



<b>FIRMS Steering Committee Meeting</b>
<b>Eighth Session</b>
<b>Rome, Italy, 4 - 5, and 8 February 2013</b>
<b>Outcome of FIRMS participation to - Science &amp; Sustainability Forum, Feb. 2012 (Ocean Trusts)</b>
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Two FIRMS FSC members, Ms Barb Marshall (NAFO) and Mr. Yimin Ye (FAO) attended the Science and Sustainability Forum meeting organized by Ocean Trust in Key Bridge Marriott, Arlington, VA February 29 – March 2, 2012. Ms Marshall was mandated by the FSC to present FIRMS at this Forum. This document provides a short summary of the meeting enriched with some additional information sent to FAO during the fourth quarter 2012 by Ocean Trust, alltogether highlighting perspectives and possible implications for FIRMS.

For more information, the summary report of the 2012 Forum and agenda of 2013 Forum are provided in information document FIRMS FSC8/2013/Inf.10.

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### **Report from the Meeting – by Barbara Marshall (FIRMS Representative)**

The Science Sustainability Forum brought together scientists and those that elaborate scientific information and many of the USA seafood retail buyers.

The main questions raised were what exactly is sustainability and where can reliable information on the status of certain species be found. The Forum focussed on looking at various types of information from different sources (mostly US and international) and counting on the reliability of the sources to judge the quality of the information.

Many of the seafood buyers were confused by the scientific lingo that described stock status. A point was made that communications and public relations are specialized professions and that scientists are not trained in these techniques. One presentation noted that scientists should not be communicating scientific information any more than PR specialists should be conducting stock assessments!

The presentations made were informative to the buyers and some of the international information like FIRMS was not well known.

A couple of side notes were that the FIRMS website is quite slow and that the look and feel is “institutional”. Perhaps this is a discussion that take place during another meeting. There is also the issue of keeping the website up-to-date as we rely on the partners to submit their information when they are able. There was a presentation from the US Fishwatch, which is introducing an updated website during the Boston seafood show and it was quite “pretty”.

The next steps for the Forum will be to work with a PR firm to prepare information in a more public friendly way. Some specific projects were identified as well and these include requesting FAO/FIRMS to take over the management of the RAM Legacy Database (<http://ramlegacy.marinebiodiversity.ca/ram-legacy-stock-assessment-database>). This will include some support funding as well.

### **Post Meeting follow-up – by Marc Taconet (FIRMS Secretary)**

Some messages were sent by Ocean Trust during the fourth quarter 2012 informing FAO about follow-up actions.

Ocean Trust is involved in a project with NOAA Domestic Fisheries, Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, and UMASS Dartmouth to explore the application of FAO's draft evaluation framework for the conformity of ecolabelling schemes with FAO guidelines (FIRF/R958) to a framework assessment of federal and state fishery management systems in the US. The impetus behind this project came from the 2010 and 2012 Science and Sustainability Forums which FAO, NOAA and other fishing nations participated in, and is based on the one of the forum conclusions that sustainability is best defined by the management system, not a quick snapshot of the stock status or fishing level at any given point in time.

Ocean Trust disposes of a working evaluation framework which integrates descriptions of management programs and evidence of conformity with FAO guidelines. This framework attempts to establish a process to certify fishery management systems as opposed to current certification schemes which are focused on single fishery assessments and certifications. Ocean Trusts has liaised with the chair of the FAO Subcommittee on Fish Trade to assess their interest to have this pilot project presented at the next meeting of the FAO Subcommittee on Fish Trade.

Ocean Trust has a continued interest in the expansion of the FIRMS database and the development of the NatFIRMS program, and looks forward to explore potential opportunities to help that process.