

# PTTP 2021 Cruise Planning Advisory Committee Meeting

28<sup>th</sup> April 2021

10:00-11:00

Virtual: Microsoft Teams

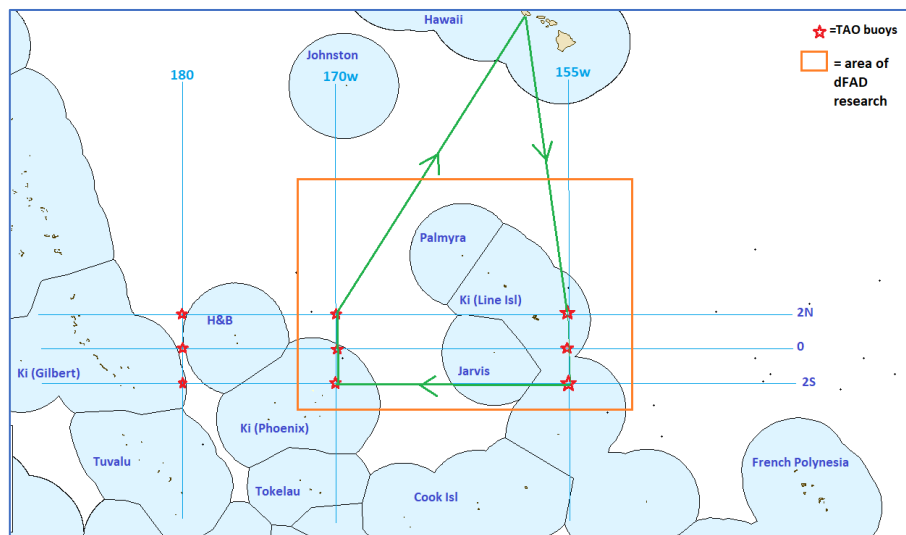
Participation: SungKwon Soh, Elaine Garvilles, Russell Dunham, Beau Bigler, Yuichi Tsuda, Yoshinori Aoki, Naoto Matsubara, Kathryn Gavira O'Neill, Beth Vanden Heuvel, Il-kang Na, Chloe-Ane Wragg, Joe Scutt Phillips, Bruno Leroy

## Welcome and Preliminaries

The chair welcomed all participants and presented the Standing Agenda (Annex 1). No additions or alterations to the agenda were requested.

## 2021 CP15 Cruise Plan Outline

Bruno Leroy outlined the plan for the forthcoming CP15 cruise. He noted that travel restrictions and uncertainties associated with the ongoing global pandemic had severely impacted original cruise planning options, as had been discussed during previous meetings of the advisory committee. While the minimal required scientific crew has been secured to carry out the core objectives, it was noted that uncertainties still existed for sending additional personnel, and this would limit the ability of the cruise to fulfil secondary objectives.



The 2021 CP15 research cruise will be a 40-day charter onboard the Gutsy Lady 4, departing the 15<sup>th</sup> of July and returning the 24<sup>th</sup> of August. The cruise will follow a similar strategy to the previous years' CP14, transecting TAO buoys in the EEZs of Kiribati and international waters, whilst opportunistically targeting drifting FADs shared through industry-science partnerships. Scientific crew will consist of COVID-19 vaccinated, Hawai'i based personnel, though no port calls will be made to any Pacific Island countries, ensuring no possibility of virus transmission.

Joe Scutt Phillips asked if any of the planning committee participants had information on potential travel exemptions for vessel crew entering into the USA, to please contact the SPC team.

SungKwon-Soh asked if travel restrictions were likely to result in an inability to deliver on the PTTP project this year.

Bruno Leroy emphasised that the minimal Hawai'ian crew would allow the core objectives of the PTTP to meet.

Beth Vanden-Heuvel suggested that the cruise planning team might contact the American Tuna Boat Association for advice regarding any potential travel exemptions that might exist for crew entry into Hawai'i.

### **CP15 Objectives**

Bruno Leroy outlined the planned objectives for CP15, again noting that the degree to which secondary objectives could be completed remained a function of crewing options, considering the current travel restrictions.

Primary objectives:

1. Conventional tag releases of bigeye and yellowfin tuna, associated with TAO moorings or drifting FADs, with a target of 5000 releases.
2. Archival tag releases of bigeye tuna and, fishing conditions permitting, skipjack tuna associated with drifting FADs. Equipment has been provisioned for up to 150 releases, noting this may be a difficult target if only a minimal crew are available.

Secondary objectives:

3. Biological sampling, including genetic material, of all tuna species and bycatch for additions to the Pacific tissue bank. Degree of biological sampling possible will, again, depending on final crewing, with priority given to tuna species if only a minimal crew are available.
4. Strontium-chloride marking of tagged tuna for growth validation studies. This will not be possible with the current, minimal scientific crew.
5. Sonic tagging- not possible with current minimal crew

### **Cruise Implementation: Vessel Availability**

The same tagging platform as for last CP14 cruise, FV Gutsy Lady4, has been contracted for CP15 duration to conduct tuna tagging and biological sampling in the targeted area.

### **Cruise Implementation: formalities and permitting**

Joe Scutt Phillips emphasised the critical importance of drifting FAD buoy-sharing to success of CP15, highlighting the valued contribution of last year industry partnerships for CP14. The anticipation for continued collaboration with these partners for the upcoming cruise was noted, alongside further increased numbers of partners. The official communications for these industry-science partnerships will be distributed during May, allowing a two-month lead up for the cruise departure. He also reminded the participants of the extended rewards scheme that was trialled for buoy-sharing fleets last year, and this would continue during 2021.

Katheryn Gavira O'Neill expressed that Satlink were still happy to collaborate in the distribution of industry-science partnership promotional material to their customers and facilitate buoy-sharing for those vessels who wished to support the research cruise.

### **Other Business**

Russel Dunham asked whether plans for the 2022 PTTP research cruise, anticipated to be a western Pacific and skipjack focussed tagging cruise, had become any clearer since the previous planning committee meeting.

Joe Scutt Phillips responded that, while a western Pacific cruise was still the objective for 2022, to ensure a continued time-series of tag recaptures in time for inclusion in the scheduled 2025 stock assessment of skipjack tuna, there were still many uncertainties associated with the planning of the cruise. In light of the requirement for bait ground access during pole & line fishing, contact with Pacific Island countries and coastal communities will be inevitable. It is hard to know what restrictions will likely be in place in the member countries visited during western Pacific cruises (typically Solomon Islands, PNG and potentially FSM) by 2022.

Considering the potential for, at least some impact on PTTP cruises, he emphasised how important continued collaboration with Japanese colleagues from FRA to continue this critical time-series of skipjack tagging data.

No other business was raised

**Next meeting:** It is proposed that next meeting happen at a date to be determined around mid-October to report on CP15 activities and start planning 2022 PTTP research cruise.

## Annex 1. Standing Agenda

1. Welcome, Preliminaries
2. 2021 CP15 cruise planning
3. Choices of objectives for the cruise
4. Cruise Implementation: Vessel and crew availability
5. Cruise Implementation: formalities and permitting
7. PS fishery drifting FAD access
8. Tag Recovery
9. Other Business

## Annex 2. Terms of Reference WCPFC Pacific Tuna Tagging Programme Cruise Planning Advisory Committee

### **Purpose**

This is a voluntary advisory committee established to assist SPC and WCPFC members with undertaking yearly PTTT Research Cruise planning and implementation. The committee role in this context is advisory only. Participants are expected to assist with setting cruise objectives (e.g. location, tagging targets, biological sampling targets), facilitating permits and access to bait grounds, and organising participation by national officers and observers.

### **Committee Process**

The advisory committee will meet electronically

The advisory committee will report annually to the PTTT steering committee

Membership of the committee is open to all members of WCPFC and invited experts

The advisory committee will work within the annual mandate of the PTTT set by the PTTT steering Committee and WCPFC SC