

Inter-disciplinary Study of Market Forces and Fishery Management in Micronesia

Progress Report I

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Summary of progress

Progress is being made on all aspects of the Walker Foundation-TNC inter-disciplinary study of market forces and fishery management in Micronesia. Current activities include background investigations, personal interviews and procurement of existing literature on state-specific traditional and rights-based management, fisheries statistics and trends, and the identification of internal and external market forces affecting fisheries sustainability. The co-investigators are focusing on both regional and global examples of management problems and solutions, including traditional and non-traditional management techniques, enhanced co-management, and privatization of resources, including buy-outs and conservation agreements.

Discussions and interviews have been initiated and are ongoing with key marine resource management, conservation, NGO and academic personnel in Yap, the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), Pohnpei, Guam, Palau and the Commonwealth of the Marianas Islands (CNMI). In each case, country profiles are being developed and analyzed to help in the identification of sustainable financing solutions. Ongoing efforts are being made to contact conservation and resource management personnel in Chuuk and Kosrae. Fisheries statistics data have been acquired from Pohnpei, Yap, Guam and CNMI and are being analyzed to gauge the current level of sustainability. The availability of comprehensive fisheries statistics has been identified for the RMI and Palau and have been requested for a detailed assessment to be included in the final report. Sustainable financing options for individual states are being explored and discussed among co-investigators and key stakeholders.

Fisher surveys have been completed in Pohnpei and have been scheduled in CNMI and RMI. Interviews have been scheduled with traditional leaders in Pohnpei to record traditional management methods. Some information on pre-colonial traditional management has been acquired for Pohnpei, Palau, RMI and Yap through literature reviews and interviews. Workshops have been scheduled with municipal leaders and stakeholders in Pohnpei to gauge the potential for greater co-management at the local level. At this time, we do not anticipate any difficulties that would inhibit us from completing the project.

Overview of activities undertaken

Literature searches are ongoing to procure statistical information on fisheries in each of the targeted states/countries. We are also using literature searches to obtain information relevant to the current study, such as regional and global examples of alternative and traditional management solutions to overfishing. All literature is being read and analyzed to formulate potential solutions to overfishing in Micronesia. Fisheries statistics have been gathered and assessed for CNMI, Pohnpei, Guam and Yap as part of a recent assessment of state-specific and regional sustainability. Recent discussions with marine resource and conservation personnel in RMI and Palau have identified the existence of fisheries and socio-economic statistics and those documents have been requested. The investigators are currently attempting to contact and hire a past member of the Palau Conservation Society to conduct socio-economic (fisher perception) surveys. In RMI, Yap and the CNMI, fisher perceptions surveys have been scheduled. We have recorded existing right-based and traditional management techniques for Palau and Yap and are continually conducting requests and interviews with marine resource and conservation personnel and traditional leaders in Pohnpei, RMI and Yap. Co-investigators Houk and McIlwain are recording this information for CNMI and Guam, respectively. We have not been successful in Chuuk on any of the key objectives, although efforts to do so are ongoing. Country profiles are being constructed for each state.

Highlights

Recent interviews with key marine resource and conservation personnel in RMI have provided valuable insight into the statistical materials available. In addition we have gained further insight into traditional management techniques for many of the outlying atolls, for which little data/information is available. Discussions to improve the flow of this information are ongoing. In Pohnpei, co-investigator Rhodes is liaising with traditional leaders to record traditional management there. Fisher perceptions surveys have been initiated in CNMI. We have procured a substantial volume of literature on ecosystem-based management and regional financing and co-management solutions to improve fishing sustainability.

Issues

Repeated attempts to contact key personnel in Chuuk have been unsuccessful, but are ongoing. Co-investigator Rhodes is currently in contact with a member of the Chuuk Conservation Society to determine how best to engage marine resource personnel and extract information on fisheries catch and management and other key components of the study. It is likely that co-investigator Rhodes will schedule travel to Chuuk later in later March to allow direct contact with Chuukese conservation and marine resource personnel. No other issues have been identified.

Planned activities

Travel is being considered for Chuuk to gather the necessary information, with a continuation trip to Marshalls to conclude information gathering. Decisions regarding trips to these two destinations will be made in the coming weeks. Fisher perceptions surveys are planned for Guam, RMI and Palau in the weeks prior to report deadline for Progress Report II. We are looking to conclude the literature search within the coming 2-3 weeks and start to address the issue of sustainable financing options with Dr. Fong. Interviews with key marine resource, conservation and academic personnel will be ongoing to identify internal and external market forces affecting sustainability within regional and state fisheries.