

Workshop Summary

Monterey, California, September 27-30, 2009

The Fisheries Leadership and Sustainability Forum continues to gain traction with a third successful workshop in Monterey, California. This September's workshop drew seventeen members from seven of the eight regional fishery management councils, including state representatives, fishermen, seafood distributors, and business owners. The Forum was honored to welcome back council members attending for their second or third time and pleased to welcome many new participants. Participants gathered to network with peers, expand their repertoire of decision-making skills and management tools, and share challenges and success stories.

This workshop focused on bycatch, which participants identified as a concern across all regions and fisheries. Over the course of the three-day workshop, participants discussed bycatch challenges with scientists and experts in bycatch mitigation, marine policy, environmental law, and decision making processes. At the beginning of the workshop, participants were asked to describe a bycatch challenge that they are currently facing. The purpose of this workshop, and the Forum, is to create a neutral arena for open discussion of current bycatch issues, and facilitate the transfer of ideas and innovations between councils.

As in past workshops, this workshop utilized a hypothetical case study as an interactive teaching tool. This case study was presented in two parts. In Part I of the case study, participants were tasked with generating management recommendations for a healthy and productive shellfish fishery constrained by bycatch of an overfished groundfish stock. In Part II, participants explored the complexities of the Endangered Species Act as it pertains to bycatch of protected species. Part II of the case study also focused on process where participants were asked to develop a structured decision making process to help them identify management solutions that account for uncertainty and satisfy their goals and objectives. Participants divided into three smaller groups representing a diverse cross-section of perspectives and experience.

The first day of this workshop included presentations led by Duke and Stanford faculty, as well as fisheries management experts with Environmental Defense Fund and NMFS, including:

- Dr. Larry Crowder, Steven Toth Professor of Marine Biology at Duke, provided a global overview of bycatch issues and mitigation strategies;
- Dr. Michael Orbach, Professor of the Practice of Marine Affairs and Policy at Duke, provided an overview of the social and cultural context of bycatch reduction;
- Dr. Rod Fujita, the director of Oceans Innovations at Environmental Defense Fund, discussed the systemic causes of bycatch and the importance of aligning incentives with goals; and
- Dr. John Watson, formerly of NOAA Fisheries, presented examples of successful gear technology development and implementation.

The second day of the workshop began with presentations by two members of the Stanford Law faculty:

- Janet Martinez, a Senior Lecturer in Law at Stanford University Law School, provided an overview of structured decision-making (SDM) as a tool for considering stakeholder interests in natural resource management. Managers can use this model to organize their decision-making process, by defining the problem, identifying objectives, criteria and performance measures, and explicitly considering uncertainty and risk tolerance. Participants were asked to work through structured decision-making protocol during Part II of the case study. Participants agreed that the SDM approach was a useful tool for building common ground during the decision-making process.
- Deborah Sivas, Director of the Environmental Law Clinic at Stanford Law School, provided a comprehensive overview of the Endangered Species Act as it relates to bycatch of protected species. Participants eagerly discussed the regulatory consequences of ESA listing. As a result, informal and engaging discussions of biological opinions and incidental take statements continued.

The workshop concluded on a positive note as participants shared bycatch success stories and offered suggestions for continued engagement with the Fisheries Forum

This September's workshop also included opportunities for participants to socialize and network with their peers. On Monday night, participants dined with sharks and bluefin tuna at the Outer Bay exhibit of the Monterey Bay Aquarium. Dr. Steve Murawski, Director of Scientific Programs and Chief Science Advisor for NOAA Fisheries, gave the keynote address. Tuesday's dinner was held at Passionfish, a restaurant in Pacific Grove renowned for its creative presentation of sustainable seafood, where NOAA researcher Scott Benson discussed the Swordfish Leatherback Utilization of Temperate Habitat (SLUTH) project.

The workshop concluded on Wednesday morning with a naturalist-led sightseeing and whale-watching tour of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. Bill Douros, West Coast Regional Director for the National Marine Sanctuaries program, led an onboard discussion of the Monterey bay ecosystem and the role of multi-use marine sanctuaries. Forum participants spotted a pair of blue whales, black-footed albatross, dolphins, sea otters and an ocean sunfish.

The Fisheries Forum is eager to begin planning for its fourth workshop, to be held at Duke University Marine Lab in Beaufort, North Carolina. The Forum welcomes feedback and suggestions for future activities, and is particularly interested to identify new opportunities to engage council members. This fall, the Forum will hold its first regional workshop on catch shares in New England.

Background information on the Fisheries Forum: The Fisheries Leadership and Sustainability Forum is a partnership of the Nicholas Institute for Environmental Policy Solutions and the Nicholas School of the Environment and Earth Sciences at Duke University, the Center for Ocean Solutions managed by the Woods Institute for the Environment at Stanford University, and Environmental Defense Fund, Incorporated. The purpose of the Forum is to facilitate networking opportunities and support professional development for members of the regional fishery management councils.