



## **Social Science Planning Committee**

May 30, 2024  
12 p.m. – 4 p.m.  
Hybrid

In-person attendance at Council Office

### **REPORT**

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

Craig Severance, SSPC chair, welcomed members to the meeting. Members in attendance were Craig Severance, Adam Ayers, Debra Cabrera, Kirsten Leong, and Michelle McGregor. SSPC members Justin Hospital and Noelani Puniwai were excused. Council staff present were Asuka Ishizaki and Zachary Yamada. Others in attendance were Minling Pan (presenter), Thomas Remington (Council contractor/Lynker), Barbara Quimby, Mark Ladao, and Tammy Harp.

#### **2. Approval of Agenda**

The agenda was approved.

#### **3. Annual SAFE Reports**

##### **A. Socioeconomic Modules 2023 Report Updates**

Minling Pan, PIFSC, provided an update on the 2023 Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) report socioeconomic module. A new development to the SAFE report based on this year's Plan Team discussions will be to include the relevant economic data in the fishery performance modules, which will be explored through a Plan Team working group. Pan highlighted new challenges in the economic data collection program, especially in terms of the Hawaii and American Samoa longline economic performance data collection. The data collection has been done in collaboration with the Pacific Islands Regional Observer Program (PIROP) to provide a 20-year time series of trip-level expenditures excluding labor cost. There is uncertainty with the continuation of this data collection program due to the digitization of the PIROP system, whereas the economic performance data has been collected through paper forms. As an example of its utility, the economic performance data documented the economic downturn of the ASLL fishery.

The SSPC discussed the utility of the longline economic performance data, noting that the information gathered is needed for the analysis of management actions. The SSPC noted that the existing data collection is voluntary with a high response rate. When the data collection program was reviewed at the 10-year mark, the response rate was about 60%, although more recently, the response rate has declined to about 50% due to increased proportions in hired captains who may not have knowledge of trip expenditures. SSPC discussed potential alternatives to the data collection methodology, including providing the form to the permit holder instead of the captain and a mandatory data collection program.

**The SSPC notes the importance of the American Samoa and Hawaii longline fisheries economic performance data collection to evaluating the impacts of fishery management actions and closed areas on the fisheries, and recommends the Council and NMFS explore approaches to continue the data collection in the most feasible format for useful representation.**

### **B. Fisher Observations**

Ayers presented the highlights of the 2023 Fisher Observations. This effort aims to collect and summarize the region's fishers' at-sea experiences, observations, assessments, and socio-economic environment to augment scientific data collected for the SAFE report. The information for the Fishers Observations are reported through the quarterly AP meetings as well as the annual summits by island areas.

The SSPC discussed future improvements to the Fishers Observations process, including ways to broaden participation and additional questions for inclusion in future efforts. Members suggested compiling a multi-year summary to track changes over the years, and noted such an effort could be done through a 5-year review. Members also suggested identifying the specific fishery for each reported observation, and discussed a general need to monitor direct marketing such as roadside vendors and sale through social media that became more prevalent during the pandemic. The SSPC also discussed approaches for increasing participation in the annual summits as well as providing feedback to the fishing community, and noted that it would be beneficial to combine outreach on the Fishers Observations with other outreach efforts. Members also noted that the recent small boat fisheries meetings held throughout the main Hawaiian Islands (MHI) attracted younger fishermen, which provides an opportunity to engage new participants for future summits.

**The SSPC reaffirms the importance of continuing the Fishers Observation effort with the Advisory Panels, and recommends utilizing upcoming community meetings to provide feedback on previous annual fishers observation summits and to broaden representativeness by increasing interest and awareness in participation in future summits.**

### **4. Review of Draft 2025-2029 MSRA Research Priorities**

The SSPC reviewed the human communities section of the draft 2025-2029 MSRA Research Priorities in a working session. The draft priorities were developed in coordination with PIFSC staff in February 2024, and preliminary review provided by the SSC in March 2024. SSPC input focused on the following (see markup version of SSPC input in Appendix A):

- Added new research priority to characterize and analyze seafood imports and effects on domestic markets, including issues of mislabeling, product quality, seafood safety, and unfair trade practices; and
- Clarified draft research priorities by adding more specificity and using plain language.

### **5. SEEM Process Review**

Severance introduced the agenda item, noting that the SSPC members were instrumental in the SEEM (Social, Economic, Ecological, and Management Uncertainty) standardization process in the past. The process started with a small group that included MHI deep-7 bottomfish fishermen, and the SSPC at the time agreed that standardization was warranted. This led to the Hospital et

al. (2019) standardization document that is still being used. There was discussion at the latest MHI deep-7 P\* and SEEM meetings about revisions to the process.

Zach Yamada, Council staff, provided an overview of needs and issues associated with the existing SEEM process. The original annual catch limits (ACL) process was implemented in 2012, and the SEEM process has evolved over time since then. There have been questions on how SEEM is applied in the ACL specification process. Yamada noted it would be beneficial for SSPC to review the process to consider improvements. Potential considerations include different application of management uncertainty (M\*) depending on the type of uncertainty.

The SSPC agreed that a review of the SEEM process is warranted, noting that a number of SEEMs have been conducted since the 2019 standardization. The SSPC discussed the need to explore the extent of overlap of the “ecological” dimension in SEEM with factors considered in the P\* process, noting that there was limited ecological information available when the SEEM process was first developed. Members also noted that there was interest in being able to score on the positive scale rather than the SEEM score only contributing to a reduction in the ACL, but that was now allowable, and thus the first three dimensions are typically scored zeros in most SEEM processes.

**The SSPC forms a working group to review the SEEM process (Hospital, Ayers, Severance) and will report out at the 2025 SSPC meeting.**

## **6. Project Updates**

SSPC members provided updates on several fishery-related projects:

- Leong reported that a publication on a national review of non-commercial fishing definition was recently submitted.
- McGregor reported on the development of the Equity and Environmental Justice (EEJ) regional implementation plan. This is undergoing final revisions and is expected to be released before the end of June.
- Ayers reported on the upcoming meetings with MHI uku fishers to collect input on management alternatives and inform a management strategy evaluation for uku.
- Severance reported on an ongoing development for a paper on American Samoa, as well as an abstract submitted with Nate Ilaoa for the upcoming AFS meeting in September.

## **7. Other Business**

Severance reported on the UH fishery graduate program in development.

## **8. Public Comment**

No public comments.

## **9. Discussion and Recommendations**

The SSPC made the following recommendations:

- 1) The SSPC notes the importance of the American Samoa and Hawaii longline fisheries economic performance data collection to evaluating the impacts of fishery management actions and closed areas on the fisheries, and recommends the Council and NMFS

explore approaches to continue the data collection in the most feasible format for useful representation.

- 2) The SSPC reaffirms the importance of continuing the fishers observation effort with the Advisory Panels, and recommends utilizing upcoming community meetings to provide feedback on previous annual fishers observation summits and to broaden representativeness by increasing interest and awareness in participation in future summits.
- 3) The SSPC forms a working group to review the SEEM process (Hospital, Ayers, Severance) and will report out at the 2025 SSPC meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 4:08pm.

**DRAFT**  
**WPRFMC Five-year Research Priorities under the MSRA**  
**2025-2029**

**Human Communities (HC) Section**  
**Reviewed by the SSPC at its meeting on May 30, 2024**

The Human Communities section addresses the socio-cultural and economic needs (the human dimensions) inherent in regional fisheries management. The MSA requires that the Council consider the importance of fishery resources to fishing communities, as well as to use social and economic data to support the specification of Optimum Yield. In addition, the MSA finds that the Pacific Insular Areas have unique social and historical characteristics. Finally, the WPRFMC's process to specify annual catch limits requires assessing relevant social and economic factors and their importance to the fishery.

**1. Socioeconomic characterization of regional fisheries, markets, and fishing communities (Characterization)**

**1.1. Information Gap: Understanding and incorporating economic and social science on commercial and non-commercial fishing dimensions into fishery management**

- 1.1.1. Monitor and track changes of the costs of fishing, fisher effort (who and where nominal and spatial) and/or participation
- 1.1.2. Characterizing non-commercial vessels, participants, motivations, catch and effort
- 1.1.3. Improving estimations of the relative proportionality of commercial and noncommercial catch and effort
- 1.1.4. Understand product flow, price determination, demand structure (~~price flexibilities~~), consumer preferences, and non-market channels of fish distribution relationships with formal markets (fish flow for both commercial and non-commercial)
- 1.1.5. Characterize and analyze ~~ing~~ labor supply focusing on fishing and processing labor, its source, composition, alternative employment opportunities, and related issues;
- ~~1.1.5:~~1.1.6. Characterize and analyze ~~analyze~~ seafood imports and effects on domestic seafood markets, including issues of mislabeling, product quality, seafood safety, and unfair trade practices.
- ~~1.1.6.~~ Monitor community engagement, reliance, and dependence on fishery resources
- 1.1.7. ~~Evaluate effects of management actions, alternatives and governance on fisher behavior, markets, and communities~~ [MOVED to section 2.2]
- 1.1.8. Explore the feasibility of establishing a regional long-term socioeconomic monitoring program beyond monetary fishing costs/earnings (e.g., demographic, social, and cultural characteristics of fishers and beneficiaries of fishing)
- 1.1.9. Perform comparative analyses of data from different qualitative and quantitative sampling designs such as focus groups, fishing panels, general

household surveys, and targeted fishing community surveys to inform fishery characterizations

**1.2. Information Gap:** *Understanding the distribution of fishery management equitable benefits and burdens in the current management systems (EEJ)*

- 1.2.1. Examine levels of representation or engagement in research and/or management processes.
- 1.2.2. Examine fishing practices and values that are bolstered or threatened by research and/or management practices.

**2. Integrating socioeconomic, ecological, and biophysical research efforts to inform ecosystem-based fisheries management (Climate Change)**

**2.1. Information Gap:** *Understanding and incorporating EBFM in the Western Pacific region.*

- 2.1.1. Support studies to expand understanding of ecosystem service valuation (non-market values; non-economic considerations), human well-being (seafood safety, security), equity and gender issues, and other intangible benefits
- 2.1.2. ~~Evaluate~~ ~~inspect~~ integrated social, ecological, biophysical, and bioeconomic research efforts to inform EBFM
- 2.1.3. Develop and utilize- approaches or models that integrate narratives of socioeconomic and ecological considerations-associated with trends in fishery performance (e.g., ~~Annual SAFE Report—Data Integration Chapters~~)
- 2.1.4. ~~Perform coupled modeling of environmental and socioeconomic parameters (e.g., using the Atlantis ecological model)~~
- 2.1.5. Collaborate with local and Indigenous knowledge holders to improve EBFM characterization, including appropriate datasets and trends over time

**2.2. Information Gap:** *Understanding and evaluating how management actions influence or are adopted by fishing communities*

- 2.2.1. Research the influences on behavior within regional fishery regulations and best practices with applications to commercial and non-commercial catch reporting and behavior (commercial marine licenses [CMLs], fish sales, closed areas, bag and size limits, etc.) and protected species interactions (turtles, monk seals, cetaceans, ESA-listed species, etc.)
- ~~2.2.2.~~ 2.2.2. Design and evaluate ~~strategie~~-strategic communication processes (e.g., conservation marketing, etc.) to improve ~~resource conditionsmanagement~~
- ~~2.2.2.2.2.3.~~ 2.2.2.2.2.3. Evaluate effects of management actions, alternatives and governance on fisher behavior, markets, and communities
- ~~2.2.3.—~~ 2.2.3.— Evaluate factors that affect participation in existing and new data collection programs, especially with the CatchIt-LogIt app in the context of AS and Guam bottomfish fisheries
- 2.2.4. ~~Identify incentives and barriers linked to factors that affect participation in new data collection programs such as the app~~

- 2.2.5. Evaluate community understanding of importance of data reporting (commercial, and non-commercial, and subsistence).
- 2.3. **Information Gap:** *Understanding impacts of climate change and other large-scale changes resulting in an uncertain future for fisheries and fishing communities for adaptive management.*
  - 2.3.1. Develop robust indicators to examine community resilience, risk perception, and adaptive management
  - 2.3.2. Generate attributes of island communities, including local knowledge and traditional practices, that may help them be resilient when exposed to change
  - 2.3.3. Determine the cultural importance of and community reliance on species vulnerable to effects of climate change
  - 2.3.4. Understand resilience/adaptations to real-time and potential large-scale disruptions to fishery production, supply chains, markets, and fishing communities.
- 3. **Understanding the cultural dimensions and values of island and Indigenous fishing (Cultural values)**
  - 3.1. **Information Gap:** *Recognizing the centrality of fisheries to importance of island cultures and the important role of traditional all fishing practices to fishing communities.*
    - 3.1.1. Examine interactions between culture and contemporary fisheries to understand dimensions of fishing potentially impacted by management
    - 3.1.2. Assess the human dimensions of US Pacific Marine managed areas (such as area closures or marine protected areas) regarding procedural and distributive justices, transferred economic, social and ecological effects and safety
    - 3.1.3. Describe dimensions of fishing and fishing cultures at appropriate cultural scales (e.g., village, island, fishery, community -- including communities of practice, etc.)
    - 3.1.4. Identify community priorities (e.g., places, practices, species) at appropriate scales (e.g., village, island, fishery, community -- including communities of practice, etc.)
    - 3.1.5. Perform focused research on attributes of culture (examples such as: materials, fishing practice, identity, motivation, governance, distribution, etc.) to ensure appropriate consideration in management actions