Pelagic Fisheries Research Program

Request for Letters of Intent

November 1, 1999

The Pelagic Fisheries Research Program (PFRP) sponsors research on pelagic fisheries to provide the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council (WPRFMC) with scientific information to support development of optimal management policies for fisheries for tunas and billfish in Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, and Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. The PFRP is soliciting letters of intent to submit proposals to conduct research on pelagic fisheries in this region. Total funds to be awarded are likely to be approximately $1,000,000 and individual awards may be as large as $200,000.

The PFRP is soliciting letters of intent to conduct research on the following pelagic fishery management issues:

1. **Non-target and associated species.**

   Longline fleets throughout the Pacific target several species of tunas and billfish. Catches generally include a number of other commercially important species in addition to tunas and billfish. Although sometimes considered “bycatch” or “incidental” catch, they have considerable value and are the “target” species of many small-scale fisheries. The PFRP is soliciting research on regional catch trends, stock status, and economic importance of “non-target and associated species”, development of methods to determine control roles and precautionary reference points, and methods for reducing catches of unwanted species. Species of particular interest are blue marlin, blue shark, mahimahi, wahoo, pomfret and opah.

   Longline fisheries also catch a substantial number of protected species such as sea turtles and albatrosses. The PFRP is soliciting research in support of understanding the impact of fishery induced mortality on protected species. Specific topics of interest are: age structure of albatross populations determined from analysis of banding data, age determination of longline caught albatross,
foraging behavior of juvenile albatross, post-hooking survival of longline caught turtles, population dynamics models of albatross and turtle populations.

2. **Non-commercial and part-time components of small-scale fisheries in the US Pacific.**

An unknown, but presumably large, number of non-commercial and part-time fishers in Hawaii may contribute significantly to the landings of pelagic species in Hawaii. A creel survey on Oahu in 1991 indicated that landings from this sector of the fishery are significant. This survey needs to be updated and expanded to cover the whole State.

Analysis of trends in participation, catch, and value in the various small-scale fisheries operating in the United States Pacific EEZ.

3. **Post-hooking survival of marlins and sharks.**

Release of hook caught fish is often recommended as a conservation measure in both recreational and commercial fisheries. Evidence from some fisheries would suggest that survival of released fish is not certain. The PFRP is soliciting research that would provide a basis to evaluate live-release as a conservation method and that would identify factors that promote post-hooking survival. Both blue marlin and blue sharks are of primary interest.

4. **Ecology of bigeye tuna.**

The propensity for tunas to form schools and to aggregate near man-made and natural features increases their vulnerability to surface fishing methods (purse seine, pole-and-line, and hand-line). Bigeye tuna appear to be particularly prone to formation of persistent aggregations. This species is the mainstay of the lucrative sashimi longline fishery throughout the Pacific. Recent changes in the conduct of surface fisheries appear to have had an adverse impact on longline catch rates. Current research in Hawaii has focused on the dynamics of bigeye aggregations at Cross Seamount, behavior of individual fish, and oceanographic factors mediating longline catches. The PFRP is soliciting research on the role of aggregation in the ecology and population dynamics of bigeye tuna.

**Procedure**

1. Interested specialists should submit a letter of intent to prepare a proposal by **January 3, 2000**. The letter should be no more than five pages long, should contain a brief description of the work to be proposed, and estimates of time frame and approximate cost. Annual costs of projects can be as high as $200,000, but higher costs will be considered for exceptional projects. Proposals for projects expected to extend for several years will be considered although funds can only be allocated on an annual basis. Such projects should be structured to ensure measurable results are presented on an annual basis.
2. The PFRP Steering Committee will review the letters of intent for relevance to PFRP and WPRFMC requirements. Certain research projects will be selected and the authors will be invited to prepare full proposals.

3. Research proposals will be sent out for peer review.

4. A special panel will be convened to review the research proposals and peer review comments, and to make funding recommendations to the PFRP Steering Committee.

Correspondence should be addressed to the PFRP Program Manager, Dr. John Sibert, Joint Institute for Marine and Atmospheric Research, School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology, University of Hawaii at Manoa, 1000 Pope Road, Honolulu, HI 96822, email: jsibert@soest.hawaii.edu

Further Information

The PFRP is currently sponsoring research projects on the biology of tunas and billfishes, on the oceanographic environment of pelagic fish, on the influence of environment on fishery performance, and on social and economic factors influencing fisheries. Additional information can be obtained by contacting the Program Manager. A list of projects supported by the PFRP, publications and other information can be obtained from the PFRP web site: www.soest.hawaii.edu/PFRP/