



BCLME UPDATE

Regional workshop puts EAF project on the map

By Claire Attwood

As signatories to the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Angola, Namibia and South Africa have committed themselves to introducing an ecosystem approach to fisheries management (EAF) by 2010. The launch of a BCLME-funded project to test the feasibility of introducing EAF to the Benguela region represents a first step towards meeting this target.

In September 2004, a first regional workshop was held in Windhoek to review the progress that the three countries have made with the EAF project. The workshop was held after the countries had each had an opportunity to convene scientific and management committees to drive the EAF project forward.

International coordinator of the EAF project, Kevorn Cochrane of the FAO's Marine Resources Service, explains that separate scientific and management committees are necessary to ensure that stakeholders participate in the project.

"We wanted to make sure that the project isn't driven only by science but that stakeholders are involved," said Dr Cochrane.

The purpose of the regional workshop was to ensure that there is good communication between the participants in the three countries, to share knowledge about transboundary fish stocks and exchange ideas on EAF.

According to Dr Cochrane, workshop participants ascertained

that Namibia and Angola are slightly behind schedule, but in South Africa the project is moving ahead very nicely.

"Namibia and Angola will need to catch up in 2005," said Dr Cochrane.

One of the most constructive outcomes of the workshop was the completion of a simple risk assessment exercise for one of the major fisheries in each of the three countries, as a way of introducing the method to the participants. The exercise allowed the workshop participants to analyse high level policy goals and identify what implications these goals have on an ecosystem and operational level. For instance, one of South Africa's policies is to conduct the demersal trawl fishery at levels that maintain the target populations and associated ecological community relative to its potential productivity. Workshop participants identified a number of important ecological objectives related to this policy in addition to objectives for the target species alone. For example, the importance of maintaining adequate abundance of forage species for hake and the need to consider the impact of fisheries on the benthic biota were identified as important issues.

The process enabled groups of specialists from each country to identify the ecosystem issues that are most important in each fishery.

"The process was very constructive," reports Dr Cochrane. "In the eyes of most participants, the EAF project was transformed into something practical and sensible, rather than just a vague idea."

One goal of the workshop was to teach participants how to conduct the risk analysis exercise so that they could return to their countries and repeat it with a wider spectrum of stakeholders.

By doing so, each of the countries will be able to identify the priority ecosystem issues for each fishery.

"We want to get to the point where we've identified key issues in each fishery and are able to put forward some options for addressing them," explains Dr Cochrane.

The question of by-catch is pertinent to most fisheries in the Benguela region and it is likely to become a high priority issue for the EAF project. In many commercial fisheries, by-catch is unrecorded and so it is very difficult to evaluate the impact that a fishery has on non-target species. One of the goals of the EAF project is to improve scientific information on subjects such as by-catch and identify practical ways to address these problems.

Dr Cochrane emphasises the fact that the EAF project is a feasibility study. The project's goal is to plan for the implementation of EAF, rather than to implement EAF in the commercial fisheries of the Benguela region.

"We don't want to alarm the fishing industry and this project will definitely not be introducing any changes in fisheries management, simply providing information on the feasibility of implementing EAF and the potential costs and benefits of the approach," he said.

In fact, the ecosystem approach that is described by the FAO is neither inconsistent with, nor a replacement for current fisheries management approaches. Instead, it is likely to be adopted as an



incremental extension of current fisheries management approaches.

Dr Cochrane says that the EAF project will use the best available information to highlight areas where improvement in the management of fisheries in the Benguela is needed. The aim of the project is to identify a range of alternative management options and detail the socio-economic and ecological implications of each.

He believes that 2005 will be a critical year for the project. The focus will be on scientific analysis and gathering the best available information on each fishery.

"We've got to do the bulk of the work this year," he says.

BENGUELA FORECAST WORKSHOP

By Vere Shannon

In November 2004 a highly successful "International Workshop on Forecasting and Data Assimilation in The Benguela and Comparable Systems" was held in Cape Town, South Africa. Sponsored by the BCLME Programme in partnership with nine other international, regional and national organisations (SCOR, IAPSO, IUGG, IOC, IRD, BENEFIT, UCT, DEAT (MCM) AND CSIR) the workshop addressed a key policy action of the BCLME, viz. the assessment of environmental variability, ecosystem impacts and predictability. Two cornerstones of this policy action are the development of an early warning system and the improvement of predictability of extreme events and their impact on the Benguela. The workshop was also a first step in

implementing a key component of IAPSO's new Strategic Plan and enabling technology transfer. An important objective of the workshop was the development of a strong base for an effective and affordable forecasting capability for the South East Atlantic within the global network. The workshop addressed a broad range of topics and disciplines related to improving predictability on time scales from hours and days to months and even years and decades. Over 100 invited experts participated (some 30 of which were from overseas) in the meeting which was run along Dahlem lines, with comprehensive review papers being circulated to delegates prior to the workshop, and included both plenary and specialist sessions. The summary assessment provided by Professor John Woods at the conclusion of the workshop was that we ARE now ready to design an operational system for forecasting in the Benguela – something that would have been somewhat questionable prior to the workshop. The information, wisdom and advice emanating from the workshop are being captured in a peer-reviewed book "The Benguela: Predicting a Large Marine Ecosystem" which will be published in 2005 by Elsevier. Not only will the book be relevant for sustainable management of the Benguela, but will also be a blueprint for application in other comparable ecosystems around the world.



SANCOR travel grant has taken me to new horizons....

By Samantha Petersen

Filled with excitement I boarded a plane for South America where I was to attend the fifth International Albatross and Petrels Conference (IAPC) in Montevideo, Uruguay and the third International Penguin Conference (IPC) Ushuaia, Terre del Feugo, Argentina. As well as participate in the IUCN workshop re-assessing penguin threat categories.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to the SANCOR travel grant for making this possible! I am incredibly grateful to have been given this opportunity to broaden my thinking by the exposure to these international fora. My knowledge and understanding of seabird biology and conservation has certainly been enriched by attending and participating in these meetings.

At the IAPC I presented one of my honours projects "Demographics of Giant Petrels on Marion Island" as well as afforded the opportunity to show case my work concerning the incidental mortality of seabirds, turtles and sharks in South African fisheries. What struck me the most about this meeting, which was academic in nature, rather than a conservation focus, was that there was virtually no presentation presented in the five days of this meeting that didn't mention the impact of longlining fishing on the biology of these birds. There is virtually no aspect of their biology that isn't affected by this threat. It really brought home the fact that this single threat has had a substantial effect on these birds and that without action they will certainly be driven to extinction. This meeting has equipped me with new and exciting developments and as well as fantastic contacts in the field of mitigation which will greatly enhance the success of the current local programme here in South Africa. It has also facilitated collaboration in