



WESTERN
PACIFIC
REGIONAL
FISHERY
MANAGEMENT
COUNCIL

Social Science Planning Committee

April 8, 2021

1:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Web Conference

Report

1. Welcome and Introductions

Craig Severance, SSPC chair, welcomed members to the meeting. Members in attendance were Craig Severance, Judy Amesbury, Adam Ayers, Debra Cabrera, Justin Hospital, Kirsten Leong, Michelle McGregor, Noelani Puniwai, and Supin Wongbusarakum. Council staff Asuka Ishizaki, Mark Mitsuyasu, Marlowe Sabater, Diana Kitiona, Joshua DeMello, and Zach Yamada were also present. A public member in attendance was Thomas Remington.

2. Approval of Agenda

Agenda was approved.

3. SSPC Working Group on Integrating Socioeconomic Considerations for Council Actions

Hospital provided a brief report on the working group discussion to consider a process for integrating socioeconomic considerations for Council actions that require a short turn-around. The SSPC recommended at the 2020 meeting that the working group bring back options to the next SSPC meeting. Members were Hospital, Severance, McGregor and Ishizaki. The working group discussed recent examples in which socioeconomic information was incorporated into Council actions, such as the spillover effects in swordfish closures and cultural fishing characterization in the AS LVPA. Timing, data availability, and process were highlighted as key considerations and constraints. Working group identified next steps, including explicitly identifying socioeconomic expertise in the ROA/Action Team processes, and exploring potential for updating community profiles. The SSPC supported these next steps.

SSPC discussed committee member involvement in providing information and review for SAFE reports, and agreed to convene an inter-sessional meeting in September or October with a focus on new revisions to the report since it is becoming the most current document.

Sabater reported that the Council at the 185th Meeting held in March 2021, directed staff to work with the SSPC to review the socio-cultural-economic information for American Samoa to provide additional context in interpreting the results of the stock assessment prior to the Data Workshop in 2021. Sabater explained that fishing community is concerned that the bottomfish stock assessment does not reflect the reality of the fishery.

Hospital indicated that the most recent American Samoa community profile could offer a starting point, and that unpublished data from a 2014 survey could be summarized for an internal report in the near-term. The information from the 2014 survey could provide data on percentage of fishermen who use bottomfish gear as well as proportion of fishermen who use bottomfishing gear as primary gear. Sabater also noted that comparison of the scale of bottomfish fisheries between American Samoa and surrounding countries could also be informative. Severance, Hospital, Cabrera, and Leong agreed to participate in a working group to work with Council staff on this effort.

SSPC members also noted lack of committee membership from American Samoa and CNMI, and discussed the importance of identifying members to fill that gap.

4. Socioeconomic Modules for the 2020 Annual SAFE Reports

Hospital provided an overview of the socioeconomic modules in the SAFE reports, and highlighted the COVID-19 impacts narrative that will be included in the 2020 report. Information compiled for NMFS' COVID impact assessment will feed into the 2020 SAFE report modules. Two earlier versions of the assessment covering March and April-July are publicly available¹, and a third covering Aug-Dec is in review. The assessments are based on qualitative and quantitative data that were available at the time, as well as semi-structured interviews conducted by PIFSC staff starting in May and with several follow-ups. Detailed results of the semi-structured interviews will be compiled by the end of the summer. PIFSC is scheduled to produce two more COVID impact snapshots (Jan-June and July-Dec 2021).

Hospital also highlighted publications and data collection updates that will be included in the 2020 SAFE report.

SSPC discussed the data sources for the assessments and noted that the quantitative data for the Marianas portion of the report should be interpreted with caution (e.g., CNMI showing much higher pelagic species revenue than Guam) due to data lags as well as confidentiality rules preventing public reporting of data in Guam's case. Severance noted that based on his observations from Hilo side, the non-commercial sector was more active in 2020, but that is not being monitored adequately outside of HMRFS. SSPC members agreed to provide feedback on the draft COVID impacts summary for the SAFE report if time permits for additional input prior to the deadline.

5. Baseline Demographic Data Collection for Regional Surveys

Leong reported on an initiative through a national working group to assess standardized demographic questions to include in regional social and economic surveys, as well as a question bank of social questions for potential inclusion in future surveys that would be pre-approved by OMB. Individual surveys could be developed using questions from this bank in an expedited OMB review. This initiative also helps to address Council's human communities research priorities, specifically: HC1.1.7, explore the feasibility of establishing a regional long-term

¹ March: <https://media.fisheries.noaa.gov/2021-02/Initial-COVID-19-Impact-Assessment-webready.pdf>
April-July: <https://media.fisheries.noaa.gov/2021-02/Pacific-Islands-COVID-19-Impact-Snapshot-webready.pdf>

socioeconomic monitoring program; and HC1.1.8, establish and monitor demographic and socioeconomic characterizations of regional fishery participants. Leong reviewed the draft list of core demographic questions being considered for the blanket OMB approval, and noted that fishing-related questions will also be developed at a later time. Leong asked for SSPC input on other core demographic questions, and what other types of information should be monitored in terms of fishing communities (e.g. to include in SAFE report) that could be included in the question bank.

SSPC suggestions included listing the race categories in alphabetical order, ensuring correct terminologies are used for race categories (e.g., using Chamorro and Carolinian instead of Saipanese or Guamanian), and gathering information on people to whom fishermen give fish for understanding fish flow. Leong noted that the order and list of race categories in the current draft (which lists “white” and “black or African American” as the first two in that order of appearance) were pulled directly from the census, and the items used could be tailored for individual surveys but no new categories could be added. The SSPC discussed that it will likely be necessary to tailor the list for each island area. SSPC members also noted that it would be useful to understand how important fishing is for a household’s livelihood and for different income groups, and to broaden housing categories to include common situations such as multi-generational households.

Leong will circulate drafts of other modules with SSPC members for additional input as they become available.

6. National Economics/Human Dimensions Research Strategy

Hospital provided an overview of NMFS Office and Science and Technology’s recently released five year national strategy for economics and human dimensions research, called the Human Integrated EBFM Research Strategy, released in January 2021. PIFSC is considering developing a Pacific Islands Regional Implementation Plan, and held a staff workshop to begin prioritizing foundational and aspirational research activities. PIFSC staff will debrief from the PIFSC EBFM workshop held earlier in the week, plan for additional work sessions and work towards a prioritized 5-year activity plan, after which input will be solicited from key stakeholders including the Council and PIRO.

Executive Director Kitty Simonds asked if PIFSC also reviewed the community plan developed for Merizo, Guam. Hospital indicated he has not looked at that plan recently, and also noted more recent efforts for coral reef plan for which PIFSC socioeconomics staff have offered help.

7. Review of SSPC Research Plan and Priorities

The SSPC discussed whether the 2017 Social Science Strategic Plan needed an update, and noted that the document was developed as a high level document that is still generally valid. Members agreed to review the plan to identify updates and revisions by April 30, 2021. If an update is warranted, SSPC will plan to adopt a revised version at the inter-sessional meeting.

The SSPC also discussed priorities for research and social science needs, which could also be incorporated into the SSC 3-year Plan. The SSPC identified priorities related to exploring socioeconomic contexts for regional data collection programs, supporting community engagement throughout the bottomfish stock assessment process, and monitoring changes resulting from COVID impacts. The list of priorities identified is included in the recommendations section of this report.

8. Project Updates

SSPC members provided the following updates of relevant projects:

- Amesbury reported on the Fishing Traditions session of the Marianas History Conference held in February 2021, as well as an ongoing film development on the history of pelagic fishing in the Marianas.
- Wongbusarakum shared a new publication in Marine Policy entitled “Mobilizing for change: Assessing social adaptive capacity in Micronesian fishing communities”
- Severance reported on the publication under preparation as an outcome of the Council’s area-based management workshop convened in June 2020
- Leong provided updates on the Hollings and EPP/MSI scholar cultural keystone project, which has now broadened to understanding cultural functions of marine species. A group of mentors is working with the students to draft a peer-reviewed publication from their research and conversations will continue at the Hawai‘i Conservation Conference.

9. Public Comment

No public comment.

10. Discussion and Recommendations

The SSPC made the following recommendations:

1. The SSPC recommends that new members from American Samoa and CNMI be added to the committee.
2. The SSPC forms a working group to assist council staff for AS bottomfish socioeconomic information, comprising of the following members: Severance, Hospital, Cabrera, and Leong.
3. The SSPC recommends holding an inter-sessional meeting to focus on SAFE report updates and any updates to the strategic plan.
4. SSPC supports the next step identified by the Working Group on Integrating Socioeconomic Considerations for Council Actions:
 - a. Explicitly identify socioeconomic expertise in the ROA/Action Team process
 - b. Explore potential for updating community profiles, including SAFE reports, community snapshot tool, and regional fishing directories
5. SSPC identified the following emerging priorities for the near-term:
 - 1) Explore socioeconomic context for regional data collection programs, including:

- a. Evaluate factors that affect participation in existing and new data collection, especially with the CatchIt-LogIt app in the context of AS and Guam bottomfish fisheries
 - b. Identify incentives and barriers linked to factors that affect participation in new data collection programs such as the app
 - c. Evaluate community understanding of importance of data reporting (commercial, non-commercial, and subsistence)
- 2) Support community engagement throughout the bottomfish stock assessment process, including:
- a. Gathering information relevant to the community
 - b. Building capacity of stock assessment scientists to communicate and engage with the fishing community at milestones throughout the stock assessment process
 - c. Sharing and validating scientific results with the fishing community and creating opportunities for feedback on results prior to results being used in management decisions
- 3) Monitor changes resulting from COVID impacts and resilience/adaptation to future natural or social disasters that disrupt fishery production, supply chains, and markets, or otherwise act as external shocks to fishing communities

11. Other Business

There was no other business.