



**Pelagics Plan Team Meeting**

**April 26-28, 2011**

**8.30 - 5.00 pm**

**1164 Bishop St., Suite 1400**

**Honolulu, Hawaii**

**Recommendations and Action Items**

**Recommendations**

**Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI)**

1. The Pelagics Plan Team (PPT) reiterates its recommendation that the landings of the emerging CNMI longline fishery should be sampled by NMFS or Division of Fish and Wildlife obtain average weights and length-weight conversion factors so that logbook catches in numbers can be expressed as weights.

**Guam**

2. The U.S. military provides vessels for recreational use by military personnel, including fishing. This fishery is currently not surveyed by the Department of Aquatic and Wildlife Resources (DAWR) and personnel have had difficulty with access to military bases to collect fisheries information. Ease of access to military property and personnel by DAWR staff seems to vary from command to command, and other contractors and personnel are freely able to enter and exit military property more freely. The PPT recommends that the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council (Council) discuss with the military, methods of documenting and surveying fishing activity taking place on military bases. The PPT recommends that a written document defining fisheries survey protocols, and the necessity for collecting fisheries data and DAWR access to address this gap in fisheries data be sent to the military.
3. The PPT recommends that the Council work with the military to coordinate with Guam natural resource agencies and local fishermen groups to allow better access to open ocean and coastal fishing areas restricted due to increased military activity and exercises. This includes, but is not limited to area W-517.
4. The PPT encourages DAWR and Western Pacific Fisheries Information Network (WPacFIN) to conduct additional outreach with commercial vendors to increase participation in the commercial receipts program. Changing demographics of fishermen selling to novel vendors whose transactions are not being captured by

the current commercial receipts program. Similar problems are also being experienced in Saipan. Distrust of government agencies and the use of commercial receipts data seem to be a common reason for not participating in the program.

### **American Samoa**

5. At the 150<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Council directed staff to prepare a Pelagics FEP amendment that would specify regulations for an American Samoa shallow-set longline fishery. The PPT recommends that, until the fishing industry expresses an interest in shallow-set fishing for swordfish in the South Pacific, no regulatory action should be taken. If and when such interest is expressed, the experimental (exempted) fishing permit process or the Council's Community Development Program would be appropriate ways to gather the information needed to develop appropriate fishery management recommendations.

### **Hawaii**

6. The PPT recommends that National Marine Fisheries Service Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center (NMFS PIFSC) apprise NMFS Pacific Islands Regional Office on a quarterly basis of the North Pacific striped marlin cumulative catch by weight in the WCPFC convention area from the Hawaii-based longline fishery. The PPT also recommends that Hawaii Division of Aquatic Resources provide a similar quarterly catch total of striped marlin for non-longline pelagic fisheries to NMFS PIRO.

To help develop management options for North Pacific striped marlin should any be needed, the PPT recommends that NMFS PIFSC conduct the following analyses:

- i. Using Hawaii longline observer data, summarize the number of striped marlin based on condition (dead or alive) upon retrieval by associated sizes.
- ii. Using Hawaii dealer data, examine the market values of striped and blue marlin size categories to ascertain the economic impacts to the fisheries if a minimum size category were implemented.
- iii. Examine the effects on the amounts of retained catches in Hawaii based fisheries of (a) striped marlin and (b) striped and blue marlin combined in the North Pacific of the WCPFC area, if live boated fish smaller than specified minimum sizes were required to be released. The analysis would examine various possible minimum sizes including no minimum size.

## **Region Wide**

7. Acknowledging the requirement for the WPRFMC to take management action and given the disparity in the U.S. fishery catches of Pacific bluefin tuna between the western and eastern Pacific Ocean, with dramatically higher catches in the latter, the PPT recommends that the Pacific Council address the stock's overfishing status. If appropriate, the Chair and appropriate members of the PPT will confer with the Pacific Fishery Management Council's (Pacific Council) Highly Migratory Species Plan Team to develop options that would assist in making recommendations to the Secretary for domestic regulations to address the relative impact of fishing vessels on the U.S. on the stock. Furthermore, the teams could assist in the development of recommendations to the Secretary of State, and to the Congress, for international actions that will end overfishing.
8. The PPT reviewed draft Amendment 2 to the Pacific Council's Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan which addresses National Standard 1 Guidelines. The PPT concurs with the potential primary FMP designations identified in Table 2-4 except for the following:
  - i. The three tropical tuna stocks of skipjack, yellowfin, and bigeye tunas in the eastern and western central Pacific Ocean should be assigned only to the Pelagics FEP given the minimal catches of these species in fisheries under Pacific Council's authority.
  - ii. Blue shark should have a shared designation between the two Councils, given the large volume of blue sharks caught in the Hawaii longline fishery, and that the NMFS Pacific islands Fisheries Science Center has taken the lead with blue shark stock assessments.
  - iii. The footnote to Table 2-4 applicable to swordfish should include North Pacific Striped Marlin because the same issues concerning striped marlin genetics and stock assessments.

## **Action Items**

### **CNMI**

1. In the CNMI module, there needs to be explicit labeling of the tables for each graph, which links the data contained in the table with the graph
2. The graphs produced from the trip ticket data require text in the figure caption to indicate if the data were extrapolated or are simply the raw data
3. The boat based survey statistics in Table 4 need an additional two columns to split the interviews into charter and non-charter vessel and an explanation of opportunistic interviews should be contained in the section on data sources.
4. In the summary, clarify that the module is about troll fishing and that large fishing vessels operating in the northern islands are not included in the creel survey, but may be captured in the trip ticket data. Some information should be included in the summary that there is a longline fishery operating out of Saipan, but confidentiality protocols preclude any reporting on the data from this fishery.
5. Formulate more specific figure captions for the commercial purchase database figures (e.g., CNMI Annual estimated total landings from commercial trip invoices).
6. Move Table 4 to the transition between creel based survey and commercial purchase database figures and tables.
7. In the module summary, expand to include an explanation of the fishery data collection similar to the American Samoa module.
8. Include a footnote in Table 5 to clarify the definition of bycatch, similar to the Guam module.

### **Guam**

9. The boat based survey statistics in Table 7 needs an additional two columns to split the interviews into charter and non-charter vessel and an explanation of opportunistic interviews should be contained in the section on data sources.

### **American Samoa**

10. WPacFIN should establish a unique time series of longline catch and effort based upon combination of the creel survey data and logbooks since the inception of the fishery.

11. Remove the second Figure 17 from the module.

**Hawaii**

12. Reformat the longline logbook catch and CPUE (in numbers of fish) from trip level (tuna-swordfish-, and mixed species-target) to set level (deep-or shallow-set) summaries based on the regulatory definition or other fishery parameters for years before implementation of the regulatory definition and subsequent modification of the logbook format. There should be an explanation of the regulatory criteria that determine whether a fishing operation was a deep- or shallow-set.
13. In the summary clarify that Hawaii catch estimates in the module are not the same as U.S. longline estimates submitted to WCPFC and IATTC because some of the catch is attributed by dual permitted vessels in Hawaii and American Samoa. U.S. reports to IATTC also include longline fisheries based on the U.S. West Coast.
14. In Table 1 include another category for ‘other tunas’ in the Tuna PMUS subgroup. Transfer other non PMUS pelagics to their own category.