



Report of the Fishery Data Collection and Research Committee

June 16, 2022

2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Via WebEx Conferencing

Honolulu, Hawaii

1. Welcome Remarks and Introductions

Archie Soliai, Fishery Data Collection and Research Committee (FDCRC) meeting chair, opened the meeting, welcomed members of the FDCRC, and invited those in attendance to introduce themselves. Mike Seki, Chelsa Muña-Brecht, Tony Benavente, April Trinidad, and Ruth Utzurum were present. Brian Nielson was not present.

Others in attendance were Joshua DeMello, Mark Mitsuyasu, Zach Yamada, Matt Seeley, Thomas Remington (Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, or Council); David Sakoda (Hawaii Department of Aquatic Resources, or HDAR); Marlowe Sabater, Jenny Suter, Rebecca Walker, Tia Brown, Hongguang Ma, Emily Crigler (National Marine Fisheries Service Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center, or NMFS PIFSC); Michael Tenorio, Frank Villagomez (Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Division of Fish and Wildlife, or CNMI DFW); and Tammy Harp, Angela Dela Cruz (Public).

2. Data Collection Subpanel Meeting Report and Recommendations

Jason Helyer, HDAR and FDCRC Technical Committee Data Collection Subpanel (FDCRC-TC) chair, reviewed the outcomes of the FDCRC-TC meeting held on April 27-28, 2022, and associated recommendations. At the meeting, members from each of the island areas noted issues with data collection stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic. There was also discussion on electronic reporting initiatives, including the Catchit Logit Application Suite (CLAS) and mandatory license and reporting regulations. Additional discussion included revisiting data sharing agreements for their renewal and reviewing updates to the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) Implementation Plan.

The FDCRC-TC developed several recommendations. The FDCRC-TC recommended that the Council direct its staff to work with HDAR staff to develop an appropriate outreach targeting fishers on the importance of accurate reporting to reduce underreporting. The FDCRC-TC recommended that the Council request HDAR include uku in its review of commercial data discrepancies. The FDCRC-TC established a working group of PIFSC Fisheries Research and Monitoring Division (FRMD) 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 recommended the Council work with the State of Hawaii to revise the MRIP Regional Implementation Plan to reflect its phased-in approach to Hawaii Marine Recreational Fishing Survey (HMRFS) improvements. Lastly, the FDCRC-TC recommended the Council review the territorial data sharing agreements with NOAA General Counsel and the territorial resource management agencies to facilitate endorsement. Helyer also reviewed the work items generated by the FDCRC-TC at their meeting.

3. FDCRC Strategic Plan 2022-2026 Update

Council staff presented on the progress for the update to the FDCRC Strategic Plan for 2022 to 2026. Commitment pages have been signed by all pertinent FDCRC members except for American Samoa, as their documents were lost during shipping. Council staff plan on facilitating Soliai signing the commitment page for American Samoa when he is in Hawaii the week of June 20, 2022, for the 191st Council meeting. Council staff will then mail the updated Strategic Plan with signatures to all FDCRC members to finalize the update.

A. Status of Grants and Cooperative Agreements

T. Todd Jones, PIFSC FRMD, presented on the status of grants and cooperative agreements in the Pacific Islands Region as they relate to the state of data improvements in the region. Jones reviewed fishery information network (FIN)-partner grants for each island area. For the DMWR, DFW, DAWR, and BSP grants, the funds must be used by June 30, 2023. Since these partners are entering the final year of their agreement, the next four-year agreement also needs to be developed and initiated. For HDAR and HMRFS, the grant is in the third year in the agreement and the funds must be used by September 30, 2023, and NMFS PIFSC hopes to get Hawaii on to the same grant cycle as the other grants.

He said that PIFSC has initiated a partnership with the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC) since requirements by the NOAA Grants Management Division prohibit fishery-dependent portfolios being funded as grants under the Cooperative Institute for Marine and Atmospheric Research (CIMAR). Thus, CIMAR grants will be converted to PSMFC contracts. As a part of this collaboration, Fisheries Information System (FIS) Program funding for data modernization will also be administered through PSMFC.

Jones reviewed the status data improvements, which is broken into phases. Phase 1 includes the transition of SILI from the Council to PIFSC. Stage 2 of this phase started in April 2022, will end in August 2022, and includes building a cloud database infrastructure (which was completed in June), the migration of the commercial receipt book database system, upgrading the SILI data entry portal, and training territorial agency staff in July and August 2022.

Regarding the review of the creel survey review and forthcoming MRIP certification, PIFSC completed interviews with territorial agency creel survey staff and a post-doctoral student will

finalize the analysis by Fall 2022 that will provide recommendations on potential changes to the design and implementation of the surveys. The analysis will also include Phase 3, which is a multifaceted approach to transition creel to electronic reporting (i.e., using tablets, progressive web applications). This review will be the basis for MRIP certification, which would lead to additional funding for creel surveys in the territories.

A territorial representative to the FDCRC noted difficulties in encouraging vendors who purchase fish from local fishers to participate in their voluntary commercial reporting program. Commercial landings are increasing and relationships with fish buyers (e.g., hotels and restaurants) are improving. A charter boat owner had previously noted he participates in the SILI application and wants to contribute to the commercial landings program. However, it is the vendor who is purchasing the fish that fills out receipt book, and it is harder to get the hotels/restaurants to which fishers sell to participate. The FDCRC member asked if it is appropriate to provide a commercial receipt book to charter companies so they can fill it out and have the buyers simply verify. Jones stated that there are separate data streams in the vendor's sales reporting and commercial fisher reporting, and the streams need to be distinct. Ensuring the data are submitted the right way will be beneficial going forward. An individual fisher may not sell only to one vendor or may not sell all of their catch, so the data sources are kept separate. PIFSC intends to set-up a meeting with Guam BSP and DAWR for this to discuss roles of BSP and SILI in the upcoming grant.

An FDCRC member said that DAWR and PIFSC have been very collaborative, and what I would like to see is to use our biologists in more scientific based projects and research. I have discussed with grants manager a couple points about wanting to build own lab and analysis. She said that they also want to expand on this at a later time to create own in house life history program.

Another FDCRC member said that they would be interested in using their biologists at the territorial management agency in more science-based projects and research, and there may be interest in building a laboratory to perform additional life history analyses. A second FDCRC member suggested reaching out to the University of Guam Sea Grant program to see if they can be leveraged to develop a life history laboratory.

4. Status of Draft Data Sharing Agreements

Council staff reported that the CNMI and Guam have data sharing agreements that expire this year. The process includes sending the agreements to NOAA General Counsel for approval so that it can get signed. He asked for commitments to get the agreements reviewed and signed prior to expiration.

An FDCRC member asked when the data sharing agreements for American Samoa expire. Council staff indicated that the agreements expire this year for Guam and next year for American Samoa.

5. MRIP Regional Implementation Plan Update

Council staff provided an update on the MRIP Regional Implementation Plan (RIP), which was developed in collaboration with the FDCRC and other advisors. The RIP provides a regional wish list for MRIP and includes five prioritized needs: a programmatic review of the territorial creel surveys, funding for surveys, improved timeliness of non-commercial catch estimates, developing an algorithm that extracts the non-commercial component of the creel surveys, and developing a mobile data entry system. For the review of the creel surveys, PIFSC is currently reviewing the survey design and implementation and plans to finalize a report in Fall 2022. For survey funding, HMRFS survey changes were approved and made available for funding though it has not yet been identified. Funding is not available for improving the timeliness of non-commercial catch estimates. PIFSC is also working on developing a non-commercial module for the Council's annual Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) reports. The Council's CLAS covered the development of the mobile data entry system. Council staff asked the FDCRC to consider if there are projects that should be added or removed from the RIP update.

6. Territorial Relationships with the Pacific Community (SPC)

Council staff noted that this agenda item was included because of the 14th SPC Head of Fisheries held June 14 to 17, 2022. The Council is interested in gauging the relationships of the territorial agencies with the SPC and if the agencies are taking advantage of the SPC's ability to provide information, data, and research for fisheries in each island area.

A territorial representative to the FDCRC indicated that it is a struggle to learn take advantage of SPC opportunities for their territory since it can be challenging to understand how SPC assistance can match territorial needs and priorities. It seems that the territories are either far behind the SPC's ongoing projects (i.e., such that the territories would be learning about their projects rather than participating) or the projects are more relevant to other island areas.

A second territorial representative to the FDCRC noted that their territory had been part of SPC programs in the past, but there may be more opportunities for the territories to reconnect with the SPC going forward.

A third territorial representative to the FDCRC stated that one of the territories is not in good standing with the SPC because they are behind on dues, but they are working on a payment plan to allow the territory to participate in the SPC in the future. The SPC offers many opportunities to work collaboratively with their neighbors in the Pacific Islands to achieve territorial goals. An interesting example is a system being implemented by New Caledonia where artificial intelligence (AI) will be used to capture data during fisher surveys. The advanced technological system would take measurements simultaneously and quickly.

An FDCRC member agreed with previous comments that it can be difficult to understand if SPC initiatives are in parallel or overlapping with U.S. Pacific Islands processes. Collaboration with the SPC on electronic reporting (ER) and AI for species identification may be useful to reduce redundant efforts. The U.S. Pacific Islands will continue to work to improve ER but should also take advantage of opportunities to import technologies and aspects of management for data-limited stocks from the SPC. A synergistic relationship would be beneficial to the region.

Another FDCRC member noted that this coordination would make fishery management work in the U.S. Pacific Islands simpler and less redundant.

7. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

8. Other Business

A. US PIR Scholarship Program

Council staff presented an update on the Council's U.S. Pacific Islands Region Scholarship Program. Recently, there was an Education Committee meeting to discuss this scholarship program designed to support undergraduate and graduate students in the Pacific Islands. A sizeable number of students completed the program and returned to their local resource management agencies to work. One of the concerns raised by the committee was understanding the needs of the territorial agencies for the type of staff they are looking to hire. If the agencies' needs are better understood, the program can improve recruitment and prioritization of students in appropriate courses. Council staff indicated that they would reach out to the directors of the territorial resource management agencies to inquire about their priorities.

An FDCRC member indicated that student and agency priorities should be consistent and it is important to ensure that the agencies are engaged.

9. Discussions and recommendations

Regarding Hawaii Data:

- The FDCRC 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 recommends the Council request Hawaii DAR to include uku in its review of commercial data discrepancies.

Regarding the MRIP Implementation Plan:

- The FDCRC 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 for inclusion into the MRIP Regional Implementation Plan. The FDCRC 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.

Regarding Territorial Data Sharing Agreements:

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

Regarding Territorial Relationships with SPC:

- The FDCRC recommends the Council assist the territories with identifying what SPC services and opportunities are available to the territories to help achieve territorial data and research goals.

Regarding the PIR Territorial Scholarships:

- The FDCRC recommends the Council provide a survey to the territorial agencies to assess the capacity needs for future scholarship solicitations and evaluations.