



WESTERN
PACIFIC
REGIONAL
FISHERY
MANAGEMENT
COUNCIL

Fishery Data Collection and Research Committee

Thursday, January 21, 2021

1:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Via WebEx Conferencing

Honolulu Hawaii

FINAL REPORT

1. Welcome remarks and introductions

Attendance: Kitty Simonds, Becky Walker, Mike Tenorio, Chelsa Muna Brecht, Archi Soliai, Mike Seki, Jason Helyer, Monica Guerrero, Ruth Utzurum

Public: Frank Villagomez, Brett Schumacher, Domingo Ochavillo, T. Todd Jones

Council staff: Marlowe Sabater, Zach Yamada, Josh DeMello, Felix Reyes, Floyd Masga, Diana Kitiona

Archie Soliai opened the meeting at 1:40 pm.

2. Round robin updates on impacts of COVID on data collection

Domingo Ochavillo reported on the American Samoa data collection update. The COVID-19 restrictions imposed by the American Samoa Government in a decrease in data collection. Creel surveys were no longer conducted at a minimum of 8 hours per day. Instead, surveys were conducted at a minimum of 4 hours a day and no surveys on Saturdays until June 2020. There were changes to the Commercial Invoice collection to minimize exposure to the crowd. Vendor follow-ups were reduced to twice per month rather than four times a month. Invoices were dropped off at DMWR rather than picked up by DMWR staff. After July, invoice collection days increased to three days a month. DMWR supported the CatchIt LogIt training of 45 fishermen. DMWR is scheduling training for fish vendors and meeting with the Council Island Staff to develop the 2021 training schedule. Regarding the Coral Reef Fishery Management Plan (FMP), three meetings were held since October 2020. The AS Working Group agreed on a general template and started discussions on forming an Advisory Committee. The Working Group decided on some plan elements, including fishermen involvement, stock assessment, desired fishery outcome, and revisiting regulations and data streams.

Chelsa Muna-Brecht reported on the Guam data collection updates. DAWR staff was not permitted to conduct any surveys from March 15 through May 31, June, July, and the first half of

August, creel surveys were conducted as usual. From August 15 to the end of 2020, staff only conducted the participation runs, and no catch interviews were conducted. The import database data entry continues as usual. DAWR supported the CatchIt LogIt implementation by providing a venue for the Council staff and Council contractor to meet. As DAWR staff return to full creel survey status, the app will be mentioned to fishers. In December 2020, DAWR added two fisheries biologists on staff. Data input was limited in 2020 due to work from home order. DAWR estimated that the 2020 data would be inputted entirely by January 22, 2021. Regarding the Coral Reef FMP development, a meeting is planned for January 27 to discuss how to move forward with 32 participants confirmed to attend.

Monica Guerrero of the Bureau of Statistics and Plan reported on the transshipment data collection. The transshipment data collection will close by the end of 2020, with the only company leaving the island. BSP maintains the Import-Export database system and collaborates with DAWR on collecting data from the cargo and shipments, including transcribing and scanning the information into the database.

Frank Villagomez of CNMI Division of Fish and Wildlife reported that in March 2020, the island residents were subject to mandatory quarantine and the government issued a mandatory curfew. The government also initiated employee furloughs. There are three positions vacant at the Data Section of DFW that needed to be filled. The DFW staff rotated in leading the Data Section since 2019. Implementing the PIFMAPS recommendations and CatchIt LogIt was difficult without a dedicated Data Section Manager. The mandatory reporting regulation has not been fully implemented. DFW developed an implementation plan. DFW also developed an application for commercial vendors and harvesters and a catch logbook. All are awaiting approval from DFW management.

Jason Helyer of the Hawaii Division of Aquatic Resources reported that the significant impact of COVID on the data collection system was on the licensing group. DAR staff had been working from home. The number of license holders had gone down, and all of the longliners had to renew their licenses over the phone. There were a couple of retirements at the Stat Unit resulting in a lack of manpower. In December 2020, WPacFIN completed the migration and sync of fish catch and dealer reports from Visual FoxPro databases (FRS and DRS) and online systems to a new MySQL database. The new database does not have a completed user-interface. DAR staff is currently still working in the old databases and experiencing difficulties with data syncs (part of the latest MySQL database). Until the database transition is finalized, tasks related to error checking incoming fish and dealer reports and summary reports will remain a challenge.

Mike Seki of the Pacific Island Fisheries Science Center reported changes in the WPacFIN personnel with Mike Quach's retirement and hiring of Daniel Hong (Jimar developer).

Becky Walker and Ashley Tomita are acting WPacFIN leads. Field activities are canceled due to the pandemic. The rest of the PIFSC report was taken up in section 3.C.

Marlowe Sabater reported the efforts to initiate the Territory Creel Survey Systems review through the National Saltwater Angler Registry Memorandum of Understanding. To date, only Guam submitted the information to Richard Cody. This is the vehicle to initiate the review because the MOU requires a review of the system. The rest of the report was covered under 3.B. Staff also noted the plans for developing the Coral Reef Fishery Management Plan in Guam and CNMI. The shallow species complex by nature is coral reef fish. This territorial [lan may have some implications on the shallow complex and the Council's Ecosystem Component Species. Staff requested involvement in that discussion. Director Muna-Brecht confirmed that Council staff (Felix Reyes) will be included in the discussion.

3. Data collection improvement updates

A. Status of mandatory license and reporting regulations development and implementation

Guam

Chelsa Muña-Brecht reported that the draft regulations were reviewed by the Advisory Panel, Council staff, and DAWR biologists. A meeting was scheduled on the week of January 25, 2021, with the Guam legislator, who has oversight on natural resources, to discuss the regulation. Staff asked whether the regulation will be in place in 2021. Muña indicated that they tried not to make the regulation controversial. She hopes that the senator feels confident in introducing it.

Seki asked about the data-sharing issue between DAWR and GFCA. Muña-Brecht said that there was a meeting between her and Manny Duenas facilitated by the Council. GFCA noted that their data is available for the Annual SAFE reports. Muñ-Brecht added that GFCA is more included to share the data if DAWR could reciprocate with progress on other projects like FADs. GFCA refuses to have DAWR staff access the information; thus, Eric Cruz inputted the Coop data.

DAWR is working with the Pacific Island Regional Office - Habitat Conservation Division to develop a Coral Reef Fishery Management Plan. Seki asked if PIFSC can be involved in the development process since some of the bottomfish management unit species are part of the coral reef ecosystem. The FMP would require data to support the management activities. This has implications for the monitoring that PIFSC conducts in Guam. DAWR is talking with the fisheries team, the biologists at the University of Guam, and the team scope the available data and is filtering the data to determine which is relevant to the FMP development. DAWR is looking into historical data from the status of the fisheries, species size, and habitat

changes. DAWR is currently working with Jonathan Brown and Gerry Davis but not PIFSC. PIFSC will be invited to join the fisheries team.

CNMI

Frank Villagomez reported that the reporting requirement of the regulation had not been implemented. Outreach activities were conducted by staff and managers. An action plan was developed mirroring the CARES spend plan. The applications for the logbooks have been drafted and awaiting approval. The division plans to procure a computer dedicated to the fishing license ID. DFW intends to implement it by March 2021.

Council staff said that the CatchIt LogIt is being implemented to support the mandatory license and reporting. There is a need for closer collaboration between the division and the Council in implementing the electronic reporting system and the regulation so that duplication is minimized and the activities are synchronized. Villagomez suggested continuing the discussion. He stated that the division has specific requirements for collecting the information but confirmed that they would be working on it with the Council. The difficulty is the lack of a Data Section manager tasked to move the licensing and reporting work forward. Villagomez said that the program has been developed and will be using the CARES spend plan list to initiate the process regarding the permit and commercial receipt program.

American Samoa

Domingo Ochavillo reported that DMWR requires a mandatory commercial fishing permit, but it has no reporting requirements. The compulsory reporting only applies to dealers. There was no progress in filling in the regulatory gaps. Director Soliai added that the new administration supports the data collection improvement initiatives and sees the need to address data collection issues.

B. Implementation of the Catchit-Logit electronic reporting

Council staff provided a report on the implementation of CatchIt LogIt. The general training sessions in the territories were completed in the last quarter of 2020. The software development phase was completed in July 2020. This included completing the data summary dashboards, separated the instances into three territories and developed the Forest App that allows changes to the species, fishing grids, and access points.

The training session included the Council Advisory Panel, territory agency staff, and the general boat fishermen. The Council hired three contractors, one for each territory, to implement the activities to launch and maintain the electronic reporting data collection system. Registration and training are still ongoing as more people are encouraged to join the data collection system.

As of December 30, 2020, 45, 51, and 38 fishermen trained and registered to CatchIt LogIt in American Samoa, Guam, and CNMI, respectively. For the vendors, there were none, five, and eight trained and registered. There were no fish vendors registered in American Samoa because most of the stores are owned by the Chinese. The language barrier was a hurdle that needed to be addressed. The fisher usage rate is about 20%, 14%, and 21% for American Samoa, Guam, and CNMI. Usage rate is defined as the number of unique fishermen names reported over the total number of fishermen registered.

The Council ran a three-month-long radio advertisement on the importance of accurate reporting and the electronic reporting system's promotion. A public service video was developed on electronic reporting. A newspaper ad was published in American Samoa informing the public about the training. The Council also promotes the CatchIt LogIt via social media (website, Facebook, and What's App).

Staff reviewed the challenges faced in the initial implementation of CatchIt LogIt. First is the unknown universe of people who should register and report. Currently, the registration and reporting are voluntary. Other lists like the CARES act, business license, boat license, and commercial fishing permit would help refine the universe. There is also low usage in the first two months of implementation. The local fishery management agency's minimal support stymied acceptance from the fishing communities, and inconsistent messaging was detrimental to the improvement efforts. The data collection system will work only if there are mandatory license and reporting requirements. Only CNMI has a complete regulatory requirement, but its implementation is not synchronized with the CatchIt LogIt implementation with DFW developing their reporting system. There is also the need to plan for the technology transfer and determine the regular funding stream to support the electronic reporting data collection system's continuance.

Director Soliai acknowledged the issues and expressed high hopes that more people will report and start using the app.

C. PIFSC Fishery-Dependent Data Collection Improvements

Mike Seki reported on the status of the WPacFIN staffing. WPacFIN delivered the new commercial fisheries statistics database to HDAR with a temporary data entry and retrieval application. HDAR is evaluating the application for acceptance. The boat-based creel survey expansion systems for the territories are being documented for CIE review. The review is scheduled for the spring of 2021. The Life History Program is developing a sampling design for BMUS for an efficient yet robust collection of growth and maturity estimates. The Guam and Saipan biosampling programs are currently implementing the resulting BMUS life history prioritization plan. WPacFIN also received a Fisheries Information System Program funding to support electronic reporting in the Pacific Islands bottomfish fisheries. The project will assess

ER's feasibility to improve overall data collection, access, quality, and timeliness to enhance management and stock assessments. Funding can support the integration of the Catch-it Log-it app into the territorial bottomfish fishery-dependent data collection systems. WPacFIN requested the FIN partner agencies' annual files to start the data validation activities on the Annual SAFE Reports.

4. Discussion on addressing the PIFMAPS recommendations

Council staff provided an update on the status of the PIFMAPS recommendations. Only four of the 33 recommendations did not have progress to date. Suggestions on the statistical surveys are being addressed through the PIFSC internal CIE review and positioning for the MRIP certification. The commercial receipt and fisher reports are being addressed through the CatchIt LogIt and various attempts to have mandatory license and reporting regulations in place. On total catch and calibration, these are being addressed through the CatchIt LogIt and the creel review. BioSampling recommendations are being addressed internally by PIFSC. The organization and execution recommendations are being addressed through the FDCRC. The outreach and education recommendations are addressed through the Council's outreach program. Lastly, the electronic technologies recommendations are addressed through the CatchIt LogIt app.

Director Soliai suggested creating brochures to reach out to the different groups, translated into local languages. In the case of the Chinese business owners, DMWR recommended utilizing their Chinese translator contact.

Hawaii was not included in the PIFMAPS because their data collection issues are different from the territories. Jason Helyer will be in touch with Council staff on the planning for the Hawaii PIFMAPS.

5. Strategic planning session for the FDCRC Technical Committee

Council staff provided a brief overview of the FDCRC Strategic Plan's status, which expired in 2020. There is a need to revisit the strategic plan and update the priorities stemming from the PIFMAPS workshop. Simonds stated that certain areas in the plan need to be completed and overlapped with the PIFMAPS recommendations that need to be addressed. The FDCRC shall direct the Technical Committee to conduct a strategic planning session at its 2021 meeting.

6. Public comment

There was no public comment.

7. Other business

The next FDCRC meeting will be held in June, but the technical committee will be held in April.

8. Discussions and recommendations

The FDCRC recommends DMWR, DAWR, and DFW provide the Council the list of fishermen from the CARES Act and any list of fishermen and vendors required by the local regulations to support the implementation of the CatchIt LogIt electronic reporting

The FDCRC recommends the Council direct staff, in collaboration with PIFSC and the territorial fishery agencies, to conduct the strategic planning to develop the 2021-2025 FDCRC Strategic Plan focused on the PIFMAPS recommendations

The FDCRC recommends the Council direct staff and Council contractors to conduct regular meetings with the territorial fishery agencies and PIFSC to enhance coordination with the agencies data collection activities

The FDCRC recommends the Council requests DMWR and DAWR to coordinate with the Council and PIFSC on the development of any Fishery Management Plan which has implications on other existing or planned FMPs being developed, data collection, the monitoring of the Council's ecosystem component species, and the science that would support the FMPs.