

**SOUTHWEST FISHERIES SCIENCE CENTER
THIRD QUARTER REPORT-FY 2003
For the Period April 1, 2003 – June 30, 2003**

SUBMITTED BY: Norman Bartoo, Acting Director, Fisheries Resources Division

Title of Accomplishment or Milestone: Conduct international billfish survey, billfish tagging, and angler outreach program PacFAAB.

Current Status: Continued collection and analysis of angler fishing catch and effort data for billfish. Tag and release data collected, summarized and published in the Billfish Newsletter. Enhanced cooperative projects included collection of DNA tissue, increased Pacific wide tagging effort, support for local tag and release tournaments and placement of satellite archival tags on billfish for movement, habitat post release survival studies.

Background Information: The Center's billfish research provides information for the conservation and management of billfish resources in the Pacific. The primary research objectives include 1) monitoring recreational and commercial fisheries, 2) conduct research into the biology and ecology of specific billfish species, 3) conduct stock assessments and 4) determine the economic importance of billfish resources. The Billfish Angler Survey and the Billfish Tagging Program produces essential information pertaining to the recreational billfish angling community for exploring management options. The Angler Survey provides catch and angler effort information from the recreational fisheries. The Billfish Tagging Program provides much needed data on the biology, distribution and migration patterns of these far ranging species. The two outreach programs, Pacific Federal Angler Affiliation for Billfish (PacFAAB) and Adopt-A-Billfish, focused scientific study on the billfish resource while making research results available to anglers on a timely basis. They are angler supported and focused on determining the survival rate of billfish released during billfish tournaments.

Purpose of Activity: Collect and analyze time-series angler fishing data for Pacific billfish, and conduct tagging studies to describe billfish movements, habitat and life histories in support of fishery management. Maintain strong constituent involvement to maximize data collection efficiency.

Description of Accomplishment (e.g., to the Center, to Management, and to NMFS Strategic Plan Goals) and significant results: Ongoing collection of historical billfish catch and effort information from local sportfishing clubs completed through 2002. Cooperative projects with local sportfishing clubs promoted tag and release tournaments and placement of data archiving tags on striped marlin and sailfish. DNA collections archived for later analysis and provided to a local university for preliminary analysis. The Angler Survey now provides a 34-year time series of recreational catch and fishing effort for billfish in many key Pacific locations. The information developed from this survey is used to indicate trends in angler catch rates in specific areas in the Pacific and provides the only measure of billfish angler success in the Pacific.

In 2002, 477 billfish anglers reported catching 3,038 billfish during 4,824 fishing days. The annual mean catch-per-effort for all billfish was 0.63 billfish per day in 2002, up from 0.44 in 2001 and 0.61 in 2000.

Significance of Accomplishment: Fishery and fishery independent data collected and analyzed in these programs are used in formulating management options and are presented in the draft FMP for Highly Migratory Species in the eastern Pacific.

Problems: None

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