

Secretariat of the Pacific Community

**1<sup>st</sup> SPC Heads of Fisheries Meeting**  
*(Noumea, New Caledonia, 9–13 August 1999)*

## **Background Paper 1**

Original: English

### **Overview – Marine Resources Division**

Marine Resources Division  
Secretariat of the Pacific Community  
Nouméa, New Caledonia

### **Overview – Marine Resources Division**

**Institutional and regional context**

The Marine Resources Division is one of the three operational units into which the SPC work-programme was classified after the South Pacific Conference of 1996 in Saipan. The other two SPC Divisions are Social Resources, covering social and socio-economic issues (including health) and operating mainly out of Nouméa, and Land Resources operating mainly out of Suva. The Social Resources Division and the Land Resources Division are each headed by a Deputy Director-General who has additional responsibilities for managing the SPC administration at each site, whilst the Marine Resources Division is headed by a Director.

The Annual Report and Strategic Plan explain the SPC organisational structure and current *modus operandi*. In the context of regional intergovernmental organisations, and service to island members, SPC sees itself very much as a technical organisation complementing the regional policy role of the Forum Secretariat. We cover the areas around and between the specific mandates of the Forum Fisheries Agency (tuna fishery management), South Pacific Applied Geosciences Commission (non-living resources), Tourism Council of the South Pacific, University of the South Pacific (higher education and basic research), and the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme. SPC is the region's oldest intergovernmental organisation and as a result this gap-filling mandate has diversified SPC into quite a complex entity over the years (in the context of the regional Pacific – it is quite small compared to applied research or development institutes in developed countries). Advisory and assistance programmes currently include community health, nutrition, demography, women and young people's social issues, agriculture, maritime transport, community and media training, national statistics, and forestry, as well as fisheries.

The Marine Resources Division is composed essentially of the two fisheries programmes: Oceanic and Coastal. There is currently some debate whether the SPC's small Maritime Programme, based in Suva and focussed entirely on shipping issues, should be considered part of the Marine Resources Division, since it is mainly concerned with social resources – particularly seafarer training and standards – and is currently managed by the Deputy Director-General (Suva) as part of the Land Resources Division. This is likely to remain a moot point until the hypothetical day that the maritime and fisheries programmes can be united at one site.

Within the Marine Resources Division itself, the more highly-focussed Oceanic Fisheries Programme has a single Manager for its three sections, whilst the more heterogeneous Coastal Fisheries Programme is managed by the heads of its 5 separate component sections, with particular attention from the Director of Marine Resources. It is not a completely logical structure but it works. Since more than 90% of the funding of the two fisheries programmes comes from non-core projects, each of which must be internally self-consistent, there is not a lot of scope for SPC to experiment with management structures.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of the Marine Resources Division is best described by the mission statements of its two constituent programmes. These are as follows:-

**OFP:** *“To provide member countries with the scientific information and advice necessary to rationally manage fisheries exploiting the region's resources of tuna, billfish and related species.”*

**CFP:** *“To provide a regional support service that assists Pacific Islanders in identifying the status, and optimising the long-term social and economic value, of small-scale fisheries and aquatic resources in Pacific Island waters.”*

The work programme to implement these missions will be described in more detail during the programme overviews of the next few days.

## **Staff**

The Division as a whole currently has 37 staff, 20 in Oceanic (made up of 5 locally recruited support and 15 internationally recruited professional), 15 in Coastal (4 support and 11 professional), and 2 in executive management (1 support and 1 professional). Currently 4 of the 8 section heads in the Division are French nationals, 3 are Australian and one is a Cook Islander. The Division has a positive policy towards employing Pacific Islanders – indeed, we will seize upon highly educated and experienced Pacific Islanders whenever we get the chance, to the occasional detriment of island member government capacity – but as in many other technical areas, the larger and more developed countries have a much larger field of highly qualified and experienced fisheries people available, and the ethnicity of our technical staff complement reflects this.

Because of this current gap in the human resource capacity of small island states, the Division has instituted a system of shorter-term associate, or attachment positions wherever funding permits. These positions are reserved solely for Pacific Islanders, and governments and the private sector can transfer personnel into these positions for periods of around one year to gain regional experience without necessarily permanently losing the services of that person. These postings are not so much for training purposes, which would require a much greater commitment than the Divisional work-programme and mandate would admit, but for broadening the experience of people already capable within their fields: people who can add to SPC's capacity to help member countries. (We also have a small and variable capacity for short-term attachments to the private sector, under the Fisheries Training Section).

## **Funding**

The support for the Divisional work programme comes mainly from sources separate from SPC's member country "assessed contributions". The SPC core budget supports the management (the Director of the Division and Oceanic Fisheries Manager), some of the administration of the Division, support services such as English-French interpretation and translation, and currently covers two professional staff positions. These latter are within the part of the work-programme that is adjudged to be of highest immediate priority to most member countries and territories (currently the Coastal Fisheries Capture (or "masterfisherman") Section). However, the great majority of the work-programme is funded by special projects or member country "extrabudgetary" programme support. The Division has this large proportion of extrabudgetary assistance in common with all regional intergovernmental programmes, except the University of the South Pacific, which has considerable student-related income.

The Marine Resources Division is thus similar in some ways to a development consultancy, in that it carries out work that supports the goals of external assistance programmes, but it differs from a consultancy in that any work that it takes on must fit within the context of the overall work programme, and must be in harmony with the goals of member countries. We do not get involved in projects to keep ourselves employed, or to expand the organisation, even if we are skilled in that area, but only in those projects which help achieve regional aims. For projects within our work-area, we thus provide value-added continuity and follow-up. Private consultancy and Marine Resources Division capabilities overlap to a certain extent, but each has its own appropriate niche. Consultancies can be quickly programmed and scaled to fill shorter-term needs for highly donor-focussed projects, without the overhead of fitting into pre-existing SPC work programmes, whilst the Division provides a more coherent and continuous service with a particular emphasis on knowledge in depth, and a built-in focus on Pacific Island priorities. Pacific Island governments are our shareholders.

## **Future of the Division**

The purpose of this meeting is to help guide the future of the Division, as well as to provide a meeting place to talk about Pacific Island living marine resource issues. Like much of our history, events outside our control are likely to play a large part in our future, but a few issues can be suggested that may influence the direction of the Division over the next three years:-

- The significant increase, if European Union funding is approved and other plans come to pass, of the quality and quantity of reef fisheries science coming out of the Coastal Fisheries Programme;
- The question of the operational amalgamation, or not, of the SPC Maritime Programme into the Marine Resources Division;
- The potential influence of the proposed new Commission for the management of regional tuna fisheries on the role and basis for funding of the Oceanic Fisheries Programme, at least on the regional component of the OFP's work. We will of course continue to service member country interests for as long as members require;
- The increasing coherence of the development functions of the Coastal Fisheries Programme, to the extent where it may possibly be appropriate in future to group the Division into Research and Development Programmes instead of Coastal and Oceanic Programmes;
- The planned construction of a new institutional home for Fiji-based programmes in Suva, which may draw SPC and the South Pacific Applied Geosciences Programme (SOPAC) under one roof and increase the capacity for working together on living and non-living marine resource research and development issues;
- Changes in the very way that ordinary people think about fisheries, and fisheries management, particularly in the developed countries that support most of the Division's work.

I will not elaborate on these points in this short paper, but you might like to bear the implications in mind over the course of the meeting, as we review the work-programme.

One issue that is currently foremost in many thoughts, particularly as many of you come to this meeting directly from a Forum Fisheries Committee, is the future international arrangement for the management of regional tuna fisheries. A Multilateral High-Level Consultation (MHLC) is coming up shortly, and it is difficult to guess what exactly may be asked of the OFP at the international level as a result. However, you need to be clearly aware that it is the SPC membership, not the MHLC, which will determine the institutional future of the OFP. Any advice that you provide, as Heads of Fisheries, will influence any decisions that are ultimately made at the Conference of the Pacific Community.

The future of the Division is of course tied in with the future of the SPC itself and, if SPC continues to develop along its millennial theme of promoting Pacific Island guardianship of resources, the Division will continue to play a central role in the work of the organisation. The views that you express over the next few days will be influential in deciding how the organisation enters the new millennium.