



Workshop for the development of a database for vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs)

Prospectus
FAO Headquarters, Rome, Italy, 7-9 December 2011

Background

The *International Guidelines for the Management of Deep-Sea Fisheries on the High Seas* (the FAO Deep-sea Guidelines; FAO 2008)¹ were developed to provide guidance for States and regional fisheries management organizations or arrangements (RFMOs/As) to ensure long-term conservation and sustainable use of marine living resources in the deep seas and prevent significant adverse impacts (SAIs) on vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs), in line with the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution 61/105. The FAO has now developed a full programme for implementation of the FAO Deep-sea Guidelines including the development of a VME database which will provide an avenue to distribute information and raise awareness on recognized VMEs to fishery policy makers, managers, scientists and the public at large.

In May 2010, a Workshop² to analyse the challenges and propose ways forward for the implementation of the the FAO Deep-sea Guidelines was held in Busan, Republic of Korea. This Workshop identified specific programmes of work and activities that will be needed to advance implementation of the FAO Deep-sea Guidelines. The proposed FAO VME database was presented to the participants at the Workshop where some attributes of the database were discussed. The database will collect, describe and publish information on VMEs, (e.g. documents, maps, and tabular data), in collaboration with states, RFMO/As and other relevant stakeholders. Some RFMOs have already indicated that they might be able to provide the type of information requested for the FAO VME database.

The FAO VME database will be developed to facilitate multi-stakeholder access to data, sharing of information and promote informed decision-making. This system will also facilitate partnerships and the creation of a network among the community of users, information contributors and those working on the protection of VMEs in the high seas.

Based on the outcome of this Workshop, the system architecture and software (e.g. specification of the type of data, information organization, interface design, system application engine) will be developed and Web applications (e.g. management procedures, data and information dissemination) will be initiated.

Objectives

In light of the above, the objectives of the Workshop are:

- Assessment of needs – determine what types of data and information need to be collated to be most useful in facilitating decision-making for RFMO/As and states (and industry) in relation to management of impacts on VMEs.
- Development strategy – options on developing the FAO VME database based on stakeholder input, including present/emerging issues and challenges, will be prepared in a proposed action plan including suggestions for the information sharing and data mechanism and Web site architecture development.

¹ <http://www.fao.org/docrep/011/i0816t/i0816t00.htm>

² <http://www.fao.org/docrep/014/i2135e/i2135e00.htm>

Approach

The approach for this Workshop will be in the form of presentations and discussions with a focus on the formulation of a strategy to lay a solid foundation for the development and use of the FAO VME database. Short overview presentations from selected partners of their experience and own capacity on VMEs will be requested.

Participants

A small group of stakeholders will be invited, including (1) representatives from groups working on VMEs or data management associated with RFMO/As (2) scientists or managers from involved or concerned states, and (3) relevant other stakeholders working on or contributing to related initiatives.

Output

- Draft proposal for the FAO VME database planning development including activities recommendations for actions and targeted activities at short, medium- and long-term timeframes.
- Workshop Report.

Location and date

Three-day Workshop. FAO Headquarters, Rome, Italy- 7-9 December 2011.

Further information

Further information (venue, participant list, and other logistic arrangements) on the Workshop will be circulated shortly. Some funding support is available for invited participants.

Relevant documents published by FAO on deep-sea fisheries can be found at: <http://www.fao.org/fishery/topic/4440/en>.

For further information on the Workshop, please contact Françoise Labonté (francoise.labonte@fao.org or +39 06 570 53638).

Workshop organizers

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