

Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center

Priorities and Annual Guidance Memo for Fiscal Year 2018

Purpose

The purpose of the Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center (PIFSC or Center) Annual Guidance Memorandum (AGM) is to focus the Center's attention on several specific programmatic priorities in the coming year. The AGM attempts to balance the work that PIFSC programs conduct on NOAA mandates and stakeholder priorities with potential annual budget scenarios. This AGM also will help position the Center for out-year (i.e., two to five year) challenges and opportunities.

The Center's Strategic Goals

This year marks the establishment of a new Center goal to enhance our data management capabilities. This along with the three strategic goals articulated in the NOAA Fisheries Priorities and Annual Guidance for 2017 are the pillars within which Center priorities are aligned. As such, in FY18, all PIFSC programs, projects, and investments will be designed and conducted in a manner that supports the four Center-wide strategic goals¹ below:

- 1) Ensure the productivity and sustainability of fisheries² and fishing communities through science-based decision-making and compliance with regulations
- 2) Recover and conserve protected resources through the use of sound natural and social sciences
- 3) Improve organizational excellence³
- 4) Enhance the management, accessibility and analysis capability of our data resources

Fiscal Year 2018 Budget Scenarios

As in recent years, the Center budget for the upcoming year remains uncertain as the fiscal year begins. The current budget projection plans offer the prospect of a flat fiscal forecast for FY18 and beyond. Base budgets will focus on the highest agency priorities in FY18 and future years. Funding for lower priorities may need to be adjusted downward in order to realize additional gains for our core program activities as well as new priorities that emerge. While an uncertain budget environment has become commonplace, implementing our mission in this context remains difficult. Even with uncertain budgets, the Center will need to balance these budget realities with mission priorities and funding line item integrity. Line item integrity refers to

¹ Goals 1 - 3 are the three NMFS National strategic goals and Goal 4 is a newly established PIFSC strategic goal

² The term "fisheries" encompasses commercial fishing, recreational fishing, and aquaculture.

³ The DOC Strategic Plan defines organizational excellence as: strengthening capacity to achieve objectives, maximize return on program investments, and deliver quality, timely service.

ensuring that funds are spent consistent with Congressional intent (e.g., fish funds for fishery research and monitoring, protected species funds for protected species research and monitoring). For planning purposes and under a budgetary Continuing Resolution through at least the first quarter, the Center will approach the scenario of an FY18 equivalent to the FY17 enacted budget. In FY17, PIFSC received approximately \$28.5 million, of which approximately 20% was temporary funds over and above the enacted budget.

PIFSC Prioritization and Implementation Plan

The PIFSC Director and Deputy Director, in consultation with Division Directors and staff, developed the Center's priorities by taking into consideration prior year accomplishments as well as Division-based and National priorities. This year's priorities are listed below and will be tracked regionally to encourage accountability and transparency.

Fiscal Year 2018 Priorities:

1. Ensure the Productivity and Sustainability of Fisheries and Fishing Communities

In Fiscal Year 2018, PIFSC will focus on the following priorities:

- A. Advance and complete insular stock assessments and associated analyses for fishery management on important federally-managed fish stocks; (1) Main Hawaiian Islands (MHI) deep 7 bottomfish (benchmark), (2) territorial bottomfish, (3) MHI Kona crab, and (4) Guam reef fish
- B. Conduct coral reef ecosystem monitoring, assessment, and reporting for the American Samoa Reef Assessment and Monitoring Program (ASRAMP) using the newly established project based approach and focus reporting efforts on the National Coral Reef Monitoring Program (NCRMP) Report Cards and a comprehensive report for Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument
- C. Continue to advance the Integrated Ecosystem Assessment (IEA) of the West Hawaii focus area, expand social components of the West Hawaii IEA, and conduct the annual status and trends report
- D. Using Enterprise database strategies for longline data integration in FY18, maintain and improve longline data systems and coordinate HMS data reporting to tuna Regional Fishery Management Organizations (RFMOs)
- E. Advance and complete pelagic stock assessments and associated analyses for fishery management for North Pacific swordfish (benchmark) and shortfin mako shark
- F. Provide life history and size data for stock assessments with the Marianas research cruise to support the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas (CNMI) and Guam reef fish and bottomfish

- G. Continue operational and research components of fishery-independent surveys and continue to develop camera capability in support of camera deployment trials off fishing boats
- H. Develop and install the PIFSC Ecosystem-Based Fishery Management (EBFM) Implementation Plan using the EBFM Policy and Roadmap as a guide to identify research areas of focus for Ecosystem Science following EBFM guiding principles
- I. Complete Climate Vulnerability Assessments (CVA's) for protected species, fish stocks and archipelagic coral reef ecosystems and continue activities under the climate 'Regional Action Plan'
- J. Continue to advance community social vulnerability indicators (CSVI) to assess resilience of Western Pacific fishing communities
- K. Define the appropriate scope and scale of the Pacific Islands Reef Assessment and Monitoring Program (RAMP) to improve regional collaboration
- L. Closeout all components of the Pacific Islands Deep Coral/CAPSTONE Initiative
- M. Continue to improve the Socioeconomics Program by implementing recommendations from the FY17 external review of the Socioeconomics Program and continue to integrate socioeconomic considerations into PIFSC reports and analyses to support ecosystem based management

2. *Recover and conserve protected species through the use of sound natural and social sciences.*

In Fiscal Year 2018, PIFSC will focus on the following priorities:

- A. Continue to conduct protected species stock and population assessments in FY18, such as:
 - 1. Complete Hawaiian Islands Cetacean and Ecosystem Assessment Survey (HICEAS) activities and continue support for the Pacific Marine Assessment Program for Protected Species (PacMAPPS)
 - 2. Update the Hawaiian Monk Seal Stock Assessment Report
 - 3. Conduct Central West Pacific green turtle and hawksbill surveys in support of population assessment
 - 4. Conduct Central South Pacific green turtle and hawksbill surveys in support of population assessment
 - 5. Conduct surveys to support quantitative assessment of Hawaii's insular cetacean stocks
 - 6. Continue passive acoustic monitoring throughout the region to provide data in support of cetacean assessments in the Marianas, Hawaii, and Pacific Remote Island Areas (PRIA)
 - 7. Conduct surveys for humpback whales in the Marianas and continue to work with international partners to examine range and structure of the Western Pacific distinct population segment (DPS)

8. Conduct surveys and bycatch quantification on leatherback, olive ridley, green turtles, and hawksbill turtles in Southeast Asia (foreign EEZs) that have connectivity with US populations or fisheries
9. Conduct surveys in support of stock assessment for nearshore cetaceans in the Mariana Archipelago
- B. Continue support for acoustic monitoring of the longline fishery to understand the mechanism of interactions with false killer whales
- C. Characterize and mitigate false killer whale-fishery interactions and provide science support to the Take-Reduction Team to develop measures to mitigate fishery interactions
- D. Conduct analysis on environmental drivers of olive ridley and leatherback interactions in the Hawaiian and American Samoa longline fisheries in collaboration with the NOAA Fisheries Pacific Islands Regional Office (PIRO) and the Western Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Council (WPRFMC)
- E. Continue to support Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Assessment and Recovery camps and Main Hawaiian Island Research, Response and Recovery activities for monk seals and marine turtles, including continued collaboration with PIRO
- F. Continue to develop and implement innovative methods using advanced technology to supplement traditional assessment approaches for protected species in the Pacific Islands Region

3. Improve Organizational Excellence

In Fiscal Year 2018, PIFSC will focus on the following priorities:

- A. Continue to implement the Ecosystem Sciences Division Integration Plan
- B. Encourage and promote professional development for all PIFSC staff
 1. Identify and implement development opportunities (both personally and professionally) for the PIFSC Leadership Team
 2. Identify and implement development opportunities (both personally and professionally) for all PIFSC staff
- C. Demonstrate commitment to the goals of NOAA's Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan
 1. Proactively recruit qualified individuals whose diverse backgrounds, experience, education, and skills will advance the Center's mission
 2. Strengthen the Center's internal communication efforts and enhance employee engagement to continue to cultivate an inclusive culture
- D. Continue to support the partnership between PIFSC and the Joint Institute for Marine and Atmospheric Research (JIMAR) to improve efficiencies and leveraging capacity to advance mutual interests in both organizations
- E. Focus to improve dissemination of web-based content
 1. Align focus of PIFSC Web Content Managers group towards new National content-based delivery system

2. Improve PIFSC Intranet content delivery through transitioning current intranet content to a more flexible content delivery system
- F. Continue to use the PIFSC Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) and other feedback to improve customer service and incorporate and implement change
- G. Work with the Director's Office to construct a new annual planning process
- H. Stabilize support for the small boat program and dive locker and ensure continued support for laboratories
- I. Maintain a safe and healthy work environment at PIFSC

4. Enhance the management, accessibility and analysis capability of our data resources

In Fiscal Year 2018, PIFSC will focus on the following priorities:

- A. Identify and implement process improvements for data streams and ensure timely delivery of all reports and accurate replication of previously reported updates, including work to:
 1. Conduct internal workshops and audits of key PIFSC data streams to identify areas of strength, weakness, opportunities, and threats to help promote a culture of support, collaboration, and sharing within the PIFSC data management community and ensure integrity of our data
 2. Develop and maintain database systems for the Western Pacific Fisheries Information Network (WPacFIN); creating new Guam data entry, new scan and search app for all data records, and new file log transfers for Hawaii in FY18-19
 3. Provide WPacFIN data for management purposes; develop a modern data summary software for Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) reporting and complete user web query functionality
 4. Conduct or facilitate longline observer sampling design (for 2018 Hawaii deep-set, and American Samoa), estimate bycatch, and conduct or facilitate other priority analyses requested by PIFSC, PIRO or the Council
 5. Produce non-confidential data summaries that are accurate, standardized, and documented; making these more detailed, routine, and widely available (compliant with PARR (Public Access to Research Results))
- B. Develop a fish video database to support and streamline ongoing efforts to automate various steps in the video analysis process (fish tracking, identification, and measurement)
- C. Develop centralized procedures and data tools to facilitate the documentation, management, dissemination, and archival of scientific data to improve the quality of data management and satisfy PARR requirements
- D. Work with the Fisheries Information Management Advisory Committee (FIMAC) to facilitate the development of Center-wide standards and best practices in the areas of data management, database development, and application development