



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

June 8, 2022

1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. (Hawaii Standard Time)  
via Web Conference

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

Joshua DeMello, Council staff, opened the meeting at 1:05 p.m. and welcomed the members to the meeting. Fishery Data Collection and Research Committee-Technical Committee Data Collection Subpanel (FDCRC TC) members in attendance included: Domingo Ochavillo, Hongguang Ma, Jason Helyer, Kelsey Lizama, and Thomas Ogawa.

Others in attendance included: Angela Delacruz (CNMI DFW); Rob Ahrens, Marlowe Sabater, and Jenny Suter (NMFS PIFSC). Public member in attendance included Tammy Harp.

### **2. Report on previous TC recommendations and Council actions**

Council staff reported on the previous FDCRC-TC meeting held April 27-28, 2022 and the recommendations made at that meeting. A recommendation to review the creel surveys as well as recommendation on data sharing agreements would be updated through presentations in this meeting.

Helyer was asked about Hawaii Division of Aquatic Resources looking at the data discrepancy for uku. He replied that they produced a summary of the data for the past years but coming up with a way to communicate the discrepancy is difficult. Fishers are important for providing the data and presenting the data without being able to provide the exact details on discrepancy would be a disservice to the fishers. Helyer said they continue to explore this discrepancy as an aspect of unreported catch.

### **3. Data Collection**

#### **A. Marine Recreational Information Program**

##### **1. Pacific Islands Regional Implementation Plan**

Council staff explained that the 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 Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) for data collection.

Sabater added that moving forward, the creel survey review is critical as MRIP wants to see the review in order to avoid duplicating efforts in their certification of the creel surveys. He also said that one thing to consider for the next PIRIP is including self-reporting and data improvements including CatchIt LogIt, particularly in consideration of the creel survey review.

CNMI Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) noted that the boat-based creel survey has 2 shifts and that spearfishers come in between 2 and 4 a.m. while the commercial fishermen come

in at 4 a.m. They suggested that a third shift for the boat-based creel survey might be able to better capture those fisheries and provide 24 hours of survey coverage. The FDCRC-TC agreed that a pilot project/supplemental survey should be included in the PIRIP.

Ogawa added that MRIP doesn't just provide funding but also provides certification of the surveys.

## **2. Transition Plan Update**

Sabater reported that the Transition Team has yet to meet and develop a regional transition plan. The team is waiting on a Main Hawaiian Island Deep 7 bottomfish workshop prior to meeting because if the data is being used in the stock assessment, the team should include that in the transition plan.

Ogawa reported that the Hawaii Marine Recreational Fishing Survey (HMRFS) had transitioned from the phone survey to a mail survey (Fishing Effort Survey, or FES) in 2017 when both phone and mail were conducted at the same time then to a full mail survey in 2018. They used the transition to calibrate the difference between the two surveys and apply that to the historical efforts. He also said that HMRFS is taking a two phase implementation approach. Phase I started in January with changing the intercept survey to the MRIP approved Access Point Angler Intercept Survey (APAIS). A big difference in the new survey design is that there are locked in assignments and removes the flexibility to move for weather or other factors which in turn reduces sampling bias. A second change for HMRFS is a switch from paper survey forms to tablets for electronic data capture. The transition was tough in the beginning with some technical issues but it has been smoothed out though some surveyors are still struggling. He said Phase II will hopefully happen in a few years with the primary focus on getting a roving survey for the shore mode survey, make changes to the intercept form to collect gear hours, and add a gear code column to identify which fish is caught with which gear.

### **B. Territorial Creel Survey Review Report**

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 TC discussed implementation issues. Ahrens said that the surveyors need to be treated as the front-line staff and be provided with training in order to retain staff and ensure that the data quality is not impacted. The FDCRC TC discussed the implications of misidentification of species, bad relationships with fishers, or mistakes in inputting data and agreed that there needed to be support to avoid that. A member said that there are several layers of complexity that needs to be teased out and how changing implementation has impacts on estimates. He said the difficulty is how to relay that to the staff so that they appreciate the complexity of the task. *The FDCRC TC said that there should be a workshop to stress the importance of proper data input and the data technicians/surveyors.*

A member asked whether the review looked at all methods. Ahrens said that it was for everything. The member asked about specific fisheries. Ahrens said it is more difficult to look at a particular fishery like bottomfish or even particular species. This gets into more subtle aspects of the expansion algorithm. There would need to be a specific question in mind because the survey is broad-brush to get information on all the species. He said there is a national movement towards supplemental programs that mesh well with base programs to get specific species or gear information. The supplemental survey would be developed to focus more on a specific method.

The FDCRC TC discussed the use of the surveys for stock assessments. Just like MRIP, the survey wasn't intended for stock assessments but is being used that way. There is a need to restructure programs for what is needed but would require more funding to do more sampling more frequently. The FDCRC agreed that there is a need to have the discussion of why the programs exist and what we want to get out of them. A member noted that those conversations with partners are important, including the discussion on implementation of the surveys. The FDCRC TC discussed the need for a workshop to discuss survey implementation issues either individually by jurisdiction or all together. The FDCRC TC identified the FDCRC as the group that needs to hold these initial discussions.

### **C. Other Data Collection Updates**

Suter reported that this is the time of the year to apply for Fisheries Information Systems (FIS) funding. PIFSC is working with the State of Hawaii to submit proposals as well as seek funding for the implementation of SellIt LogIt, WPacFIN, and redesigning and modernizing the longline and purse seine database. FY23-24 proposals are due soon.

DeMello discussed a Hawaii small-boat project that is being initiated by the Council this year. He said that a presentation by the community to the Council and NMFS spurred a project to increase engagement with the fishing community. The project will engage the fishing community in a series of meetings on issues that are of importance to the community, including data collection.

## **4. Annual SAFE Reports**

### **A. Data Issues**

Ma reported that the Archipelagic Plan Team was working on a non-commercial module. He also said the APT is working on adding tracking for uku non-commercial catch to monitor the Annual Catch Target/Annual Catch Limit.

## **B. Archipelagic Plan Team Recommendations**

Suter provided a review of the Archipelagic Plan Team recommendations and work items for WPacFIN and PIFSC. She said they are working on data fixes for Guam bottomfish and will regenerate an expansion and summary tables. Sabater added that they have been working with DAWR and found things that need to be addressed like the process for selecting fish as well as estimating lengths. They are still working on 2019 through 2021 data and will likely get that done in late July through early August. After that it will go to PIFSC staff to develop the smoothers and then get finalized.

Suter said that in order to do some revisions, PIFSC will need to work with the territories to know which reports to work on and which tables to use. She said the Guam commercial receipt data is tricky so they are working with DAWR and BSP to increase vendor participation. Suter also identified a need to coordinate so that species lists are in sync.

There was a request for DAR staff to calculate a summary of those records that include fish that are tagged for a study. Helyer said that the data is there and should be looked at in the future but WPacFIN could add a field to their database for things like this.

## **5. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

## **6. Discussion and Recommendations**

The Data Collection Subcommittee of the FDCRC Technical Committee made the following recommendations:

- 1. The FDCRC-TC recommends the FDCRC hold a workshop with the data technicians in the territory to stress the importance of their data collection.**
- 2. The FDCRC-TC recommends the FDCRC discuss creel survey implementation issues and needs.**
- 3. The FDCRC-TC recommends the FDCRC request the Council convene and ad-hoc committee to discuss changes to MRIP Pacific Islands Regional Implementation Plan and Transition Plan and include a supplemental survey for the night time to cover the 24-hour period.**

## **7. Other Business**

DeMello noted the 148<sup>th</sup> Scientific and Statistical Committee was being held next week and the 195<sup>th</sup> 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).

The meeting concluded at 2:37 p.m.