

SOUTH PACIFIC COMMISSION

TWENTIETH REGIONAL TECHNICAL MEETING ON FISHERIES
(Noumea, New Caledonia, 1 - 5 August 1988)

COUNTRY STATEMENT - MARSHALL ISLANDS

REORGANIZATION

In February of this year the organizational structure responsible for the protection, management and development of marine resources, including conclusion of foreign fisheries agreements, issuance of fishing licenses and surveillance activities, was integrated into the statutory body now known as the Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority. It functions under a Board of Directors with the Minister of Resources and Development serving as Chairman. A Managing Director serves as the chief executive of the Authority and is assisted by an Assistant Director. The Development division is headed by a Chief Fisheries Officer, who is assisted by an extension officer and two project officers. First data collection and processing is also a new responsibility of the Authority that is now being implemented.

Purse Seine Purchase

The Republic has recently entered into a joint venture with an individual from California in the purchase of a tuna purse seiner (1200 tons). Part of the agreement includes crewing the vessel with young Marshallese men. As a result of this joint venture, the Authority is now evaluating the logistics and economic potential of Majuro's international dock area as a tuna transshipment port and base.

Fish Marketing Facilities

The fishing Co-op has been closed for five years now and plans are in the works to resurrect it. The new foreign fishing base

facility is presently being leased to a private concern interested in setting up a fleet of small boats for fishing in the outer islands, then shipping the fish back to the U.S. by air. The pilot project is being headed by Richard Howell and will initially be conducted on Arno Atoll. Training will occur during the first three months while the fishing base is being modified into a fish processing unit.

Grant & Aid Program

The Japanese will be repairing the old commercial dock system in Majuro; the cost is expected to be nearly \$2 million. Also in the works after the dock is completed will be the Outer Island Fisheries Development Project scheduled to begin in June of next year. This project initially will be limited to Arno Atoll, after which it will gradually be extended to other atolls. The project calls for developing four fishing complexes in the Arno Atoll, with each of the fishing complexes becoming a community center for education and fishermen training, and with infrastructure facilities such as a landing jetty, a shipway for fishing vessels and communications system, supply facilities for fuel, fishing gear and ice, weighing scales, transport vehicles and repair facilities. The project will use about 15 small modernized vessels of several models, a 40-foot diesel powered research vessel and a fifty foot fish transport vessel equipped with a radio communication system, echo sounder and a cooling unit for insulated fish holds.

Surveillance

The Republic has just acquired a second patrol boat that will increase surveillance activity by the Authority during the coming fiscal year.

Industry

Since the end of June the Katsuobushi plant has suspended operations because of management changes and procurement problems. The plant, which produces smoked skipjack loins, including namari, a vacuum-packaged product, expects to resume production early August, a new inventories permit. When in full production, the plant can process up to 4 tons of skipjack per day and employs 25-30 Marshallese.

Sport Fishing

The recent July 4 week-end fishing tournament, a two-day event held in Majuro, proved to be a very productive time for local fishermen, reflecting a small but very active and aggressive sport fishery. With nearly 40 teams participating, trolling catch totalled over 10,000 lbs., with 17 billfish caught. Bottom fish catch equalled 934 lbs.

Mariculture

The Wahoo Island Giant Clam Mariculture Project in Mili Atoll is going very well. Far more clams are being produced than can be raised through their growout stage. Steps are underway to form out seedlings to outer island locations. The government intends to assist in this seeding effort.

FAD's

None are in operation at this time.