



WESTERN  
PACIFIC  
REGIONAL  
FISHERY  
MANAGEMENT  
COUNCIL

## **Report of the Program Planning Standing Committee Meeting**

*Friday, September 15, 2023*

*11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.*

*Council Office*

*Honolulu, Hawaii*

### **1. Welcome and Introductions**

Judith Guthertz, Chair, opened the meeting at 12:00 noon. Members in attendance included Will Sword. Members absent included Sarah Malloy and Matt Ramsey.

Others in attendance included Kitty Simonds (Executive Director), Zach Yamada, Joshua DeMello, Asuka Ishizaki, Mark Fitchett (Council Staff); and Chelsa Muña, Sylvan Igisomar, Manny Duenas, and Archie Soliai (Council Members).

### **2. Addressing Climate Change in Fishery Management**

Council staff described the funding available for addressing climate change in fisheries of the Western Pacific Region. NMFS received \$349 million for climate-ready fisheries under the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). Essential Data Collection and Advanced detailed (EDA/AT) funding provides \$105 M for FY23–FY26 and includes supporting un-crewed monitoring platforms, active and passive acoustic monitoring systems, remote sensing, and social science. EDA funds will also be used to charter protected species surveys and modernizing data acquisition and management in the region. Regionally, funding for PIFSC will be used for electronic reporting for creel surveys and biosampling, as well as a pilot fishery-independent survey in the territories and protected species surveys. The Climate Ecosystems and Fisheries Initiative (CEFI) will support decision support teams and a network of PIFSC scientists working on climate-ready fisheries.

Sword asked if the charter would be externally hired to do the research projects. Council staff said the intention would be contract charter vessels to fulfill their proposal.

### **3. Inflation Reduction Act**

#### **A. Council Management Priorities for Addressing Climate Change**

Council staff provided an overview of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funding. The Councils have been allocated \$20M from the IRA funding to contribute to dynamic management and increasing fishing community resiliency in response to climate impacts. NMFS has included funding priorities that require projects funded under the IRA need to address fisheries governance. Council staff has started developing project proposals to address the IRA priorities, including climate scenario planning, regulatory review, protected species, and community engagement. The projects would need to be completed by 2027.

Sword asked if a project for a longline training center for a master's program could be included. Staff noted that idea could be incorporated into Project 4 that includes vocational training for

fisheries. Sword noted that the American Samoa Congresswoman has also expressed interest and is working in Congress to get something done as well.

#### **B. Council Program Planning and Multi-year Priorities**

Council staff presented on the status of updating the Council's five-year program plan. The current plan is for 2020-2024, and the Council is scheduled to review and approve the next five-year plan and budget in March 2024. The current plan priorities focuses on improving support for island areas and FEPs, which included the shift from three to four SSC and Council meetings per year and expanding the Plan Team membership to incorporate broader ecosystem expertise. Staff also reviewed the list of current Council advisory bodies, policies and agreements and near-to mid-term priorities.

Sword asked about the engagement with the local indigenous communities. Council staff replied that the five-year program plan is being presented to the advisory groups and the community through public meetings to get input from the community, including the local indigenous community.

#### **4. Advisory Group Reports and Recommendations**

Council staff provided the reports and recommendations for the Program Planning and Research items from the Pelagic Plan Team, Fishing Industry Advisory Committee, Advisory Panel, and Scientific and Statistical Committee.

Standing committee members agreed with the recommendations and expressed their desire for those recommendations to be considered by the Council for its consideration.

#### **5. Other Business**

No other business.

#### **6. Public Comment**

Manuel P. Duenas III said he was disappointed in how NMFS is distributing the funding that could augment the Council process. This has been affecting the Council's ability to hire staff to do the work of the MSA. Protected species is a long term goal and the Council should keep DOI and DOC in check on the status of ESA/MMPA listed species. The agencies continue to include new species but there is no plan to recover the species. He does not understand why there is more data in science when the fishery value is not equivalent to the cost. NOAA is continuing to take money to build the agency rather than supporting the Council's mission.

Sword said in the last few years there have been more initiatives to weaken the MSA. It is obvious what they are doing as they continue to try and make MSA irrelevant.

#### **7. Discussion and Recommendations**

The Program Planning and Research Standing Committee endorsed the recommendations of the Council's advisory groups. In particular, the PPRSC recommends the Council support the project categories developed for the Council's IRA proposal, including scenario planning, regulatory reviews, protected species review and update, and community engagement and capacity building. The PPSC also endorsed the Council's draft 2025-2029 Program Plan themes

and recommends the Council direct staff to finalize the Program Plan for a decision by the Council at its meeting in March 2024.

The Program Planning and Research Standing Committee recommended the Council draft a letter to the Secretary of Commerce addressing the continuing initiatives by the Federal government to weaken the MSA by financially starving the work of the Councils.

Meeting was adjourned at 1:01 p.m.