



WPSAR Steering Committee

April 30, 2020

Time: 1:00 – 4:00 pm

Via WebEx and Teleconference

Steering Committee:

Kitty Simonds – Executive Director WPRFMC

Michael Seki – Director PIFSC

Michael Tosatto – Regional Administrator – PIRO

Coordinating Committee:

Marlowe Sabater, John Syslo, Brett Schumacher

FINAL REPORT

1. Introductions

Marlowe opened the meeting and did a sound check.

Kitty started; asked Mike and Mike for a few words.

2. Update on the Stock Assessment Prioritization Process in the Pacific

John Syslo, PIFSC, began with a brief 6 slide powerpoint, to provide an update on the stock prioritization process. John summarized the process for implementing the guidance on regional prioritization. Over the last few months, the Coordinating Committee organized the stocks. They ended up with a list of 19 stocks, after starting from a much longer list of all MUS in the Pacific Islands Region. The committee removed those that were under moratoria or closures, or those managed by RFMOs. We ended up with a list of 19, 6 of which are archipelagic fish and shellfish, and species from the pelagic plan, and also the precious coral complexes.

The prioritization process involves scoring a suite of factors (e.g., importance to commercial fisheries, non-commercial fisheries, ecosystem function). Separately, factor weights are determined by fishery managers and are applied to the scores to develop a final score that is used for the prioritization. The factor weights will be the same across the region rather than by island group because the assessment prioritization is done at the regional level. The weights will be developed by polling state/territorial fishery managers, fishermen, PIRO and the Council. The next steps are to develop the factor scores at PIFSC, develop the factor weights, and then rank the weighted scores in order to inform the next update of the 5-year WPSAR schedule.

Council staff indicated that are thinking of starting the polling of the advisors this summer. Simonds asked whether local fishers in addition to the advisors will be polled, and Council staff replied in the affirmative.

3. Modernizing Recreational Fisheries Act in Section 201

Sabater reported that the 2019 territory stock assessment, and an additional benchmark in the future, this would be an opportunity to utilize the process developed by the SSC, approved by the Council, and send to NMFS that would require a data callout prior to completing an assessment. This fulfills the requirements for the Recreational Fisheries Act. We would like to reach out to PIRO and PIFSC to determine how to fulfill the requirements. From our perspective, we would be developing an FR notice, put ads in the local newspaper soliciting information, and use this process to accommodate that. We would like to coordinate with regard to when this process should start, and identify how long in advance we put out the notice, and also what role each agency would play in this process. This is meant to be an open discussion to the steering committee.

Simonds said we would have to work backward from the date the assessment is due. PIFSC should decide or tell the Council when they think this information should be coming in. We do a callout - people respond, and then what happens?

Sabater said that once a data callout goes out, the three entities would review the comments and then reach out to those who may hold data and then evaluate the utility from an assessment perspective.

Simonds said that would take some time. Seki said that Simonds is correct, and it will add time to the stock assessment. The data may not be useful for the assessment.

Sabater said that if we want to incorporate this in the process, the callout and data review would have to be completed in advance.

Simonds asked what happens before the assessment is done.

Seki deferred to the assessment folks and said that it is stock dependent. The data used for an assessment becomes a controversial issue particularly when the stock assessment results are not favorable, and will add much time to the process.

Tosatto said there is some expectation that ongoing timelines stay on track even while we're trying to comply with this new requirement. We will do our best in the near term, and our focus should be on how to get ahead of it as a matter of routine into the future. Tosatto said PIRO can work with the Council on what the regulatory notice looks like, and include a deadline for submittal of data.

Council staff noted that the new requirement only applies to benchmarks.

The coordinating committee can work on the requirements. Sabater and Schumacher will be the lead in coordinating this portion of the stock assessment development process. Could

do an annual notice, that says in the future NFMS will be doing X, Y, Z stock assessments and call for information of these types, and put a deadline. Call out a year or two in advance.

3. Coordination of data preparation meetings

Seki cautioned against going down the full workshop route like SEDAR.

Sabater asked about what the standards should be - do we need to do one for all assessments or just be strategic in terms of which ones would include data preparation meetings. What would the representation be from the offices?

Simonds said that she would like the advice of the coordinating committee and stock assessment program.

Felipe Carvalho, PIFSC stock assessment program, said the current plan is to develop data workshops for at least each of the territories for the next round of bottomfish assessments, and we are committed to work closely with the Council and PIRO to develop these workshops. The scope and scale of future workshops is still under development.

Sabater said that preparation and planning can be challenging and that we should have close coordination as the next territorial bottomfish assessments develop

5. Stock Assessment Schedule

Carvalho gave a presentation on the stock assessment program. One of the biggest challenges for his group is to find the balance between human power and timeliness. PIFSC produces stock assessments for internationally managed stocks, the main Hawaiian islands, and the territories. PIFSC SAP currently takes the lead on 11 stock assessments. The work of SAP also includes producing bycatch estimates, providing analyses to be used in catch limits, and the bottomfish independent survey. Carvalho showed who works on which assessments to give the leaders a good idea of how the teams work on the assessments.

The steps in producing a stock assessment are planning, data preparation, model development, report writing including internal and peer review, and delivery. The allocation of staff resources is an internal decision, but it does demonstrate the breadth of the stock assessment activities to aid in strategically thinking about the development of the schedule.

Simonds thanked Carvalho for the presentation. The Council acknowledges the work of the PIFSC. Simonds asked about billfish stock assessments.

Carvalho responded that PIFSC works with their partners in Taiwan, South Korea, and Japan for example, but the US takes the lead in developing models and report writing for billfish. Many of the partners that come to the data preparatory workshops hand their data to PIFSC. Jon and Michelle take the lead to present to the international committees and even follow up actions. That also applies to the sharks except the ones that are handled by SPC.

Simonds asked if they work with Gulf and Atlantic stock assessment scientists.

Carvalho responded that they don't work completely separately. At some level they are isolated but they don't work in a vacuum. The primary collaboration is through data preparation or scientific meetings with invited experts that prepare assessments for Atlantic or Gulf stocks, where they may read reports and provide input. When developing the assessment and writing the report, it's very similar to what we do on the domestic assessments.

Seki clarified that swordfish is included in billfish - blue marlin, striped marlin, swordfish.

Tosatto said that at some point in the past, the Center billed for an MSE position. In our realm, MSE has been a term used with fish stocks. Is this TBD position the MSE position or will that end up somewhere else within the Center structure? Will it focus on fish stocks?

Seki said the MSE is separate and we did hire one. We expect him to report remotely and expect him to be involved in fish issues but we haven't totally pinned it down yet.

Sabater displayed the draft 5-year schedule and asked what the preference is for the type of review of the Deep-7 assessment. Previous update for territorial bottomfish was a done by a subcommittee of the SSC rather than as a WPSAR panel review.

Carvalho asked for clarification on details of the types of review available under the WPSAR policy. He said from a SAP perspective that an SSC panel review would be appropriate with the panel's understanding of the scope of an update assessment. An update uses the same model but with updated data, so there are only so many changes they can do.

Syslo asked if the reviews for updates were desktop reviews or panel reviews. Sabater said they were panel reviews, but shorter (2-3 days) than WPSAR reviews that last up to 5 days. Like WPSAR, the panel comes up with a report that will go to SSC, and the chair of the subgroup will also present to SSC.

SC consensus to use SSC panel review for assessment updates (e.g, Deep 7), and WPSAR for benchmarks.

Sabater continued through the schedule, and asked for an update on the activities that would take place in 2021 and 2022 on the American Samoa bottomfish benchmark. He reported that the Council is launching the e-reporting app in the territories.

Simonds said it would be good to have further discussion with T.T. Jones and Carvalho about the self-reporting app and hopefully soon (i.e., by June).

Carvalho said the schedule was difficult to develop and may be interpreted as uncertain. We believe that Guam and CNMI should be after American Samoa because we believe we will learn a lot from American Samoa. This offsets the data workshops for American Samoa and the Marianas. 2023 is a heavy year. From SAP's perspective, he is balancing the urgency of the territorial bottomfish assessments with completing the process correctly for the stakeholders and the staff. The current schedule will be a challenge to follow.

Simonds said that in terms of fisheries development and management, we would like the stock assessments that are important to the territories as soon as possible. We'll make do. The fisheries important to the areas are what's important to the Council, and bottomfish is what it is to the Territories.

7. EFH

This came out as a Council recommendation. One major piece would be knowing when the five-year EFH review for territory bottomfish will happen. DeMello is coordinating with Michael Parke on when to initiate with. On the PIRO side, who is the contact for the -year review schedule?

Tosatto said the characterization and refinement of EFH is a habitat division function. Gerry and Malia are the starting points.

Simonds said no discussion until the EFH review schedule is ready.

8. Other products for CIE Review

PIRO did not have any additional products. **PIFSC has the expansion algorithm for the creel survey to add to the CIE review.**

Sabater asked if the algorithm is an improvement of the expansion algorithm, or a documentation of the current calculation.

Carvalho said we need to provide further information about the statistical assumptions that we're making.

Sabater said this is helpful because it's for all creel surveys, correct? There were some PIFMAPS recommendations regarding the shore-based creel surveys. He also noted that this would help with MRIP certification (a PIFMAPS workshop recommendation) and potentially we could combine the two.

Carvalho said that at this point it is not part of our effort on whether the currently implemented survey design is the best statistical approach that we can do to collect information on our fisheries. It's important, but that's not the goal of this report.

At the end:

Consensus on the five-year WPSAR schedule. Coordinating committee will consolidate the report. Marlowe would circulate the report to steering committee members.