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To: Key Stakeholders
Pacific Islands Region Strategic Planning Process

From: Scott McCreary and Eric Poncelet
CONCUR, Inc.

Date: March 18, 2004

Re: Pacific Islands Region Strategic Planning: Public Forum and Final
Stakeholder Assessment Report

Greetings all,

Last summer, we contacted you and approximately 30 other key stakeholders interested in Pacific Islands marine resource issues to participate in discussions to provide the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council (Council) and the NOAA Fisheries (NMFS) Pacific Islands Regional Office (PIRO) and Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center (PIFSC) with information on important issues facing the NOAA Fisheries Pacific Islands Region (PIR). The information has been used to inform the development of a Strategic Plan to guide federal marine resource conservation and management actions in the new Region. A major motivation of the stakeholder discussions and the Strategic Plan is to enhance public participation and dialogue in this area. We appreciate your help and are happy to provide you with an update on the strategic planning process. As we promised when we talked to you, your input was anonymous to the three offices, and this continues to be the case. Yet now is an opportunity to provide more public input if you like.

Public Forum to Review Pacific Islands Region Strategic Plan

These federal offices have recently completed a summary version of the Strategic Plan and are eager to solicit input from you as interested stakeholders as well as the general public.

We would like to invite you to attend a two-hour Public Forum at the Hawaii Convention Center in Honolulu, Hawaii on March 23, 2004 from 6:30 – 8:30 PM. This public workshop has been scheduled to coincide with the 122nd meeting of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council. The Public Forum is intended to provide opportunities for interested stakeholders to contribute directed feedback on the

Strategic Plan. Other key topics will include a briefing on Coral Reef Ecosystem FMP requirements and a discussion of bottomfish fishery data needs.

The Strategic Plan is available on the Council's website at www.wpcouncil.org or contact the Council by e-mail at info.wpcouncil@noaa.gov, by phone at 808/522-8220, or by fax at 808/522-8226. Copies are also available on the PIRO website at <http://swr.nmfs.noaa.gov/pir/index.htm>.

If you are not able to attend the March 23, 2004 Public Forum, we encourage you to send comments by e-mail, phone or fax to the Council at the above contact information or to the NMFS Pacific Islands Regional Office at NMFS.PIRO.Statplan@noaa.gov, 808-973-2937 (phone), or 808-973-2941 (fax). Please send in your comments no later than April 2, 2004.

Stakeholder Assessment Report

We have also attached, for your information, a copy of the Stakeholder Assessment Report that summarizes the results of our discussions with you and other key stakeholders. The discussions generated many valuable insights and helpful suggestions. The PIR offices drew upon the Stakeholder Assessment Report to inform their preparation of the Strategic Plan. This Stakeholder Assessment Report is also available on the Council and PIRO websites.

Next Steps for Strategic Planning

You will note that the current version of the Strategic Plan is still in summary form. The PIR offices intend to produce a full Strategic Plan complete with specific action items, milestones, and operating protocols within the next 12 months or so. Your comments on the summary version of the Strategic Plan will help to inform production of this full version.

We again want to thank you for your cooperation and participation in this strategic planning effort. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us at by e-mail or by phone at 510/649-8008.

Best regards,

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STAKEHOLDER ASSESSMENT REPORT

Pacific Islands Region Strategic Planning

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I. INTRODUCTION

Background

With the formation of the new Pacific Islands Region (PIR),¹ the federal agencies responsible for marine resource management in the Western Pacific—the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council (WPRFMC, or the Council), the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Pacific Islands Regional Office (PIRO, or the Regional Office), and the NMFS Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center (PIFSC, or the Science Center)—have decided to initiate a Strategic Planning process aimed at improving coordination and effective use of resources among these three offices.

To inform this strategic planning process, the three offices hosted two joint workshops to elicit staff concerns regarding the major issues and priorities facing the new Pacific Islands Region. The offices also engaged CONCUR, Inc.² to conduct confidential discussions with a cross-section of stakeholders in the Pacific Islands Region.

Methodology

A preliminary list of potential stakeholders with whom to hold discussions was developed with input from the PIRO, PIFSC, and WPRFMC offices. Additional names were then solicited from the stakeholders themselves. A total of 30, one-hour telephone discussions were conducted. The stakeholders contacted represent a cross-section of local and national environmental groups, natural resource management and enforcement agencies (at the state, territorial, federal, and international levels), and fishing interests, including both commercial and recreational fishermen located throughout the Pacific Islands Region. The organizations represented by the stakeholders are shown below. A listing of the questions used to guide the discussions is attached in Appendix 1.

*Secretariate of the Pacific Community	Hawaii Marine Biology Institute
KAHEA	Hawaii Longline Association
Hawaii Fisherman	Hawaii Boaters Political Action Association
The Nature Conservancy	Ocean Sports Productions
Hawaii Coastal Zone Management	Audubon Society (Hawaii)
Hawaii Land & Natural Resources	Ocean Conservancy
Guam Fishermen's Coop	Sierra Club
NOAA General Counsel	CNMI Fish & Wildlife Resources
NMFS Southwest Region	Pelagic Fisheries Research Program
US State Department	NWHI Coral Reef Reserve
Audubon Society (National)	NOAA Pacific Services Center
NMFS Enforcement	NOS Marine Sanctuary Program
Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission	US Coast Guard
Marine Mammal Commission	Big Island Fishermen's Association
Guam Div. of Aquatic & Wildlife Resources	American Samoa Dept. of Marine & Wildlife Res.

**Responded in writing*

¹ The new Pacific Islands Region includes American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, Hawaii, and the remote Pacific Island Areas (Howland, Baker, Jarvis, and Wake Islands; Midway, Palmyra, and Johnston Atolls; and Kingman Reef).

² CONCUR, Inc. is an environmental consulting firm that specializes in strategic planning, facilitation, and dispute resolution with regard to complex natural resource management issues.

Outline for the Report

The pages that follow contain a summary report developed by CONCUR, Inc., based on the discussions. This report is intended to draw out and highlight key themes raised during the discussions. It also strives to convey the great diversity of comments and suggestions made. It is not, however, intended to be a comprehensive listing of all issues mentioned. No comments included in this report are attributed to specific individuals; rather, this report represents a synthesis across all discussions.

This summary report is divided into two main sections:

(1) *Key Findings*. This section is broken down into the following sub-sections:

- General Comments
- Perceived PIR interests in strategic planning
- Key stakeholder interests
- Critical issues facing the Pacific Islands Region
- Potential obstacles
- Recommended strategic planning goals in the domains of:
 - Resource management and conservation
 - Research needs
 - Linkages between science and policy
 - Stakeholder involvement, collaboration, and outreach
 - Inter-agency coordination
 - Administration, personnel, and infrastructure
 - WPRFMC/PIRO/PIFSC collaborative decision making

(2) *Implications for Strategic Planning*.

Note on Nomenclature

In this report, the phrase Pacific Islands Region (or PIR) is used to refer to the region that falls under the management purview of the NOAA agencies responsible for fishery management in the Western Pacific—i.e., the Pacific Islands Regional Office, the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, and the Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center.

II. KEY FINDINGS

Discussions with stakeholders yielded several overarching observations. These themes are summarized below under the following categories:

- A. General Comments
- B. Perceived PIR Office Interests in Strategic Planning
- C. Key Stakeholder Interests
- D. Critical Issues Facing PIR
- E. Key Obstacles to Addressing Issues
- F. Recommended Strategic Planning Goals

A. General Comments

Stakeholders provided a wide range of comments. This was not surprising, given the diverse interests and perspectives represented.

Overall impressions: In their discussions of the PIR offices, respondents offered both favorable and critical comments on the actions, both individual and coordinated, of the Council, the Regional Office, and the Science Center.

Praise: Respondents from fishing interests, resource management agencies, and environmental groups alike expressed appreciation for past and present PIR office efforts, including:

- Fishery management and conservation efforts
- Quality of the research
- Level and effectiveness of cooperation among the three offices
- Level and effectiveness of coordination with other fishery management agencies
- Effectiveness of the Council process as a means of involving broader stakeholder communities

Criticism: Certain stakeholder respondents also offered criticisms of PIR office actions. These comments came most frequently from members of the environmental community, but representatives of resource management agencies often expressed similar concerns as well. The discussions elicited the following perceptions:

- Past relations among the three offices have been poor and characterized by friction
- Power imbalances exist among the three offices, with the Council seen by some as having dominated past relations (due in part to powerful political connections)
- Certain stakeholder communities tend to be disproportionately more involved in PIR decision making than others. The fishing industry was most often cited as having greater influence in PIR resource management decisions, while environmental groups were most often cited as having less influence.
- Past coordination between PIR NMFS offices and other local, territorial, state, and federal agencies has been poor. Here, some stakeholders portrayed interagency coordination as being better in some areas (e.g., fishery management) than others (conservation). Other respondents pointed to the Council as having a tendency to act alone

New regional autonomy: Nearly all of the stakeholders contacted expressed optimism regarding the formation of a new Pacific Islands Regional Office and Fisheries Science Center independent of the NMFS Southwest Region. Respondents described a series of possible benefits stemming from this institutional change. These include:

- Better focus on and understanding of PIR issues
- More direct relations with NMFS headquarters
- More control over local decision-making processes
- More control over finances and funding for the PIR
- Better coordination among the NMFS offices and the remote islands in the PIR

A few respondents cautioned that increased independence is only a benefit if the PIR offices accomplish their resource management and conservation goals more effectively than they have in the past. That is, the potential benefits represented by the creation of a new Region—which are considerable—can only be realized through constructive, intentional action and a dedicated focus on effective implementation.

Summary: All of the respondents welcomed the strategic planning process as an opportunity to improve PIR resource management and conservation efforts. Most also welcomed the stakeholder discussions as a good start to ensuring a more involved, open, and transparent relationship with affected stakeholder communities.

B. Perceived PIR Interests in Strategic Planning

Respondents discussed several significant benefits that they viewed as emerging from strategic planning among the WPRFMC, PIRO, and PIFSC offices. These benefits fall into three broad categories as follows:

Strengthening Organizational Effectiveness

- Aligning the missions of the three offices
- Streamlining work and eliminating duplication of effort
- Setting the tone for future collaboration among the three PIR offices
- Clarifying for staff the roles and responsibilities of each of the offices
- Getting the PIR up and running in an expedient manner, including ensuring the quick and comprehensive transfer of duties and responsibilities from the SW Region and getting the PIR offices coordinated in terms of space, staff, and funding in a timely fashion
- Resolving issues caused by former institutional ties to the SW Region
- Allocating resources more efficiently (e.g. eliminating unnecessary competition over resources/ funding)
- Having a more balanced relationship between the Council and NMFS
- Enabling improved coordination with other agency strategic planning processes
- Involving the enforcement wing more effectively in planning and decision-making activities
- Establishing plans and procedures that are sufficiently flexible to allow for adaptive management

Improving Decision Making

- Prioritizing critical issues to be addressed
- Better connecting science and policy so policy makers have reliable science with which to make decisions and scientists have support for work on pertinent management issues
- Enabling decisions that are made in a more timely manner, that are better informed, and that are based on a strong administrative record and therefore more defensible in legal terms

Improving Stakeholder Involvement

- Clarifying for stakeholders the roles and responsibilities of each of the offices
- Soliciting input from all of the PIR fishery management and research organizations in planning for the PIR
- Getting stakeholder communities “on board” and involved in PIR management activities. Stakeholder involvement in the strategic planning sets a good tone for future stakeholder involvement. A clear plan will help to reduce misinformed expectations
- Demonstrating the ability of the three offices to follow through on key planning decisions

C. Key Stakeholder Interests

Stakeholders described some of the benefits to their organizations that might arise as a result of more effective communication, coordination, and collaboration among the three PIR offices. While many of these interests were shared by stakeholders across organizational affiliations, some were also divergent.

We have organized these expressed interests according to the following sectorial categorizations: governmental/regulatory agencies, environmental groups, and fishing interests. We stress that these are statements of interest; they are meant to inform the PIR offices, but they are not intended to commit the PIR offices to particular actions.

1. Governmental/regulatory agency (federal, state, US territories, international) interests

General

- Protecting “public trust” interests in marine resources
- Balancing policy decisions and actions between marine industries and environmental concerns
- Improving resource management agency relations with the Council, Science Center, and Regional Office

Inter-Agency Coordination and Cooperation

- Improving inter-agency cooperation, idea-sharing, and unification on key management issues
- Establishing a regional, integrative approach to fisheries and coastal zone management
- Coordinating better with other agencies' strategic planning processes
- Improving coordination when organizations undertake similar tasks (e.g. training between NOS and NMFS)
- Improving the cooperative management of National Marine Sanctuaries and Reserves
- Clarifying cases of overlapping jurisdictions (e.g. with regard to Sanctuary Programs)
- Establishing a PIR contact point for use by other agencies
- Increasing funding for and focus on research management functions that have been lacking in the past (especially in remote island areas)—e.g., enforcement, observer programs, assessment/research.
- Improving coordination on international issues (e.g., MHLC process)

Transfer of Responsibility from Southwest Region to Pacific Islands Region

- Facilitating inter-agency communications (e.g., easier for conference calls, traveling)
- Developing better understandings of island ecosystems and cultures
- Developing policy that is applicable locally, culturally sensitive, and reflective of local resource issues
- Providing PIR offices with greater decision-making authority and control over finances/funding so that these offices can take faster and more effective local action in response to local problems
- Improving access to decision-makers

Research and Science

- Improving science to support management decisions
- Coordinating better with NMFS research and information gathering
- Ensuring greater independence between science and management offices (i.e., limiting the control by the fishery management agencies over the Science Center)
- Increasing staff support for marine mammal issues
- Directing greater research attention to monk seals in main Hawaiian Islands
- Assisting smaller islands with science, technology, and lab work
- Focusing more on protected species in refuges and Section 7 consultations
- Improving the management of extractable resources by NMFS
- Providing greater input on fishing regulations and practices regarding the proposed National Marine Sanctuary

2. Fishing (commercial and recreational) interests

Resource Management

- Improving the balance between resource management and economic development
- Expanding fisheries and obtaining access to fisheries outside of current EEZs
- Reducing stresses to the ecosystem, from pollution to over-fishing
- Improving understandings of and respect for native islander's resource management knowledge, practices, and values, and incorporating this into local resource management plans

Education, Outreach, and Involvement

- Improving communication of the roles of the three PIR offices to fishermen
- Improving access to PIR representatives
- Improving regional stakeholder representation in the Council
- Educating fishermen on their impact on resources and on how they can improve their stewardship over these resources
- Informing recreational fishermen of the controls that the Council or NMFS might impose on them
- Investigating the ecological and socioeconomic effects of recreational fishing industry
- Attending to the interests of small boat owners and harbors

Fisheries Regulation

- Consolidating fisheries under one jurisdiction (some suggested purse seine, long line, and small boat fisheries should all be regulated by one agency)
- Regulating fisheries on an area-specific basis (e.g. regulations for Hawaii should be specific to Hawaii, regulations for Guam specific to Guam, etc.)
- Adapting safety and operations rules and regulations for small boat commercial fishermen to conditions of the PIR.
- Improving data collection from smaller fishing vessels. Currently, most data collection comes from larger vessels, many of which carry sophisticated fish tracking equipment. Data from small boat fishermen, whose boats are more limited in range and technology, tend to be under-represented.

Institutional

- More efficiently-run organization with less overlap and duplication of effort, simpler interactions, and fewer obstacles to giving and receiving information
- Better relations between PIR offices and NMFS headquarters
- More transparency in NMFS procedural/ administrative decision-making processes
- Strong PIR (e.g. with its own general counsel, protected resources staff, etc.)

3. Environmental group (local, national, and international) interests

Resource Management

- Adopting a more precautionary approach to fisheries management and species protection
- Increasing PIR commitments to protecting the “public trust” (i.e., fisheries, wildlife, and other publicly-managed resources) for the long term rather than optimizing fish catches in the short term
- Enhancing protection of Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI) Reserve/Sanctuary and other coral reef ecosystems
- Increasing attention to protected resources issues and enhancing protection of threatened and endangered species: e.g., leatherback turtle, monk seal
- Balancing local promotion of ESA and MMPA
- Improving biodiversity conservation and ecosystem health
- Maintaining the integrity of small Pacific islands with small economic value but great ecological value
- Increasing collaborative research and coordination of research efforts
- Improved science driving policy decisions

Institutional Relations, Research, and Outreach

- Improved public participation
- Encouraging a more transparent process on the part of the Council and a stronger local presence of NMFS relative to the Council
- Involving the US more in international treaties (e.g. Highly Migratory Species) which could have a positive effect on international fleets

Note: Several environmental group members noted that better collaboration between the three offices and their chiefs may not necessarily be a good thing if it serves to facilitate PIR actions that are adverse to resource protection. They advocated greater independence for the three PIR offices along with checks and balances and oversight.

D. Critical Issues Facing the PIR

Respondents discussed a wide variety of critical issues facing the PIR. These have been synthesized and are summarized below. Many of these issues are described in greater detail in Section E.

- **New Region formation.** Getting the PIR up and running administratively as quickly and effectively as possible; address staffing, infrastructure concerns, and accounting issues
- **Balancing agency mandates.** Balancing fisheries management and resource conservation mandates/goals
- **Evaluating fishery management effectiveness.** Evaluating the effectiveness of existing fisheries management regimes (i.e., to ensure that existing fishery management plans are addressing resource management and conservation concerns in an effective manner)
- **Science and policy linkages.** Improving the scientific basis of policy decisions and the quality of science done
- **Constraints of crisis management.** Being more proactive in fisheries management and resource conservation (i.e., less crisis or litigation driven)
- **Inter-office collaboration.** Improving collaboration and institutional relations among the three offices. This includes addressing perceived power imbalances between the NMFS offices and the Council. It also includes ensuring that each office feels empowered to accomplish its own institutional mandates
- **Inter-governmental agency collaboration.** Improving relations and coordination with other resource management agencies at the federal, state, international, and territorial levels. This includes moving beyond the perceived “we-versus-them” attitude of the past
- **Jurisdictional issues.** Clarifying jurisdictional issues with other agencies (in particular: NWHI Coral Reef Reserve, and integration of EEZ and state or territorial management policies and activities across the 3-mile boundary and other marine protected areas)
- **Enforcement.** Improving enforcement, especially around remote islands
- **International cooperation.** Increasing international cooperation on and management of marine resource issues; involving other countries in ocean-wide management of fisheries: obtaining reliable data and making informed cooperative decisions on resource use
- **Challenges facing local areas.** Addressing the lack of sufficient money on smaller islands to pay for local responsibilities like enforcement, integrative resource management, and public outreach and to respond to bad economic times
- **Stakeholder involvement.** Broadening stakeholder involvement (especially beyond the fishing industry), improving stakeholder outreach, and building capacity of fishermen, fishery managers, and community groups

E. Key Obstacles

Stakeholders discussed a number of key obstacles or constraints that they viewed as impeding the efforts by the PIR offices to adequately address the key issues described in Section D. These include:

Insufficient Resources and Staff

- Funding does not always go where it is most needed
- Difficult to obtain sufficient funding to implement decisions
- Difficult to recruit and retain qualified staff on small islands
- Inadequate staff support and funding on management side
- Staff have good technical skills but are not trained to effectively communicate with stakeholders
- Not enough staff to get the work done (e.g., to perform adequate scientific analysis)
- Not enough qualified experts/researchers devoted to key problems

Statutory/Institutional Constraints

- Difficult to both protect resources and manage commerce of resources when there is great pressure to obtain returns on the economic investments made
- Conflict between competing regulatory regimes: MSA mandate (harvest oriented, maximizes optimal yield, single species oriented, no broad ecosystem protection framework) versus Wildlife Refuge Status (prioritizes resource protection). PIR offices were seen as being industry driven and valuing limited economic benefits over significant ecological benefits (e.g., NWHI)
- Magnuson-Stevens Act does not really permit the implementation of an ecosystem-based management approach

PIR Historical Relations

- Overcoming past power relations in which the Council was the dominant party in decision making processes. (Several respondents described the Council as utilizing political ties to access and control funds to serve its own interests.) Potential difficulties in creating relations among the three offices in which each office feels empowered and none dominates
- Past conflictual relationships between PIR offices and members of the environmental community

Litigation and Rule Changes

- Being “blindsided” by 1) new litigation or 2) redefinition of rules
- Litigation and the threat of litigation is driving fishery management more than anything else
- Litigation has caused PIR resource management policies to be reactive and short-sighted. It takes up much staff time and has kept NMFS from focusing more on bycatch and mitigation issues

Interagency Disputes / Jurisdictional Issues

- Unresolved jurisdictional issues remain and cause uncertainty for how to proceed. E.g., different agencies, regions, sub-regions define EEZ boundaries differently
- Overlapping jurisdictions lead to turf battles with other agencies (e.g., control over management of NWHI resources)
- Jurisdictional issues between the State Department and the Department of Commerce. The State Department negotiates fisheries treaties, while the Department of Commerce

(NOAA) just plays an advisory role. There is a need to have fishery people at table doing the negotiating

Geography

- PIR is characterized by a huge area covering multiple time zones. This leads to difficulties in both communication and in the time and cost of travel amongst the constituent island areas. Technology needs to be used more effectively to address these challenges
- Decision makers at NMFS headquarters or in NMFS offices in California do not always understand the particularities or specific context of PIR work

Cultural Factors

- Cultural differences (e.g., ethnic groups on CNMI). Leads to competing resource management plans (e.g., "Western" versus traditional)
- Resistance of resource exploiters and managers to change

Enforcement

- Insufficient resources and staff for enforcement of management regimes. Increased staff is needed to deal with dolphin, monk seal, humpback whale (etc.) enforcement
- Insufficient guidance and discretion for enforcement staff as to what constitutes harassment and what staff can do about it

Transboundary/International Issues

- Difficulties in managing transboundary issues
- Lack of cooperation among countries to share fisheries information

Industry

- Perception that industry leaders have captured the Hawaii-based fisheries management process and that PIR offices serve the goals of the fishing industry, not of ecosystem health

F. Key Goals

Stakeholders suggested strategic planning goals for each of the following topical areas:

- (1) Resource management and conservation
- (2) Research needs
- (3) Linkages between science and policy
- (4) Stakeholder involvement, outreach, and collaboration
- (5) Interagency coordination
- (6) Administration, personnel, and infrastructure
- (7) PIR inter-organizational decision making

Prioritization of goals: Respondents listed all of the above topics as deserving considerable emphasis. When asked to prioritize, respondents generally viewed resource management and conservation as the primary priorities. The remaining goals (i.e., research needs, policy/science linkages, stakeholder involvement, interagency coordination, administration, and collaborative decision making) were viewed as deriving from these main priorities.

1. Resource management and conservation

In general, respondents wanted the PIR offices to effectively carry out the goals articulated under the statutes and treaties that they are obligated to implement (e.g., Endangered Species Act (ESA), Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA), National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), South Pacific Tuna Treaty, Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Convention, etc.).

Other key goals expressed on this topic included the following:

General approach to resource management and conservation

- Address resource management and conservation issues in a more aggressive and time sensitive fashion. Be more proactive; manage less by crisis
- Coordinate resource management and conservation efforts with other affected/involved agencies (local/state/territorial/fed/international)
- Pursue ecosystem-based and multi-species approaches to resource management. This includes integrative management of coral reefs (coastal zone and watershed)
- Consider precautionary approaches to resource management

Fisheries Management

- Address over-fishing issues
- Resolve Coral Reef Fishery Management Plan issues
- Address highly migratory species/pelagic fish issues. Pursue implementation of the Multilateral High Level Convention, but make sure that recreational fisherman perspectives are taken into account
- Better regulate "incidental fishing" (although it was acknowledged that the US fleet is not a big problem here)
- Establish distinct management regimes for commercial fishing versus small boat/subsistence fishing
- Have resource management policies be region specific and not "one-size-fits-all"
- Consider consolidating regulation of different fisheries (long liners, purse seiners, small fishermen) under one agency

Conservation

- Improve the protection of protected species (e.g., sea turtles, monk seals, lobster, sharks, spinner dolphins, humpback whales)
- Improve coordination with the state and local/private businesses to address conservation issues

Link between fisheries management and conservation

- Achieve balance among sustainable fishery (MSA) and protected resources (ESA/MMPA) mandates
- Base fishery management decisions on cost-benefit analysis comparing the value of fish exploitation versus the value of ecosystem conservation

Inter-agency and jurisdictional issues

- Work out jurisdictional issues and clarify roles and responsibilities between NMFS and other agencies in situations where there are multiple agencies involved (e.g., NOS, US F&W, DoI, USGS, DoD, US Coast Guard, State of Hawaii). Of particular concern, address issues where overlap exists between ESA and MMPA
- Work more collaboratively and effectively with other agencies. In particular, work more collaboratively with NOS to resolve NWHI issues (i.e., resolve uncertainty over what the Secretarial Order establishing the NWHI Reserve really means)

Local knowledge

- Integrate Western management techniques with traditional (culturally-based) resource management methods
- Value native islanders' resource management knowledge and practices, and incorporate them into local resource management plans

Concentration of effort

- Shift focus somewhat away from Hawaiian Islands and toward more remote islands
- Increase efforts at developing international resource management and conservation regimes. Access resource data from all fishing methods and countries to make management decisions. Exert more leadership here

2. Research needs

Respondents offered both general goals as well as specific suggestions for where research priorities should be directed.

General:

- Focus research to support priority resource management and conservation decisions. There needs to be a balance between research to optimize yields and to protect species
- Pursue collaborative research with fishing industry. Where possible, involve commercial demonstration components that demonstrate solutions as practical (e.g., sea turtles, seabirds)
- Enable the Science Center to become an "international center of excellence" for research on PIR issues
- Assess research needs in coordination with applicable federal, state, or local agencies where mission needs overlap. Share resources where possible (e.g., research vessels). Consider satellite labs in the Western Pacific islands

- Assess research needs in coordination with foreign resource management agencies as appropriate to address international issues
- Have research needs reviewed by an independent panel to determine priorities
- Make research more proactive. Research should be conducted that will limit the impact of potential crises or lawsuits; research should not simply be crisis or lawsuit-driven

Key Research Needs: The following represents respondents' recommendations for research in the PIR. These are not presented in any particular order.

- Cost-benefit analyses comparing the value of fish exploitation versus the value of ecosystem conservation
- Evaluation of the effects of fishery management actions taken (i.e., evaluate how well fishery management actions are working)
- Biological survey of NWHI/marine reserve
- Stock assessment and population dynamics, especially of HMS/pelagic but also shoreside
- Threatened and endangered species:
 - Interactions between fishing vessels and threatened/endangered species—special emphasis on turtles and monk seals
 - Methods to mitigate bycatch
 - Effects of bycatch and bycatch reduction methods on species populations
 - Basic life information
 - Monitoring of movement
- Coral reefs
- Benthic habitat
- Links between reproduction and dispersal—i.e., on how reproduction in one area can impact stocks in other areas
- Biology of mammals for Marine Protected Areas (How long do they live in the protected areas? What is their range?)
- Geographic scope for different species (gene marking for different populations)
- Maximum sustainable yield studies—this will necessitate collaborative research with other countries to get reliable harvest numbers
- Quantification of the socioeconomic benefit of recreational fishing
- Analysis of which countries are having the most impact—either harming or helping fisheries. This will enable resources to be directed to those areas that have a “better bang for the buck”

3. Strengthening Linkages between Science and Policy

In general, respondents acknowledged the tension that exists between science and policy within NOAA in the domain of resource management more broadly. Most agreed that in government work, policy needs to drive science and that researchers/scientists need to provide high quality, accessible, understandable, and relevant information to managers. A few respondents noted that in the past, the Science Center has focused on some high priority projects that were of interest to science but not as useful for informing fisheries/species management decisions. At the same time, several respondents stated that science-based PIR policy would stand up better against lawsuits. A couple of other respondents noted that science can be used to educate stakeholders and build support for the policies.

Several respondents criticized PIR policies for being based too much on factors like politics, litigation or the threat of litigation, and administrative procedures and not enough on the best available science. On this topic, a few stakeholders added that MSA-oriented policy decisions seem to be better informed by science than ESA/MMPA-oriented issues (e.g., monk seals and lobster). These respondents described ESA/MMPA decisions as having relatively poor links to science.

Other stakeholders commented that PIR policies also needed to be based on other non-scientific criteria, such as fisherman knowledge and traditional (culture-based) resource management knowledge and traditions.

Additional goals suggested by respondents include the following:

- Target science to achieve a balance between resource management and conservation
- Base resource management and conservation decisions on multiple (as appropriate) scientific disciplines. Several stakeholders warned that policy decisions should not be based on fish biology alone. Other scientific disciplines flagged as important included economics, sociology/cultural anthropology, and political science (to influence international action)
- Where possible, ensure that the science informing policy is region/place specific. Intra-regional differences (e.g., cultural differences between different islands) need to be taken into account
- Ensure transparency in how science is being used to influence policy. Some stakeholders criticized how science has been used in recent section 7 consultations, alluding to their perception of “behind closed doors” policy making
- Guard against fishery managers “laundering” or manipulating the science they are given just to support preferred policies

4. Stakeholder involvement, outreach, and collaboration

In general, most respondents characterized the Council as being more effective in the area of stakeholder involvement, outreach, and collaboration than either PIRO or the Science Center. Several stakeholders expressed appreciation regarding recent efforts on the part of the two NMFS offices to better involve and inform stakeholders. Many of the respondents pointed out the important educational role that stakeholder involvement and outreach plays in the PIR in terms of producing better buy-in on decisions and assisting in enforcement efforts.

Many respondents described satisfaction with the Council process as a means for involving stakeholders in PIR decision making. These respondents highlighted the many opportunities that Council structures provide for stakeholder involvement.

A significant number of other respondents, however, believed that the Council process was not adequately representative and focused too much on particular groups of stakeholders (although this was seen generally as improving). Nearly all of the members of environmental group representatives contacted, as well as several resource agency representatives, stated that the Council process placed too much emphasis on fishing interests. Several environmental group representatives expressed the view that the Council had actively resisted efforts to confirm environmental group representatives as voting Council members. Conversely, some members of the fishing industry believed that scientific perspectives were privileged over the views of fishermen. All of

these respondents recommended that stakeholder involvement be broadened to include more interests and diversity of philosophical views.

Respondents suggested the following as additional goals for adoption on the topic of stakeholder involvement, outreach, and collaboration:

Council representation:

- Enhance representation of and opportunities for significant involvement by the following constituent groups:
 - Environmental interests (e.g., as Council members)
 - Other NOAA line agencies (note: several respondents pointed out that many opportunities exist for other NOAA line agencies to participate but that these representatives often do not attend)
 - Coastal resource management agencies that don't deal with fish
 - Consumer groups
 - Taxpayer groups (because resources are publicly owned and part of the public trust)
 - Village communities and other small island stakeholders
 - Subsistence/recreational fishermen

Involvement

- Reorganize stakeholder involvement structures so that stakeholders encounter fewer choke points as they strive to give and receive information
- Create more opportunities for stakeholder involvement in PIRO and PIFSC decision-making processes (i.e., more than just the Council)
- Ensure transparency in agency decision making processes. Avoid perceptions of PIR decisions resulting from "back room dealings"
- Facilitate capacity building for those interest groups that have not been involved in the past
- Involve and represent small fishermen in international regulatory forums

Outreach

- Better inform the public (including environmental groups, commercial fishermen, fishermen not associated with longline associations, small boat fleets, and native Hawaiians) of the value and results of NMFS research and policy decisions. At least one respondent recommended the formation of a designated public affairs office would be helpful. Respondents generally believed that it is best not to rely just on the Council for outreach
- Encourage the NMFS offices to be more forthcoming with information for the Council (e.g., on biological opinions)
- Target additional outreach to address the key issue of enforcement
- Inform stakeholders of the roles and responsibilities of the PIR offices. Many of the stakeholders contacted were still not clear on these roles

Collaboration

- Increase stakeholder (e.g., fishermen) collaboration in research, but ensure that stakeholder collaborators receive tangible benefits in return

5. Inter-agency coordination

Respondents generally agreed that there were important benefits to be gained by having the three PIR offices better coordinate and communicate with other agencies involved in fishery management and resource conservation in the Western Pacific. Respondents qualified this point in several important ways:

- Close inter-agency coordination is not required for all actions. This remains a judgement call on the part of each agency
- Improved coordination and communication from the PIR offices also means that the other PIR-related resource management agencies need to respond in kind
- The PIR offices need to avoid reproducing the dynamic that existed between the SW Region and the Hawaii offices (where the power/focus remained primarily in the SW Region) by having the focus remain on the Main Hawaiian Islands at the expense of the outer islands. It is important to improve communication and collaboration with all PIR islands, especially remote ones
- Improve interagency coordination and encourage greater levels of “partnering” and “matrix management” among agencies. Important benefits include:
 - More efficient use of resources
 - Avoids duplication of effort
 - Greater access to resources

Other recommended goals for inter-agency coordination included the following:

- Establish closer coordination among enforcement organizations. Particular improvements could be made between:
 - Hawaii state enforcement agencies and NOAA offices
 - State and sister territorial agencies (e.g., enforcement offices in HI, Guam, CNMI, internationally)
- Create a liaison position within the PIR to deal with other agencies (e.g., State of Hawaii, other NOAA line agencies, Coast Guard/enforcement)
- Resolve interagency jurisdictional and overlap issues where they exist (e.g., with NOS/Marine Sanctuary Program in NWHI)
- Establish clear roles and clarify statutory responsibilities vis-a-vis all agencies with which the PIR offices interact—e.g., DoI/US F&W/National Wildlife Refuge, USGS, DoD, other NOAA line agencies (NOS/Marine Sanctuary Program, Marine protected area center), DLNR, EPA, Army Corps, State Department, etc.
- Establish a single and clear point of contact for external agencies to coordinate/communicate with the PIR offices
- Coordinate among PIR offices so that they generate one unified message rather than many different disjointed messages
- Pursue increased coordination with foreign countries and international agencies. This was viewed by respondents as being critical to resolving international resource management issues. Such coordination may also lead to the transferring of good fishery management practices (e.g., U.S. agencies can help foreign countries establish good fishery agreements with foreign fleets). Several stakeholders pointed out that such an international approach might have greater fishery management cost-effectiveness. They noted that the US can only do so much good by managing its own fleet, although increased international coordination will require better coordination with the State Department

6. Administration, Personnel, and Infrastructure

Respondents generally favored rapid re-organization and setting of clear goals for the new region. Several respondents recommended that the size of the PIR office staffs be increased, especially that of PIRO, and that sufficient funding be provided to support everyone from administration to scientists. Some respondents also noted that the Council and NMFS need to work together more closely to secure this funding.

Respondents suggested other goals in the areas of personnel and skills, funding, inter-organizational coordination, and infrastructure. These are as follows:

Personnel and Skills Needed

- Augment staff capacity in the following areas:
 - Protected resources. Recommend at least two more management people to deal with monk seals in main Hawaiian islands, and one more person to analyze data collected on monk seals
 - Sustainable fisheries, including population biology staff for each FMP
 - Finance, administration, and management of these offices
 - Legal counsel office in Hawaii. NOAA needs to coordinate with NMFS and the Office of General Counsel to figure out financing and staffing of this office, which should have 2 attorneys on management, one on enforcement, one paralegal, and one secretary
 - Enforcement. Recommend an enforcement officer for Samoa, 4-5 more officers for Hawaii (one permanently stationed on each island and trained in interaction with monk seals and turtles), at least two more management people to deal with monk seals in the main Hawaiian islands, one more person to analyze data collected on monk seals, and more protected resources staff
 - Stakeholder coordination expertise
 - Economic and scientific expertise on the Council
- Determine which skills to develop in-house and which skills to contract out
- Strive to hire staff characterized by ideological diversity (i.e. not all pro-fishing or pro-conservation viewpoints) and geographic diversity within Council staff
- Address problem of high turnover of PIRO administrative staff. Make efforts to build capacity among staff, as it is difficult to recruit and retain staff on small islands with low pay scale and lots of uncertainty

Funding: Specific areas of funding called out by respondents include:

- Strandings issues: Funding for personnel, hotline numbers, emergency travel, public service announcements, brochures, signs, equipment to respond to haul-out of seals, and places to take injured animals in captivity
- Make more resources available to assisting foreign countries where fisheries impacts are most severe

Inter-organizational coordination

- Establish official operating protocols for the three PIR offices
- Reduce duplication of effort and overlaps in jurisdiction
- Operate effectively independent of SW Region . Separate financial accounts from SW Region
- Establish greater NMFS presence on all of the main Hawaiian Islands. Minimally, establish a telephone number via which NMFS can be contacted—e.g., in the case of strandings

- Establish on-island administrative liaisons with the PIR offices. In particular, establish point contact persons to relay PIR office objectives to the other islands and to communicate island issues back to the PIR offices
- Enable PIR leadership to work effectively with NMFS headquarters
- Cost share some investments in training with other resource agencies (e.g., NOS)

Infrastructure

- Explore new centralized facilities for NMFS offices
- Move PIFSC closer to the water and fishermen
- Establish a satellite lab for the PIR
- Determine where to house expertise over Highly Migratory Species (HMS): La Jolla or Honolulu. Potential solution—could put temperate species expertise in CA and tropical species expertise in HI
- Devote greater capacity toward open area research (more vessels, more lab space)
- Create new displays in PIR office buildings to illustrate the cooperative links among different NOAA line offices and to explain integration within NOAA

7. PIR Collaborative Decision Making

Many respondents described collaborative decision making among the Regional Office, the Science Center, and the Council to be relatively good. Several other respondents, primarily from other resource management agencies and environmental groups, described the process as problematic, due to perceived competition among the offices and attempts by some offices to control others. Most of these stakeholders suggested possible improvements, including:

- Institutionalize ongoing communication and collaboration among the three offices. Increased collaboration will help to limit competition between them (e.g., over funding)
- Expand collaboration beyond three main organizations to include other PIR resource management agencies
- Establish clear roles and responsibilities among the three offices (and other PIR organizations) in the PIR
- Continue improving relations among leadership of the Council, PIRO, and PIFSC
- Maintain degree of independence between the Council and NMFS so as to avoid perceived conflicts of interest
- Resist the perception of “regulatory capture” of NMFS offices (including via domination by the Council) and work to address such perceptions through more transparent processes. NMFS agencies may require increased support from headquarters to achieve this
- Encourage greater compromising between the Council and the NMFS offices

III. PRELIMINARY IMPLICATIONS FOR STRATEGIC PLAN PREPARATION

The preceding pages capture many of the interests, key issues of concern, and recommended PIR goals discussed by the stakeholders. Interestingly, these interests, concerns, and suggested goals strongly parallel those elicited by the staffs of the three PIR offices during the two workshops conducted in the spring and summer of 2003.

Key recommendations for using this Stakeholder Assessment Report

To ensure that the information gleaned by this Stakeholder Assessment is being adequately reflected in the Strategic Plan, we recommend that the Pacific Islands Region attend to the following key actions:

- Confirm that the Strategic Plan is in fact targeting some of the key PIR benefits expressed by stakeholders in section II.B above ("Perceived PIR Interests in Strategic Planning")
- Verify that the Strategic Plan is attempting to address the "Critical Issues" facing the PIR specified by stakeholders in section II.D. above
- Confirm that the research needs/priorities being called for in the Strategic Plan accommodate the research priorities indicated by stakeholders in section II.F.2, "Research Needs"
- Review the strategic planning goals suggested in section II.F. Endeavor to capture these goals in the Strategic Plan
- Carry out the anticipated distribution of this report to the stakeholders contacted
- Convene one or more meetings with interested stakeholders to present a draft version of the Strategic Plan

Examples of potential detailed action steps for incorporation into the Strategic Plan

The Stakeholder Assessment Report contains many specific suggestions for how the PIR offices can better manage their region. These suggestions, listed primarily in section II.F above, might contribute to the Action Plans/Steps being developed as part of the Strategic Plan.

- Assess enforcement capabilities and allocate staff and other resources as necessary
- Identify and appoint contact people for each of the PIR offices and for each of the other significant resource management offices within the Western Pacific. This would establish communication protocols between agencies and lead to improved inter-agency coordination in the Western Pacific
- Work within international treaty forums to cooperate on data sharing with other countries
- Review outreach/education components
- Continue communications with stakeholders on the strategic planning process to keep them informed

Additional suggestions

Some additional suggestions to be considered in the strategic planning process:

- Create a chart or other graphic that delineates the relationship of PIR offices to each other and to other agencies
- Develop graphics that depict the alignment of staff and funding relative to strategic planning priorities

APPENDIX 1

PACIFIC ISLANDS REGION STRATEGIC PLAN STAKEHOLDER DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Personal/Organizational Background

1. Please tell us a bit about your role in your organization and your relation to federal fisheries management and conservation efforts in the Pacific Islands Region.

Interests

2. How might the new Pacific Islands Region benefit from strategic planning?
3. How might your organization benefit from a more effectively managed and coordinated Pacific Islands Region?

Issues, Goals, and Priorities

4. What are the critical issues and priorities currently facing the new Pacific Islands Region?
5. How effective has the Pacific Islands Region been in meeting these challenges? What have been the key obstacles?
6. What should be the goals of the new Pacific Islands Region with relation to the following topical areas:
 - Resource Management and conservation
 - Research needs
 - Linkages between science and policy
 - Stakeholder involvement and outreach
 - Inter-agency coordination
 - Administration, personnel, and infrastructure (e.g., facilities)
7. Which of these goals are most important?
8. How effective are the Pacific Islands Region organizations in collaborative decision making? What would make Regional decision-making processes more effective?

Strategic Planning Process

9. Representation in the discussion process: Currently, the staffs of the PIRO, PIFSC, and WPRFMC are working together to provide input into the strategic planning process. What other stakeholder groups need to be involved?
10. Whom else should we contact on this topic?

Other comments

11. Do you have any other comments that would be help us in preparing for the Strategic Planning process?