of citations for non-compliance to the commercial permit in the American Samoa FEP Annual SAFE Report.

9. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

10. Discussions and Recommendations

Regarding fishery data collection improvement, the FDCRC recommends the Council:

1. Recommends the Council work with the DFW, DAWR, DMWR, and PIFSC in the implementation of the electronic reporting for the bottomfish fishery;
2. Supports the Pacific Insular Fisheries Monitoring and Assessment Planning Summit and commits to reviewing the recommendations from the summit for implementation to improve fishery data collection; and
3. Recommends the Council request Department of Marine Wildlife Resources to include the time series of the number of commercial permit holders and number of citations for non-compliance to the commercial permit in the American Samoa FEP Annual SAFE Report.

Regarding the FDCRC strategic plan, the FDCRC recommends the Council:

4. Recommends the Council direct staff to convene a strategic planning session with the Technical Committee members accounting for the recommendations generated by the Pacific Insular Fisheries Monitoring and Assessment Planning Summit.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:05 a.m.