



Regional fishery management organizations and large marine ecosystems



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ABSTRACT

Regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) addressing the management of living marine resources have a long history, beginning in 1811 with the North Pacific Fur Seal Convention followed by the International Pacific Halibut Convention in 1924. Following the expansion of fisheries after WWII RFMOs proliferated and after the general acceptance of a 200 mile extended jurisdiction in the mid-1970s many more nations became involved. There are approximately 17 RFMOs, (depending on the definition of “management”) of the over 40 marine Regional Fisheries Bodies (RFBs) identified by FAO. The Large Marine Ecosystem (LME) approach has roots in the experience of the International Commission for the Conservation of Northwest Atlantic Fisheries (now defunct and replaced by the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO)) which pioneered ecosystem based fisheries management. The LME approach was fleshed out in the 1980s and initiated as both the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and country projects, beginning in the mid-1990s. LMEs have fisheries as a major component to be addressed under the LME five-module concept. As LME Programs enter the stage where they need to move to develop their governance responsibilities, the relationship with existing RFMOs is critical. This paper examines possibilities for this interaction with special attention to, but not exclusively, the Western coast of Africa. Possible inferences from the US east coast experience are also addressed, considering the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission as a pseudo RFMO with the states assuming a role similar to countries.

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1. Introduction

Large Marine Ecosystems have been designated throughout the world as effective units for assessing, managing recovering and sustaining the resources of the continental shelf and coastal ocean areas (Sherman and Alexander, 1986; Wang, 2004; Hennessey and Sutinen, 2005; McLeod et al., 2005; Duda, 2009; Lubchenco, 2013; Ishii, 2013; Watson-Wright, 2013) (Fig. 1). They have become the “gold standard” for such efforts, and have been adopted by the United Nations for their Transboundary Waters Assessment Program (TWAP) of the status of the ocean as part of their efforts to meet General Assembly instructions. (<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/ioc-oceans/high-level-objectives/ecosystem-health/transboundary-waters-assessment-programme/>) (2014). The Global Environment Facility (GEF) adopted LMEs beginning in 1995 with the Gulf of Guinea (GOG LME pilot project.) as the core of their coastal ocean international waters programs. They are supporting projects in 19 of the world's 64 currently designated LMEs (Hume and Duda, 2012). Unlike many development projects, the success of

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Large Marine Ecosystems of the World and Linked Watersheds



Fig. 1. Large Marine Ecosystems and linked Watersheds.

an LME Project cannot be judged by a final project report on how well the project followed its project plan or even on the scientific results from a successful research cruise. This is because the ultimate goal of LME projects is to have, at the end of the day, a management structure capable of making LME decisions which has an ongoing stream of information from all of the five LME modules -Productivity, Fish and Fisheries, Pollution and Ecosystem Health, Socioeconomics and Governance) (<http://lme.edc.uri.edu/>, 2014) (2014) upon which to base those decisions.

One of the major driving forces in an LME is its fisheries. The LME approach emphasizes that fisheries be assessed and managed holistically taking into consideration not only the ecosystem approach to fisheries (<http://www.fao.org/fishery/topic/16034/en>) (2014) but all of the services of the ecosystem. Fisheries has a long history of establishing bodies to address transboundary fisheries issues going back to the first half of the 20th century. Thus, as LMEs move to address fisheries management issues the existing fisheries organizations need to be addressed.

This paper will look the intersection of LME management's future efforts and regional fisheries management organizations. It will focus primarily but not exclusively on West Africa. It will also look at the US experience particularly with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) for possible inferences where the ASMFC as a pseudo-RFMO, with the states which are responsible for fisheries management within three miles of shore assuming the role of countries.

2. RFBs and RFMOs

RFMOs have a long history, as the nature of living marine resources drives sound management to transboundary agreements. The first RFMO for a living marine resource was the fur seal convention of in 1911 signed by the US, Great Britain (for Canada) Japan and Russia (http://pribilof.noaa.gov/documents/ THE_FUR_SEAL_TREATY_OF_1911.pdf) (2014). The Governments of Canada, Japan and the Union of Soviet Socialist in 1976 updated it in the CONVENTION ON CONSERVATION OF NORTH PACIFIC FUR SEALS (sedac.ciesin.columbia.edu/entri/texts/acrc/fur.seals) (2014). The second RFMO was the International Pacific Halibut Commission established in 1923 by a convention signed by the US and Great Britain (for Canada)(<http://www.iphc.int/>) (2014) There were some efforts in the 1930s but they failed to come to complete fruition because of WWII. Post WWII, fisheries commissions began to expand in response to rapidly expanding fisheries. Prior to the extension of coastal jurisdiction these conventions covered what now are both international waters and those now within country jurisdiction. One of them, the International Convention for the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries (ICNAF) for the investigation, protection and conservation of the fisheries, came into being in 1950 (<http://www.nafo.int/about/frames/hist-early.html>) (2014) and became a laboratory for the early developments of the LME approach.

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