

NHAW SESSION 3 BREAKOUT: HOW TO IMPLEMENT THE PROPOSED SOLUTIONS IN THE SOUTHWEST AND PACIFIC ISLAND REGIONS

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Top Recommendations

- Regional entities should identify their research/management priorities and communicate to each other how these priorities are established and achieved.
- A joint budgeting process, or at least planning sessions, are needed to address budget reconciliation and the constraints faced in the provision and prioritization of habitat science.

Discussions during this breakout session focused on implementing the ideas generated throughout the workshop in the Southwest (SW) and Pacific Islands (PI) Regions. The goal of the discussion was to achieve better awareness, communication, understanding, coordination, and collaboration amongst the Science Centers (SCs), Regional Offices (ROs), regional Restoration Centers (RCs), and Fishery Management Councils (FMCs). In particular, each of these groups needs to identify their research and management priorities and communicate how these priorities are established and achieved.

In the near term, several opportunities for improved communication between the SCs, ROs, RCs, and FMCs were identified. Suggestions included exchanging a list of recent publications through librarians, increased data sharing, and updated web pages to reflect the science and management activities being carried out by staff. A distribution list for newsworthy items already exists at the Southwest Fisheries Science Center, so it may be possible to simply expand the distribution list. A need for points of contact to serve as subject area experts was identified by managers, who suggested a contact list managed by a gatekeeper. An inter-office habitat team composed of SC, RO, RC, and FMC personnel could serve to facilitate communication amongst offices and identify opportunities for collaboration. Similar species-specific science teams exist in the Pacific Islands Region, so the creation of an interoffice regional habitat team is feasible. This team would be able to identify points of contact and habitat liaisons within the SC, RO, RC, and FMC. Collocation of staff from these offices would greatly increase understanding of science products, management needs, and the opportunities for improved collaboration amongst offices. Such collocation of staff could occur on a short-term, informal basis, as well as through longer-term, more formal arrangements such as rotational and permanent assignments.

Examples of potential areas for collaboration would be aquaculture (PI and SW) and restoration (SW), where significant habitat science and monitoring needs currently exist. In the past, some of these operations have been conducted through joint institutes and contractors. SCs were overlooked due to assumed lack of capacity, but SCs potentially had the resources to do this type of research and monitoring. There is a need to be prepared for opportunistic funding sources such as refining essential fish habitat (EFH) and hydrologic study. A joint budgeting process, or at least planning sessions, to address budget reconciliation would address the constraints faced in the provision and prioritization of habitat science.

With regard to the provision of science, managers indicated that decision support tools are useful, but not necessary. A more cost effective approach in many cases may be the simple transfer of data or scientific conclusions, which can be interpreted by the managers. A starting point for this would be to adopt protocols that provide access to peer-reviewed and grey literature habitat science and to publicize this amongst other offices.

There are disconnects between the SCs and the ROs/RCs/FMCs involving time scales, geographic areas (inshore versus offshore), and focal species, but these differences can be addressed through improved planning. For instance, emerging areas of concern, such as EFH and hydrology, are likely to require significant scientific input on short time scales. To meet that demand, managers must anticipate the types of information that they will need and communicate it to the habitat scientists as soon as possible. Without this lead time, habitat scientists cannot plan, fund, and execute the research to adequately accommodate science requests from managers. In addition, there is a need to address the fundamental incentive structures.

Long-term means to achieve effective habitat-related science and management will hinge on the successful implementation of the *Habitat Assessment Improvement Plan* (HAIP) and concomitant funding. As indicated by the HAIP, a major limiting factor in the amount of habitat science being

conducted is available funding. The breakout group supported full implementation of the budget initiatives presented in the HAIP as a necessary step to fully accomplish NMFS' habitat science and management goals.

PROCEEDINGS

11TH NATIONAL STOCK ASSESSMENT WORKSHOP

Characterization of Scientific Uncertainty in Assessments to Improve Determination of Acceptable Biological Catches (ABCs)

JOINT SESSION OF THE NATIONAL STOCK AND HABITAT ASSESSMENT WORKSHOPS

Incorporating Habitat Information in Stock Assessments

1ST NATIONAL HABITAT ASSESSMENT WORKSHOP

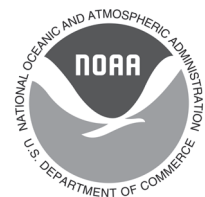
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