

SPC/Inshore Fish. Res./BP.35
29 March 1988

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

SOUTH PACIFIC COMMISSION
WORKSHOP ON PACIFIC INSHORE FISHERY RESOURCES
(Noumea, New Caledonia, 14 - 25 March 1988)

COUNTRY STATEMENT - REPUBLIC OF PALAU

by

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Country Statement - Republic of Palau

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Background:

Palau's inshore fisheries development program has reached a point where administrators, fishermen, and state governments have agreed that there should be major efforts to properly manage the resource in order to attain maximum long term benefits . Recognition must be given to sectoral requirements which include subsistence, economic, social, recreational and others. In contemplating various legislative requirements the policy makers are faced with the lack of basic information needed to formulate meaningful and comprehensive regulations. Fisheries agencies involved with the development and management of marine resources have been taking ad hoc measures to protect the fishery. However, extremely difficult questions from the biological, economical and political fronts have arisen, which should be properly addressed before a comprehensive management plan can be formulated.

Recent Research Activities:

In addition to the on-going activities to investigate mariculture potentials on several species of marine organisms, the Marine Resources Division has utilized the expertise of short term consultants to conduct resource surveys on selected species of organisms which have not been exploited before. Projects which are currently being conducted at MMDC include turtle mariculture trials and stock enhancement, tridacna mariculture trials and stock enhancement, and continued investigation into the feasibility of mariculture and stock enhance of several species of reef fishes and other organisms.

The area outside the barrier reef is now being investigated for possibility of shrimp and other deep-water resource fishery. Funds are being sought to conduct a pilot project on FADs in badly overfished areas. Efforts are being made to develop artisanal fishery on coastal pelagic species in an attempt to ease pressure on reef fishes.

Management Problems:

Management problems cannot be attributed to one specific issue. Rather, it is the combination of many factors which arise from the high dependency on the inshore resource by the Palauan community. Compounding the problem is the erosion of traditional management system in highly populated areas, creating the need for urgent legislations. The lack of basic data to make proper decisions makes this difficult

Research Needs:

Manpower Development - The management unit within the Marine Resources Division is just emerging. As such, the skills required to handle the complicated issues have to be built over a period of several years. It is envisioned that proper training is the most important for the staff at this stage. Meanwhile there is a need to utilize outside expertise to put problems in proper perspective and to develop an on-going long term management program.

Improvement of Data Collection - Data collection was initiated in 1982 and was not properly monitored over the years. In 1987, SPC conducted a review of the system and made recommendations for its improvement. One of the recommendations is the assistance in regular monitoring and data analysis. Baseline information need to be incorporated into the system for easy access.

Resource Surveys - Continued resource surveys are needed to investigate potential for commercially important species and their viability under local conditions.

Stock Assessment - Techniques for regular stock assessment on important species needs to be developed and applied in order to give us better information for management decisions.

Fish Aggregation Device - The effectiveness and economics of FADs in the waters around Palau should be investigated, especially in areas where overfishing has taken place and where tourist industries require easy access for sports fishing.

Economic Analysis of Marine Resources - A macro economic review of inshore resources needs to be made in order to assist in planning for resource allocation and commercial expansion.

Legislations - Since all national regulations in Palau have been codified, it is an appropriate time to make a review of all existing fisheries regulations to determine their weaknesses for possible amendments. Possibility of creating a single fisheries act should be considered. Standardization of state level ordinances should be looked at in order to ease the enforcement burden.

Information Requirement - Steps to create a local information base is being considered. This will be greatly assisted by the marine resource bibliography which will soon be published under FAO, Suva program. The next logical step would be the translation of the Japanese works in Palau prior to World War II. This will produce valuable information which has never been available to the region.

Possible Assistance from IFRP

- Provision of technical advice in addressing the above problems.
- Channeling relevant information of a timely basis to assist in planning projects.
- Provide advice on appropriate trainings and training institutions.
- Provide advice on the selection of appropriate consultants and experts.
- Look for financial assistance to assist in conducting research requirements.