



# **Report of the Fishery Data Collection and Research Committee**

June 12, 2023

2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. (Hawaii Standard Time)

Via WebEx Conferencing

Honolulu Hawaii

## **1. Welcome remarks and introductions**

The Fishery Data Collection and Research Committee (FDCRC) meeting was opened at 2:00 p.m. Members in attendance included: Archie Soliai (Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources, DMWR), Kitty Simonds (Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, Council), T Todd Jones (for Tia Brown (Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center, PIFSC)), April Trinidad (Guam Bureau of Statistics and Plans, BSP), and Ruth Utzurum (USFWS).

Others in attendance included: Joshua DeMello, Felix Penalosa, Felix Reyes (Council staff); Marlowe Sabater and Rob Ahrens (NMFS PIFSC), Pua Borges (NMFS Pacific Islands Regional Office, PIRO), Thomas Remington (Lynker)

## **2. Data Collection Subpanel Meeting Report and Recommendations**

Council staff provided a report of the FDCRC Technical Committee (TC) Data Subpanel meeting held on June 8, 2023. The FDCRC TC discussed data collection and annual reports. He also provided the recommendations made by the FDCRC TC.

## **3. Council Research Priorities**

Council staff presented the Council's research priorities under the MSA five-year priorities, cooperative research, and pelagic research plan. He noted that the Council hopes to update its priorities before March 2024 in order to meet the deadlines for the Council's new program plan.

## **4. PIFSC Territorial Creel Survey Review**

Rob Ahrens presented a report done by Michaela Pawluk that explored bias and precision in the Guam and CNMI boat-based creel survey design. He noted that territorial survey evaluations have been done in the past and a recent review of the expansion methods by Ma et al. in 2022 went through a CIE review. That evaluation showed that the expansion approach looked good so this project looked at the survey design aspect to see if it can be improved. The results of the survey design are encouraging as the methods are unbiased in terms of catch and variance. If more effort is applied to the survey variance decreases but catch remains relatively constant, which is expected. There is no real benefit or change in the strategy because it is set up to sample a proportion of effort. In CNMI sampling precision could be improved with readjusting sampling intensity on particular sites. In Guam, the survey has lots of night shift interviews while CNMI has a lot of day shift interviews. Sampling the opposite independently may improve precision. He said that sample sizes can be adjusted to meet the basic requirements but it is dependent upon budgetary and logical constraints. In summary, the approach used for the creel survey is unbiased. A concentration on the time and effort problems instead of the current

design would be more fruitful. Implementation issues such as staff retention, training, and reducing bias will need to come from leadership in order to move forward.

The FDCRC was concerned that the Mariana members were not in attendance as the review focused on the Mariana Archipelago surveys. Jones noted that the review was presented to those members separately previously but Ahrens added that they hadn't had a sit down talk about it after the investigation was done.

Soliai asked if the results would be applicable to American Samoa. Ahrens said that there needs to be a different discussion about American Samoa, given where the fishery has gone over time, the separate Manua fishery, etc. If the creel survey was implemented as written it would work but because the fishery has declined there may be better ways to collect the data. There needs to be the conversation about what people think needs to be done and how it should be structured. Soliai agreed that the decision would be helpful to determine where to go from here and additional conversations would be helpful.

### **5. MRIP Regional Implementation Plan Update**

Council staff explained that the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) Pacific Islands Regional Implementation Plan (PIRIP) expired at the beginning of 2023. He reviewed the projects that were included in the previous plan noting that many of the projects have been addressed or will be addressed. It is important to provide an updated PIRIP in order to receive assistance from the MRIP for data collection.

Jones noted that legacy surveys or peer-reviewed assessments can potentially move forward towards MRIP certification. The MRIP PIRIP should include certification of the creel surveys in order to get additional support for jurisdictional surveys.

Council staff noted that an ad hoc committee comprised of one member of each of the territorial agencies and an MRIP representative will be used to update the PIRIP.

### **6. Data Sharing Agreements**

Marlowe Sabater, NMFS PIFSC presented on how data access and flow is structured at PIFSC. The Fishery Information Network (FIN) structure includes data from DMWR, DAWR, DFW, DAR, and BSP. The data are owned by the territories with PIFSC acting as the central database maintaining the database. Data users include the Council, PIRO, PIFSC, and the local agencies. There are multiple agreements that govern sharing data such as the WPacFIN Cooperative Agreement which are grants between PIFSC and the local agencies; Memorandum of Agreements between the local agencies and NMFS to share data; and Non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) for PIRO and PIFSC to use the data. He reviewed the types of agreements and what type of information exchange occurs. Sabater said that the Council had a data sharing agreement that was described in the 2014 FDCRC Strategic Plan that allowed Council staff to access to territorial data. These agreements are due for renewal but the Council may consider signing an NDA with NMFS in order to access confidential data as the Council is an authorized user under NAO 216-100, section 06.03c. The current NDAs are being reviewed and evaluated by NMFS to maintain opportunities for better collaboration and communication.

Sabater noted that there is a need for the territorial Attorney Generals to support data sharing agreements. Trinidad asked if the agreements are signed by the attorney general. Sabater said in Guam both the AG office and Governor's office signs the agreements. Since BSP holds the commercial receipt books, there might be a need for a separate agreement from DAWR.

#### **7. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

#### **8. Discussions and Recommendations**

The FDCRC made the following recommendations:

##### ***Regarding the review of the creel survey:***

- The FDCRC recommends the Council work with NMFS PIFSC to develop a workshop with the territorial agencies to discuss the challenges and issues with creel survey implementation to find solutions;
- The FDCRC recommends the Council request NMFS PIFSC to hold meetings/workshops with the creel survey data technicians to stress the importance of the data;
- The FDCRC recommends the Council convene ad hoc working committee to discuss MRIP Transition Plan for Hawaii changes and an MRIP PIRIP to include supplemental surveys that cover the 24 hour survey period.

#### **9. Other Business**

Council staff noted the 148th Scientific and Statistical Committee was being held that week and the 195th Council Meeting is to be held in American Samoa on June 27-29, 2023. He invited members to participate online and noted the information for the meetings are available on the Council's website, [wpcouncil.org](http://wpcouncil.org)