

# **Pelagic Fisheries Research Program**

## **Project Management Report**

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Program Manager

### **Overview**

The FY1998 appropriation for Pacific tuna management was larger than previous years. The increase allowed the Program to fund all on-going projects and to greatly expand tagging efforts on bigeye tuna. Delays in allocation of budgets within NOAA and NMFS will cause some PFRP projects to fall about 1 year behind schedule.

Output by PFRP affiliated scientists remains high. Roughly eighteen publications appeared in print or were submitted for publication in the past 12 months, and thirteen of fifty-one of the scientific presentations at the 1998 Lake Arrowhead Tuna Conference were authored by PFRP affiliated scientists. A list of recent publications is attached.

### **Continuing Activities**

Quarterly publication of the PFRP Newsletter is a major activity. The Newsletter is received all around the world and has collected many compliments. Sylvia Spalding and May Izumi and her colleagues at the SOEST publications deserve a lot of kudos.

Production of an "International Module" for the WPRFMC Pelagics Annual Report is a new activity. The module is a brief summary of the current status of the major tuna stocks in the Pacific Ocean culled from many sources. It contains maps of the annual distribution of catch of the major species by gear type at 5° longitude and latitude resolution. Coverage is nominally the entire Pacific Ocean from shore to shore, 20°S to 40°N. Most of the work is done by Dodie Lau with a bit of help from Kevin Weng and Johnnoel Ancheta. The first module was prepared for the summary of the 1996 fishing year.

### **Progress on Specific 1997-98 Project Management Goals:**

#### **1. Increase general effectiveness of PFRP operation.**

No progress was made towards creation of a formal mechanism to support of graduate fisheries education at UH.

## **2. Conduct a new round of project solicitations.**

One new project, the “Hawaii regional tuna tagging project” under Kim Holland was initiated. No new proposals were solicited because continuation of existing projects used nearly all of the available funds.

## **3. Convene a second symposium on Pacific Pelagic Fisheries.**

A two day symposium was held on November 12-13, 1997 on economic considerations of pelagic fisheries. Invited speakers as well as PFRP investigators made presentations. The proceedings will be published in late 1998. A special session on “Management of fisheries for large pelagic fish: applications of genetics to policy” was convened during the 1998 Lake Arrowhead Tuna Conference.

## **Financial Status**

All but one of the projects approved for continuation by the Steering Committee were funded in this year. However, tardiness in allocation of funds within NOAA has meant that three projects, “*Evaluation of remote sensing technologies for the identification of oceanographic features critical to pelagic fish distributions around the Hawaiian archipelago*” (Mitchum and Polovina), “*A sociocultural study of pelagic fishing in Guam*” (Rubinstein and Pinhey), and “*Economic interactions between United States longline fisheries*” (Travis and Strand) had not received funding as of late June 1998.

The NMFS “headquarters tax” actually caused a shortfall, and one project “*Investigation of Pacific broadbill swordfish migration patterns and habitat characteristics using electronic archival tag technology*” (Boggs and Gunn) could not be funded. After discussion with the PIs of this project it was clear that deferment until FY1999 would not interfere with progress of the work since there are severe problems with suppliers of archival tags.

Program expenditures by project are summarize and projected through FY1999 in the accompanying spreadsheet entitled “Awards and Expenditures under Cooperative Agreement”. At normal funding levels, it will be possible to solicit some new projects. Some PIs have requested continuations that were not anticipated in earlier proposals and reports.

## **Problems**

Losses of parts of the “Pacific tuna management” earmark and tardiness in allocation of budgets have harmed the ability of the PFRP to accomplish the its task. In June 1997, the Program Manager’s report contained the following paragraphs:

The project funding process is too cumbersome. After leaving the University (a process itself requiring a large number of steps), PFRP proposals pass to La Jolla, Seattle, Boulder and back to Honolulu. None of these steps are intended to improve the quality or efficiency of the research; rather they exist to assert control over expenditures. The large number of steps required to actually implement projects ensures that mistakes

and delays are inevitable. In years when the federal budgeting process does not proceed smoothly, implementation of PFRP projects is made even more problematical. These controls actually jeopardize the ability of PFRP projects to accomplish their goals. The process badly needs streamlining.

The depredation by NMFS headquarters on our budget is another continuing problem. The 7% (or so) "headquarters tax" accomplishes nothing and is the equivalent of about one project that could not be funded for lack of resources.

These problems developed almost exactly as anticipated, and the program nearly lost an additional \$400,000 to NMFS. The result was serious delays in getting funds in place for on-going projects which will effectively put some projects one year behind. The table entitled "FY 98 Budget Requests" summarizes the dates of funding requests, funding action at SWFSC, and receipt of funds by JIMAR for charges against the FY1997 carryover and FY1998 allocation

## **Project Management Goals for 1998-99:**

### **1. Conduct a new round of project solicitations.**

Several on-going projects will be concluding in the current funding cycle. Anticipated commitments for 1999 total about \$1,000,000, so at normal levels of funding in FY1999, there should be approximately \$500,000 available for new projects.

### **2. Coordinate an international Pacific-wide research project on bigeye tuna.**

Bigeye tuna is an important and valuable Pacific-wide resource. Changes in harvesting practices in the past two years have caused scientists and managers throughout the Pacific to reevaluate stock assessments and harvesting policies. The PFRP tabled a research prospectus (attached) at the eleventh meeting of the Standing Committee on Tunas and Billfish (SCTB) in which the PFRP offered its services as a research coordinator to develop an integrated multinational research project to understand the dynamics of the bigeye population on a Pacific-wide scale. The idea was strongly supported by the SCTB.

### **3. Improve funding procedures.**

As mentioned above, losses of parts of the "Pacific tuna management" earmark and tardiness in allocation of budgets have harmed the ability of the PFRP to accomplish its task. Some means must be found to reduce or eliminate the NMFS "headquarters tax" and to bring the more of the "Pacific tuna management" earmark into the PFRP review process.