



## **Report of the American Samoa Archipelago FEP Advisory Panel Meeting**

*June 1, 2015, 4:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.*

*Toa Restaurant, Nu'uli Village*

### **1. Welcome and Introductions**

Chairperson Christinna Lutu-Sanchez welcomed everyone to the meeting. American Samoa Advisory Panel members in attendance included: Mike Crook, Krista Corry, Mac Aveina, Isaiah Hunkin, and Brian Thompson. Also in attendance was Council Coordinator for American Samoa, Nathan Ilaoa.

### **2. Review and Approval of the Agenda**

The agenda was approved by the members unanimously.

### **3. Issues to be discussed at 163<sup>rd</sup> Council Meeting**

#### **A. Upcoming Council Action Items**

##### **i. Cooperative Research Priorities**

Nate Ilaoa, Council Coordinator, presented the Council's cooperative research priorities that will be transmitted to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to take into account when conducting cooperative research. The presentation focused on the American Samoa and Pelagic research priorities.

The AP Members were in agreement with the American Samoa and Pacific Pelagic items and supported these priorities.

##### **ii. Five-year Research Priorities**

Ilaoa also presented on the Council's five-year research priorities that are a mandate of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) and are also transmitted to NMFS.

Krista Corry suggested that Ecosystems Research priority #7 be moved up the list. They noted that it should follow-up on impacts to the fishing community.

Christinna Lutu-Sanchez stated that there has never been a complete stock assessment on American Samoa green sea turtles so there should be priorities to get this data so that assessments can be done. The group also discussed the impact the ruling would have on local fishing communities – mainly socioeconomic. There was concern that there have been added federal regulations for protected without scrutiny of the effectiveness of such measures. Additionally, this escalation of protection for the American Samoa DPS of green turtles comes without justification specific to American Samoa as very limited data has been collected on local nesting grounds. This is magnified by the fact that American Samoa is the only US area in this green turtle DPS and neighboring islands do not have stringent turtle protection laws that we do.

Brian Thompson said that Priority #5 of the Stocks Research category should be higher on the list and agreed with Mac Aveina that Priority #10 and #14 under Human Dimensions should be a higher priority.

The AP Members generally supported the five-year research priorities but would like to see these priority rankings changed as noted above.

## **B. American Samoa FEP Community Activities**

Ilaoa reported on the community activities in American Samoa that will be presented at the 163<sup>rd</sup> Council Meeting. He presented an update of the fishing development activities that were assisted by the Council including the Fagatogo fish market, as well as reports on the continuing data initiatives and fishing activities since the last Council meeting.

## **4. American Samoa Archipelago FEP Issues**

### **A. Report of the Sub-panels**

#### **i. Island Fisheries Subpanel**

The report of the Island Fisheries Subpanel focused on collaboration and outreach efforts. They noted the need to contact the American Samoa Department of Marine and Wildlife (DMWR) to request collaboration on education and outreach efforts in the community. These efforts should focus on fisheries, regulations and current issues.

#### **ii. Pelagic Fisheries Subpanel**

Continuing with the need for education and outreach, the Pelagic Fisheries Subpanel agreed that that there needed to be an educational component (counseling) for alia fishermen applying for SSBCI funds to purchase larger fishing boats so that they were fully aware of the costs and required output to not only pay back the loan, but to be profitable. Ilaoa volunteered to speak with the American Samoa Department of Commerce regarding whether they had any plans to do this type of outreach and offer AP assistance where possible.

The Subpanel also noted that there is much follow-up work needed to be done by the US Coast Guard regarding regulations for American Samoa pelagic fisheries (purse seine, longline & alia longline). Mike Crook suggested that the USCG publish a quick reference guide for requirements of all pelagic fisheries, perhaps even a web portal or mobile application. Crook and Lutu-Sanchez agreed that that there needs to be uniformity in standards for all pelagic fishery regulations.

There was some discussion by the Subpanel about post-hook mortality. Isaiah Hunkin said there are too many instances of fish that are undersized being left on the deck or not being thrown back in time to have a chance to survive. Crook added that this was a common issue within large vessel fisheries.

#### **iii. Ecosystems and Habitats Subpanel**

The Ecosystem and Habitat Subpanel brought up the need to evaluate MPAs and other managed areas to determine their effectiveness. The AP agreed to look into this more to determine what needs to be done for this to be accomplished.

The members also discussed the proposed rule for green sea turtles that would up-list the species to endangered in American Samoa. The AP opposed the rule and supported the Council and American Samoa government's request for public meetings in American Samoa.

#### **iv. Indigenous Fishing Rights Subpanel**

Outreach and education was also a concern of the Indigenous Fishing Rights Subpanel. Members discussed the need for DMWR to be the lead on outreach for fisheries issues and stressed the need for the AP to partner with them to conduct the outreach. The AP suggested the Council's Coordinator broach the subject with the DMWR and work with the AP to develop an outreach plan.

#### **B. Other Issues**

There were no other issues

#### **5. Public Comment**

Carlos Sanchez spoke about his plan to adopt alia vessels to fish with the longline vessels. He said it was possible that the smaller alia would catch more fish than the larger boats.

#### **6. Recommendations to the Council**

The American Samoa Advisory Panel made the following Recommendations:

*Regarding outreach and education, the American Samoa Advisory Panel:*

- 1. Recommended the Council develop outreach programs, preferably with DMWR, to educate communities on various fisheries and fisheries related issues.**

*Regarding the American Samoa Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP) research priorities, the American Samoa Advisory Panel:*

- 2. Supported the Cooperative Research Priorities listed under American Samoa and the Pacific Pelagic sections, as well as the ranking given to those priorities.**
- 3. Supported the research priorities included in the Council's Five Year Research Priorities document, and recommends that the Council make adjustments to the rankings of the following priorities:**
  - Stocks Research Priority #5 be ranked higher**
  - Ecosystems Research Priority #7 be made the #1 priority**
  - Human Communities Priorities #10 and #14 be ranked higher**

*Regarding protected species, the American Samoa Advisory Panel:*

- 4. Opposed NMFS, FWS and the Department of Commerce proposed rule changing the status of American Samoa green turtle DPS from threatened to endangered, as there is not sufficient justification for the change in status.**
- 5. Supported the Council and American Samoa Government's request for NMFS hold a public meeting in American Samoa on the green turtle proposed rule.**

#### **7. Other Business**

There was no other business.