

MRIP Listening Session

Pacific Islands Region

Summary Report

Location: Honolulu, Hawaii

Date: February 4-8, 2008

Purpose: To gather input from Regional Office and Science Center staff, Council members and staff, state partners and constituents to assure that the MRIP design that we are developing is appropriately tailored to the specific fishery management and stock assessment needs of the region. Further, such an assessment will enable us to begin to identify and prioritize regional needs for MRIP projects for the next round of project funding, with FY 2008 funds.

MRIP Team Members: Gordon Colvin, Preston Pate, Forbes Darby, Rob Andrews and Scott Sauri

Agencies/Groups Represented: NMFS Pacific Islands Regional Office and Pacific Islands Fishery Science Center, Western Pacific Fishery Management Council, State of Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa and Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and constituents from the Hawaiian sport fishing community

Attachments: Agenda, list of attendees, detailed minutes

Major Points and Comments:

1. Up to the present, the Western Pacific fisheries do not appear to have been subject to the same level of federal regulation, permitting and reporting requirements that the Team members are familiar with from Atlantic coast fisheries. Non-commercial and smaller commercial vessel permitting and reporting is mainly administered by the state of Hawaii and the territories.

2. However, the current regulatory environment is dynamic and new permitting and reporting provisions are being implemented, due in part to new information on stock status. The determination that MHI bottomfish (Deep 7) are being overfished and the recent international assessment of yellowfin tuna will lead to regulations that seek to reduce exploitation of these Management Unit Species. In addition, the Annual Catch Limit/Accountability Measures requirements will intensify the need to accurately account for all landings, and may require in-season tracking of landings (e.g. bottomfish).

3. The Council is interested in implementing non-commercial vessel permitting and reporting (at the vessel level) for all managed fisheries. This is now part of the proposed rule for the Main Hawaiian Island bottomfish. There are concerns about the availability of resources and infrastructure to implement such measures in all vessel-based fisheries.

4. Consistent with the preceding, the Council and staff of the NMFS Pacific Islands Regional Office have advocated a vessel-based registry to support survey-based accounting of non-commercial catch. It is not clear that the Hawaii Division of Aquatic Resources fully endorses this approach, though the state boating division (DOBOR) has agreed to share the database with NMFS and offered to assist NMFS in building a non-commercial vessel registry. A data-sharing agreement between NMFS' Pacific Islands Fishery Science Center and DOBOR has been in place for some time. Discussions are ongoing regarding alternative approaches to enable state-registered vessels that are used for non-commercial fishing to be identified and included in a vessel registry.

5. There is considerable interest in the Region in seeking an exemption to the federal registration requirement based on the regional survey exemption approach. This will require that the state of Hawaii and/or Guam/American Samoa/CNMI take the initiative to apply for such an exemption when the final registry rule is adopted.

Comments on data needs:

1. The Council and NMFS offices are mainly concerned with boat-based fish harvest. However, there is general acknowledgement of the importance of shore-based fishing, and that the state and the territories have a strong interest in shore mode harvest. It was generally agreed that HMRFS and West PacFIN--based approaches could continue to get this data, but alternative approaches to estimating effort could be explored, particularly for HMRFS (see below).

2. Pacific Islands Fishery Science Center staff believe that a regional approach to recreational data collection can be developed that:

a. Maintains the basic structure of West PacFIN, while addressing needed improvements;

b. Explores alternatives to household telephone surveys for estimating effort (including site-based approaches) for all areas, including Hawaii;

c. Produces data that will satisfactorily address data quality standards when developed via MRIP.

3. It is likely that the staff from the Council, PIFSC, Hawaii and the Territorial governments will continue this dialogue and work toward developing a Pacific RecFIN-type "regional survey" that could exempt anglers in the region from the federal registration requirement.

Comments Specific to Outreach

Staff from the Council, PIRO, PIFSC and state and territories will carry out a regional MRIP outreach and communication program initiative (the details of which will depend on funding to be made available).

Future Funding Priorities

Staff from the Council, PIRO, PIFSC and state and territories will continue to participate in MRIP, and will seek funding (through the Work Groups) for their past proposals, plus the design of the aforementioned regional survey, in the next round of MRIP funding.