



26th Sea Turtle Symposium Longline Fishery Panel

COOPERATIVE APPROACHES TO IMPLEMENT SEA TURTLE BYCATCH SOLUTIONS IN LONGLINE FISHERIES

The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council in collaboration with organizers of the 26th Annual Sea Turtle Symposium in Crete, will convene a pelagic longline fishery panel at the upcoming Symposium on Thursday, 6 April 2006 at 3:30pm. The objectives will be to provide factual information about the longline industry, promote transparency, engage symposium participant to help identify any new opportunities for fishery research and collaborations, and discuss current management and mitigation efforts to promote environmentally responsible longline fisheries within an ecosystem context.

Background

The reality is that global consumer demand for pelagic resources continues to grow. Longlining and purse-seining are the two principal fishing methods that are meeting the majority of this demand. The challenge is to unite the fishing industry and others interested in wise use of pelagic marine resources to find and implement effective solutions to avoid protected species interactions and to ensure healthy stocks of tuna and billfish. Successful mitigation measures must provide incentives for use while significantly reducing or eliminating interactions without making fishing operations difficult or unprofitable.

The Council, along with the National Marine Fisheries Service and a consortium of international agencies and non-government organizations, are strongly proactive in developing fishery mitigation measures as well as sea turtle conservation that support the initiatives of the Bellagio Blueprint to address protection of sea turtles in the Pacific¹. Recently, in July of 2005, 250 fishermen and industry representatives, scientists, environmentalists and government officials met in Yokohama, Japan, to tackle important management issues. The resulting “Yokohama Declaration of Responsible Tuna Fishers” outlines a 12-point plan for achieving these goals:
www.wpcouncil.org/iff/IFF3_ExecutiveSummary.pdf.

¹ (1) the protection of all nesting beaches, (2) reducing turtle take in at-sea and coastal fisheries, (3) stimulating Pan-Pacific policy actions, and (4) encouraging the sustainability of traditional use of sea turtles (Worldfish, 2004).

The Panel Format

A two hour discussion, moderated by Dr. Milani Chaloupka, will consist of brief presentations by a panel of six experts followed by an interactive question and answer period. During the session, panelists will dispel misperceptions about longline fisheries and provide symposium attendees with the best available information from researchers and managers actively working with fisheries and fishermen to solve problems and implement solutions.

Discussion will conclude with panelist providing a list of recommendations for regional fishery management organizations regarding their opinions for the next international steps forward to promote responsible longline fishing. These recommendations will be submitted to relevant international meetings, such as the next FAO Committee on Fisheries (June 2006).

The Council invites symposium participants to join the current movement among multiple stakeholders to work cooperatively to support the international acceptance of effective mitigation strategies. For more information, please contact the Council's sea turtle program coordinator: Irene.Kinan@noaa.gov.