



WESTERN
PACIFIC
REGIONAL
FISHERY
MANAGEMENT
COUNCIL

Social Science Planning Committee
Thursday, March 5, 2020
1:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Report

1. Welcome and Introductions

Craig Severance, SSPC chair, welcomed members to the meeting. Members in attendance were Severance, Justin Hospital, Noelani Puniwai, Adam Ayers, Debra Cabrera, Kirsten Leong, Judy Amesbury (by phone), and Michelle McGregor (by phone). Council staff Mark Mitsuyasu, Asuka Ishizaki, and Josh DeMello were also present.

2. Approval of Agenda

Agenda was approved.

3. Review of SSPC research plan and priorities

Mitsuyasu introduced the 2017 SSPC Strategic Plan, and suggested that SSPC review the document this year and consider an update. SSPC agreed to review the document inter-sessionally through the use of the Google doc format. Members should identify any research projects in their respective areas that should be brought to Council attention.

SSPC discussed the overlap between the strategic plan and the 5-year research priorities, and requested that staff circulate the 5-year research priorities for SSPC review.

Members also suggested creating a way to track progress of projects within the plans, which could be done through the Annual SAFE report as well as at each meeting of the SSPC. Members discussed the lifespan of the strategic plan, and noted that a 3-year plan may be a more productive format rather than a 5-year plan.

4. NMFS Socioeconomic Aspects in Stock Assessments

Hospital presented on the NMFS Socioeconomic Aspects in Stock Assessments Workshop (SEASAW) convened in February 2020. The workshop was attended largely by NMFS staff, some regional fishery management council staff and academics. The workshop focused on how socioeconomic expertise and information are incorporated in the stock assessment process. Hospital presented the results from the data call done in advance of the meeting, which highlighted differences in the range of information available and considered in stock assessments. Workshop discussions focused on barriers to using socioeconomic data, how case studies could be scaled up, balancing multiple management objectives, strategies for communicating socioeconomic risks to SSCs and Councils, improving collaborations, and short and long term research needs. PIFSC has funding through the FY20 MSA Implementation Funds RFP for a pilot project to incorporate socioeconomics into stock assessments, as well as proposals awaiting funding. PIFSC anticipates having this topic highlighted in its annual guidance memo.

5. Social Impact Assessment

McGregor provided background on a recent NMFS Practitioner's Guide to Fisheries Social Impact Assessment guidance document. The document appears to be geared toward federal staff who are new to conducting social impact assessments. Council provided comments on the Guide in December 2019. Copies were sent to SSPC members for reference.

6. Cost-benefit analysis to evaluate impact of Council management actions

Ishizaki provided background on a Council recommendation from October 2019 to develop a cost-benefit analysis to evaluate the impact of any management actions for reducing turtle interactions on the economic performance and socioeconomic effects of the shallow-set and deep-set longline fishery. The Council also recommended that such analyses include consideration of transferred effect of the US longline fishery closure on target species as well as protected species.

SSPC members suggested that the Council identify specific management questions and objectives that are of high priority, and develop timelines for analyses needed to facilitate coordination with PIFSC. Members also discussed the importance of engaging social scientists early in the management action development process to assist in identifying and developing necessary analyses to inform Council actions. Specifically, SSPC supported involving social scientists in the ongoing shallow-set longline reasonable and prudent measures (RPM) working group in response to the biological opinion (BiOps), as well as action teams convened pursuant to the Regional Operating Agreement (ROA) for Council actions. Council has been working to improve coordination with PIRO to frontload necessary analyses and complete all analysis documents in time for final action, which should also facilitate early identification of socioeconomic analysis needs.

SSPC also discussed situations in which there is limited time to develop management actions, such as in response to BiOps or emergency actions, and that formalizing a process for considering socioeconomic analysis under such actions may be beneficial. Other suggested strategies included setting up automated data tools to provide economic data in a timely manner, as well as ensuring necessary data are incorporated in the Annual SAFE report.

7. Report on OceanObs 2019 outcomes on incorporating traditional knowledge

DeMello provided a report on the OceanObs 2019 outcomes. The conference resulted in a resolution committing to incorporating traditional knowledge into ocean monitoring. Council staff is developing a group to assist in the implementation of the resolution.

In partnership with the Federal Interagency Traditional Ecological Knowledge Working Group, Leong will be moderating a session at the Society for Applied Anthropology on the role of social scientists in bringing indigenous knowledges to the table. Working Group resources are available on the NPS TEK Website¹. Puniwai also has developed a model for the Hilo area to show what the scientific and local community can tell us about the oceanographic environment.

¹ <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/tek/index.htm>

8. User group involvement in developing stock assessments

Severance led a discussion on fishermen involvement in developing stock assessments. There has been considerable community concern raised with the lack of fishermen and community involvement in advance of the bottomfish stock assessment for the Marianas and American Samoa. SSPC discussed the benefit of engaging fishermen user groups throughout the stock assessment process, and developed a recommendation regrading this topic.

9. Socioeconomic Modules for the 2020 Annual Safe Reports

Hospital reviewed the existing socioeconomic module structure for the SAFE report, and provided an overview of the 2019 update. New information in the 2019 will include community participation in Hawaii fisheries, which includes metrics such as fishing engagement indicators and regional and local quotients that compare one community's catch and value to the whole.

10. Public Comment

No public comment.

11. Discussion and Recommendations

- 1) SSPC recommends tracking progress of projects in the 5-year research priorities in the Annual SAFE report.**
- 2) SSPC recommends including a social scientist on the BiOp RPM Working Group.**
- 3) SSPC recommends convening a working group to consider a process for integrating socioeconomic considerations for Council actions that require a short turn-around (e.g., responding to BiOps; emergency actions) and bringing back options to the next SSPC meeting.**
- 4) The MSA allows regional flexibility and the built-in opportunity for fishermen to have a voice as the resource users. Much of the time, fishermen know as much if not much more than the biological scientists about the fish resources, their behavior, habitat and catchability. Failure to fully understand fisheries can compromise the quality of assessments, both in the protected species realm and the stock assessment realm.

The SSPC recommends that the Council engage fishermen user groups throughout the stock assessment process. Workshops and other forms of engagement should be held with a sample of local fishermen in each island group to inform any pending stock assessments. Throughout the process, fishermen can speak to their knowledge of the stocks, stock condition, and to data collection and data quality issues.

12. Other Business

Leong introduced an upcoming internship opportunity focusing on cultural keystone species. Leong plans to bring together a group of mentors to help focus the project prior to the start of the internship. SSPC members provided suggestions for potential contacts.