

**Joint PIR and SWR**  
**Policy for Dissemination of HMS Fishery Data to**  
**Regional Fishery Organizations**

**May 2005**

Because of mutual interests in fisheries on highly migratory fish species (HMS), the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWFSC), Southwest Regional Office (SWRO), Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center (PIFSC), and Pacific Islands Regional Office (PIRO) developed this policy for the dissemination of HMS fisheries data to regional fishery organizations (RFOs). The purpose of the policy is to ensure consistency of data reported to different RFOs and to improve efficiency by establishing protocols and identifying roles. RFOs include, but are not limited to, the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission, International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific Ocean, Secretariat of the Pacific Community, and Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission.

**HMS Data Dissemination Policy**

- 1) Data disseminated to meet international treaty obligations, to support voluntarily the work of RFOs, to support the work of subsidiary bodies of RFOs, to support approved scientist-to-scientist collaboration, and to support ad hoc international teams and working groups are covered by this policy.
- 2) The data confidentiality requirements stated in NOAA Administrative Order (NAO) 216-100, NAO 216-100 Amendment 1, SWR data confidentiality handbook (Administrative Report LJ-97-01, and, when it is developed, a comparable handbook for the PIR will apply to all data disseminated under this policy. These data confidentiality statements refer to several specific federal acts (laws), including U.S. Trade Secrets Act, Magnuson-Stevens Act, and Marine Mammal Protection Act, and South Pacific Tuna Act.
- 3) Definitions used in this policy statement:
  - a) Public Data: Data that are aggregated, summarized, structured, or processed so that the data are not identifiable with or reveal the business practices of any person either from the most current release of the data or in combination with other releases;
  - b) Confidential Data: Data that are identifiable with any person, that reveal the business practices of any person, and that are prohibited by law from being disclosed to the public;
  - c) Person: Any individual (whether or not a citizen or national of the United States), any corporation, partnership, association or other entity (whether or not organized or existing under laws of any State), or a Federal, State, local, or foreign government or any entity of such governments, including U.S. Regional Fishery Management Councils.
- 4) Data categories used in this policy are in accord with those used by most HMS RFOs:
  - a) Category I: Total annual catch by species and gear and total number of vessels, by gear and vessel size class when possible;

- b) Category II: Catch and effort (logbook) data;
  - c) Category III: Size composition data.
- 5) An official U.S. data correspondent for each RFO will be designated by the PIFSC/PIRO or by the SWFSC/SWRO, depending on which their Center/Region has the lead regarding data submissions. The data correspondent will be responsible for communications with RFOs and dissemination of HMS fishery data to the RFOs. The name of the data correspondent shall be provided to the RFOs, indicating that he/she is to be the sole contact for data matters between the two organizations. Joint memos or other documentation may be developed as needed and appended to this policy to clarify Center/Region lead regarding RFOs.
- 6) The official U.S. data correspondent for the Center/Region having lead for the given RFO will coordinate with a designated HMS data correspondent from the other Center/Region for the compilation of official statistics for dissemination, unless otherwise arranged on a case by case basis.
- 7) Documentation of the processing involved in preparation of Category I, II, and III data, metadata, and other information facilitating its use are to be provided with the disseminated data.
- 8) Data disseminated pursuant to this policy must be subjected to a pre-dissemination review pursuant to the Information Quality Act to ensure that it meets all applicable information quality standards.
- 9) Category I data, being aggregated by year and gear types, will in almost all cases meet the definition of Public Data. Thus, Category I data can usually be distributed freely. Procedures for converting processed weights to whole animal weights or estimates of catch by species made from species composition sampling, if used, are to be provided in the documentation. Aggregated Category II data will be provided to RFOs following the international standards below. Though vessel identifiers are removed when aggregating the data, trade secrets could still be revealed in individual time/area strata when data from fewer than three (3) vessels are aggregated. Thus, an additional protocol of eliminating strata with fewer than three vessels or companies represented, as agreed to by SWFSC/SWRO and PIFSC/PIRO, must be followed with these aggregated data to ensure confidentiality of the disseminated data.
- a) 5° lat. X 5° long. X month for pelagic (drift) longline, recognizing that some RFOs prefer quarterly summaries and that most longline sets are longer than 1° in length;
  - b) 1° lat. X 1° long. X month for surface fisheries (purse seine, troll, handline);
- 10) Set by set Category II data, i.e. un-aggregated, are sometimes listed as optional or preferred by RFOs. These data are confidential and cannot be disseminated unless:
- a) The person or persons receiving the data sign a NOAA Fisheries statement of nondisclosure; or
  - b) An authorized official of the RFO or other entity receiving the confidential data signs or otherwise administratively agrees to abide by the NOAA Fisheries statement of nondisclosure; or
  - c) The RFOs have in place an official, approved policy on data confidentiality that in essence conforms to U.S. laws; or
  - d) All members of an RFO have agreed that un-aggregated set by set data are to be provided; and

- e) Vessel identifiers are removed and replaced with unique sequence numbers for these data to be disseminated. The same process will be used for any captain, other crew names, and company names.
- 11) Regarding Category III data, RFO submission requirements can range from raw individual samples to aggregation at the same resolution as Category II data. When submitting Category III data in aggregated or un-aggregated form, the same guidelines used for Category II data will be used. Vessel, company, and similar confidential data elements will be removed or replaced with unique sequence numbers to meet these varied submission requirements.
- 12) All Category II and III data disseminated will be designated raised or un-raised and the appropriate procedures used to raise the data will be supplied. If data are submitted un-raised then the appropriate coverage rates will be supplied.
- 13) To help ensure consistency of information provided, U.S. national fishery reports presented at annual meetings of RFOs are to be based on the same version of data used to prepare the official U.S. Category I, II, and III data, which are generally submitted immediately before the annual meetings. To the extent practicable, the same should apply to scientific papers presented at meetings of working groups and scientific committees.
- 14) To help ensure consistency of information provided internationally, Centers and Regions should use the same database or mirrored databases.
- 15) PIFSC/PIRO/SWFSC/SWRO will not release confidential fisheries data supplied by any RFO, nation or other entity unless such dissemination is officially requested by the entity that supplied the data.