

SOUTH PACIFIC COMMISSION

FOURTH TECHNICAL MEETING ON FISHERIES

Noumea, New Caledonia

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TRUST TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

MARINE RESOURCES DIVISION

Koror, Palau

Western Caroline Islands 96940

PROGRAM SUMMARY

Marine Resources

The major marine resources of the Trust Territory include the offshore tuna fisheries, the inshore reef fisheries, the mother of pearl fisheries, and the lobster and crab fisheries. Recreational fisheries, algae harvesting, trepang harvesting, and turtle farming show real promise but have yet to be of commercial importance. Shipbuilding and repair activities are growing and essential to any successful marine operation.

Fisheries

The major fishery within the Trust Territory is for skipjack tuna and these operations are based in Palau where approximately 20,000,000 lbs. (10,000 tons) of skipjack were harvested during the past year by eleven live bait fishing vessels.

The development of the inshore fisheries has been retarded everywhere but Palau by the lack of ice and cold storage facilities, ship repair facilities, docks, etc. In Palau, the inshore fishery meets all fresh fish requirements for the island inhabitants and exports reef fish to Guam as well. Last year the Palau Fishermen's Cooperative purchased 513,000 pounds of fish and lobsters from local fishermen. Export sales, mostly by air, totalled 215,739 lbs. valued at \$64,721.73. Export sales combined with local sales of fish, fuel, supplies, etc. brought total sales for the year to over \$234,000.00.

The Palau Shipyard with 20-30 employees has had gross sales of \$400,000 during the last three years making and repairing wooden hull vessels.

Attention is being focused on the harvesting and farming of marine algae. Trial farms in Palau have mostly failed due to the feeding activities of herbivores. Several natural beds of Eucheuma spinosum have been located and test harvesting and shipping trials are now being conducted.

Limited work with rearing young hawksbill turtles indicates commercial farming of these animals is possible.

As a means of insuring greater survival of hatching turtles, about 2000 young turtles have been reared during the past year to an average size of 6 inches and released.

Trochus fishing is on the increase and tests are being conducted with the collecting of various types of oyster larvae to determine the feasibility of entering into commercial pearl shell and oyster culture.

Investigations on the habits of lobsters and teuthids (siganids) are also being carried on by graduate biologists.

#### Need for Technical Assistance

The lack of technically qualified people is largely responsible for the slow rate of development of the marine resources of the area. For example, over a million lbs. of trepang (Bêche-de-mer) was exported from Truk to Japan during 1941. At today's prices this would be worth over \$560,00.00. When production of the other districts is considered, the value of this resource is great. To develop this resource, an experienced Trepang Fisherman/Processor who could travel to various districts in the Trust Territory and show local fishermen the valuable species and the proper method by which they should be processed is required.

The lack of suitable ship repair facilities and skilled construction and maintenance personnel in the boatbuilding and drydocking fields makes ferro-cement hulls appear extremely promising. While excellent support facilities for the construction of ferro-cement vessels exist in Palau, personnel experienced in this type of construction are not available. An experienced ferro-cement boatbuilder could demonstrate to the management (two U.S. employees) and workers of the Palau Shipyard the proper construction techniques that would make possible the development of a new type of vessel which would have wide applicability throughout the Trust Territory.

#### Need for Research

The need for research is urgent. Nothing is known of the live bait species which supports the 10,000-ton skipjack fishery in Palau or of the other districts; Tridacna clams are gone from Saipan, Guam, Truk, Ponape, Yap and remain only in the Marshalls and Palaus; many miles of living coral reefs have been killed by the crown-of-thorns starfish and nothing is known of the reasons for the sudden population increase, or how to effectively control the predator or how to effectively rebuild dead reefs. Nothing is known of the life habits of the commercially important siganids, crabs, mullet, mackerel, snappers, groupers, etc., thus, making effective management of the marine resources almost impossible.

#### Desirable Assistance from SPC and SPIFDA

The provision of personnel skilled in special fields for adequate time periods is the best possible type of assistance which could be provided by SPC and SPIFDA. Examples include a ferro-cement boatbuilding instructor, a trepang fisherman/processor, a pearl shell skipjack tuna fisherman, a research biologist for life history studies of a specific commercially important species. Such assistance should be provided only

if proper support facilities are available in the host country. Most importantly, the man selected as the "expert" must have had many years of experience in the actual performance of his trade and not be qualified for his position because of academic achievement. Example, a graduate marine biologist who specialized in the study of holothurians rather than a fisherman/processor who has spent years harvesting and drying them; a graduate food technologist rather than a former manager of a katsuobushi plant; a marine architect rather than a man who has successfully built ferrocement boats, etc. The stressing of practical know-how and achievement over academic accomplishment in the selecting of tropical fishing experts who will provide technical assistance is absolutely essential to a successful marine resources development programme.

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