

Pacific Islands Fishery News

Newsletter of the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council



Winter 2003



The aftermath of Pongsona at Agana Boat Basin (left) where 13 boats were sunk and at the Small Boat Marina and Refuge in Piti (right).

Longliners Vow to Protect Sea Turtles and Seabirds

More than two hundred representatives from fishing industries, government agencies, non-governmental organizations and other interested parties from 28 countries participated in the Second International Fishers Forum (IFF2), Nov. 19–22, 2002, in Honolulu, to develop solutions to reduce the unintended catch (bycatch) of sea turtles and seabirds by longline fishing gear.

"In the United States, we take our obligations to protect endangered species very seriously—so seriously in fact, that Hawaiian longline fishers have been barred from the swordfish fishery, even on the high seas, in order to protect endangered sea turtles," noted US Sen. Daniel Inouye in an address

Super Typhoon Devastates Guam's Fishing Community

With sustained 150+ mph winds and 184 mph gusts, Super-Typhoon Pongsona slammed into Guam on Dec. 8, 2002. Within 24 hours more than 1,700 homes were destroyed, an additional 2,000 were severely damaged and nearly 40 percent of Guam's 8,600 hotel rooms were closed. Among the many casualties were the Guam Fishermen's Cooperative and more than a dozen local fishing vessels.

According to Paul Untalan of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Disaster Recovery Center, "Preliminary damage estimates are \$83.1 million for the public sector and \$788 million for the private sector. Damage assessments are still ongoing, and the figures are expected to continue to rise."

To ascertain the extent of the damage to the fishing sector, Guam's Bureau of Statistics and Plans, with support from the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council, will conduct a Fishery Damage Rapid Assessment.

"It is important that we capture this information because fisheries have grown to be a very important and growing industry for Guam," said the Bureau's spokesperson Micki Leon Guerrero.

Preliminary losses estimated for the Guam Fishermen's Cooperative include \$15,000 in fish inventory; \$80,000 in equipment; \$200,000 in infrastructure; \$20,000 in recovery expenses; and \$120,000 in lost revenue, said Manny Duenas, the organization's president.

"We lost about 60 percent of our structure, all of

our office equipment including three computers and the fish testing lab," Duenas noted. "Thousands of dollars of manuals and records were found in the Agana Boat Basin."

One of the Co-Op's four ice machines was mangled, and the other three were

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John Bennett of New Zealand was presented with the first Golden Albatross Award for his tireless efforts to innovate and improve seabird mitigation measures on his vessel and to inspire his crew, his fleet and others at the Fishers Forum by his example.

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More typhoon damage at the Small Boat Marina and Refuge in Piti.

submerged and are being repaired. Now, with two borrowed machines, the Co-Op can produce only 25 percent of the 5,000 lbs needed for its daily operations.

“Without some sort of assistance, even a recovery loan, the Co-Op may have to abandon ship,” Duenas speculated. “After 25 years of existence, the Co-Op finds itself back to square one.”

The fate of the Co-Op is reverberating throughout Guam’s fishing community.

“The Co-Op was forced to shut down its facility for over two weeks, leaving subsistence, commercial, recreational and charter fishermen without means to continue their livelihood, due to the lack of fuel, ice and the fish market,” Duenas said “Nearly 200 members are dealing with the greatest economic disaster impact of their careers.”

According to Duenas, about 90 percent of Guam’s fishermen are traditional subsistence fishermen, so they are not eligible for disaster grants or loans or even unemployment benefits.

Fishermen with vessels that sustained major damage face particular hardships. At least 12 members had their boats severely damaged during the storm, Duenas said, noting that

many members have yet to check in with him. The damage ranged from the engines being submerged to damage from flying debris.

The 40-foot fiberglass *Maria* was one of the boats that sank in the Agana Boat Basin. Paul Aguon, an independent fisherman who owns the boat, said that when he applied with FEMA, he was sent to the Small Business Administration where his loan application was declined. Moreover, when the boat’s crewman who lived on the boat to watch it at night applied for FEMA, he was told that, since he did not own the living quarters, he didn’t qualify for much. Now with the boat out of the water and under repair, he is without a home.

Duenas encouraged all fishermen to participate in the Fishery Disaster Rapid Assessment in order to document the economic situation of Guam’s fishermen. “Fishing has been an integral part of the local community,” Duenas said. “We need



John Cepeda preparing to get back to work on the *Maria*, fixing the many holes punched into the fiberglass hull by Super-Typhoon Pongsona.

to maintain that fishing tradition. ...” For more information, please contact the Council’s onsite coordinator on Guam, John Calvo, at +1 671 649-3150 or john.calvo@noaa.gov.

Council Acts to Amend Sea Turtle Conservation Measures

The Western Pacific Fishery Management Council met on Dec. 16, 2002, in Honolulu to address measures to minimize injury to sea turtles by pelagic fishing gear.

Current sea turtle conservation regulations require longline and other pelagic fishing vessels to carry line clippers and bolt cutters to release captured sea turtles. In contrast, the Biological Opinion (BiOp) for pelagic fisheries in the Western Pacific Region, issued by the National Marine Fisheries Service on

Nov. 15, 2002, continued these requirements only for longline vessels. After reviewing the new BiOp and reports showing virtually no interactions between sea turtles and non-longline pelagic fishing vessels, the Council took an initial vote to recommend removing the requirement to carry bolt cutters and line clippers on troll, handline and pole-and-line vessels.

The Council also voted to investigate the April and May longline area closure south of 15° N, which was implemented

to reduce sea turtle interactions with longliners. A smaller and shorter seasonal closure may have the same or greater effect on reducing interactions as the present closure, which prevents fishermen from entering the area when valuable bigeye tuna are plentiful.

For more information on the Council meeting, please contact the Council at +1 808 522-8220 or at info.wpcouncil@noaa.gov or visit the Council website at www.wpcouncil.org.



Networking and sharing of new gear and techniques provided many with solutions to specific problems that had them stumped. The Aquatic Release Conservation (ARC) de-hooker, developed in the northeast Atlantic, was one such welcome discovery for many of the Pacific fishermen at IFF2. Preliminary reports indicate that the ARC de-hooker has tremendous success in removing almost all hooks and lines from sea turtles, marine mammals, sharks and other bycatch.

shown by video to the forum participants. "One country alone cannot stem the jeopardy to the world's ocean resources; the effort must be international in scope."

Sen. Inouye also told the forum that the US Senate has committed substantial resources in fiscal year 2003 for the negotiation of a binding international agreement for reducing sea turtle interaction with longline fisheries of the Western and Central Pacific.

Following four days of deliberation, the forum participants resolved to encourage the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) to develop an international plan of action to reduce sea turtle bycatch. They will also ask the FAO to better implement and monitor the existing international plan of action to reduce seabird bycatch in longline fisheries.



During the final day of the forum, fishermen and other participants gathered in small groups to discuss the commitments they will undertake in the next two years to reduce bycatch of seabirds and sea turtles by longline fishing gear.

On a more personal level, dozens of fishermen and other participants publicly committed to a variety of projects to protect sea turtles and seabirds. These commitments ranged from modifying fishing practices to increasing biological research on these threatened and endangered species.

Sean Martin of the Hawaii Longline Association said his organization would continue to work towards real world solutions to the problems of bycatch.

"Cooperation and education by all interested groups will be instrumental for this to be effective and to achieve that goal," he noted.

Manny Duenas said the Guam Fishermen's Cooperative Association would establish an advisory body to review and analyze data on Guam's pilot bigeye tuna longline project. It will also establish an education and training program focusing on protected species and employ technology analyses that will examine the local applicability of both known and emerging bycatch reduction techniques (tori lines, blue dyed baits, line shooters, weighted swivels, etc.).

"We hope in two years we can report that we put all of this into place and have a new longline fishery that employs the world's best practices," Duenas said.

Janice Molloy said her New Zealand-based group, Southern Seabird Solutions, would work to increase its membership and lift the bar on conserving protected species. The group will also pursue joint projects with other countries that share albatrosses and petrels with New Zealand.

"At lunch, we had our first meeting with some of those people," Malloy reported. "The South Americans met with the Southern Seabird Solutions group. ... This is the beginning of a great relationship we believe. ... Hopefully we will be able to report back on some fantastic projects in two years."

Hans Jusseit of Australia's East Coast Tuna Boat Owners' Association said he'd like to put his energies into things that are creative and positive. "I would rather be part of the solution than the problem," he declared, echoing a sentiment shared by all the fishermen at the forum.



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New Report Analyzes Problems Transshipping



Craig Severance photo

Off loading fresh tuna in Hawaii. An estimated 50 percent of Hawaii's fresh catch is shipped out of state, usually on tourist-dependent passenger planes.

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, have significantly changed the cargo and transshipment industry. However, a November 2002 report by the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council reveals that most of the current problems transshipping fresh fish in the US Pacific islands are connected to matters unrelated to 9/11.

Hawaii

As one of the largest Pacific air transport hubs, Hawaii imports and exports large amounts of fish. Countries like the Philippines and Fiji send their fish to Hawaii where it is re-iced and sent on to Japan or the US mainland. Of the locally landed fish, an estimated 50 percent is sent to the US mainland, Japan and Europe.

Fish is usually sent on tourist-dependent passenger planes. Cargo and chartered planes are other alternatives. The cargo planes are more desirable than passenger planes because security restrictions are less stringent and the costs are lower.



However, there are not enough cargo planes to satisfy demand.

Prior to 9/11, there were almost 43 daily flights from Honolulu to the US mainland. From September to December 2001, the number dropped to 37. According to available data for 2002, flight frequencies during 2002 rebounded to nearly 47 flights daily, exceeding pre-September 2001 numbers.

Those involved in the transshipment of fish cite the airline industry's shift to using smaller planes, an event unrelated to 9/11, as the primary problem. Most of the aircraft flying to the US mainland are no longer DC 10s but smaller bodied 767s. While the DC 10 could accommodate an LD3 container (about 1 ton of cargo), a 767 can accommodate only an LD2 container (about 800 kg of cargo).

Along with the smaller planes has come a decentralization

More 9/11 Impacts on Air Shipment of Fresh Fish

- ★ **More Cargo Space, New Charter Planes:** The US Postal Service must now transport any parcel exceeding 16 ounces by freighter craft rather than by passenger plane. The result—more space in the cargo section of passenger planes and the possibilities to ship fish on newly chartered mail freighters.
- ★ **New Security Surcharge:** Those involved in the transshipment industry must now have more security equipment and take more security precautions. These costs are passed down by way of a security surcharge. The result—estimated increase in shipping costs by as much as 50 percent. If these charges increase too much, shipping fish may no longer be profitable.
- ★ **Not Everyone Can Send Air Cargo:** The Transportation Security Administration has more stringently implemented the pre-existing "known shipper" policy. Companies and individuals who wish to send cargo via air must have a long, clean record of shipment. Part-time shippers have to either work through a known shipper or establish an account, which requires a lengthy background check by the FBI and US Customs. The result—most of those in the business of shipping fish were already known shippers so the impact was minimal.
- ★ **Potential Delays:** The Food and Drug Administration has attempted doubling the amount of physical testing of imported items. While the purpose of inspecting seafood is to determine its safety relative to natural food hazards, regulations like the new Bioterrorism Act of 2002 may shift the focus to purposefully contaminated food. The result—the demand for domestic fish may increase if fish imported from outside the United States face more potential delays.

Fresh Fish in the US Pacific Islands

of landing sites. Honolulu flights now disembark not only at San Francisco and Los Angeles, but also San Jose, San Diego and other more remote airports. Trucks could solve the problems associated with decentralization, but the time and the cost of getting the product to market would increase and the extra handling could adversely affect the value of the fish. On the other hand, decentralization may encourage the opening of new markets.

Guam

Due to the excellent port and airport facilities, as well as its proximity to fishing grounds and Japan markets, Guam has become a transshipment hub.

Transshipment of fish to Japan is dependent on the tourism industry. In 1998 there were up to 11 flights a day to Japan. Fresh fish occupied 60 to 85 percent of the cargo space. Because air cargo export to Japan is almost exclusively fish and the fishing vessels coordinate their landings, there has usually been excess space.

Like Hawaii, Guam also faces the problem of smaller aircrafts. However, cargo space constraints may only be a problem during Japanese holidays, when the demand for fresh fish is heightened.

After the 9/11 attacks, Guam flights were grounded for about four weeks. Then, during the first two months of 2002, flights for three major airlines were cut back by about 91 flights per month. Despite this initial decrease in flight frequency, the airlines in 2002 apparently not only recovered but also exceeded pre-September 2001 service to Japan.



Tuna landed in American Samoa is destined for the canneries. With no tourism industry to speak of, American Samoa has limited cargo lift on passenger airlines. This in turn limits the possibilities of fresh fish export.

Northern Mariana Islands

Fishing is not a major contributor to the economy of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). Most fishermen operate small boats and target skipjack tuna. Some larger operations target bottomfish.

There is little incentive for Asian longline fishing vessels to port in Saipan because Guam is closer to the southern fishing grounds and has better facilities and cheaper fuel and re-supplying costs.

Although CNMI may not yet have the required fishing infrastructure, there is no limitation of air service. In 2002, tourist numbers apparently rose, and flight frequency increased.

Clearly the limiting factor in CNMI is the not lack of air cargo capacity but lack of fresh fish due to unexploited local marine resources as well as the need for harbor infrastructure improvement and more competitive fuel and service charges.

American Samoa

American Samoa tuna (mainly albacore) production is mostly destined for canning. Starkist Seafood and Samoa Packing employ one third of the population of American Samoa and generate secondary revenue by supplying the fleet with provisions and repair services.

Unfortunately, American Samoa has no tourism industry to speak of, which limits cargo lift on passenger airlines and the possibilities of fresh fish export. Currently a DC 10 flies directly from Pago Pago to Honolulu every Monday and Friday. The flight's arrival in Honolulu at 5:15 AM is excellent for marketing in Hawaii or transfer to planes bound for Japan or the US West Coast. But the small lift and low frequency makes a constant flow of goods impossible.

The US Postal Service charter plane that carries the mail to American Samoa continues to Australia, so there is little potential for fresh fish export to the US mainland. However, as Sydney is one of the major airport hubs of the Pacific, there is potential for fresh tuna export to Japan. It is also possible to send fish from nearby Western Samoa, which has much more airlift than American Samoa. Of course, additional charges would have to be assessed relative to potential returns.

For the complete report, please contact the Council office at +1 808 522-8220 or go to www.wpcouncil.org.

Overview of Council's Management and Conservation Activities in 2002

The ocean and its resources define our way of life in the Pacific Islands. Ensuring that these resources remain healthy for future generations of US Pacific Islanders is the work of the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council. It develops fishery management plans for federal waters (generally 3 to 200 miles offshore) around American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), Guam, Hawaii and US Pacific island possessions. In 2002, the Council focused on reducing fishery interactions with protected species, bolstering the fishery rights of indigenous communities and educating island youths to respect our ocean resources.

In February, the Council convened the Western Pacific Sea Turtle Cooperative Research and Management Workshop, a forum to exchange information and promote greater regional collaboration for the conservation and recovery of depleted Pacific sea turtle populations. Fifty-three representatives from 18 Pacific nations participated in the workshop. They agreed to work towards the development of a meta-database for tag information; better delineate stock boundaries and breeding, foraging and migratory ranges; and increase capacity building through future technical training, workshops and distribution of educational materials.

Also in February, the Council co-sponsored Hawaii research on a device that reduces the unwanted catch of seabirds by longline vessels. The 29-foot underwater setting chute, developed in New Zealand, sends baited hooks 16 feet underwater before releasing them. The results of the experiment were astounding. Of 6,491 hooks set without the chute, seabirds contacted 419 (6.5 percent of the hooks) and 24 seabirds were killed. Of 6,168 hooks set with the chute, seabirds contacted 10 (0.2 percent of the hooks) and no seabirds were observed killed or hooked.

Efforts to address fishing interactions with seabirds and sea turtles continued in November, with the Council hosting the Second International Fishers Forum at the Hawaii Convention Center in Honolulu. Fishermen comprised nearly



PROTECTING SEABIRDS: The underwater setting chute delivers baited hooks from the vessel so that they first emerge 16 feet underwater, out of sight and reach of diving albatrosses.



PROTECTING SEA TURTLES: The Council hosted a regional workshop in February and an international forum in November that aimed to protect sea turtle populations.

half of the more than 200 participants from 28 countries and 14 states meeting to address this global problem. The remaining participants included researchers, gear manufacturers, fishery managers and other interested parties. Participants reported greater awareness of problems and solutions and made personal commitments to work towards increasing protection for seabirds and sea turtles.

The Council worked equally hard in 2002 to protect the fishery rights of indigenous communities. In June, the Council approved a limited entry program for the longline fishery in federal waters surrounding American Samoa. The program was developed in part to protect the livelihoods of local longline fishermen who utilize small *alia* catamarans. It also recognizes the strong cultural dependence on fishery resources by indigenous American Samoans.

Also in June, the Council received 15 proposals for Western Pacific Demonstration Projects. These projects are intended to benefit indigenous communities in the US Pacific Islands. In October, the Council approved four proposals for funding to 1) improve and restore the Heeia pond ecosystem on the island of Oahu, State of Hawaii; 2) provide pole-and-line aku fishing and training for teens and young adults on the island of



PROTECTING OUR WAY OF LIFE: The three-part TV series *FishQuest* was filmed on location in American Samoa, CNMI, Guam and Hawaii. The Council is committed to a long-term investment in education, including the development of classroom materials for children, to ensure the respect for the ocean resources that have defined our island way of life

Molokai, State of Hawaii; 3) develop remote fishing stations on two Northern Islands in the CNMI; and 4) test modern longline gear and train fishermen to store and transport fish in Guam.

Education, along with regulation, is the most effective way to manage the 1.5 million square miles of ocean that constitutes the Western Pacific Region. In 2002, the Council, in partnership with the Hawaii Department of Education and the Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL), produced a three-part television series focusing on fisheries and fisheries management. The *FishQuest* series features fisheries in American Samoa, CNMI, Guam and Hawaii, highlighting both their importance to island communities and the complexity of managing such diverse ecosystems. The program began airing in classrooms and homes in September.

117th Council Meeting Notice

The Western Pacific Fishery Management Council will meet Feb. 11–13, 2003, in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). The Council develops and amends management measures for US Pacific island fisheries operating in federal waters (generally 3 to 200 miles off shore). Measures developed by the Council are forwarded to the Secretary of Commerce for final approval. Among the issues the Council will address at the meeting are the following:

- ★ Finalize a recommendation to remove the requirement for non-longline vessels to carry line clippers and bolt cutters. Longline vessels would continue to carry these devices to release any captured sea turtles.
- ★ Initiate a recommendation to revise the regulation on mitigating seabird bycatch by longline vessels. The amended regulation would give Hawaii longline vessels fishing north of 23° N the option of using an underwater setting chute as an alternative mandatory mitigation measure. Currently, the options include blue-dyed bait and strategic offal discards. Research experiments on the underwater setting chute conducted February 2002 in the fishing grounds north of Hawaii resulted in zero observed mortalities of seabirds. The experiments were conducted through a partnership involving Albi Save (Australian manufacturer of the chute), the Audubon Society's Living Oceans Program, the Hawaii Longline Association, the National Marine Fisheries Service, the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council.
- ★ Initiate recommendations to amend the bottomfish fishery management plan to put in place a process to issue the two Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Mau Zone permits for indigenous communities through the Community Development Program. Alternatives for awarding the Mau Zone permits to indigenous communities will be reviewed.
- ★ Initiate a recommendation to revise management of the Guam bottomfish fishery. A prohibition against targeting bottomfish species on large vessels within 50 miles of shore and an alternative to expand this option to include the pelagic fishery will be considered.
- ★ Review current sea turtle conservation measures. A new area closure to replace the current April and May Hawaii longline area closure south of 15° N, the use of de-hooker devices and other measures will be discussed.
- ★ Examine ways to improve commercial catch data and to capture recreational catch data for all federal fisheries in the Western Pacific Region. For example, Guam has proposed a community-based monitoring program of its bottomfish resources. Applicability of this potential program to other island areas will be discussed.

For more information on the 117th Council meeting, please contact the Council at +1 808 522-8220 or info.wpcouncil@noaa.gov or visit the Council website at www.wpcouncil.org.

Guam's Coral Reef Awareness Campaign Ends Successfully

"Man, Land & Sea"—a nine-month coral reef awareness campaign on Guam—held its final event on Nov. 10, 2002, at the Hilton Guam Resort & Spa. The festivities included displays and demonstrations by various organizations, local musicians, children's coloring contests and speeches by community leaders, including Governor-Elect Felix Camacho and *Pacific Daily News* (PDN) publisher Lee Webber.

The Guam Coastal Management Program (GCMP) and Western Pacific Fishery Management Council's joint display emphasized the agencies' distinct geographical jurisdictions and their shared responsibility for marine resource management. GCMP's jurisdiction runs 0 to 3 miles from shore while the Council's interest stretches 3 to 200 miles offshore. Annie Flores of GCMP and John Calvo, the Council's onsite coordinator on Guam, answered questions and distributed materials, including the Council's newsletters, brochures, posters and coloring sheets of sea creatures with their names in English and Chamorro. The coloring sheets were a big hit with the children, parents, teachers and the general public. The booth also featured the *FishQuest* series and *Stewards of the Pacific*, videos on fisheries management produced by the Council.

"Man, Land & Sea" was a combined effort of PDN, environmental groups, business leaders and local and federal government agencies. Its purpose was to inform the public about the causes for coral reef decline and ways to restore them to their productive state.

The PDN dedicated a full page every Monday to coral reefs. Archived articles are available at the PDN website, www.guampdn.com. Among the other program activities were tree plantings, beach cleanups, hazardous waste collection, public forums and an opportunity to witness coral spawning. Council representatives participated in all events.

The Council is now working with PDN on a literacy project. It will run throughout 2003 and feature the Council's educational materials. For information on these materials, please contact Council staff member Cindy Knapman at +1 808 522-8169 or at lucinda.knapman@noaa.gov.



COUNCIL CALENDAR

FEBRUARY

- 11–13 117th Council Meeting, Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
- 11–14 International Longline Sea Turtle Bycatch Workshop, Seattle, Wash.
- 24–28 United Nations FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) Meeting, Rome, Italy
- 26–27 US Coral Reef Task Force Meeting, Washington, DC

MARCH

- 12–13 Forum Fisheries Agency/United States consultation on the US/Pacific Islands multi-lateral purse seine tuna access treaty, Majuro, Marshall Islands
- 17–20 23rd Annual Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 17–21 Secretariat of the Pacific Community's Coastal Fisheries Management Meeting, Nadi, Fiji
- 24–27 2nd International Tropical Marine

Ecosystem Symposium (ITMEMS), Manila, Philippines

APRIL

- 2–3 Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Reserve Advisory Council Meeting, TBA
- 13–16 Inaugural National Conference on Coastal and Estuarine Habitat Restoration, Baltimore, Maryland

MAY

- 5–9 Western and Central Pacific Fishery Management

Commission, PrepCon IV, Nadi, Fiji

- 13–15 Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee Meeting, San Francisco, Calif.
- 13–16 54th Tuna Conference, Lake Arrowhead, Calif.
- 20–22 83rd Scientific and Statistical Committee Meeting, Council conference room, Honolulu
- 26–29 Council Chairmen and Executive Directors Meeting, Virgin Islands

Western Pacific Recipe

Quick Octopus Pupu

INGREDIENTS

- 1 whole cleaned octopus
- 1 cup of shoyu
- 1 "finger" ginger root
- 2 cloves garlic
- Sugar to taste
- Tabasco to taste



PREPARATION

Boil the octopus until it turns red. Remove it from the pot, and cut the octopus into small pieces. Put the pieces into a serving bowl, and add shoyu (it should come to the same level as the octopus pieces). Add remaining ingredients, and serve. SERVES 6

Recipe courtesy of the Captain Cook Hotel, Christmas Island; reprinted by permission from *Hawaii Fishings News*



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