



Fishery Data Collection and Research Committee

September 20, 2021

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Via WebEx Conferencing

Honolulu Hawaii

DRAFT MEETING REPORT

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Participants: Archie Soliai, Kitty Simonds, Mike Seki, Chelsa Muña-Brecht, Manny Pangelinan, Jason Helyer, Monica Guerrero, Ruth Utzurrum, and Council Staff.

1. Welcome remarks and introductions

Archie Soliai, meeting chair from the American Samoa Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources (DMWR), welcomed participants and thanked them for attending the Fishery Data Collection and Research Committee (FDCRC) meeting of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council (the Council).

2. FDCRC Strategic Plan 2022-2026

Council staff presented on the FDCRC Strategic Plan for 2022 through 2026, focusing on a review of the strategic plan and providing a summary of the draft plan made through local agency consultation. The previous Strategic Plan for 2014 through 2019 provided direction for improving data collection and research to support fisheries science and management. It had five overarching goals, including improving fishery dependent data collection, creating a list of priority species, making non-peer review reports and unpublished datasets available, implementing science to support ecosystem-based fisheries management (EBFM), and enhancing local capacity for science and research. Members were provided a status matrix for the previous Strategic Plan that outlines what was accomplished under each of the five goals; for example, about 48% of the 42 tasks for improving fishery dependent data were completed. Council staff also briefly reviewed highlights of accomplishments through the previous Strategic Plan.

The update of the Strategic Plan update was done through local agency consultations in April 2021 that identified what was completed in previous plan as well as emerging needs. Agency inputs were consolidated with Pacific Insular Fisheries Monitoring, Assessment and Planning Summit (PIFMAPS) recommendations. The updated Strategic Plan retains four of the five previous goals, removing the goal for identifying priority species but adding new tasks for the remaining items. Council staff requested that FDCRC members review the current draft of the Strategic Plan in the next month and provide comments with which the draft will be revised.

Manny Pangelinan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) director mentioned that his staff have been having some issues with the

Catchit-Logit (CILI) electronic reporting application, and Council staff reaffirmed that they would continue to work with DFW to address these items prior to launching the platform.

Chelsa Muña-Brecht, Guam Department of Agriculture, asked how it would be determined who would be responsible for each of the proposed tasks in the Strategic Plan update. Council staff noted that the old Strategic Plan had a matrix included in the appendix specifying who had responsibility for each of the tasks, but this has yet to be developed for the Strategic Plan update. Council staff said they could provide a summary from the interagency consultation, which showed that there were some tasks that the Guam Division of Aquatic and Wildlife Resources (DAWR) expressed they wanted added to the Strategic Plan, as well as generate a new matrix to send out to the local management agencies. Jason Helyer, Hawaii Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR), had a similar concern about who would be leading the initiative to implement the proposed tasks since DAR's capacity is limited and some the items involve other partners. Council staff the Council would help with coordination to address the tasks with the necessary partners. There are some tasks that only the local agency can do, such as mandatory license and reporting regulations, but the Council would provide support otherwise. Pangelinan also shared the same sentiment as Muña-Brecht and Helyer, especially with respect to capacity and funding for fulfilling the tasks. Council staff reassured meeting participants that the tasks that require funding could be identified along with potential funding sources when discussions are held with the local agencies.

3. Report on the Catchit-Logit Implementation

Council staff presented on the implementation of the CILI electronic reporting application. Starting in August 2020, the Council supported several activities associated with the implementation of the application, including developing and distributing outreach materials, providing contractors to work with community to sign up fishermen and vendors, completing training sessions for the Council's Advisory Panels, local agency staff, fishermen, and vendors on use of the application, and engaged with the Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center on technology transfer, among other things. Council staff then presented data from the past year on users and usage of the application. Generally, there were more non-commercial fishers registered to use the application, but in the CNMI, for example, more commercial fishers are reporting. There were some questionable data reported for American Samoa in which bottomfish harvested by trolling was an order of magnitude higher than by handline bottomfishing. For Sellit-Logit (SILI), the vendor reporting portion of the Catchit-Logit Application Suite (CLAS), CNMI has been receiving far more reports than either Guam or American Samoa, but there is currently a duplication of efforts since these commercial data are being reported both by paper logs as well as through the application. American Samoa has had the lowest cumulative registration of the three territories. The initial pilot is done for the application, and it is not being transitioned to the territories' control, with implementation and data review to follow. The next steps include a review and possible renewal of contractors based on performance over the last year, fully implementing mandatory license and reporting, and development of the back-end database.

Pangelinan commented it would be helpful if there was a way to validate information submitted by fishers, and his staff will be providing a presentation on making sure the reported data are accurate. Kitty Simonds, Council Executive Director, suggested that they could use

dealer reports to what validate is reported to be sold commercially on CILI, and Pangelinan agreed. Issues to be addressed and features to be added to the application are a part of the transition plan. Pangelinan then stated his wish the incorporation of fish identification tools into the application since there are hundreds of species. Council staff noted that the progressive web application system has a placeholder to add photos to aid with identification, and Council staff had previously confirmed that they could provide training to DFW staff to update the web application with fish photos to aid in species identification.

Soliai asked why American Samoa was not included in many of the usage analyses, and Council staff responded that only one commercial fisher was reporting, while non-commercial reporting has been very sporadic. Simonds suggested that there needs to be a discussion with the Council contractor who has had a year to help develop reliable fisher reporting.

4. Critical Role of Mandatory License and Reporting Regulation

Council staff briefly presented on the importance of mandatory license and reporting regulations. Participants were presented with a discussion paper on this topic in their briefing books. The mandatory license and reporting regulations are needed to boost the use of CILI. Even if there are existing regulations, CILI will be limited if they are not fully implemented and enforced. Some of the fishing community refuses to report since it is not yet mandatory to do so. Some vendors are also concerned about duplicative efforts between reporting on paper logs as well as through the electronic application. It would be helpful to have a clear implementation from the local agencies that CILI is the platform to use and for those that do not have mandatory license and reporting regulations to implement them. Without these regulations, everything would remain voluntary.

Pangelinan noted that his staff will be providing a presentation on how the regulations would be rolled out this week, so they are coming very close to implementation. The goal is to have them in place by this November as long as operating procedures are in place and a letter can be sent out to those who will be participating. Muña-Brecht noted that Guam is getting closer to having final regulations as well, as the Guam senator is ready to see a final version of the regulations and introduce them. Muña-Brecht came to an agreement with the senator about how to address obstacles, and she requested that Council staff to provide edits to the regulations as they had previously. Soliai noted that, in American Samoa, there is a shortage of attorneys on the Attorney General's legal team, so there has been a delay in trying to find lawyers to further these regulations as well as others. Helyer offered that he could provide information via email about lessons learned in Hawaii from when they implemented mandatory license and reporting regulations.

5. Transfer of Catchit Logit Implementation to Territorial Agencies

A. Transition Plan

B. Timeline

Council staff presented on the transfer of the Catchit-Logit application to the territorial resource management agencies, including both the transition plan and timeline for the transfer. Transition tasks for CLAS include transferring the AWS database account and maintenance.

SILI is the highest priority because several vendors reporting consistently in the CNMI but do not want to maintain duplicate reports in paper logs. Also, CLAS needs to have a backend database from AWS to the PIFSC server developed and have MySQL and SILI databases integrated to make sure species codes are consistent. The territories need to decide on the transition from paper to electronic reporting with a clear cut off date. PIFSC would maintain the database system instead of the Council going forward. Other tasks include software development, update, and support, such as developing a fish identification tool or a mobile application for the creel surveys instead of paper sheets to help with timely data submission. Additionally, the territorial need to integrate the CLAS into their data collection systems to capture commercial (and some non-commercial data). There is a need to integrate the two systems together so there is a unified approach that was recommended as an outcome of PIFMAPS. Associated with this, there is a need to look into regular funding streams to support electronic reporting, such as cooperative agreements. Last, there data sharing agreement, which must be reviewed every five years, is scheduled to be renewed. The Council will work with NOAA General Counsel and the territorial agencies on this review.

Regarding the timeline, from September 2021 to March 2022, transfer of AWS and integration of systems will be prioritized. Software upgrades will start in March 2022. Data sharing agreements will be reviewed starting in January through April 2022, and the integration of CLAS into territorial data collection will occur from January to December 2022. Pangelinan supported the integration of commercial and creel survey data collection because there would otherwise be duplicative efforts, though he was not aware from where funding would be obtained for the effort. Soliai suggested determining if the Western Pacific Fisheries Information Network could provide funding on this front.

6. Public comment

McGrew Rice, charter boat fishing captain, asked if improvements to data collection for recreational fisheries are included in the ongoing tasks under the strategic plan for improvements to fishery data collection. Council staff responded that the data collection priorities identified in the previous strategic plan also include data collection for non-commercial fisheries, such as HMRFS, which covers recreational fisheries.

T. Todd Jones, PIFSC Fisheries Research and Monitoring Division (FRMD), commented that non-commercial catch is derived from the creel surveys that determine total catch in two ways: by calculating the difference between reported commercial catch and total estimated catch and through fishers that state they intend to sell their catch in the creel surveys. PIFSC is working towards improving this process. Jones also stated that CILI needs to be separated from the creel surveys, which need to be maintained. Fishers need to be informed that they should participate in creel surveys if approached by surveyors since CILI does not provide a method to estimate non-commercial catch. Mandatory license and reporting will allow for a census of vendor sales and commercial catch, but that can be a relatively small portion of total catch. For a total estimate of catch and CPUE, creel surveys will need to continue to be a major part of the data collection system. SILI is the most important at the moment, so data integration needs to be done with the current commercial receipt systems to maintain a continuous data stream. Lastly, Jones asked that PIFSC FRMD be included in future meetings where discussion about replacing the commercial system take place. Jones reiterated that CILI cannot estimate total catch because

only those who decide to register and participate will report, and it is not clear if reporting is consistent. Thus, creel surveys must be maintained and Phase 1 of replacing the commercial receipt system should be initiated.

Manny Duenas, Guam Fishermen's Cooperative Association (GFCA), commented that he cannot support the CILI exercise. Fishers on Guam are not tech-savvy, and CILI is difficult for them to use. Those that have tried to use it were told they were doing so incorrectly. Focus should be on capacity building, and Duenas hoped that the capacity building would focus on scientific training. Some Guam fishers are reluctant to report because if they sell just one fish, then, by law, they are considered commercial fishers. Duenas said he does not trust the CILI data, noting concerns about accuracy since self-reporting fishers can make up any number. Creel surveys should continue but be improved, perhaps by giving surveyors a scale and measuring tape. Duenas also noted that he has fished regularly for 40 years and has not been approached by surveyors in a very long time. Establishing CILI would put another person in an office without getting accurate data. Duenas went on to comment that GFCA has submitted commercial reports to PIFSC for the last 40 years. CILI has low participation. The community should be brought to the table about the implementation of CILI and not just PIFSC. Duenas also stated that the GFCA has been giving data but is only getting gas cards and coolers in return; they would like recognition and real help. Lastly, Duenas stated his opposition to mandatory license and reporting, noting it could be viewed as a punishment towards fishers.

Simonds, noted that a recent discussion on EBFM for Council members focused on the struggle to get accurate information from the territories, which is really just a struggle to work with the Western ways of dealing with things. It is important to continue to get the government to understand that those in the Pacific Islands are different from the mainland. Fishers want to give their information, but it is not done in a way that is accepted by the culture of the territories. These kinds of issues should warrant a workshop or continued discussion. In the meantime, the Council is trying to find new ways to get information, which is why CILI was developed.

Soliai reminded those in attendance that this was a strategy developed in 2014. It is not new, but challenges remain. He agreed with Simonds and Duenas that indigenous peoples have struggles in meeting reporting criteria due to not being tech savvy and not having access to appropriate hardware. The same challenges exist across the Pacific Islands. There needs to be a balance between the weight given to creel surveys and CILI once the transition has occurred. How that balance is found will take more discussion in the future, but the value of both needs to be stressed.

7. Other business

There was no other business.

8. Discussions and recommendations

Regarding the updated Strategic Plan 2022-2026, the FDCRC:

1. Approves the new tasks and strategies in the plan updates and recommends the Council direct staff to finalize the plan;

2. Recommends the Council direct staff to work with the FDCRC agency leaders for their signatures as an expression of commitment and support;
3. Recommends the Council send a letter to University of Hawaii following up on the effort that was initiated through the Pacific Fisheries Research Program to establish a Fisheries Program.

Regarding the mandatory license and reporting regulation, the FDCRC:

4. Recommends the Council requests the territory fishery management agencies to continue to push for the development of the regulations, address the regulatory gaps, and fully implement the existing regulations to increase the effectiveness of the electronic self-reporting and other data collection systems.

Regarding the Catchit-Logit Transition Plan, the FDCRC:

5. Approves the Transition Plan and recommends the Council direct staff to coordinate with the Pacific Island Fisheries Science Center and the territorial fishery management agencies on the transition activities