

Connecting fishers to conserve a transpacific ambassador: A trinational fisheries learning exchange

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Abstract:

Fisheries learning exchanges (FLE) can be useful for enhancing fisheries management. Reversing the decline of the North Pacific loggerhead turtle is a priority articulated in US, Japanese, and Mexican natural resources policy. However, by 2005, while nesting beach protection was strong in Japan and bycatch reduction had been achieved in U.S. Hawaii-based longline fisheries, bycatch mortality was very high in Mexican artisanal fisheries and believed to be problematic in Japanese coastal fisheries. Efforts to conserve the population were hindered by lack of understanding and cooperation by and between fishers, conservation practitioners, scientists, and managers of all three countries. The authors produced a trinational FLE with participants from Japan, Mexico, and Hawaii to share bycatch challenges and develop solutions. The trinational FLE gave fishers and other participants new, otherwise unattainable knowledge, perspectives, and experiences that empowered them as leaders among their peers, resulting in unexpectedly strong cultural and conservation outcomes that included: a) understanding of the myriad threats to loggerheads throughout their ranges and lifetimes, b) development of a transpacific conservation partnerships to undertake coordinated recovery efforts, c) participatory research to develop and test bycatch reduction technological and practical solutions for Japan and Mexico, and d) hundreds of juvenile loggerheads spared per yr from bycatch mortality via changes in fishing practices by FLE participants. The authors conclude that the reciprocal FLE can serve as a practical tool with potential for broad application for empowering fishers and other fisheries stakeholders to improve fisheries.

Associated Project:

[Learning Exchanges for Conservation: An Examination of Lessons Learned \(LExCELL\)](#) [1]

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