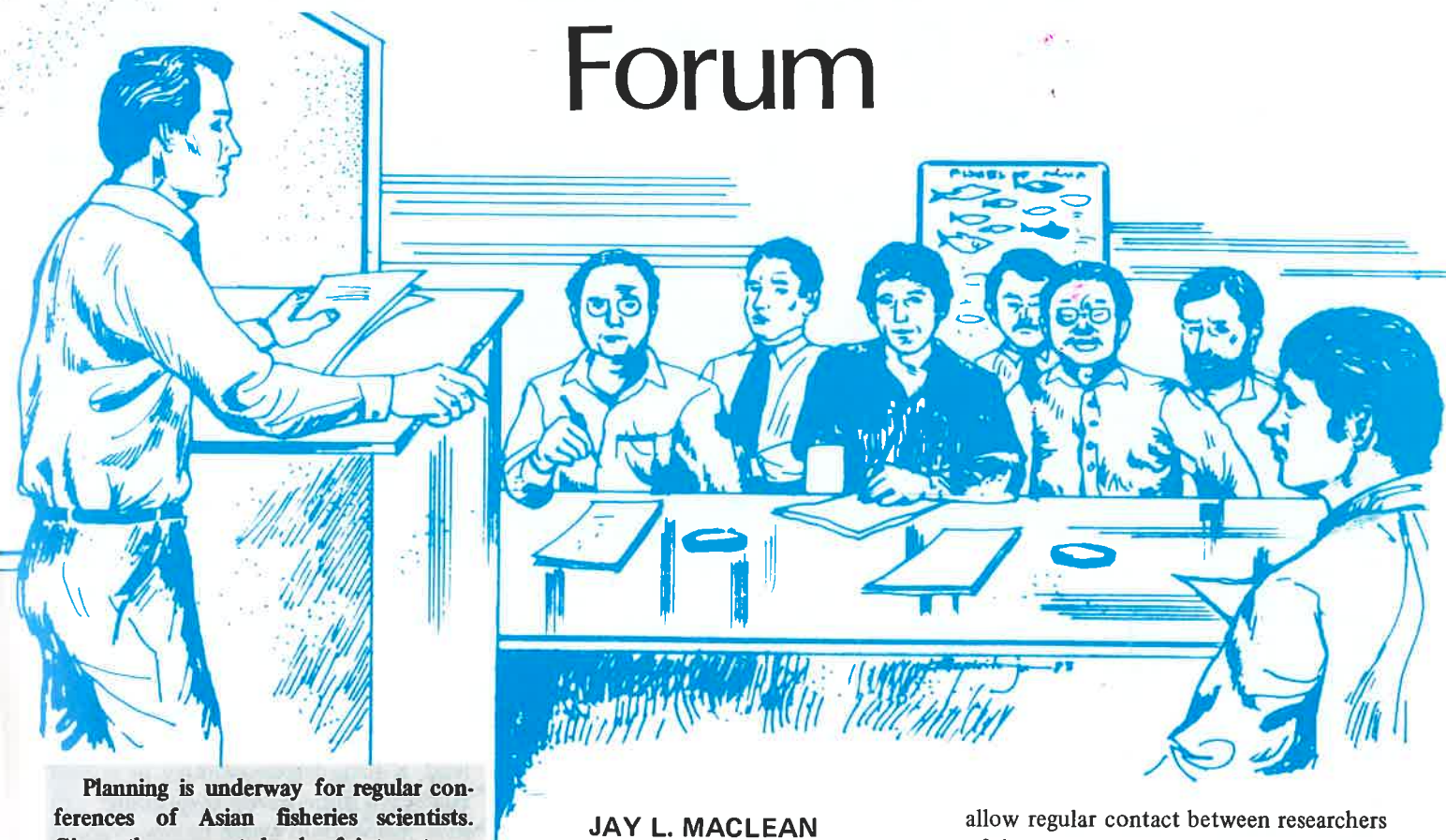


An Asian Fisheries Forum



Planning is underway for regular conferences of Asian fisheries scientists. Given the present level of interest, an Asian Fisheries Society may be formed in the near future.

Within Southeast Asia, there has often been expressed the need for fisheries scientists to get together to exchange ideas and information and provide a stimulus for improving their research capabilities. Some research is being duplicated because scientists remain unaware of activities in nearby countries, and often even within their own country. This fact has been a rationale for the establishment of scientific societies, academies and journals for over 200 years.

Southeast Asia forms a part of the Indo-West Pacific faunal zone, which extends from the central Pacific in the east to the coast of Africa in the west, Japan to the north and Australia to the south. Within this vast area it is not surprising that some duplication of effort occurs.

There are probably about 1,000 scientists and technicians working on

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tropical fisheries in Southeast Asia alone. The number of students studying aspects of fisheries or aquaculture is probably equal to or greater than the number of active scientists.

The Status Quo

The Indo-Pacific Fishery Commission is the major organization providing regular (biennial) contact between fisheries authorities from countries in the Asian region. The Commission, as an FAO instrument, is an inter-governmental body, such that attendance at the biennial council meetings is by accredited national delegates who are administrators able to speak and, where necessary, vote, on issues on behalf of their country.

Other international and regional organizations also hold seminars, conferences and workshops on particular topics, but all these events are *ad hoc* and none are regular, recurring meetings. In no case has a forum been established which would

allow regular contact between researchers of the region.

At present, the results of most fisheries research probably are not distributed beyond their originating institution. They are often locked in such unconventional literature forms as theses and limited-number mimeograph editions; they are also very often in languages not generally understood by the vast majority of research workers in other countries of the region.

One year ago, ICLARM circulated a proposal for the establishment of a regular Forum for Southeast Asian fishery scientists, raising the points discussed above. On the basis of the many highly enthusiastic responses, a group of scientists met at ICLARM headquarters in Manila in May 1983. That group endorsed the proposal and agreed that the geographic scope of such a Forum should encompass the many countries within the Indo-West Pacific zone. Since this was not a cohesive name as far as communities of nations were concerned, the term Asian Fisheries Forum was chosen.



The Manila group at ICLARM headquarters, May 1983. L to R: Dr. Richard Neal, ICLARM; Dr. Muhammad Eidman, Bogor Agricultural University, Indonesia; Dr. Chua Thia Eng, Network of Aquaculture Centers in Asia (Chairman); Dr. Twesukdi Piyakarnchana, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand; Pr. Brian Morton, University of Hongkong; Dr. Rogelio Juliano, University of the Philippines in the Visayas; J. Maclean, ICLARM; Dr. Liao I-Chiu, Tungkang Marine Laboratory, Taiwan.

The Fisheries Forum

The Forum is intended to be a gathering of scientists dealing with fisheries and aquaculture research and development in Asia; a gathering at which both broad issues and specific topics can be discussed and where scientists can speak in their professional capacities in an apolitical atmosphere; and a gathering to receive and assess contributions from the scientific community of the region. Such contributions, along with the proceedings of the Forum meeting, should be published and widely disseminated, both within and outside the region. The Forum would be a regular meeting, its location decided on a rotational basis. The duration and organization of the meetings could be determined on the basis of needs and interests of the participants. Although this would be a regional meeting, participation should be open to interested persons and institutions from all parts of the world. The number of participants need not be limited, although it may be necessary to restrict the number of papers presented. Special papers or reviews might be invited.

The subject matter of Forum meetings should broadly cover all topics related to tropical capture and culture fisheries in both freshwater and saltwater in the Asian region. The theme for the first meeting is proposed to be "New Frontiers in Asian Fisheries Science." The meeting may take place early in 1986 and there are indications that the venue will be Manila.

Foundation Council

The Forum proposal called for formation of a committee to begin planning Forum meetings and various associated matters, one of which was the suggestion of forming a Society to further unite the region's fishery scientists and ensure permanency of the Forum. The group which met in Manila became that committee or "Foundation Council" and was unanimous in adopting the idea of a society, the "Asian Fisheries Society", to further the aims of the Forum.

The Foundation Council's functions are to organize the first Forum meeting; prepare a draft constitution for the Asian Fisheries Society; seek the views of the Asian fisheries scientific community on

the Forum and Society through a broadly distributed questionnaire; publicize the Forum and proposed Society; and begin soliciting funds for the Forum/Society and associated publications. It was expected that the first Annual General Meeting of the Society would be held during the first Forum, when an election of the first Society office bearers would take place.

Asian Fisheries Society

The objectives of the Asian Fisheries Society are an extension of those of the Forum described earlier: to encourage interaction between scientists, exchange of information, and publication of research results; to strengthen cooperation between institutions; to focus attention on the importance of wise use of resources; and to create an awareness of the importance of fisheries in the region.

In addition, a Society could play a variety of roles in cooperating with national and international societies and institutions.

Full members of the Society would be those scientists and technicians with at least a first degree, working in a field related to fisheries or aquaculture, and such membership would be free. Various categories of non-voting membership were also proposed.

There is no doubt that a regional fisheries society akin to other societies, such as the European and World Mariculture Societies will eventually be formed in Asia. The high level of interest in the proposal circulated by ICLARM indicates that the time is ripe. There are problems in funding to be addressed but these are to be found in almost any organization today.

The main prerequisite for success is enthusiasm. It is obvious that enthusiasm exists in abundance for a regular regional fisheries forum and a society to maintain it.

Inserted in this Newsletter is a questionnaire on the proposed Forum and Asian Fisheries Society. Readers are urged to complete and return the forms. The success or failure of a venture such as this depends on the attitude of those whom it is intended to benefit. Please express your interest by responding to the questionnaire.