

Pelagic Fisheries Research Program

Project Management Report

June 1997

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Current Status

The FY1996 allocation was well below needs for the second straight year. No new projects were initiated and maintaining the existing projects was challenging. The principal investigators associated with the PFRP have been very cooperative and have shown flexibility in re-budgeting and deferral of second year requests.

Progress on 1996-97 Project Management Goals:

1. Increase communication of PFRP results.

The PFRP Newsletter appears to have become a very successful vehicle for dissemination of results. The current mailing list now includes over 250 names. The editorial assistant, Ms. Sylvia Spalding, has been retained to produce four more issues.

PFRP-affiliated investigators contributed seven technical reports and several publications to the primary literature. The complete PFRP publications list is attached.

The program manager makes regular contributions to WPRFMC activities including the Pelagic Plan Team, Scientific and Statistical Committee and the Council itself. Invitations to address international symposia on management of pelagic fisheries in the Pacific, Atlantic (invitation declined because of time constraints) and Indian Oceans have been received.

PFRP-affiliated investigators made another impressive contribution to the annual Lake Arrowhead Tuna Conference, presenting 14 of 59 papers and posters.

The PFRP "home page" on the World Wide Web has been kept up to date (<http://www.soest.hawaii.edu/PFRP/pfrp1.html>).

2. Conduct a new round of project solicitations to address the new priorities.

No request for proposals was issued last due to lower than anticipated funding.

3. Convene a second symposium on Pacific Pelagic Fisheries.

PFRP principal investigators felt that 1996 was too soon to convene a second symposium and that little would be accomplished. A two day symposium is planned for

November, 1997 that will address 2 specific issues: (1) role of genetic information in fishery management policy; and (2) economic considerations of pelagic fisheries.

Project Management Goals for 1996-97:

1. Increase general effectiveness of PFPP operation.

One of the implicit goals of the PFRP is to develop a cadre of fisheries professionals who can be called upon to conduct high quality research projects on relatively short notice. As a result there is a group of excellent researchers based in and working both at the University and at the NMFS-Honolulu Laboratory. Unfortunately, several PFRP projects suffered staff turnover during the past year. This turnover was due largely to relatively low salary levels available to RCUH employees and to lack of job stability due to the “soft money” nature of the PFRP. As predicted in the Program Manager’s report last year this trend has continued. The following two actions will assist in maintaining and developing the available pool of qualified professionals.

Key PFRP staff employed by RCUH should be offered the opportunity to move to Board of Regents positions. A simple change in classification does not insure job stability, but it does offer the opportunity for these people to respond directly to requests for proposals as Principal Investigators, and thus will provide more options for continuing employment.

Creation of a formal mechanism to fund education of graduate students will increase the available pool of qualified scientists. There are a large number of Master’s and Doctoral theses lurking among the fishery management problems to be solved in the next 5 years as the Pacific moves towards ocean-basin scale

2. Conduct a new round of project solicitations.

Implementation of new projects of course depends on availability of funds.

3. Convene a second symposium on Pacific Pelagic Fisheries.

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Anticipated problems

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.