
SECTION 5

Linking Capacity to Opportunity: Incentives and Rewards

This section reports on the challenges of attracting, supporting, and enabling fisheries managers to develop rewarding careers. The following questions framed the discussion:

How do we attract, support, and enable skilled fisheries managers to succeed?

Present participants in fisheries management may be the “gatekeepers” of future professional opportunities. How do we enlighten the gatekeepers and the decision makers?

How do we develop responsible, professionally rewarding opportunities?

How can programs be designed and delivered to ensure that they are accessed by a wide range of learners including existing participants in fisheries management?

Challenges

The pre-workshop focus survey (Appendices C and D) and workshop discussion (Appendix E) emphasize that fisheries management as a profession is in crisis. Attracting and retaining non-agency personnel to fisheries management is increasingly difficult. Presenters and participants identified the following challenges:

- Within management agencies, key symptoms of the crisis include:
 - Difficulty recruiting recent graduates
 - High turnover of all staff and low retention of capable, middle-managers with leadership potential
 - Aging workforce

- Suggested “internal” causes for retention and recruitment problems include:
 - Low rates of pay compared to the private sector or other agencies
 - Limited career prospects in hierarchical agency structures
 - Limited professional development opportunities
 - Low job satisfaction
 - Perceived conflict between science and management disciplines within management agencies

- External causes for retention and recruitment problems include:
 - Limited exposure and recognition of fisheries management in the field of natural resource management
 - Absence of interest in fisheries management by graduates of management or non-biological programs
 - Lack of public and stakeholder trust in fishery management institutions
 - The political and litigious nature of fisheries management that weakens management professionals and creates low morale

Knowledgeable non-agency people involved in fisheries management are also increasingly reluctant to engage in the fisheries management process. Most stakeholders enter into management situations expecting success. Failure to achieve the expected outcome is often perceived by the participants as a personal failure. Moreover, the media and stakeholders antagonistic to particular aspects of fishery management give disproportionate attention to failure compared to successes.

Solutions

Workshop discussions produced no single solution for resolving staff recruitment and retention issues within agencies or for rewarding non-agency participants in management. However, several non-exclusive measures were identified.

Strategies within management agencies:

- Attracting high achieving graduates from a diverse range of management, resource, and biological disciplines by:
 - Benchmarking entry-level remuneration at the mean range of salaries paid in comparable public sector agencies
 - Articulating clearly identified career development pathways within fisheries management agencies
- Rewarding staff by:
 - Providing performance-based increases in wages and salaries
 - Creating leadership positions outside the normal hierarchy of agency structures that allow individuals to take initiatives, seek solutions, and mentor other staff
 - Involving all professional staff in the decision-making process and ensuring that this occurs at an early stage in the process
- Encouraging professional development through:
 - Training in new areas or advancing existing knowledge of an area
 - Secondment of staff into different agencies, private sector, NGOs, or academia, including sea-time
 - Giving stretch assignments that develop staff both personally and professionally
 - Rotating positions within organizations so that, for example, biologists work with economists and economists work with biologists; rotating staff from operational positions into strategic positions to give professionals time to reflect and draw on operational experiences that will help improve management systems and procedures

Strategies external to management agencies:

- Improving the image of fisheries management by actively promoting management successes
- Working collaboratively with non-agency stakeholders including indigenous peoples
- Creating an international association tasked with developing and promoting fisheries management as a profession