

PIFSC Priorities and Annual Guidance Memo for FY2017

Purpose

The purpose of this 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 FY2017 budget scenarios. This AGM also will help position the Center for out-year (i.e., two to five year) challenges and opportunities.

NOAA Fisheries Priorities

All NOAA Fisheries programs, projects, and investments should be designed and conducted in a manner that supports these three NMFS strategic goals:

- Ensure the productivity and sustainability of fisheries¹ and fishing communities through science-based decision-making and compliance with regulations.
- Recover and conserve protected resources through the use of sound natural and social sciences.
- Improve organizational excellence²

The FY2017 NOAA Fisheries Priorities document outlines anticipated results that all activities should be mapped to. Please refer to this document in the attached communication.

FY2017 Budget Scenarios

As in recent years, the Center budget for the forthcoming year remains uncertain as the fiscal year begins. The current budget projection plans offer the prospect of a flat fiscal forecast for FY2017 and beyond. Base budgets will focus on the highest agency priorities in FY2017 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 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

¹ The term "fisheries" encompasses commercial fishing, recreational fishing, and aquaculture.

² The DOC Strategic Plan defines organizational excellence as: strengthening capacity to achieve objectives, maximize return on program investments, and deliver quality, timely service.

least the first quarter, the Center will approach the scenario of an FY2017 equivalent to the FY2016 enacted budget. In FY2016, 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 Directors Office, in consultation with the PIFSC Board of Directors, established the Center's priorities taking into consideration a combination of prior year accomplishments, PIFSC Division priorities, and National priorities. The Center's FY2017 priorities are listed below and will be tracked regionally to encourage accountability and transparency.

FY 2017 Priorities:

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

In FY 2017, PIFSC will focus on the following priorities:

- Conduct Main Hawaiian Islands bottomfish fishery independent surveys and advanced sampling technologies, including operationalizing the new MOUSS stereo-video camera system
- Conduct stock assessments on important Federally managed fish stocks
- Implement Regional Action Plan in support of NOAA Fisheries Climate Science strategy to improve the science and management tools for addressing the impacts of climate change on fisheries, their habitats, and the communities
- Continue implementation of the Territorial Science Initiative to improve data collection and biological sampling that support stock assessments of fishery resources in American Samoa, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands
- Conduct coral reef ecosystem monitoring; Marianas Archipelago Reef Monitoring and Assessment Program (MARAMP)
- Conduct climate change vulnerability assessments for archipelagic coral reef ecosystems
- Conduct climate change vulnerability assessments for fish stocks
- Conduct socioeconomic studies to support ecosystem based management
- Evaluate incorporation of fishery independent surveys and environmental data into fishery stock assessments
- Continue to advance the Integrated Ecosystem Assessment of the West Hawaii focus area
- Create and produce geospatial and oceanographic data services for PIFSC data
- Prioritize scientific research needs and complete Monument Science Plans for the Pacific Islands Region starting with Mariana Trench Marine National Monument
- Implement the Ecosystem-Based Fishery Management (EBFM) Policy and Roadmap and identify research areas of focus for Ecosystem Science following EBFM guiding principles

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

In FY 2017, PIFSC will focus on the following priorities:

- Conduct Hawaiian Islands Cetacean and Ecological Assessment Survey (HICEAS) in the Hawaiian Archipelago, including the expanded Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument
- Implement Full Season of Hawaiian Monk Seal Assessment and Recovery Camps in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands
- Conduct climate change vulnerability assessments for protected species
- Conduct research supporting the NOAA ocean noise roadmap
- Complete stock assessments for all strategic marine mammal stocks and complete annual stock assessment reports
- Conduct assessments of the status and dynamics of sea turtle populations in the central Pacific
- Improve the integration of both environmental data and ecosystem models into fishery and protected species research programs
- Conduct research to understand dynamics and mitigation of depredation in fisheries

3. Improve Organizational Excellence

In FY 2017, PIFSC will focus on the following priorities:

- Promote and emphasize PIFSC core values in conducting all activities in the Science Center
- Implement the Ecosystem Sciences Division Integration Plan
- Conduct external review of the socioeconomic program at PIFSC
- Cultivate an organization that is both diverse and inclusive
- Improve communication of products and activities to external audiences using cost-effective communication tools, consultations, and outreach activities
- Expand partnerships to further develop scientific capacity in the region
 - Support the NOAA Fisheries partnership with OAR for the CAPSTONE Deep Sea Coral and Sponge research onboard the NOAA Ship *Okeanos Explorer* in the Central and Western Pacific Ocean
 - Provide opportunities to scientific partners for shared use of PIFSC laboratory and sea water capabilities at the IRC
 - Expand Center involvement in the new UH Marine Biology graduate program and the NOAA Fisheries QUEST program
 - Continue PIFSC leadership of mentoring local students and the PYSO college-level internship program in an effort to promote diversity and inclusion in our scientific endeavors

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- Collaborate with local resource agencies in the region on ecosystem research and monitoring projects
- Continue to improve the organizational excellence of PIFSC
 - Support the NOAA plan for Public Access to Research Results (PARR) through enactment of the PIFSC local implementation plan to ensure the Center's data inventory meets accessibility and readability standards
 - Respond to the feedback received from the FY16 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey and improve internal PIFSC communications
 - Establish and maintain a tracking system for PIFSC education and outreach activities including social media