



WESTERN
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FISHERY
MANAGEMENT
COUNCIL

**Fishery Data Collection and Research Committee
Technical Committee
Data Collection Subpanel**

April 27 – 28, 2022
1:00 – 5:00 p.m.
Web Conference

Meeting Report

1. Welcome and Introductions

Jason Helyer, Fishery Data Collection and Research Committee (FDCRC, or Committee) Technical Committee (TC) Data Collection Subpanel (hereafter, FDCRC-TC) meeting chair, opened the meeting, welcomed members of the FDCRC-TC, and invited those in attendance to introduce themselves. Present via teleconference were Francisco Villagomez, Jay Gutierrez, Brent Tibbatts, Domingo Ochavillo, Thomas Ogawa, Hongguang Ma, and Joseph O'Malley. T. Todd Jones sat in for Jenny Suter, who was not present.

2. Approval of Draft Agenda

The FDCRC-TC approved the draft agenda for its April 2022 meeting.

3. Report on Previous FDCRC Recommendations and Council Actions

Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council (Council) staff provided a presentation on progress that has been made over the past year with respect to recommendations from the previous FDCRC-TC meeting. Regarding the recommendations for territorial resource management agencies to develop a registry of fishers to support data collection and for PIFSC to provide logistical information to increase the resolution of spatial fisheries reporting grids, the Council sent a letter to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center (PIFSC) and received a response indicating that PIFSC staff can provide information. Council staff conducted a crosswalk of the FDCRC Strategic Plan for 2015–2019 with outcomes from the Pacific Insular Fisheries Monitoring, Assessment, and Planning Summit and used this information to inform the strategic plan update. Lastly, the FDCRC adopted CatchIt LogIt (CILI) as an official tool for data collection.

4. Report on the Individual Jurisdiction Data Collection Improvement Work

A. American Samoa

Domingo Ochavillo, American Samoa Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources (DMWR), presented updates for data collection improvement efforts in American Samoa. Efforts over the last quarter were focused on the data workshops with local fishers in both Tutuila and Manua. There were relatively few fishers present (12) at the Tutuila data workshop due to inclement weather. The Manua data workshop, conversely, had better attendance with 27 fishers. All fishers present at the workshops considered themselves both commercial and subsistence fishers. These workshops represent an initial step in efforts toward PIFSC developing a bottomfish stock assessment for American Samoa in 2023. Emerging concerns include community transmission of COVID-19 on February 21, 2022, which led to a suspension of creel surveys for five weeks.

Starting March 28, DMWR creel surveyors worked two days a week, and they began working for three days a week starting April 18. DMWR needs to work with the PIFSC Fisheries Research and Monitoring Division (FRMD) to determine the impacts on the catch estimates from the lack of surveys during from February to March 2022.

B. Guam

Brent Tibbatts, Guam Division of Aquatic and Wildlife Resources (DAWR), provided updates on efforts to improve inshore data collection in Guam. For the first half of January 2021, Guam was still under restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Normally, six creel surveys inshore and two participation surveys are conducted each month, but in January, only three surveys were conducted after COVID restrictions ended on January 18. However, DAWR increased the number of conducted participation surveys to eight to compensate. After January 18, creel survey schedules returned to normal. There have been no aerial surveys due to COVID restrictions to air services taking on passengers. A pilot that previously performed surveys for DAWR has recently opened a new air service company, and DAWR is getting price quotes to restart the aerial surveys. Creel survey meta-data as well as summary statistics are included in the Council's annual Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) report for the Mariana Archipelago. Emerging issues include the lack of reporting by fishers and commercial vendors since it remains voluntary. There are more than three vendors selling fish on Guam; however, data continue to be confidential due to the lack of reporting, which may be partially due to issues from language barriers. Vendors who speak English as a second language are not comfortable communicating with DAWR staff, do not report data to a useful resolution (e.g., "assorted reef fish"), and are suspicious of the reasons why DAWR is collecting the data. Additionally, the high turnover of vendors in Guam persists, so better continuity in training is needed.

Tom Flores, Guam DAWR, provided updates on efforts to improve offshore data collection in Guam. In response to busy boat basins on the weekends, DAWR has "doubled-up" on creel survey staff to collect information from all present vessels. The boat-based data continue to be expanded through PIFSC, but DAWR has concerns that the expansion may be overestimating catch values. Manpower is sufficient at DAWR, and funding continues to be provided through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration (WSFR) Program. Emerging issues include the reluctance of many fishers and vendors to report their catches and sales, respectively. Additionally, there has been an increase in kayak-based fishers that harvest deep water bottomfish but are difficult to intercept during reel surveys. The reduction of fishing in certain areas may be due to available fish stocks and the recent increase in fuel prices. During the peak of the pandemic, Guam charter fisheries nearly declined to zero, but they have begun to recover more recently. Charter operations began advertising to demographics such as locals and military in the absence of normal tourism levels.

Helyer asked if there is any information that is able to be collected from kayak-based deep water bottomfish fishers. Flores said that the kayak fishers are not intercepted well by the creel surveys since DAWR is unable to survey every port and survey effort is inconsistent. The only available data from kayak fishers would be through CILI if the fishers opted to report. Also, it is unknown if kayak fishers are selling a majority of their catch. While increasing surveys to capture information from kayak fishers may take a large increase in effort, encouraging the kayak fishers to report data through CILI may be an option.

T. Todd Jones, PIFSC FRMD, asked for DAWR's perspective on the large increase in total estimated bottomfish catch in Guam in 2021, as it was one of the highest catch totals in the past

several decades. Flores indicated that there have been fewer shallow water bottomfish fishers and more deep water bottomfish fishers in Guam with large catches in recent years. Many bottomfish creel survey intercepts come from the two main ports in the north, whereas not many bottomfish interviews are conducted in the south portion of Guam. The increase may be due to increased deep water fishing effort, but the expansion may also be overestimating total catch.

C. CNMI

Frank Villagomez, CNMI Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW), provided updates on efforts to improve data collection in the CNMI. There are several new staff in the DFW data section, so training is a priority, including identifying common types of fishing and fishers, fish identification, and fish measurements. Additionally, the commercial data collection program has improved due to new staff; there are 42 active vendors, and 37 of those vendors are up to date with their data submissions. However, the fishery data manager position at DFW is still vacant, and two of the seven positions for fishery technicians also remain unfilled. Roughly 85% of the remaining funding for DFW is going to personnel salaries. Emerging issues include the hiring and retaining of staff as well as implementing mandatory license and reporting regulations. The provisions were signed into law in 2012, but regulations were not developed until 2019. Since then, DFW has been trying to create an implementation plan to establish the rules for the law. Another issue is confusion from vendors surrounding electronic vs. paper-based reporting (i.e., CILI/Sellit Logit, or SILI, vs. commercial invoices). DFW staff told vendors to continue reporting with paper until SILI is better established. There are additional issues with the creel survey data not accounting for catches from Tinian or Rota. There have been some pilot studies conducted in Rota to collect creel survey data, but commercial data have not been collected at all. Lastly, Sugar Dock on Saipan, which is one of the three ports sampled for boat-based creel surveys, has sediment build-up on the north side of the pier. Sugar Dock is still being surveyed by DFW, but there is not a lot of fishing activities, so staff will usually opt to collect opportunistic surveys at other sites, such the DFW Boat Ramp. However, DFW has had difficulties in determining how to input data collected from new sites like the DFW Boat Ramp.

Ma asked if catch interviews are still being conducted at Sugar Dock. Villagomez stated that DFW staff go to Sugar Dock, but no catch interviews are done. The sediment accretion at Sugar Dock makes it difficult for fishers to launch boats there, so the site is relatively inactive. Ma asked if perhaps the data collection at Sugar Dock consists only of effort surveys and not catch interviews. Villagomez indicated that he will check the DFW database to see if there has been any effort at Sugar Dock in the form of either trailer counts or intercept interviews. As a side note, Villagomez mentioned that the CNMI government allocated money to restore Sugar Dock, which will include dredging the accumulated sediment and revitalizing the surrounding area. It is not clear when the project will begin.

Council staff stated that the Council has money under the Sustainable Fisheries Fund (SFF) to establish the DFW creel survey program on Tinian and Rota. Villagomez noted that DFW needs to develop a creel survey protocol for these islands in the near future.

Jones inquired about the issues DFW had inputting data into the Western Pacific Fisheries Information Network (WPacFIN) database and whether the issues were with Visual FoxPro (VFP). Villagomez confirmed that under VFP, there is no place to enter data for the DFW boat ramp into the database, but this would likely be easy to do with MySQL. Villagomez asked for clarification on when the transition from VFP to MySQL will take place. Jones said that the VFP transition is in line with basing the data from the Catchit Logit Application Suite (CLAS) in

MySQL and territorial database modernization. PIFSC has received FIS funding for these efforts and applied for additional monies. In addition to transitioning from VFP to MySQL, creel surveys will begin to utilize progressive web applications for data entry, though this also requires database modernization. Specifically, with respect to adding data for DFW Boat Ramp, PIFSC staff and DFW staff can discuss the relatively simple issue privately after the meeting with Bradley Gough of WPacFIN and Ma. PIFSC FRMD is also conducting a creel survey review, in which the relevancy of the sampled ports to where fishing occurs will be evaluated.

D. Hawaii

1. Commercial Fishery

Jason Helyer, Hawaii Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR), provided updates on efforts to improve commercial data collection in Hawaii. In 2021, while licensing and fish reports increased, dealer reports decreased. Reporting can be done online or with paper reports, but fishers are tending to submit more reports online as time goes on. The decrease in dealer reports is not necessarily reflective of a decrease in vendors, but rather indicates who of the dealers are reporting; the data collection is imperfect. Two improvements made were Deep 7 bottomfish and pelagic species discrepancy analyses/audits. The analyses compared fish reports and sales reports for each commercial marine license (CML) holder or dealer, and DAR staff would contact a dealer if a discrepancy in catch and sales numbers was identified. However, only 30% of DAR contacts resulted in a situation where issues were resolved. The analyses indicated that about 1% to 4% of commercial catch is unreported for these fisheries, though this only reflects a portion of unreported catch. Data are summarized and reported through the DAR annual landings report, the Council's annual SAFE reports, and data requests from the public and other agencies. With respect to manpower, the DAR fish reporting group has one vacancy in their licensing team and one vacancy in their reporting team, which also has no supervisor after Reggie Kokobun retired. The Hawaii commercial data collection programs are funded through several multi-year pools of money: the Commercial Fish Special Fund (from CML sales), an Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act Grant, and a WPacFIN grant. Emerging issues include evolving the reporting team to be able to handle mostly online reports with the addition of data quality assurance/quality control, but there are many challenges with the DAR database systems developed long ago by a contractor (i.e., difficult and expensive to maintain with years of "band-aid" fixes). Additionally, staff turnover at DAR and WPacFIN has hampered the previously regular meetings to identify common goals between the two groups.

Ma asked if any discrepancy analyses were performed for uku. Helyer stated that formal comparison of fish catch and sales reports is only conducted for the Deep 7 fishery and noted it would be a good idea to expand this analysis to include uku in the future. Ma agreed since now both commercial and non-commercial data are being used together to measure fishery performance against the uku annual catch target.

Ogawa noted that some of the commercial dealers are not reporting and asked about outreach to non-reporting dealers is possible. Helyer noted the challenge of enforcing dealer reporting. DAR sends letters to potential new dealers as well as non-reporting dealers when made aware. However, without a dealer license, it is difficult to enforce non-reporting. Helyer added that outreach would be a part of the new dealer license, but progress has been slow.

2. Non-Commercial Fishery

Thomas Ogawa, Hawaii Marine Recreational Fishing Survey (HMRFS), provided updates on efforts to improve non-commercial data collection in Hawaii. Regarding the Marine Recreational

Information Program (MRIP) implementation process, Phase 1 and 2 revisions were described. Phase 1 was recently revised to transition the private boat and shore mode surveys to a standard MRIP-certified access point angler intercept survey (APAIS) which incorporates “time block” sampling windows and tablets to be deployed by January 2023. In the original plan, only the private boat survey was to be switched to the certified APAIS design as well as adding trip-based effort questions targeting invertebrates to the Fishing Effort Survey (FES, mail survey). DAR subsequently decided that fishery estimates for invertebrate species were not needed due to the low incidence of invertebrates in the historical datasets and thus no revisions to the FES were being requested. Phase 2 involves the certification of the roving survey, collecting invertebrate fishery information, and collecting gear-based catch and effort data to allow for the calculation of catch per unit effort (CPUE). With respect to manpower, HMRFS would like to increase its current staff workload from 0.75 time to full time as well as hire additional staff on Maui, Kauai, and Molokai to allow for more complete sampling coverage. For fiscal year 2023, HMRFS has level funding from MRIP and the Sport Fish Restoration Program of the USFWS with a possible increase in fiscal year 2024. Emerging issues include MRIP staff retirements slowing processes down and reinstating invertebrate data collection as a part of Phase 2, which may be impeded by difficulties surrounding filtering invertebrates out from current interviews. Also, there are issues associated with rod and reel having multiple methods of harvest within the gear type. For example, a boat-based fisher who spends most of his time bottomfishing may troll on the way to and from the bottomfishing grounds. If the fisher caught a pelagic species while trolling, then that species would appear to have been caught while bottomfishing as only the primary gear/method used during the trip is recorded. The PIFSC Stock Assessment Program suggested implementing different gear codes for each of the different rod and reel methods.

Ma noted that NMFS was going to accommodate the Phase 1 changes, but starting in 2023, the MRIP-certified intercept survey forms will begin being used in Hawaii. In the interest of not changing too many things at once, Ma noted that MRIP (i.e., NMFS Office of Science and Technology) staff suggested implementing the new survey forms first before implementing additional changes. Ogawa asked if NMFS is amenable to implementing modified gear codes for rod and reel gear types. Ma replied that NMFS and MRIP are planning to accommodate some of the suggested modifications after the MRIP-certified intercept survey is in use/in place.

5. Report on the Electronic Reporting Initiatives

A. CatchIt LogIt Implementation

Council staff provided an update on CLAS implementation. CLAS went live in 2021 with both CILI and SILI. This past year has been focused on optimizing and debugging the applications as well as having fishers registered to contribute. There has been an average of one to five fishers reporting on CILI each month, depending on the territory and gear type. However, CLAS contributions seem to have substantially declined after the initial sign-ups. It is not clear if there are fewer registrants fishing or if people are simply not using the applications. It may be useful to compare data collected from CILI with the Lokahi application. For SILI, there are one to four vendors participating depending on the territory. To determine the performance of CILI thus far, the Council performed a data comparison for catches and trips from January to June 2021 from CILI and the expanded creel survey data. The comparison came with some caveats, such as the high variability in the creel survey data that are intended for annual expansion and the CILI database being incomplete due to voluntary reporting. The CILI data tended to be lower than expanded creel values except for bottomfish fishing trips in the CNMI and American Samoa. Outreach for CLAS is ongoing, with posters being developed and sent to venues, a media blitz

(i.e., radio shows, videos, social media, etc.), and in-person interactions (at tournaments, one-on-one trainings, etc.). Issues with the implementation of the CLAS include the lack of technological proficiency for some of the older fishers, the lack of incentive, and vendor confusion regarding through which platform they must report data. The FDCRC approved the CLAS transition plan, and the Council initiated a contract with SudoKrew Solutions to complete transition tasks such as migrating VFP to SILI, developing the backend cloud database system for WPacFIN, etc.

Helyer commented that, based on experience with Hawaii’s online reporting system, there are different generations of fishers with varying preferences for electronic data collection. Going forward, a version of paper reporting would be necessary for the portion of fishers that are not comfortable with submitting data online. Council staff clarified that CLAS is not replacing any data collection streams, but rather it is augmenting current data collection efforts to better determine fishing activity and how it may compare with the creel survey expansions.

Ma asked if the proportions of commercial to non-commercial fishing in the territories are generally known. Council staff replied that previous studies determined territorial fishing activity to be primarily commercial, and the Council’s Archipelagic Plan Team is making efforts on developing a more robust estimate of this proportion. Council staff also clarified that CLAS is for both commercial and non-commercial fishers with SILI and CILI, respectively.

Ogawa asked if it is possible that the expanded creel survey data for spearfishing being higher than what was reported for the gear type through CILI could be an artifact of fishers not reporting trips where no fish were caught. Council staff indicated that fishers registered for CILI may be more likely to be boat-based fishers, and there are not many spearfishers are registered. Ogawa suggested that additional outreach to spearfishing clubs and tournaments could help fill the gap in data. Council staff agreed and noted that outreach to fishers other than those that are boat-based will be part of the next phase of CLAS implementation.

Joseph O’Malley, PIFSC Life History Program, asked if the outreach activities listed in the presentation were reflective of recent efforts or a complete summary of all activities. Council staff clarified that the listed activities were since the beginning of 2021, encompassing the time periods before and during the launch of CLAS. The Council did not have funds to retain the initial CLAS administrators under contract, but the Council’s Island Coordinators in each territory have been providing support as necessary.

Regarding the difference in data between the creel survey expansions and CILI, O’Malley stated that there are large caveats in that most of the data are from just after the launch of CLAS. Council staff noted that it is important to determine how to foster sustained participation, and the current hope is to do a “saturation drive” in which local media is saturated with information on CILI to encourage more fishers to register.

B. Sellit Logit Database Migration

T. Todd Jones provided an update on the SILI database migration. As an initial effort, PIFSC FRMD recently began working to review the design and protocol of the creel surveys for all three territories in January 2022, and in February, meetings were held in American Samoa to better understand the data collection systems in place. The next work phase is cloud database migration. Under CLAS, SILI could be used to replace the territorial commercial receipt systems, and PIFSC FRMD collaborated with the Council to contract SudoKrew Solutions to migrate historical commercial data into the CLAS cloud. Additionally, the SILI database was

redesigned, migration scripts were generated, and new user interfaces were developed to support data entry by territorial agency staff. The next phase is to finalize the application designs based on feedback from the territorial resource management agencies. Once the design is finalized, the old and new versions of SILI will be merged and will support paper-based reporting (through creel surveyors manually inputting the data). PIFSC FMRD recently hired former Council staff Marlowe Sabater as a territorial liaison to coordinate activities between WPacFIN, PIFSC, the territorial agencies, the State of Hawaii, and the Council. WPacFIN resources have recently been made available to the territories for data collection improvement efforts. The biggest issue with CLAS is that there is no reporting mandate to use CILI, unlike SILI since vendor reporting mandates exist in American Samoa and the CNMI. Fishery managers must take care when training fishers to use CLAS so as to not give them false expectations; fishers should double-report through both the creel survey interviews as well as CILI until mandatory reporting for non-commercial fishing is implemented, which is unlikely to occur in the near future. CILI augments the available data and provides information on fish lengths and species composition of the reported catch.

C. Mandatory License and Reporting Regulations

Representatives from the territorial resource management agencies provided updates on their efforts to implement regulations for mandatory licensing and reporting of commercial fishers in their respective island areas. Villagomez stated that there have been no recent updates for the CNMI. The DFW sent their implementation plan for mandatory license and reporting regulations to be reviewed by NOAA staff and received comments back. The next step will be to revise the document and meet with the DFW Director to evaluate whether the plan is sufficient to proceed.

Ochavillo stated that there are no updates on progress to improving their mandatory license and reporting regulations, as the issue still needs to be discussed further with the DMWR Director.

Jay Gutierrez, Guam DAWR, stated that a specific process to implement regulations must be followed. Currently, DAWR is obtaining a purchase order for an advertisement about a hearing on the regulations. The order has been entered into the appropriate system, and DAWR is awaiting approval by the Guam General Services Agency to approve.

Ogawa stated that the State of Hawaii intends to implement an online registration platform for a non-commercial, non-resident fishing license in Fall 2022, but it is not certain whether the online registration will be ready by then. While there is no immediate initiative to mandate a non-commercial, resident fishing license, there are several new revenue sources for local management, including a green tax on eco-tourism activities. Helyer noted the struggles that the territories seem to be having in implementing regulations for mandatory licenses and reporting. In Hawaii, once regulations were passed, there were difficulties in obtaining fish reports. It was not until disciplinary action became a possibility (e.g., financially, through the Civil Resource Violation System) that overall compliance increased from 20 to 80%.

6. Discussions

FDCRC-TC discussions were held immediately after each agenda item.

7. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

8. Revisiting and Renewing Data Sharing Agreements

Helyer provided background on the data sharing agreements between the Council, PIFSC, and the territorial resource management agencies. The agreements typically last for five years and allow the Council to have access to creel survey data from the local agencies through PIFSC. The data sharing agreements would be renewed in 2022 for Guam and the CNMI and in 2023 for American Samoa. The intended outcome for this agenda item was for each island area's representative to report on their review of the previous agreements to determine if changes should be made for the new agreements.

Council staff stated that the previous agreements had been shared with Guam and the CNMI, and Council staff asked if there are items that need to be changed or updated. Gutierrez stated that he needs to review the agreement again. Jones clarified that the future path for data collection will be the cloud, and during conversations with DFW, Jones noted that the previous data sharing agreements do not have language that covers the region's transition to progressive web applications or the cloud. Helyer agreed and stated that this issue applies to Hawaii as well. Helyer asked if Council staff would communicate with Guam representatives after the meeting to review the agreement, and Villagomez stated that he also needs to review the previous agreement for the CNMI. Villagomez asked who can be worked with to address changes to language, and Council staff confirmed that they would assist. Council staff will send out an email with the draft agreement update for review, the local agencies can provide comments or changes prior to signing, and Council staff will facilitate incorporating the changes after they are cleared by NOAA General Counsel. Council staff noted that they would send the draft agreements within the two weeks following the FDCRC-TC meeting.

9. Review and Updates to the MRIP Regional Implementation Plan

Helyer noted that, under this agenda item, the FDCRC-TC was looking for input or updates to actions identified in the previous MRIP Regional Implementation Plan (the plan). Council staff noted that the previous plan ends this year after being initiated in 2018, so the plan must be developed for the next five years. The FDCRC-TC needs to review the previous plan, note what items were completed, and note any tasks associated with new needs; doing so will allow the Council to procure funding related to the listed tasks when MRIP has resources to allocate.

A. Hawaii

Ogawa noted that his presentation from Day 1 of the meeting covered a majority of recent changes relevant to the MRIP Regional Implementation Plan, which mostly involved discussion, planning, and ultimately breaking Hawaii's portion of the plan into two phases, both of which have been revised. Phase 1 is now tablet implementation and using the MRIP-certified APAIS. The difference between the old and new APAIS is the use time blocks (i.e., a new stratum) and does not allow alternate site visits or shifting assignments around (i.e., days, sites, timeframe). This approach will allow for uniform sampling to generate a true stratified random sample. Additionally for Phase 1, the mail survey component will not be revised for trip-based information where invertebrate questions were going to be added, but DAR decided against this. Phase 2 involves certifying the roving survey, which could help the territories in the certification of their roving surveys. Another part of phase 2 is implementing invertebrate data collection as mentioned before and collecting gear-based information. Main changes to the plan are to revise cost estimates to increase current staff to full time and hire new staff. Additional funds for Phase 2 will also be needed because the roving survey will require more driving (field staff use personal vehicles and get mileage reimbursements). In addition, the data will be housed in a secure, cloud-based server at MRIP headquarters.

Council staff asked what is in the current MRIP Implementation Plan that can be removed or revised to better meet current needs. Ogawa replied that the plan should be revised to outline the phased-in approach and items under each phase. Council staff stated that they would work with Ogawa to update Hawaii's portion prior to the upcoming Council meeting, and they asked if any other FDCRC-TC members had feedback for Hawaii's portion of the plan. Ma suggested that items listed by Richard Cody, NMFS Office of Science and Technology (OST), in an email response to Council staff regarding the phase-in approach should be included in the revisions.

B. American Samoa

Council staff noted that the plan for American Samoa focuses on pilot surveys for the creel survey program, and DMWR proposed quarterly data analyses to shed light on the accuracy of the efforts. Ochavillo stated that this item was developed in 2018, and the aforementioned pilot projects were applied for under MRIP but not funded. Thus, nothing has been done for the tasks listed in the plan. From the perspective of DMWR, Ochavillo believes that the ideas for the pilot studies may shift with all of the changes that have occurred since 2018, and he suggested developing a new plan outside of the current meeting due to the anticipated workload. Council staff encouraged FDCRC-TC members to list some ideas during this meeting to help push the effort forward and work on it further offline. Ochavillo confirmed that DMWR will review the pilot projects in the plan, review them, and see if any can be carried over for the subsequent plan.

Jones noted that American Samoa is the first territory where PIFSC is conducting the analysis of the base creel surveys and if they align with the current fisheries (i.e., with respect to ports). Some of the review being conducted by PIFSC would be applicable to the review of some of the pilot projects, and items such as determining if the survey ports align with the current fisheries could get fleshed out. Ochavillo continued, saying that there are many portions of the plan that should be reviewed, and while there have been many developments since 2018 and PIFSC is addressing some items, DMWR can contribute by reviewing the pilot project ideas and working with PIFSC FRMD to identify additional work for the next five years. Helyer stated that additional time and effort are needed to ensure the plan update is accurate, and Council staff agreed. Helyer suggested that the territorial agencies look more closely at the plan after the meeting and communicate further; Ochavillo supported this idea.

Jones stated that, for territories seeking MRIP funding, one of the first steps is a formal review of the current survey designs in each of the territories. In Hawaii, workshops were held to examine the survey design and identify strengths and weaknesses. The following workshop evaluated the design changes and pilot surveys, and the next step was a formal review of the program. Ochavillo asked if PIFSC FRMD is conducting a review of the creel survey program in American Samoa, and if this review would be applicable for MRIP certification. Jones replied that the goal is to move toward MRIP certification to allow funding for the creel surveys in the territories. Thus, the first step is looking at the creel surveys, since they have not been updated in a long time, to see how they align with ports, etc., but it is not clear if a review is a necessary step prior to presenting the survey design to MRIP. Ogawa noted that it does not hurt to do a preliminary evaluation of the survey design to better understand strengths and weaknesses logistically and statistically. Then, it will be easy to convey the information to MRIP consultants to evaluate and corroborate themselves. Ogawa suggested not sinking too much money into the evaluation if MRIP consultants will eventually get involved but agreed that a survey review is the first step. It may be advantageous to hold a workshop regarding survey design features and how to improve upon the current surveys. If Hawaii's roving survey were to be already certified, that would be a help for the territories, aside from conducting any pilot studies that MRIP may

suggest. Jones stated that there is a need to circle back to examine the parallels between improving the creel surveys while moving toward MRIP certification and funding. Ogawa noted that glaring issues in the survey design can be addressed prior to involving MRIP consultants, but it may be best to wait for other items in case MRIP disagrees with any implemented changes.

Ochavillo stated that if PIFSC FMRD is reviewing the creel surveys, DMWR supports the initiative and would make it a priority for the plan if additional funding is required.

Jones stated that for the two-day workshop for the National Academy of Science, Science, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) review of MRIP, the ultimate goal was to move towards certification since it would allow for future funding for creel. Ma added that, during that review, a territorial review by MRIP was also discussed, including the ongoing efforts by PIFSC FRMD. At that time, a representative from OST and MRIP said the program review by the territories can be joint between PIFSC staff and MRIP consultants. Since some preliminary work was already completed, it can be used by MRIP consultants in a future review.

Jones stated that it would be preferable to have Ma, Ogawa, and others to discuss how to coordinate the ongoing PIFSC review to be combined with MRIP process to have them further involved. Jones also recommended deferring on making progress on this item until the reviewers are able to join the discussion. A working group could be formed to meet in the summer to discuss how to move forward. Ogawa noted that he can be present to provide support. Helyer stated that Council staff would organize the meeting, and the territorial representatives may propose dates.

C. CNMI

Villagomez indicated that he is in the process of reviewing the previous plan currently, but the only potential change he identified so far was for an item about remote observations. Villagomez believed that utilizing technology to collect data is a great idea, but it is not clear how funding would work. The WSFR recently prohibited the use of drones due to associated software risks.

Council staff indicated that the expansion of the creel surveys to Tinian and Rota in the CNMI could utilize SFF funding and be added to the plan; the DFW could also think about how to better incorporate CLAS into their items. The new plan is an opportunity to generate a “wish list” of projects to see what could be funded for non-commercial fisheries. If MRIP receives a windfall, there is potential for the funds to be allocated for projects under the plan.

Villagomez indicated that the DFW creel survey program would benefit from a review, as it is hard to determine what can or cannot be done in the next five years without such a review. Jones noted that what was previously discussed for American Samoa would also apply for the CNMI and Guam with respect to a creel survey review. When the working group meets, it should include all three territories to complete a parallel evaluation. The group can then discuss how to move the issues toward MRIP certification. Helyer agreed with the suggestion and proposed a meeting in May or June where PIFSC would present preliminary results to better inform the new plan. Jones agreed that the FDCRC-TC would be better informed once the evaluation is complete. Helyer asked if it is possible to postpone the implementation plan update until after the presentation of review results by PIFSC. Council staff confirmed, noting that the current plan still covers 2022, and stated that the FDCRC-TC could recommend PIFSC coordinate the review with the territory agencies and MRIP to have more time to develop ideas for the subsequent plan.

Jones expressed uncertainty about a meeting time without having conferred with the review’s authors and suggested late summer or early fall to have the review presented to the FDCRC-TC

working group. Helyer asked if it would be possible to set a cut-off date and have a meeting in the fall of 2022 on the plan, with the intention of facilitating flexibility in scheduling. Council staff suggested that there could be a recommendation to develop a timeline to better understand when updates need to be submitted to MRIP, when the FDCRC should approve the updated plan (i.e., in June or later), etc. The FDCRC-TC approved the approach by consensus.

D. Guam

No updates were provided for Guam given the outcome of the discussion on the MRIP Regional Implementation Plan for the other island areas (see agenda items 9.A through 9.C).

10. Consolidation of the New Tasks for the MRIP Regional Implementation Plan

The FDCRC-TC took up this agenda item concurrently with the preceding agenda item (9).

11. Discussions

Ma noted that Marlowe Sabater, PIFSC FRMD, previously represented the Pacific Islands Region for the National MRIP Implementation Team as a regional lead. Ma stated that while the Pacific Islands Region has MRIP Implementation Plans that encompass the next four to five years, other regions' plan may only extend from one to three years. Ma requested that Sabater provide his perspective regarding what he knows about the plans from other regions from his time on the national team.

Sabater stated that all of the regions are updating their plans on a five-year time scale, and MRIP would like each of the regions to complete the updates to their regional plans prior to the finalization of the national strategic plan; however, no explicit deadline for the final regional plans has been set. The next regional implementation council will be meeting in May 2022, which will provide Council staff with a better idea on the timeline. Sabater suggested that it would be a good idea to frontload the Pacific Islands regional plan such that it would be easier to submit once the deadline is known. Helyer asked if a shorter timeline for the regional implementation plan may be more appropriate for the territories while Hawaii retains the five-year plan format since MRIP certification may be forthcoming. Sabater replied that neither the timeline nor Hawaii's proximity to MRIP certification are of particular importance since every task will be described in the national plan, which will present priorities and timelines for each listed effort. However, short timelines can be implemented for the plans as needed.

12. Other Business

There was no other business.

13. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

14. FDCRC-TC-DCSP Recommendations

- The FDCRC-TC recommends the Council direct staff to work with DAR staff on developing an appropriate outreach targeting fishermen on the importance of accurate reporting to reduce underreporting.
- The FDCRC-TC recommends the Council request Hawaii DAR to include uku in its review of commercial data discrepancies.
- The FDCRC-TC establishes a working group of PIFSC FMRD staff, territorial resource management agency staff, and Council staff to review the outcomes of the territorial creel

survey evaluation by PIFSC FRMD and utilize the results to refine the MRIP Regional Implementation Plan following the territorial visits in summer 2022. The FDCRC-TC further recommends the Council work with the State of Hawaii to revise the MRIP Regional Implementation Plan to reflect its phased-in approach to HMRFS improvements.

- The FDCRC-TC recommends the Council to review the territorial data sharing agreements with NOAA General Counsel and the territorial resource management agencies to facilitate endorsement.

Work Items

- HMRFS to ensure invertebrate data collection is incorporated into the MRIP Regional Implementation Plan (i.e., for Kona crab, deepwater shrimp, forage fish/squid, tako, opihi, etc.) and the FDCRC-TC requests PIFSC to perform the expansion.
- DFW to develop a plan/protocol to implement creel surveys in Tinian and Rota.
- DFW to review their database to determine what type of fishing survey efforts have been occurring at Sugar Dock in recent years.
- PIFSC to meet with DFW to discuss the issue of incorporating data collected from the DFW Boat Ramp into the database expansion system.
- Council to perform additional CILI outreach at spearfishing clubs and tournaments as part of its “saturation” approach.