

UPDATE OF
FISHERIES ASPECTS OF CENTRAL AND WESTERN PACIFIC ISLANDS AREA

By

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The following is an update of the information in the report, "Fisheries aspects of central and western Pacific Islands area." The original report was prepared to provide general background information on fisheries in the area.

SOUTH PACIFIC COMMISSION (SPC)

1. The present Secretary-General is Mr. Young-Vivien of Niue. I believe his term has expired and he will be replaced. It may be that someone has already been selected to replace Young-Vivien.
2. The present Fisheries Officer for SPC is Mr. Bernard (Barney) Smith of Australia. Barney spent approximately 6 years in Papua New Guinea working under Dr. Robert Kearney in the PNG tuna program.
3. Dr. Robert Kearney, a native of Australia, is currently the tuna authority in the South Pacific area. Bob previously headed the SPC Skipjack Tagging Programme. The field work for the program was completed in the summer of 1980. More than 130,000 skipjack tuna were tagged during the 3-year field work. The Skipjack Tagging Programme has the well deserved reputation of being the most successful tagging program for a pelagic species. Funds for the Skipjack Tagging Programme were primarily provided by the Governments of Australia, New Zealand, U.S.A. and Japan. France may also have provided some financial support. An outcome of the Skipjack Tagging Programme is the estimate made by Dr. Kearney's group that the skipjack tuna stock size in the central and western Pacific is 10,000,000 metric tons. There have been some questions about the reliability of this estimate. One tuna scientist indicated that the 10,000,000 metric ton figure could only be achieved by using the most optimistic estimates of the various parameters for estimating stock size. In any event the size of the skipjack tuna resource will be a subject of considerable discussion in the near future.

I understand through third-hand sources that the SPC skipjack program has encountered difficulties in obtaining tuna data from Japan. Part of this, I believe, is attributed to Japan's continued and increased reluctance in releasing tuna data outside of Japan. The argument has been that these data are eventually used against the Japanese during the course of negotiations for permits and access to the EEZ's of various countries.

^{1/} Southwest Fisheries Center, National Marine Fisheries Service, NOAA, Honolulu, Hawaii 96812. July 1982.

The solution to the various problems on tuna data would be to have an international agreement whereby tuna fishing countries would have a commitment to share data for stock assessment purposes.

Since the official termination of the skipjack tuna program last year Dr. Kearney has been able to obtain financial support for a follow-up program entitled "Tuna and Billfish Assessment Programme." Funds are presently being provided by Australia, New Zealand and the U.S.A. It may be appropriate, some time soon, to face the issue on continued support of this program. Based on the objectives of this program, as well as the manner in which data are being collected, the program appears to be of a long-term continuing nature. It may be desirable to seek clarification of funding sources for future years.

FORUM FISHERIES AGENCY

1. The present composition of the Forum Fisheries Agency staff is as follows:

Director - Philipp Muller of Western Samoa
 Deputy Director - Dr. George W. Coulter
 Fisheries Development Officer - Alan B. Chapman of the U.S.A.
 (Alan is the son of the late Wib Chapman.)

2. The Forum Fisheries Agency appears to have finally settled down and started to address the various fisheries problems. The original objective of the FFA was to provide a wide range of services to Forum countries, including monitoring the resources, keeping track of the economics of tuna fisheries, providing advice to member countries in tuna negotiations and providing monitoring and enforcement services. It appears that the Forum Fisheries Agency is currently depending upon the SPC's tuna program to provide information on the status of tuna fisheries in the region.

3. Recently some members of the Forum Fisheries Agency met in Nauru outside of the FFA in an attempt to organize a broad-based structure to handle fishing access in the EEZ's of certain countries. I believe representation at the Nauru meeting included PNG, Solomons, Nauru, Federated States of Micronesia, Marshalls(?) and Kiribati(?). I'm not sure what the status of this organization is or of the draft agreement that was prepared at the Nauru meeting.

4. Fisheries Officers. There have been a number of changes in fisheries officers in the South Pacific area.

5. The former Gilbert Islands gained independence in 1979. The name of this new country is the Republic of Kiribati (pronounced Kiribas).

DRAFT FOR COMMENT

FISHERIES ASPECTS OF CENTRAL AND WESTERN PACIFIC ISLANDS AREA

By

Richard S. Shomura ^{1/}

Author's notes

The following report summarizes my personal views and interpretations of present fisheries conditions in the central and western Pacific islands area, especially the South Pacific Commission area. The material is being summarized to provide U.S. Government and industry members with general fisheries information of the area. This may be useful as background material in participation of the fisheries policy meeting scheduled to be held in Suva, Fiji, in mid-November. This meeting is being called by the South Pacific Bureau for Economic Cooperation. Due to the press of time, I have not doublechecked some of the statements; however, I feel confident that the information is essentially correct.

INTRODUCTION

Since the recent move by countries to unilaterally impose an extended jurisdiction zone generally seaward to 200 miles, the island waters of the central and western Pacific have started to receive an upsurge in interest as it relates to marine fisheries. Interest in the U.S.A. and other distant-water fishing nations has been especially engendered by the scheduled meeting in Suva this month to discuss the organization of a South Pacific Fisheries Agency.

1/ Southwest Fisheries Center, National Marine Fisheries Service, NOAA, Honolulu, Hawaii 96812. November 1977.

GEOGRAPHY

The island areas of direct concern to the U.S.A. are shown in Figure 1 as the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council area. The WPFMC is one of the eight Councils created by the Fishery Management Conservation Act of 1976 and has responsibility for management of the fishery resources of the Hawaiian Islands, American Samoa, and Guam. The Northern Marianas will gain U.S.A. territorial status shortly, and is expected to fall under WPFMC. It should be noted that there are other islands in the central and western Pacific that the U.S.A. has some measure of responsibility. These include undisputed U.S.A. possessions, e.g., Johnston Island, condominiums, e.g., Canton Island, and a number of islands claimed by the U.S.A., but said claim being disputed by other countries, e.g., Christmas Island whose ownership is disputed by U.K.

Another major area of U.S. responsibility in the western Pacific is the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (Fig. 1). It should be noted that for the present the Northern Marianas is included in the TT area. Presently discussions are being carried by the Government of Micronesia to determine the ultimate political status of the remaining Districts that constitute the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. Finally, Figure 1 shows the area under jurisdiction by the South Pacific Commission.

GENERAL FISHERIES DEVELOPMENT

With respect to marine fisheries, there are basically two areas of concern; namely, (1) the lagoon and nearshore fishery resources and (2) the pelagic resources including the highly prized tunas. Except for some island areas, e.g., Indonesia, Philippines, and Papua New Guinea,

the lagoon and nearshore marine resources of most of the Pacific Islands are suspected to be relatively small in total biomass. Basically the resources are being used to meet domestic needs and only a small part is exported, e.g., spiny lobsters.

For the pelagic marine fishery resources, the island governments and territories of the SPC area until only recently were unable to participate in a meaningful manner with the development of the tuna resources of the region. Prior to World War II, Japan did some fishing for tunas using the longline gear in the western Pacific. Japan resumed tuna fishing in the equatorial waters of the western Pacific following termination of World War II. Subsequently, Japan rapidly expanded her tuna fishing capabilities and extended fishing operations throughout the tropical and subtropical waters of the world's oceans for tunas. Fishing with longline gear was focused primarily on the yellowfin tuna (Thunnus albacares), bigeye tuna (Thunnus obesus), and albacore (Thunnus alalunga).

Until recent years the fishing for skipjack tuna (Katsuwonus pelamis) in the central and western Pacific was confined to coastal waters off Japan and around a few other island areas, e.g., Hawaii, Ryukyu Islands, and Palau. About 10 years ago Japan began utilizing far-ranging pole-and-line vessels to fish for skipjack tuna throughout the tropical and southern waters of the Pacific. The success of Japan's extensive southern water fleet operations is reflected in the increased Pacific catch of skipjack tuna. From a previous pre-World War II annual average catch of around 100,000 metric tons, Japan has increased its skipjack tuna catch

markedly. Presently Japan's annual landings are in the neighborhood of 400,000 MT. It should be noted that in recent years other countries have become interested in the skipjack resources of the central and western Pacific; namely, United States, U.S.S.R., and the various island governments and territories of the area.

Almost without exception the island nations and territories of the central and western Pacific are looking towards the tuna resources as being the only marine fishery resources capable of providing economic benefits to the island communities. As noted earlier the insular resources of these island areas are not considered to be extensive and definitely not in the same economic class as the tunas. As a result, the island governments are looking towards economic returns via licensing, joint ventures or direct participation in the tuna fisheries.

ORGANIZATIONS

The following provides a brief review of the several organizations which concern themselves with fishery matters in the central and western Pacific area.

INDO-PACIFIC FISHERIES COMMISSION (IPFC)

The IPFC is an international fisheries body sponsored by FAO to provide a forum whereby member nations are able to discuss fisheries problems of mutual interest. In recent years the IPFC has made overtures to move from an advisory body to one which is more action-oriented; recent activities are for more direct involvement in programmatic areas and in fisheries management. The present membership of IPFC consists of 18 nations (Australia, Bangladesh, Burma, Democratic Kampuchea, France,

India, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, United Kingdom, U.S.A., Vietnam). While membership is open to all countries affiliated with the United Nations, none of the independent island nations located within the South Pacific Commission area is a member of IPFC. After Fiji achieved independence in 1970, it expressed interest in joining IPFC in 1972; however, at the last minute, Fiji withdrew its plans for membership. Based on unofficial views, the general comment expressed has been that island nations of the South Pacific Commission area were not interested in joining IPFC primarily because IPFC appeared to be a body interested in fisheries matters of Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean and that fishery matters of the island community were given low priority. Furthermore, the fisheries needs of the South Pacific islands area appeared to be met to some extent by the South Pacific Commission.

Geographically, the areas of concern to IPFC have not been defined. This was done deliberately to provide flexibility. Generally the fisheries matters under consideration by IPFC at its biennial meetings have extended as far east to cover the fisheries of Hawaii and as far west to cover the fisheries of India and Sri Lanka. It should be noted that with the creation of the Indian Ocean Fisheries Commission (IOFC) the IPFC has deliberately reduced emphasis in the Indian Ocean and presently concerns itself with marine fisheries matters of the western Pacific and Southeast Asia and the inland fisheries aspects of the entire membership area.

SOUTH PACIFIC COMMISSION

The Commission was organized in 1947 by six metropolitan governments having territories with direct interest in the South Pacific islands area. These countries included Australia, France, Netherlands, New Zealand, United Kingdom, and the United States of America. The Netherlands withdrew membership in 1962. As the island governments gained independence, they joined the Commission. Western Samoa joined in 1964, Nauru in 1969, Fiji in 1971, and Papua New Guinea in 1975. The area of Commission concern is shown in Figure 1. It should be noted here that while the Commission is called South Pacific Commission, the area circumscribed by the Commission includes a substantial group of islands located to the north of the equator, i.e., the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands and the Line Islands chain. It should also be noted that islands not included in the Commission area include the State of Hawaii, Philippines, and Indonesia.

The Commission undertakes a wide range of activities and the prime purpose is to advise the participating governments on ways to improve the well being of the peoples of the area. The activities sponsored by the Commission range into fields of food and material, marine resources, world management and technology, community services, information services, and data analysis. In essence it appears that the Commission is a mini-FAO organization. The Commission's headquarters are located in Noumea, New Caledonia. The Commission originally met annually in Sessions. The present Secretary-General of the Commission is Dr. Macu Salato of Fiji.

THE SOUTH PACIFIC CONFERENCE

The South Pacific Conference was formed in 1950 when it held its first meeting. The South Pacific Conference was originally a meeting of delegates from countries and territories within the Commission area. The meetings of the Conference were held just prior to the Commission Sessions. Sometime during the early 1970's the membership of the Commission and the South Pacific Conference got together and decided to hold joint meetings. These joint meetings were also to be called the South Pacific Conference. Thus, the first joint Conference was held in October 1974.

While not confirmed, the U.S.A. participation in the Conference consists of (1) a U.S.A. delegation headed by the U.S.A. Commissioner, (2) a delegation from American Samoa, (3) a delegation from Guam, and (4) a delegation from the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.

THE SOUTH PACIFIC FORUM

During the course of attending South Pacific Conference meetings a number of island governments became disenchanted with the constraints imposed by the Conference. Delegates of these countries felt that it was impossible to discuss political matters at the South Pacific Conference; thus, they took to meeting on an ad hoc basis outside of the Conference. Another unofficial reason for organizing the Forum was that the island governments felt that the developed countries tended to overwhelm them at the Conference.

As a result, these island governments organized themselves into a group known as the South Pacific Forum. The Forum met officially for the first time in August 1971. The current membership consists of Nauru, Fiji,

Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Cook Islands, Niue, Western Samoa, and Tonga. What sets the Forum from other official bodies is that the Forum is a meeting of officials at the prime ministerial level.

At the meetings of these prime ministers the discussion centers around setting of policies on matters of mutual interest. Implementation of many of the policy matters is delegated to an organization called the South Pacific Bureau of Economic Cooperation (SPEC). The Forum last met in Papua New Guinea in August 1977.

Some of the problems faced by the South Pacific Commission and the South Pacific Forum are detailed in an account (Attachment A) by John Carter, who described activities at the 17th South Pacific Conference held in Pago Pago, American Samoa in September 1977.

SOUTH PACIFIC BUREAU FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION (SPEC)

This organization was established in 1972 with funds provided by Australia and New Zealand. While its activities probably are wide-ranging, for the purpose of the present discussion SPEC operates as a "Secretariat" for the South Pacific Forum. Basically their efforts to date have been to develop free trade among its membership. The present Director of SPEC is Mr. Mahe Tupouniua.

SOUTH PACIFIC FISHERIES AGENCY

At a Forum meeting held in Suva, Fiji, in October 1976, the Forum directed SPEC to prepare proposals for the establishment and operation of a South Pacific Fisheries Agency. A draft document (Attachment B) was prepared in May 1977 by SPEC with the assistance of specialists from the South Pacific

Commission and the Fisheries Division of the Australian Department of Primary Industry. Subsequently, a working group consisting of experts from the South Pacific Commission, Government of Australia, and representatives from several Forum countries met in Suva, Fiji, in July 1977 to review and revise the draft document. The revised document was completed and submitted at the Forum meeting held in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, on 29-31 August 1977. Attachment C provides the report of the Director of SPEC to the Forum entitled "Establishment of a South Pacific Fisheries Agency." The Forum then presented its views on the Law of the Sea and the need for a regional fisheries agency and requested the Director of SPEC to convene a meeting of officials of all interested coastal states in the region to (1) prepare a draft convention establishing a South Pacific regional fisheries body, (2) arrange for an interim agency office, and (3) discuss and prepare guidelines for the agency. Attachment D entitled "Declaration on Law of the Sea and a Regional Fisheries Agency" provides the report in full.

PRESENT FISHERIES ACTIVITIES

In general the various island governments and territories in the region carry out very little fisheries research and development work. Some details are provided in a later section; the present section highlights the international fisheries activities.

SOUTH PACIFIC COMMISSION

The Commission's fisheries work is carried out by a Fisheries Adviser whose office is in Commission headquarters in Noumea, New Caledonia.

Mr. Rene Grandperrin, a fishery biologist, who was formerly with ORSTOM (a French overseas fisheries organization) in Noumea, assumed the post of Fisheries Adviser in mid-1976. The fisheries work is basically a one-man operation. The Fishery Adviser's functions are to (1) provide fisheries advice to the Commission, (2) prepare proposals for Commission support, (3) provide advice and coordination among fisheries officers of the region, (4) overview Commission-sponsored fisheries projects, and (5) disseminate fisheries information to the fisheries officers of the region, and (6) organize and run the regional technical fisheries meetings.

COMMISSION'S REGIONAL TECHNICAL MEETINGS ON FISHERIES

The Commission sponsors an annual meeting of the Fisheries Officers of the Commission area. The last (Ninth) meeting was held in Noumea, New Caledonia, on January 24-28, 1977. Basically, the meeting provides an opportunity for the Fisheries Officers to review their activities, exchange information, and review the Commission-sponsored projects.

COOPERATIVE SKIPJACK TAGGING PROGRAMME

Recently the Commission became involved in a cooperative skipjack tagging program. The objectives of the tagging program are to determine the migratory pathways of skipjack tuna in the central and western Pacific, aid in stock identity, and obtain some ideas of the population size of skipjack tuna in the area. Additionally, the program is planned to provide island areas with an opportunity to obtain information about their baitfish resources and to become exposed to the pole-and-line technique of tuna fishing. The present program commenced field work in October 1977 and is expected to run for three years. The countries funding this project

to date include Australia, New Zealand, and the U.S.A. Japan has contributed to this program, thus far, by donating three months of vessel time to get the program started. The program is presently headed by Dr. Robert Kearney, who is on the staff of the Commission.

UNDP REGIONAL FISHERIES COORDINATOR

The UNDP has Mr. Harry Sperling as the Fisheries Coordinator for the region. He is presently based in Suva, Fiji. Mr. Sperling's responsibilities are primarily to assist island governments in reviewing their fisheries needs and to assist in preparing proposals for UNDP support. As an example, he recently toured the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands and helped prepare a fisheries development package.

OVERVIEW OF COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC COMMISSION AREA

The following provides a very brief country-by-country status report as it relates to fisheries matters.

AUSTRALIA

Status

Independent nation. Australia's primary role in the South Pacific Commission is as a donor country. I believe Australia is a major contributor to the finances that operate the Commission.

General fisheries comments

Australia plans to move in concert with the other island governments on matters relating to extended jurisdiction. With regard to tuna fisheries, Australia presently has an ongoing fishery for southern bluefin (Thunnus maccoyii) by pole-and-line and purse seine methods. Skipjack tuna are

taken in varying quantities; however, a major viable fishery for this species has not been established to date.

Fisheries research and management

The federal fisheries matters are handled by CSIRO.

NEW ZEALAND

Status

Independent nation.

General fisheries comment

With regard to tuna fishing, New Zealand has a small surface albacore fishery. For various economic and technical reasons, the fishery has not expanded; however, the resource base appears to be large enough for a substantial expansion of this fishery. The skipjack fishery had its start only 3-4 years ago and has shown a remarkable success. The catch has steadily increased and is now around 5,000-10,000 tons. The fishery is presently being operated by an arrangement involving the New Zealand Government, New Zealand fishing industry, and U.S. tuna fishing interests. The fishery is based on capture by the purse seine method.

Fisheries research and management

Research is handled by a fisheries group headed by Mr. G. Duncan Waugh.

While small in size the staff is rated high in technical competence.

The management area is handled by Mr. Brian Cunningham.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Status

Gained independence on September 16, 1975.

General fisheries comments

PNG is reported to have considerable fisheries resources which are still underutilized. Outside of Japan, the fishery for skipjack tuna in Papua New Guinea showed the most marked success. In 1974 the skipjack catch amounted to 40,000 metric tons. Skipjack fishing is carried out by joint venture arrangements involving the Government of PNG and private Japanese and U.S. interests. It is reported that the Government of Papua New Guinea has not been overly satisfied with the joint venture arrangements with the Japanese companies. One of the two Japanese companies is reported to have ceased operation in Papua New Guinea.

Fisheries research and management

Peter Wilson, a former resident of Hawaii, is currently attached to the Government of Papua New Guinea by UNDP as a Fisheries Adviser. My understanding is that Mr. Wilson has reviewed the total fisheries arena of PNG and is providing the Government with advice on a wide range of fisheries topics, e.g., fisheries development, research and management. He is presently recruiting for some senior scientists to fill positions in the research unit.

SOLOMONSStatus

Protectorated under U.K.; expected to gain independence soon.

General fisheries comments

Is a transshipment base for foreign longline vessels. Has a joint venture arrangement with Japanese fishing concerns to develop the skipjack fishery of the Solomons area. I believe the recent skipjack catch for the Solomons has been between 10,000 to 20,000 metric tons.

The Solomons has been selected as the permanent headquarters for the projected South Pacific Fisheries Agency.

Fisheries research and management

A Mr. Richard James of the U.K. is presently the Principal Fisheries Officer for the Solomons. Mr. James is a young, knowledgeable individual who has had some commercial fishing experience in England. He is aggressive and not reluctant to make the views of Solomons' interest known at fisheries meetings. This is done firmly but politely.

COOK ISLANDS

Status

Gained internal self-government status under New Zealand in 1965.

General fisheries comments

The Cook Islands have been interested in developing their fisheries for some time. Several years ago the Cook Islands was involved in an aquaculture project to rear lobsters; the project failed miserably. While the Cook Islands are undoubtedly interested in developing a skipjack fishery, it is uncertain as to what the availability and abundance of skipjack is in Cook Islands waters. Also, the perennial problem of baitfish exists.

Fisheries research and management

The Principal Fisheries Officer for the Cook Islands is a Mr. Thomas Marsters. Sir Henry, who is the Prime Minister for the Cook Islands, has a keen interest in fisheries and has expressed the Cook Islands' views eloquently in the past. He has expressed willingness to negotiate with U.S.S.R. if it will help the Cook Islands.

FIJIStatus

Gained independence on October 10, 1970.

General fisheries matters

In past years Fiji made some attempts to develop an aquaculture industry. Species examined included oysters and tilapia. I believe effort in aquaculture development is presently at a low level or dormant. With regard to nearshore fisheries, the present Fijian administration is encouraging the development of fisheries for nearshore and slope resources, e.g., snappers and groupers. For tuna fishing, Suva is a transshipment base for a foreign longline fishing fleet. The Fijian Government entered into a joint venture arrangement with a Japanese firm recently to develop a skipjack fishery. Presently the joint venture operates a small tuna cannery in Suva. Albacore caught and landed by the longline fishery is being canned and exported to the U.S.A. The skipjack catch is being canned and the entire catch is reported to be consumed locally. The skipjack fishery is in its initial stages of development, and the fishery is based on catches made by several chartered Japanese pole-and-line vessels. The present annual catch is estimated to be in the neighborhood of 1,000-2,000 tons. From all accounts the potential for growth of the skipjack fishery is good. The baitfish supply appears more than adequate to support a small fishery.

Fishery research and management

Mr. Robert Stone is the Principal Fisheries Officer for the Government of Fiji. He is a native Fijian who spent two years (1973-75) at the

Fisheries School of the University of Rhode Island. Mr. Stone is a young, aggressive, and level-headed individual who thinks in practical terms as it relates to fishery development.

It should be noted here that Mr. Stone, Mr. Henry Seseapasara of American Samoa, and Mr. Marsters of the Cook Islands are probably the only fisheries officers who are native-born and citizens of their island governments or territories. All others are expatriates.

NEW CALEDONIA

Status

Overseas territory under France.

General fisheries comments

Fishing is completely on an artisanal basis at the present time. Not much is known about the marine resources available in New Caledonia. With regard to tunas, the French administration has expressed interest with the development of a tuna fishery; however, no substantive field work has been undertaken to date. Much of the emphasis in fishery work has been undertaken to date. Much of the emphasis in fishery work has been in the aquaculture area. There is an aquaculture station in Noumea where research is focused on the culture of penaeid shrimp.

Fisheries research and management

Mr. Jean Claude LeGuen is the Principal Fisheries Officer for the French Government in New Caledonia. I believe he heads the ORSTOM organization based in Noumea, New Caledonia. My understanding is that the French Government plans to expand fisheries research in the Pacific island area. Mr. LeGuen is presently developing plans to expand their research on skipjack tuna.

WESTERN SAMOAStatus

Gained independence on January 1, 1962.

General fisheries comments

Although the islands that make up Western Samoa are larger than the islands making up American Samoa, the problems in fisheries are essentially the same. Fishing is presently confined to nearshore artisanal fishing. With regard to skipjack, the UNDP has a project which hopes to develop the skipjack fishery. Efforts appear to be below critical mass. Western Samoa has a problem of inadequate baitfish supply and is therefore engaged in a mollie culture experiment similar to that operated in American Samoa. Additionally, UNDP has a project to assist the Western Samoan people in upgrading their small-boat fishing capabilities. There have been reports of recent U.S.S.R. and Republic of China interest shown in Western Samoa.

Fisheries research and management

I do not believe the Western Samoan Government has on its staff any fisheries expertise. Fisheries assistance is provided by international organizations such as UNDP.

FRENCH POLYNESIAStatus

Overseas territory under France.

General fisheries comments

There is some development of the nearshore fishery resources in French Polynesia. I understand some fish are being taken in Tuamotus and

shipped to Tahiti markets. There is a small pole-and-line skipjack fishery based in Papeete, Tahiti, which utilizes the Polynesian style of fishing. I believe the annual catch is in the neighborhood of 2,000 tons per year. Large skipjack exceeding 30 pounds are not uncommon in the Papeete fish markets. Presently the French Government is making an effort to further develop the skipjack fishery. I understand a small pole-and-line vessel has been purchased and is now operating in the Marquesas area.

Fisheries research and management

The French Government has a CNEXO unit in French Polynesia which operates a sizable aquaculture plant in Vairao, Tahiti. A wide range of species is being evaluated; emphasis is on penaeid shrimp. The Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission is presently engaged with the French Government on a cooperative skipjack tagging project. Tagging is presently going on in the Marquesas area.

The local Tahitian Government has a small fisheries unit which is equivalent in concept to a State Fish and Game entity. Based on very limited contact it appears that the local fisheries unit and the CNEXO group are not on the best operating terms.

TUVALU

Status

Gained independence on October 1, 1975. Formerly the Ellice Islands of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Group.

General fisheries comments

Tuvalu consists of a series of islands which have very narrow fringing reefs. Because of the very limited lagoon and reef area, the inshore

fishery resources are considered to be very small. The Government of Tuvalu hopes to expand its fishery activities utilizing small vessels. Also, the Government is interested in developing its tuna resources; however, it is not quite sure what is available and what the best approach should be toward its development. Based on very scanty data, there appears to be very little baitfish in the area.

Fisheries research and management

Tuvalu does not have anyone with substantial fisheries background.

GILBERT ISLANDS

Status

Self-government status under United Kingdom. I believe the Gilbert Islands is expected to gain independence in the near future.

General fisheries comments

The situation in the Gilberts is very similar to Tuvalu. Presently there is a UNDP project to develop a skipjack fishery in the Gilberts. Since baitfish are lacking in the area the project is working on the suitability of culturing sufficient quantities of young milkfish. The lagoon in Tarawa has been modified to create a number of earthen ponds. Milkfish fry are taken from wild stocks and placed into the ponds. Information is not available on the present status of this project; however, it has been reported that the milkfish will be tried next year on an SPC-sponsored skipjack tagging vessel.

Fisheries research and management

A Mr. Hollness is presently the Fisheries Officer for the Gilbert Islands.

I believe he is a staff member of the United Kingdom's overseas unit on loan to the Gilberts. Mr. Hollness was formerly with the PNG fisheries group.

TRUST TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

Status

The Northern Marianas District will gain territorial status next year. The other Districts making up the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands are presently in the process of determining their future political destiny.

General fisheries comments

For most of the areas where relatively large population centers exist the nearshore fishery and lagoon resources have been reported to be heavily fished. It is generally believed the slope and bank resources of the various parts of the Trust Territory hold sufficient fishery resources for expansion of coastal fisheries. The magnitude of the resources are probably not large enough for a substantial export market. Considering the Trust Territory area as a whole, it is probably the center of tuna fishing activity in the western Pacific. There is extensive longline and pole-and-line fishery in this area. After World War II the Japanese longline fleet centered its operation in the Trust Territory area and caught substantial quantities of yellowfin and bigeye tuna. It is believed that a substantial longline fishery still operates in the Trust Territory region.

While a detailed examination of the time and space distribution of the Japanese southern pole-and-line fishery fleet has not been undertaken,

it is believed that a substantial part of the Japanese southern tuna fleet operates in the Trust Territory area. One can assume that a large share of the 200,000 metric tons of skipjack tuna taken in the western Pacific by the Japanese southern fleet is taken in the TT area. Other tuna fishing activities in the area include a small U.S.A.-operated pole-and-line fishery based in Palau. The fishery lands from 5,000 to 10,000 metric tons a year and utilizes the Japanese type pole-and-line vessels. The catch is transshipped to U.S.A. canneries. A recent study of the baitfish resources in the area concluded that the baitfish supply is adequate for sustaining a small fleet.

One of the small pole-and-line vessels obtained by the Trust Territory Government from Japan as part of the reparation agreement is being utilized at Ponape for surface tuna fishing. My understanding is that the vessel is on charter to a private firm and is having some measure of success in catching skipjack tuna using the pole-and-line technique. The other reparation vessels are reported to be lying idle in Palau.

AMERICAN SAMOA

Status

Territory of the U.S.A.

General fisheries matters

In all probability the nearshore and lagoon fishery resources of American Samoa are being fully utilized. Presently a small dory fishery operates on the slope and bank waters of American Samoa; catches are primarily made up of snappers and groupers. One of the major problems faced by this fishery has been the necessity to discard about 50 percent of the

catch because it is made up of the red snapper (Lutjanus bohar) which has the reputation of being highly toxic.

The Government of American Samoa, in cooperation with NMFS and the Pacific Tuna Development Foundation, is presently engaged in rearing Mexican mollies to be tried as baitfish for pole-and-line tuna fishing. Present plans are to conduct field trials early 1978.

Presently the major fishery in American Samoa is a foreign-operated longline fishing fleet which based out of Tutuila, American Samoa. The catch is processed by two U.S.A. canneries located in Pago Pago. In recent years the longline landings in American Samoa, as well as landings made in other parts of the central Pacific, have declined. The decline has been due to several causes, including reduced fishing effort due to the sharp increase in oil prices in 1975.

Fishery research and management

The Principal Fisheries Officer is Mr. Henry Seseapasara, a native of American Samoa. A substantial part of the operation of the fisheries activity in American Samoa is funded by the U.S. 88-309 Program.

TONGA

Status

Gained independence on June 4, 1970.

General fisheries comments

The Government operates a longline vessel which sells the catch through local markets. While the operation is not believed to be self-sustaining the consumption of fish in Tonga has probably increased substantially. The crew of the longline vessel is made up predominantly of Tongans.

The Government of Japan has a "Peace Corps"-type fishery project in Tonga. I believe the original plan was to aid in the development of a surface tuna fishery. The project has not gotten off the ground, primarily due to the lack of baitfish. It does not appear that this project represents a sincere effort, since the project is considerably undermanned, e.g., availability of only one technical specialist.

The UNDP recently initiated a project to develop skipjack fishing. How this ties in with the Japanese effort is not known. The UNDP project has located some baitfish in the northern islands. The fishing trials are projected for the next phase of this project.

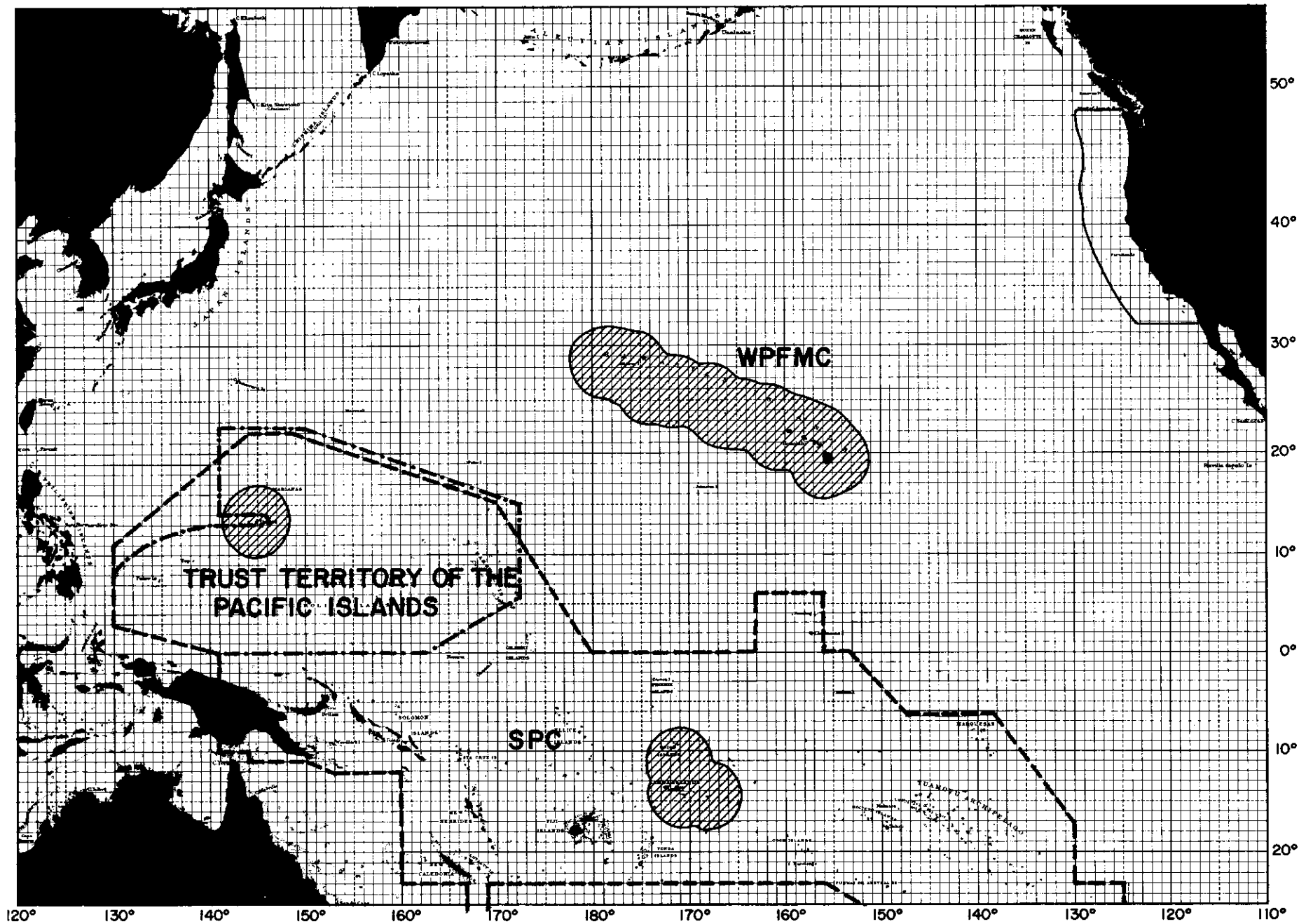
Fisheries research and management

The Principal Fisheries Officer is a Mr. William Wilkinson. Like all of the other fisheries officers in the Commission area, Mr. Wilkinson operates a fishery unit which is grossly understaffed and underfunded.

OTHERS

Due to the press of time and the general lack of information, summary reviews are not provided for Guam, New Hebrides, Niue, Tokelau Islands, and the Wallis and Futuna Islands.

Figure 1.--Geographical areas encompassed by (a) Western Pacific, Fishery Management Council (WPFMC), (b) Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, and (c) South Pacific Commission.



1/ The shaded areas include the areas of overlapping jurisdiction between the USA and neighboring countries.