

A road map for scientific collaborations between PIRO and PIFSC on marine turtles

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Kyle S. Van Houtan

Marine Turtle Assessment Program, Protected Species Division, Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center, NOAA Fisheries, 1601 Kapiolani Blvd, Ste 1000, Honolulu, HI 96814

E-mail: kyle.vanhoutan@noaa.gov, telephone +1 808 228 1112

Here I present a summary of potential areas of scientific collaboration between PIFSC and PIRO on marine turtle research in the Pacific Islands Region. My comments below stem from a review of PIRO projects and grants 2007-2010, one-on-one meetings with PIRO turtle staff, and after an assessment of scientific objectives set by MTAP and PIFSC.

In my estimation there are currently no significant sources of marine turtle data that PIRO maintains, or has immediately on hand. There are a suite of projects involving various activities from education and outreach, to in-water capture and nesting studies. However, PIRO itself is not a significant data holder, and does not maintain databases themselves, but allows projects to maintain their data locally. This stems primarily from their administrative and granting structure. PIRO has traditionally provided funds through research grants which have a looser structure, as opposed to contracts or cooperative working agreements where there are more restrictions and oversight and where data products can be required.

In the current partnership with PIRO, it seems PIFSC will be most effective in shaping data streams and obtaining data through the RFP and grant award process. Therefore it is recommended that MTAP have a stake in the design of the RFP narratives and in the review process of awarding research grants. This will allow MTAP/PIFSC staff members who are most aware of the high-priority data streams to fund projects that can strategically fill these gaps. Moving forward, there is great potential for PIFSC and PIRO to collaborate throughout the PIR. Conducting research in the Marianas, Samoa, the PRIAs, and internationally carries logistical and political challenges. PIRO has been cultivating relationships with local agencies in some areas for five years. PIRO should maintain their lead role as liaison through diplomatic ties to local agencies. PIRO staff additionally have scientific and field training and can provide important advice and support for scientific activities, with PIFSC in the lead role. It is sensible for PIFSC to work alongside PIRO, fulfilling our separate roles in synergy to attain our shared goals to study, protect, and recover marine turtle populations. I encourage greater interactions with PIRO in planning our own research activities, and especially in funding programs and research.

There are several data collection programs that should be developed in collaboration with PIRO. Immediate priority should be given to designing, funding and implementing: (i) a nest monitoring program at Rose Atoll, and (ii) turtle stranding programs in Samoa and the Marianas. Rose Atoll appears to be an index nesting beach for the green turtle population segment taken in the American Samoa long line fishery. Simply put, understanding the fishery impacts to this turtle population will require time series of nesting data from Rose Atoll. Secondly, stranding programs have great value for establishing threats to turtle populations. Understanding the nature and scope of nearshore population threats has proven to be important for recent BRT reports. It is no accident that my recommendations here mimic the decades-long turtle databases that George Balazs and the MTRP have successfully developed in the Hawaiian Islands. Mr. Balazs and MTRP have shown these data streams to be invaluable for science and management.

The accompanying Excel spreadsheet details the entirety of the projects that PIRO turtle staff are engaged in, and the potential data sources they involve.

Marine Turtle Assessment Program
prepared by Kyle Van Houtan

PACIFIC REGION

American Samoa
American Samoa
American Samoa
Main Hawaiian Islands
Main Hawaiian Islands
Main Hawaiian Islands
Main Hawaiian Islands
Marianas
Marianas
Marianas
Marianas
Marianas
Marianas
PIR-International
PIR-International
PIR-International
PIR-International
PIR-International
PIR-International
PIR-International
PIR-International
PIR-International
PIR-International
PIR-USA Flag
PIR-USA Flag
PIR-USA Flag

PACIFIC REGION	ISLAND GROUP	ISLAND	LOCALITY	SPECIES	PROJECT + DATA DESCRIPTION							NMFS POSSESS DATA?	
					E/O	BASKING	NESTING	CAPTURE	TISSUE	IN-WATER	TRACKING		DURATION
American Samoa	Manua	Ofu/Olosega		green	--	--	YES	--	YES	--	YES	2008	--
American Samoa	Manua	Ofu/Olosega		hawksbill	--	--	YES	--	YES	--	YES	2008	--
American Samoa	Swains Atoll	Swains Atoll		green	--	--	YES	--	YES	--	--	2008	YES
American Samoa	Tutuila	Tutuila		hawksbill	--	--	YES	--	YES	--	YES	2004	--
Main Hawaiian Isl.	Hawaii	Hawaii		hawksbill	YES	--	YES	YES	YES	--	--	1990	--
Main Hawaiian Isl.	Maui	Maui	Maalea Bay	hawksbill	YES	--	YES	YES	YES	YES	--	1995	YES
Main Hawaiian Isl.	Oahu	Oahu	Laniakea Beach	green	YES	YES	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Main Hawaiian Isl.	Oahu	Oahu	Waikiki Beach	green	YES	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Main Hawaiian Isl.	Oahu	Oahu	Pupukea District	green	YES	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Marianas	CNMI	Salpan		green	YES	--	--	--	--	--	--	2009	--
Marianas	CNMI	Tinian		green	--	--	YES	--	--	YES	YES	2009	--
Marianas	CNMI	Salpan		green	--	--	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	2009	--
Marianas	CNMI	Salpan		hawksbill	YES	--	--	--	--	--	--	2009	--
Marianas	CNMI	Salpan		hawksbill	--	--	--	YES	YES	YES	YES	2009	--
Marianas	Guam	Guam		green	YES	--	--	--	--	--	YES	2009	--
PIR--International	French Polynesia		Mopelia Atoll	green	--	--	YES	YES	YES	--	--	2009	--
PIR--International	Japan			loggerhead	YES	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
PIR--International	Malaysia			leatherback	--	--	--	--	--	YES	--	--	--
PIR--International	Mexico	Baja Calif. Sur		loggerhead	YES	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
PIR--International	New Caledonia	Grand Terre		loggerhead	YES	--	--	YES	YES	--	YES	2009	--
PIR--International	Rep. Marshall Islands	Majuro/Wotje At.		green	YES	--	--	--	--	--	--	2009	--
PIR--International	Rep. Marshall Islands	Majuro/Wotje At.		hawksbill	YES	--	--	--	--	--	--	2009	--
PIR--International	Solomon Islands			leatherback	--	--	YES	YES	YES	--	--	--	--
PIR--International	Vanuatu	Vanuatu		green	--	--	YES	YES	YES	--	--	2009	--
PIR--International	Vietnam	Vietnam	EEZ	multiple	--	--	--	--	--	--	-?	2009	--
PIR--USA flagged	Fed. States Micronesia	Gielop, Loosiep	Ulithi Atoll	green	--	--	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	2007	--
PIR--USA flagged	Fed. States Micronesia	Gielop, Loosiep	Ulithi Atoll	hawksbill	--	--	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	2007	--
PRIAs	Palmyra Atoll	Palmyra Atoll		green	--	--	--	YES	YES	YES	--	2006	--

LOCAL AGENCY PIRO CONTACT NOTES

DMWR	Karen Frutchey	
DMWR	Karen Frutchey	
DMWR	Karen Frutchey	not active project, access restricted, one-time sample
DMWR	Karen Frutchey	opportunistic strandings (< 10 yr-1) as well
NPS, FWS	Kim Maison	nesting concentrated in E/SE, elsewhere isolated; tissues from pau
HWF, FWS	Kim Maison	joint project with MTAP/PIFSC as lead, isolated nesting scattered
Malama Honu	Irene Kelly	
UH Reefwatch	Irene Kelly	
HCSN	Irene Kelly	
PMRI	Irene Kelly	
DLNR	Karen Frutchey	GB gave transmitters, not yet deployed
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DAWR	Karen Frutchey	Haggan Watch, tags deployed, need new partner (Univ of Guam?)
Chel. Polyn.	Karen Frutchey	Mopelia locals harvest turtles but want ICDP, current agency diffi
Pro-Peninsula	Irene Kelly	
MRF	Irene Kelly	research to identify pelagic foraging habitat
Pro-Peninsula	Irene Kelly	
Aqu. des Lag.	Karen Frutchey	Also some Dc and Ei
MIMRA	Karen Frutchey	
MIMRA	Karen Frutchey	
MRF	Irene Kelly	exploratory project, working out details with SWFSC
Wan Smol Bag	Karen Frutchey	Also some Dc and Ei (Tina Fahy involved)
WWF	Karen Frutchey	Initiating observer program, Yonat Swimmer also involved (tags?)
Oceanic Soc.	Karen Frutchey	
Oceanic Soc.	Karen Frutchey	
AMNH, FWS	Kim Maison	potential EP Cm, Ei uncommon