Strengthening Fisheries Management Capacity Through Professional Development

Fortalecimiento de la Capacidad de Gestión de la Pesca Mediante el Desarrollo Profesional

Renforcement de la Capacité de Gestion des Pêches
par le Biais du Perfectionnement Professionnel

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Capacity development, a process by which an organization or institution strives to improve the skills of its professional staff, is often cited as a principal need for strengthening fisheries management in the Caribbean region. Fisheries resource managers indicate that skills desired to enhance their organization's capacity include:

i)   Fisheries management and policy planning,
ii) Data collection and analysis methods (quantitative/qualitative),
iii) Geographic Information systems and geo-spatial technologies, and
iv) Fisheries stock assessment.

These skills are typically imparted to staff on-the-job or through participation in professional trainings. Short-term trainings typically provide participants with basic knowledge and exposure to concepts. Extended learning opportunities that incorporate user-defined projects can provide participants with greater expertise and added confidence to apply the knowledge gained, given sufficient backing from their organization or institution.

The Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Professional Development Program (CFPDP), established in 2011 and sponsored by Florida Sea Grant, Puerto Rico Sea Grant, the GCFI, the Billfish Foundation NOAA, and the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism, supports this extended learning perspective to effectively develop fisheries management capacity within the Caribbean. The program's mission is to promote greater collaboration, synergy, and the sharing of knowledge among organizations that manage and promote the sustainability of Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean fisheries resources. The effectiveness of the program stems from the development of training programs for marine and fisheries professionals around the needs and capacity shortages present in member countries.

The CFPDP is a four-month program at the University of Florida that coincides with the spring or fall academic semester. Candidates from countries throughout the Caribbean are matched with Florida Sea Grant-affiliated faculty whose expertise aligns with their area of interest. Successful candidates apply knowledge gained to advance an ongoing or proposed project of their choosing that is related to a fisheries management need identified by their government ministry, agency, or NGO.

Projects conducted by the CFPDP award recipients have included:
i)   Dominica — develop plans for engaging stakeholders to promote co-management of Dominica's FAD fishery,
ii) St Kitts and Nevis — map St. Kitts and Nevis' landig sites and offshore fishing infrastructure,
iii) Jamaica — conduct spatial analysis of conch abundance and fishing pressure on Jamaica's Pedro Bank,
iv) Antigua and Barbuda — establish survey methods for quantifying offshore fishing catch and effort, and
v)   Trinidad and Tobago — model fish age and growth for more accurate stock assessments of wahoo and Spanish mackerel, two commercially important species for Trinidad and Tobago.

CFPDP award recipients are provided airfare and travel expenses, lodging, University of Florida tuition-free course credits, and a $1,500 monthly living stipend.

Application Criteria

The following program requirements must be verified in the application packet:
i)   Employment by a fisheries resource ministry, government agency or NGO operating in the wider Caribbean region –CRFM member states; Bermuda; American countries from Mexico to Colombia; Venezuela; US Territories,
ii) Bachelor's or professional degree,
iii) Health insurance, and
iv) English language proficiency.

Note: The CFPDP competition is not open to students or to professionals residing in the continental US.

Application Process

The application has six parts:
i)   Contact Information,
ii) Job Status,
iii) Training Interests,
iv) Letter of Endorsement,
v)   Educational Achievements (scan of diploma), and
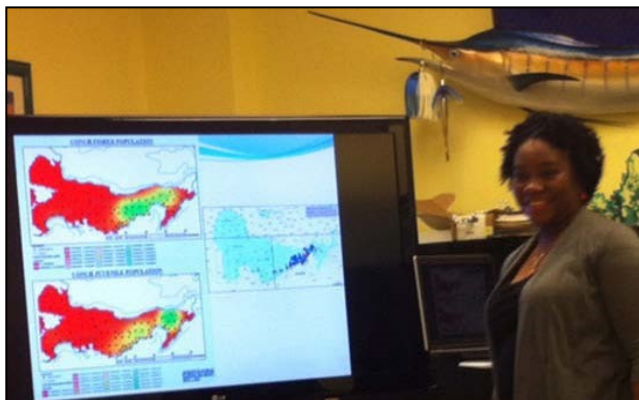vi) Professional Accomplishments (CV)

All six parts must be combined in order into a single pdf and emailed to Dr. Charles Sidman at the University of Florida or to Dr. Susan Singh-Renton at the CRFM. The applications are reviewed and ranked by the program sponsors. Applications for the spring/fall 2018 program will be solicited by the GCFI and the CRFM in fall 2017.

For more information please contact:
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KEYWORDS: Training, education, capacity, skills, management

Mrs. Anginette Murray, a recipient of the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Training Program award, completed her four-month program at the University of Florida, which included a graduate-level course in the application of geographic information systems (GIS) technologies using the ArcGIS platform. As a product of her training Mrs. Murray applied the concepts and skills learned in the classroom to evaluate the spatial distribution of conch stock abundance relative to fishing pressure on Jamaica's Pedro Bank. Complementary analyses involved the mapping of government-owned gear sheds and fisher's cooperatives.

Mr. Randel Thompson, a fisheries biologist with the St. Kitts and Nevis Department of Marine Resources, was selected as the first recipient of this new capacity-building opportunity. Mr. Thompson's program focused on the application of geospatial technologies (GPS and GIS) to help him develop an action plan for the management of a system of Fish Aggregation Devices (FADs) that will be deployed in the waters of St. Kitts and Nevis. As a demonstration project Mr. Thompson developed a series of spatial data sets that mapped various features of the FAD management plan (e.g., satellite imagery of St. Kitts and Nevis, bathymetry, location of FADs, location of landing sites, catch and effort data collection form linked to FAD locations).