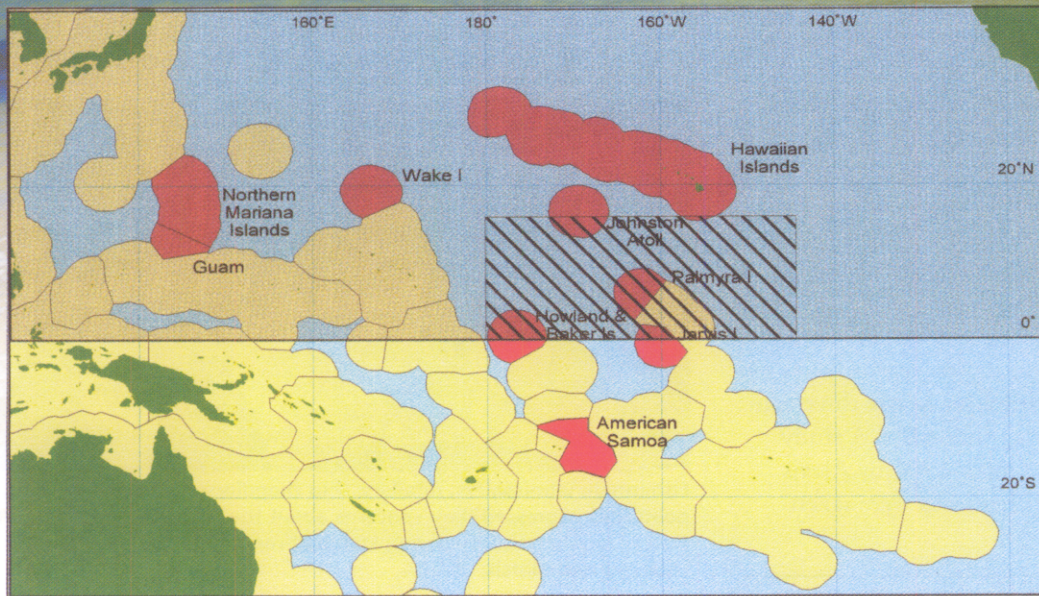


Pacific Islands Fishery News

Newsletter of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council

Spring 2001



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- 1) No swordfishing area (entire North Pacific Ocean) year-round for US Pacific island vessels only
2) No tuna fishing area (1.9 million square miles) April and May for US Pacific Island vessels only

'Saving' the Pacific Leatherback Turtle?

From March 15 to 30, 2001, US District Judge David Ezra closed the entire Hawaii longline fishery, pending National Marine Fisheries Service's completion of an updated environmental impact statement (EIS) on the fishery. On March 30, after receiving the EIS, he modified his injunction. It now bans Hawaii longline vessels targeting swordfish from operating in the entire North Pacific, from the equator to the North Pole, and closes 1.9 million square miles of mostly international waters south of Hawaii during April and May to Hawaii longline vessels targeting tuna.

The court injunction mirrors the reasonable and prudent measures in a biological opinion (BO) on the fishery dated March 29 and incorporated in the EIS, which finds the Hawaii longline fleet jeopardizes the continued existence of the endangered leatherback

turtle and threatened loggerhead and green sea turtles. The findings replace a 1998 BO on the fishery, stating that the Hawaii longline fleet did not jeopardize the existence of any sea turtle population. A National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) spokesperson said the new findings reflect new information on the status of turtle populations as well as a change in the agency's approach to jeopardy. NMFS now

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President Clinton's NWHI Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve

Through 11th hour executive orders issued Dec. 4, 2000, and Jan. 18, 2001, President Clinton created an 84-million square mile coral reef ecosystem reserve in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI). Included in the executive orders was a set of permanent conservation measures and an advisory committee heavily weighted toward preservationist and non-consumptive interests. Depending on interpretation by the Secretary of Commerce, these measures could have devastating impacts on Hawaii's fisheries:

- Catch and effort caps and an array of area closures restricting commercial fishing to fewer than 17 vessels (with eventual reduction to 0 through attrition), reducing traditional bottomfish fishing grounds by two-thirds and limiting recreational fishing to current levels, which are unknown.



- Permanent closure of the only commercial lobster fishery in the state (annual landed value of \$1 million to \$6 million during the

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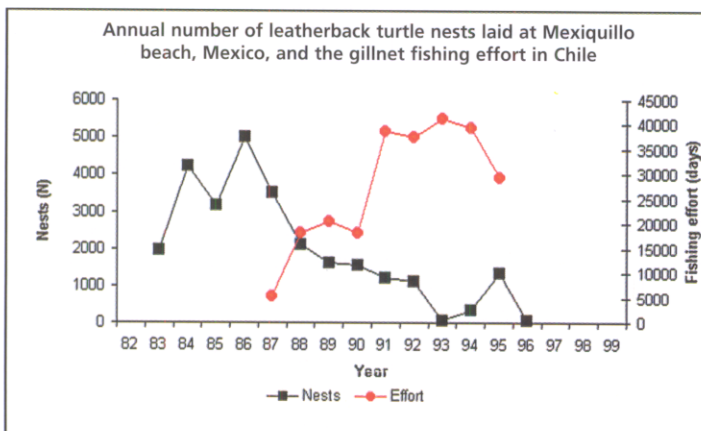


focuses more specifically on how the subject federal action affects a listed species.

However, the cumulative impacts on the species are far-reaching in both time and space. The leatherback turtle has existed for more than 65 million years. It is a highly migratory, pelagic animal found throughout all of the world's oceans in both temperate and tropical latitudes. Impacts on the species are both natural and man-made.

Humans, dogs and pigs raid the eggs at nesting beaches. Researchers Eng-Heng Chan and Hock-Chark Liew note that "coastal villagers in Terengganu [Malaysia] have been collecting leatherback eggs for consumption and sale from time immemorial, with egg harvests approaching 100% for many decades." The nesting populations there have decreased to numbers approaching zero.

Directed fisheries for the leatherback also occur. Researcher Christopher Starbird reports that hunting for leatherbacks has been part of the traditional Adat culture for nearly three centuries in the Kai Islands of present-day Indonesia. A study conducted during October and November 1994 by Alexis Suarez and Starbird estimated 87 leatherbacks were taken annually by the villagers.



Incidental catches in coastal and high seas fisheries have been implicated in major declines on both sides of the Pacific Ocean. The downturn of the nesting population at Mexiquillo, Mexico, occurred at the same time that effort doubled in the Chilean driftnet fishery (S. Eckert and L. Sarti 1997).

The two major declines impacting the Malaysian population coincided with a period of rapid development in the fishing industry, particularly trawling, in Terengganu between 1972 and 1974 and with the introduction of the Japanese high seas driftnet fishery for North Pacific squid in 1978.

The leatherback also suffers from loss of nesting beaches due to natural erosion and coastal development, from pollution and boat collision and from human disturbance related to tourism and sanctuary operations, such as the patrolling of beaches at night when the leatherbacks nest. "The highly publicized Rantau Abang Sanctuary [Malaysia] is visited by thousands of tourists during the nesting season, with up to 1,000

people watching a single nesting turtle," notes Chan and Liew. "As a result, tourism and its related activities remain a major disturbance within the sanctuary."

Nevertheless, there is room for optimism.

- The high seas driftnet fishery, estimated to have incidentally taken from hundreds to thousands of leatherbacks annually in the North Pacific, was banned internationally in 1992. The long-term positive effects on population recovery from this fishery ban are not



Fishermen, wholesalers, retailers, ship chandlers, restauranteurs and politicians expressed their concerns about the draft EIS and BO on the Hawaii longline fishery during standing-room only Council meetings in February and March.

yet evident due to age of sexual maturation of leatherbacks.

- Nesting females at Las Baulas National Park, Mexico, one of the largest leatherback nesting beaches in the world, was at a five-year high during the 2000-2001 season (www.leatherback.org/lasbaulas/costa-rica/index.html).
- Leatherback turtle anti-poaching campaigns and hatchery operations as well as government and non-government agencies efforts to solve the leatherback problem have increased.

In 1996, some scientists predicted the imminent extinction of the species. But the opinion is not universal. Renowned turtle researcher Peter Pritchard, founder of the Chelonian



Sen. Rod Tam, chair of the Economic Development and Technology Committee (far right) with industry representatives at Kewalo Basin. Tam and Rep. Ezra Kanoho, chair of the Water and Land Use Committee, introduced concurrent resolutions expressing the Hawaii Legislature's concern about the Hawaii longline closure and its impact on the state's economic well-being.



As predicted, closure of the fishery impacted local fish supplies. The Honolulu fish auction, which normally opens from early morning to noon each day, reportedly closed within an hour on some days. Local troll and hand-line tuna catches did not fill the void in supply. The wholesale market turned to tuna imports from Fiji and Micronesia where longline fisheries take six to seven times more turtles than the Hawaii longline fleet.



Bill Hogarth, NOAA acting assistant administrator for fisheries, presented the draft biological opinion on the Western Pacific pelagic fisheries at the Council meeting in March.

Research Institute, notes: "My conclusion is that the leatherback is a vigorous and dynamic species ... and able to show quite rapid response to protection."

Whether closing and confining the Hawaii longline fishery, which accounts for less than 1 percent of the fishing effort in the Pacific, provides effective "protection" is debatable. Since July 2000, the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council has said that international agreement is needed to protect sea turtles during all their life stages instead of high-handed restriction of the Hawaii longline fleet alone.

The Council also supports an experimental swordfish fishery for the Hawaii-based fleet to develop mitigation measures that can then be adopted by longline fleets worldwide.

"Overall, we are not happy with the decision of the court and the BO outcome," said Kitty M. Simonds, Council executive director. "Banning a US fishery from operating in half of the largest ocean in the world is unprecedented and unreason-

able. Ironically, marine turtle populations may be negatively impacted by this decision, as the US demand for swordfish must now be met by foreign fleets that may kill 950 times more sea turtles per ton of swordfish than the Hawaii fleet, according to the EIS."

The EIS also states: "It is clear from Congressional discussion of the proposed Endangered Species Act (ESA) prior to its enactment in 1973 that the Congress intended that ESA-listed species be protected throughout the range of their critical habitat regardless of national boundaries. ... International cooperation is a must to achieve conservation goals for protected species such as sea turtles that live in, and travel across, many national boundaries."

The Western Pacific Fishery Management Council, the Hawaii longline fishermen and the EIS have provided an alternative that could obtain this goal. It is to work with the fishing industry to develop gears and methods that can be utilized by all domestic and foreign longline fleets. A similar approach was successfully undertaken by the eastern Pacific purse-seine industry to accomplish the difficult task of conserving another highly migratory protected species. Over the past 20 years, modification of fishing tactics has reduced purse-seine fishery interactions with dolphins from hundreds of thousands of animals to a few thousand per year. Fishing tactic modification for the longline fishery could also prove a sensible solution for highly mobile, wide-ranging sea turtles.

Pacific Leatherback Migration Routes

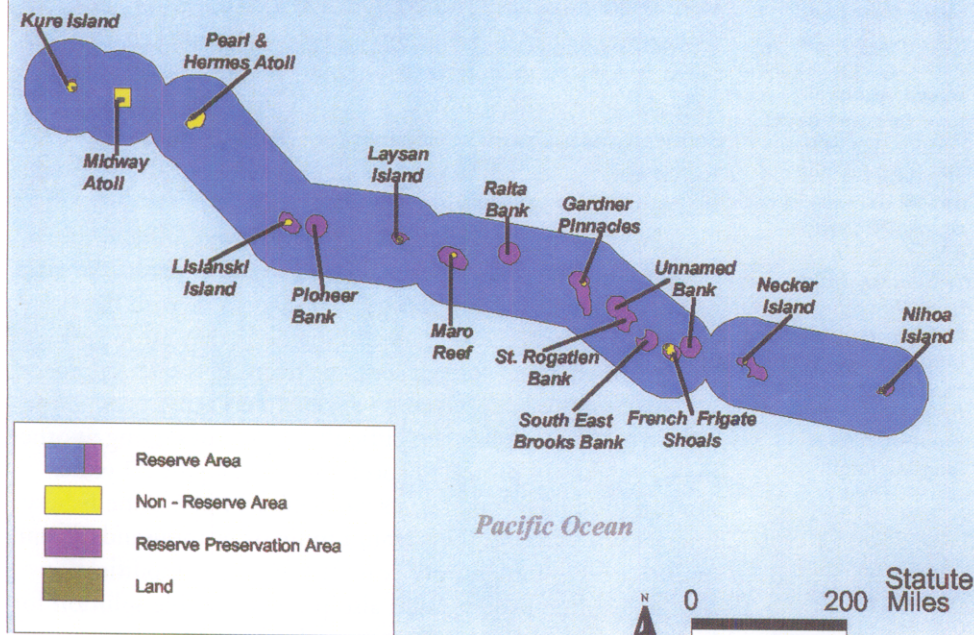
Leatherback turtles are highly migratory species spending their lives almost entirely in the open ocean. Only the nesting females and hatchlings are found on shore. Knowledge about the species is limited, but it is being enhanced by satellite tagging and genetic research.

These studies show that the Pacific leatherback exists in two distinct populations. An eastern population nests from Baja California to Colombia and a western population with nests historically ranging from Taiwan to Fiji.

After nesting, the eastern population moves south toward Chile.

Meanwhile, the western population migrates through the central Pacific to the US West Coast. Genetic markers in 13 of the 14 leatherbacks sampled from the central North Pacific (incidentally caught by the Hawaii longline fishery) identify those turtles as originating from nesting populations in the southwestern Pacific. Likewise, all of the stranded leatherbacks from Alaska to San Diego sampled to date have been of western Pacific nesting stock. Genetic samples from two leatherback turtles taken by the California/Oregon drift gillnet fishery revealed that both originated from western Pacific nesting beaches. Two leatherbacks captured and tagged in Monterey Bay in September 2000 and fitted with transmitters were both on a southwest migratory path.

Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve



past decade).

- Prohibition of any other potential commercial fisheries in the NWHI, including those for deepwater precious coral (estimated landed value \$1 million and worth \$25 million to associated local businesses) and coral reef resources.

The Reserve is larger than the entire US National Parks system and seven times larger than the 13 National Marine Sanctuaries combined. The Reserve is the largest protected area (land or sea) in the United States and the second largest marine protected area (MPA) in the world after Australia's Great Barrier Reef, where more than 25,000 recreational and commercial fishermen are allowed to operate. The Reserve does not include state waters (0 to 3 miles from shore) nor waters of the Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge. Only 2.7 percent of the Reserve contains habitat suitable for coral reefs. (See www.hawaiiireef.noaa.gov).

The Reserve's seaward boundary is the same as the outer boundary of the Protected Species Zone MPA, established by the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council in 1991 to mitigate interactions between longline vessels and endangered Hawaiian monk seals. The objectives of the Reserve appear to have been copied verbatim from the objectives of the Council's draft Coral Reef Ecosystem Fishery Management Plan (FMP), except that references to sustainable use and fishing communities have been dropped.

The Council questions the legality of the provisions in President Clinton's executive orders that infringe on the Council's authority to manage fisheries, as mandated by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. The Council recommends that the Coral Reef Ecosystem FMP, including its proposed no-take zones, be the initial conservation measures for the NWHI Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve.



President Clinton's Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve includes waters 3 to 50 miles offshore surrounding nine of the 10 remote islands and atolls that comprise the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. Among them are Necker Island, a sacred spot for indigenous Hawaiians since about AD 1000, and French Frigate Shoals, which includes the largely man-made Tern Island, used formerly as a fishing base and military and US Coast Guard outposts.



The NWHI coral reef ecosystem has remained nearly pristine as evidenced by the domination of predators, such as jacks and sharks.

Photo by Chad Yoshinaga

Hawaii Fishers, Seafood Industry Form Associations

Two industry associations have formed in response to legal challenges that aimed to change the way Hawaii's fisheries and seafood markets operate. On Nov. 29, 2000, Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI) bottomfish fishers established the Hawaii Bottomfish Association.

"The industry had to come together to survive the legal challenges that threaten to close the fishery," said Sharane Gomes, president elect. A lawsuit filed by Greenpeace Foundation, Center for Biological Diversity et al. against the Secretary of Commerce claimed the NWHI bottomfish fishery impacts endangered Hawaiian monk seals by discarding ciguatoxic kahala, competing for prey and hooking and killing seals. In March 2001, US District Judge Samuel King denied the plaintiff's motion for an injunction against the fishery.

"During my 11 years of fishing in the NWHI, I have never hooked or heard of anyone hooking a monk seal," said David Kalthoff.

Bottomfish association members are also concerned about President Clinton's executive orders that created a Reserve in the NWHI, which could considerably reduce fishing activity based on performance by individual vessels during the previous five years.

"Weather, distance, the small number of vessels in the limited entry program and the nature of this fresh fish fishery make this cap needless," said Timm Timoney, a NWHI bottomfish and lobster permit holder. "Every vessel with a NWHI permit is going to have a problem with this non-scientifically based cap on a healthy fishery."

Seafood distribution companies also united in early December to form the Hawaii Seafood Industry Association. Robert Fram of Garden & Valley Isle Seafood, spokesman and secretary for the association, said they "hope to expand membership to include all the wholesalers, retailers, chefs, restaurateurs and anyone else who enjoys fresh Hawaiian fish and fish products." Fram cites the recent closures of the swordfish and NWHI lobster fisheries and potential closure of the NWHI bottomfish fishery as the impetus for the new association.

Association Contacts:

Hawaii Bottomfish Association; President: Sharane Gomes
Phone: (808) 385-1816

Hawaii Seafood Industry Association; Spokesman and Secretary: Robert Fram
Phone: (808) 524-4847

Hawaii Longline Association;
General Manager: Scott Barrows
Phone: (808) 235-7507 or 225-4313

Interior 'Claims' Palmyra Atoll, Kingman Reef as Wildlife Refuges

On Jan. 18, 2001, outgoing Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt issued departmental orders establishing the Kingman Reef and Palmyra Atoll National Wildlife Refuges. The orders effectively remove submerged lands and waters out to 12 nautical miles from commercial fishing, without the benefit of advance public comment, or analysis of the environmental or socioeconomic impacts. Secretary Babbitt may also have overstepped his authority by establishing a wildlife refuge in the territorial sea or exclusive economic zone.

The two refuges contain 93 percent of the coral reef associated waters that have been recently claimed as National Wildlife Refuges and National Parks by the Interior Department. The Palmyra refuge includes 515,232 submerged acres and the Kingman Reef refuge contains 483,702 submerged acres. By comparison, the Virgin Islands Coral National Monument contains 12,702 submerged acres and the Buck Island Reef National Monument Expansion contains 18,135 submerged acres, according to the Interior Department.

The Western Pacific Fishery Management Council has asked the new Interior Secretary, Gale Norton, to review the departmental orders. The Council notes that its draft Coral Reef Ecosystem Fishery Management Plan, scheduled to be implemented later this year, designates all coral reef habitat around Kingman and Palmyra (i.e., 0 to 50 fathoms) as no-take zones. The Nature Conservancy's catch-and-release fishery on Palmyra will likely be granted an exception. These no-take zones should provide sufficient protection for the two coral reef ecosystems.

Western Pacific Recipe: Spicy 'Ahi

The next time you block an 'ahi loin for sashimi, don't throw the remaining odd sized and shaped pieces into poke—make spicy 'ahi instead.

Ingredients

Fresh ahi, chopped into very small pieces
Rock salt
Black pepper
Sesame oil
Chili oil
Chili pepper flakes
Green onions, chopped
Paprika



Mix the ingredients to fit your taste. Serve over hot rice, and enjoy!



Kitty Simonds, Western Pacific Fishery Management Council executive director, bonefishing at Palmyra Atoll.

Changing the Way Fisheries Are Managed

The first in a series of Congressional hearings on the reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act was held April 4, 2001, in Washington, DC. James Gilford of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council presented joint recommendations of the eight Regional Fishery Management Council chairmen. Among the suggestions were the following that are of particular concern to the Western Pacific region:

- * The definition of overfishing should be modified because data deficiencies may lead to unreasonable results if every fishery must be managed using maximum sustainable yield.
- * The Councils and National Marine Fisheries Service should be authorized to regulate non-fishing activities by vessels that could adversely impact fisheries or essential fish habitat.
- * The Congressional moratorium on individual fishing quotas should be rescinded or should not be extended beyond 2002.
- * The Councils should have discretionary authority to establish fees to help fund observer programs.
- * The definition of bycatch should be consistent in the Atlantic and Pacific. Hence, highly migratory species in the Pacific that are managed under a Western Pacific Council fishery management plan and tagged and released alive under a scientific or recreational fishery tag-and-release program should not be considered bycatch.

The Western Pacific Council is also concerned about judicial review of and economic loss due to Secretary of Commerce action. The Council suggests that the Secretary's failure to comply with the National Environment Policy Act (NEPA) should result only in judicial guidance about NEPA compliance rather than judicial management of, or injunction against, a fishery. The Council also recommends that fishery disaster relief funds should be made available for fisheries closed or severely curtailed as a result of government decisions, administrative or judicial, intended to protect the marine environment.

The Council will continue to discuss Magnuson-Stevens Act reauthorization at its **110th meeting, slated for June 18-21, 2001, at the Ala Moana Hotel in Honolulu.** Several other broad fishery management issues to be addressed include the definition of jeopardy under the Endangered Species Act, incorporating ecosystem management into existing fishery management plans (FMPs) and meshing President Clinton's executive orders on the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands into existing FMPs.

Fisheries Forum Supports Enforcement

Private citizens, officials from state and federal agencies, and members of the Hawaii Senate and House of Representatives gathered at the 2nd Annual Hawaii Fisheries and Ocean Users Forum on Jan. 13, 2001. The all-day forum was designed to enhance public awareness of the issues relating to Hawaii marine resources, to afford users and managers an opportunity to develop a consensus by engaging in mutual discussions of issues and to develop ideas for legislation at both the state and federal levels of government.

Guest speaker Hal Osburn, senior marine fisheries policy advisor for the State of Texas, addressed the fear factor in fishery management. "Fear is the poorly managed component in fishery management today which has so often created unnecessary wars or prevented successful resolution of conflicts," he noted.

Panel discussions focused on nearshore management challenges, legal challenges and solutions. Luncheon presentations examined the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands ecosystem and reviewed Hawaii's pelagic fisheries in the context of the Pacific-wide pelagic fisheries. During public participation periods, concerns were expressed about the ability to enforce fisheries regulations in Hawaii state waters.

Following the event, the Fisheries Forum committee submitted a request to Sen. Lorraine Inouye and Rep. Ezra Kanofo for a bill designed to enhance education and enforcement of Hawaii marine regulations.

Persons wishing to participate in continued online discussions about Hawaii ocean policy issues are invited to send an e-mail message to hawaiiocceanspolicy-subscribe@egroups.com.

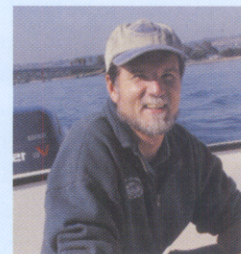
New SSC Members

Three new members have joined the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee, bringing with them expertise in environmental law, protected species, spiny lobsters and marine ecosystems.

Christopher Carr, JD, PhD (expected 2001), is an attorney at Washburn, Briscoe & McCarthy, San Francisco, Calif. His area of practice is in natural resources litigation and permitting, including endangered species law, fisheries, ocean and coastal law, maritime boundary disputes, mining, water pollution, wetland and water and real property law.

Scott Eckert, PhD, is a senior research biologist at Hubbs-Sea World Research Institute and adjunct research professor at the University of San Diego. He specializes in endangered species research and management, physiology, conservation biology and marine turtle management and conservation.

Christopher Evans, PhD, is chief biologist at the Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources, American Samoa. His research has focused on marine ecology and tropical marine invertebrates, particularly spiny lobsters and prawns. Previous employment includes inshore fisheries research and management in Bermuda, Papua New Guinea and the United Kingdom.





New Hawaii and federal laws end participation by US fishermen in the lucrative shark fin trade. Imports of fins caught by foreign fishermen are still allowed.

Congress Bans Shark Finning

A Congressional bill to amend the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act to prohibit the landing of shark fins without the accompanying carcass was signed into law on Dec. 21, 2000. This new law will have the following consequences:

- * Ban on finning sharks (discarding carcass) from US fishing vessels throughout the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) or on the high seas
- * Ban on foreign fishing vessels transshipping fins through US ports
- * Possible prohibition on foreign vessels possessing shark fins to refuel and reprovision at US ports
- * Possible prohibition on US imports of shark fins by conventional cargo vessels



The anticipated impact on the Hawaii-based longline fleet will probably be minimal. Finning activity ceased almost entirely within the state after the Hawaii Legislature passed a bill in May 2000 banning the landing of shark fins without carcasses, said Gary Moniz, chief of the Hawaii Division of Conservation and Resources Enforcement. Still not known are the effects of the federal law on the Asian restaurant and apothecary trade.

Advisory Panel Members for 2001-2002

Jim Cook (chair)

Richard Shiroma (vice chair)

Commercial Sub-panel: AMERICAN SAMOA: James Anderson and Afoa Lutu; GUAM: Manny Duenas (chair) and David Silva; HAWAII: Clayton Carvalho, Minh Dang, Sean Martin and Richard Tamashiro; NORTHERN MARIANAS: Warren Dela Cruz and Ramon Mafnas.

Recreational Sub-panel: AMERICAN SAMOA: Louie Denolfo and Steven Haleck; GUAM: Marie Teresa O'Brien and David Silva; HAWAII: Gary Beals, Tim Hale, Mike House and William Mossman (chair); NORTHERN MARIANAS: Pedro Itibus and Gene Weaver.

Subsistence/Indigenous Sub-panel: AMERICAN SAMOA: Henry Sesepasara (chair) and William Sword; GUAM: James Borja and Manny Duenas; HAWAII: Kawehi Ryder, Jeffery Kaluhiwa, Robert Luuawai and James Mawae; NORTHERN MARIANAS: Arnold Palacios and Pete Tenorio.

Ecosystem and Habitat Sub-panel: AMERICAN SAMOA: Michael Crook and Fatima Sauafea; GUAM: James Borja and Lone Wolf; HAWAII: Tony Costa, Terry Donnelly, Eric Gilman and Henry Okamoto; NORTHERN MARIANAS: John Gourley (chair) and Benigno Sablan.

Alternates: AMERICAN SAMOA: Jennifer Aicher and Faamausili Pola; GUAM: Anita Borja-Williams; HAWAII: Thomas Graham and Sean Timoney; NORTHERN MARIANAS: Jesus Cabrera and William McCue.

Video Features NWHI Fishermen

The first episode of *Living the Legacy*, a video series documenting the history of US Pacific Islands fisheries, features the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. Through oral histories and archival film, viewers learn about the 1920s pearl oyster fishery, 1950s near-shore and akule fisheries and current limited-entry bottomfish and lobster fisheries managed under the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council. For more information on the 19-minute video, contact the Council.



COUNCIL CALENDAR

MAY

- 1-3 Pelagic Plan Team meeting, Council office, Honolulu
- 3 Advisory Group meeting, Guam's Fishermen's Co-operative, Barrigada, Guam
- 4 Advisory Group meeting, Multipurpose Center, Susupe, Northern Mariana Islands
- 11 Recreational Data Task Force meeting, Council office, Honolulu
- 14 Crustacean Plan Team meeting, Council office, Honolulu
- 15-17 77th Scientific and Statistical Committee meeting, Council office, Honolulu
- 21-23 Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve Council meeting, Honolulu
- 21-23 PACON 2001, Huandao Tide Hotel, Haikou, China
- 21-24 52nd Tuna Conference, Lake Arrowhead, Calif.
- 22-25 Councils Chairmen/Executive Director meetings, Key West, Fla.

- 27-28 Boat Show, Ocean Expo and Fishermen's Festival, Ko Olina Marina, Hawaii

28-June 2

Building Bridges with Traditional Knowledge international summit meeting, Honolulu

- 30-31 National Marine Fisheries Service MSY workshop, Seattle, Wash.

JUNE

- 6-7 Enforcement and Vessel Monitoring System meeting, Council office, Honolulu
- 15-16 Advisory Panel meetings, Ala Moana Hotel, Honolulu
- 18-21 110th Council Meeting, Ala Moana Hotel, Honolulu
- 21-26 2nd Symposium on Marine Conservation Biology, San Francisco
- 26-28 NOAA Science Advisory Board meeting, Monterey, Calif.

JULY

- TBA Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve Council meeting
- 3-5 Asia-Pacific Fishing 2001, Cairns, Australia
- 8-11 Pacific Congress on Marine Science and Technology, Burlingame, Calif.

- 9-13 19th Session of the Coordinating Working Party on Fishery Statistics (FAO), Noumea, New Caledonia

- 17-21 National Marine Educators Association conference, Victoria, Canada

- 19-21 FAO/Secretariat of the South Pacific, Pacific Island Fisheries Statistics Workshop, Noumea, New Caledonia

- 23-27 Secretariat of the South Pacific Heads of Fisheries meeting, Noumea, New Caledonia

AUGUST

- 8-9 Secretariat of the Pacific Community, 4th Standing Committee on Tuna and Billfish meeting, Noumea, New Caledonia

- 19-23 3rd International Billfish Symposium, Cairns, Australia

- 27-30 Putting Fishers Knowledge to Work international conference, Vancouver, Canada

Group Works to Reduce Turtle Takes

The second meeting of the Working Group on Reducing Turtle Bycatch in the Hawaii Longline Fishery, convened in San Diego, Jan. 9 to 11, 2001. Presentations included status of Pacific sea turtle populations, genetic typing of Pacific sea turtles, mitigation experiments in the Azores, trials by a commercial longliner from California with circle hooks and turtle research activities of the National Marine Fisheries Service Honolulu Laboratory.

Attempts were made on the second day to reach a consensus on a possible fishing regime for the Hawaii longline fishery that would satisfy environmental community concerns for sizeable take reductions and retain the potential for Hawaii-based longliners to catch swordfish. As yet, no consensus has been reached, said John Sibert, chair of the working group and program manager of the Pelagic Fisheries Research Program. The general agreement was that a combined approach of bycatch reduction and nesting beach protection was the strategy most likely to promote recovery of sea turtle populations.

The turtle working group is comprised of scientists, fishermen, environmentalists and government officials and is sponsored by the Pelagic Fisheries Research Program, based at the University of Hawaii.

Pacific Islands Fishery News

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Telephone: (808) 522-8220; Fax: (808) 522-8226; <http://www.wpcouncil.org>

Chair Judith Guthertz (Guam)

Vice Chairs Isabel Lujan (Guam)

Jack Tenorio (Northern Mariana Islands)

Executive Director Kitty M. Simonds

Frank Farm (Hawaii)

Aitofele Sunia (American Samoa)



The 1999 annual report for the pelagic fisheries of the Western Pacific Region is now available on the Web. To access the pdf file, click on www.wpcouncil.org.