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Pacific Islands Fishery News *Newsletter of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council / Fall 2016*

Executive Director's Message:

Change Expected with Federal Transition

Kitty M. Simonds, Executive Director

Most humans take comfort in stability and a slow pace of change. Unfortunately, the world is dispassionate about our desire for equilibrium. Instead, it is dynamic, with conditions continually shifting and evolving.

In terms of change, 2016 has been a momentous period. The election of Donald J. Trump as the nation's 45th president caught the country by surprise. If Secretary Hillary Clinton had won, she likely would have continued the policies and legacies of President Obama. Trump will follow a much different agenda. On environmental issues, he is a known skeptic of climate change, which has been a key policy issue for Obama, leading to the international adoption of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, on Dec. 12, 2015, in Paris, and the United States ratifying and entering it into force in September and November 2016, respectively.

Another Obama policy has been the "blue legacy," using the Antiquities Act to transform large areas of US exclusive economic zone (EEZ) waters into marine national monuments (MNMs). Until recently, all the proclaimed MNMs were in the Western Pacific Region, including the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI), Rose Atoll, Marianas Trench and Pacific Remote Islands MNMs. In 2016, Obama expanded the NWHI monument, pushing its 50-nautical mile (nm) boundary to the limits of the 200-nm EEZ. The executive action in late August momentarily created the largest marine protected area in the world, surpassing the size of the Pacific Remote Islands MNM, which Obama had expanded in 2014. The NWHI monument lost its claim to fame after two months with the creation of the Ross Sea marine reserve in Antarctica in October.

It will be interesting to see how Trump might affect the governance of the MNMs. Will his administration maintain the status quo of allowing only recreational and subsistence fishing, or will the terms of these protected areas be modified? Hopefully, Trump, as a businessman, will understand the economic importance of fishing, particularly commercial fishing, for our region. Currently, 61 percent of US EEZ waters around Hawai'i and about 30 percent in the US Western Pacific Region are closed to commercial fishing.

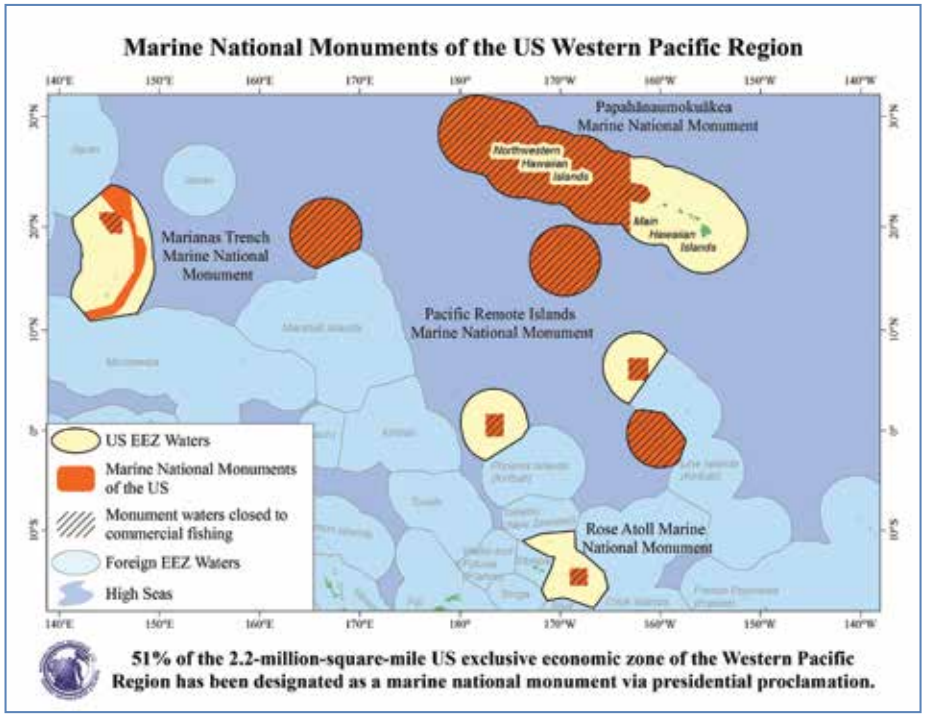
Also troubling is the aging of our region's fishing fleets and communities. Fishing is no longer an employment opportunity that attracts local people into its ranks. Fewer Americans are inclined to endure the rigors and hard life of fishing, with trips lasting up to several weeks. Therefore, foreign fishermen are recruited to crew US fishing vessels, including those in Hawai'i, and imports account for more than 90 percent of the seafood consumed in the United States, a market share that continues to increase.

However, we are at the beginning of a new era, one that promises to be interesting as our country adjusts to new policies and perspectives. Change is as inevitable as night and day. Our region's fisheries and the Council need to be prepared to meet these challenges and opportunities.

ECOSYSTEM-BASED MANAGEMENT OF FISHERIES IN THE US PACIFIC ISLANDS

The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council was established by Congress in 1976 to manage marine resources and maintain opportunities for sustainable domestic fishing in the US exclusive economic zone waters and high seas around Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and the eight US Pacific remote island areas.

Fishing Regulation Development Underway for Expanded NWHI Monument



The expanded Papahanaumokuakea Marine National Monument prohibits commercial fishing in about 61 percent of the US EEZ around Hawai'i.

On Aug. 25, 2016, President Obama issued Presidential Proclamation 9478, expanding the Papahanaumokuakea Marine National Monument in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI) to encompass a total of 582,578 square miles. The monument is now larger than the area of every state except Alaska and larger than all but 19 countries in the world.

The proclamation stated that the Secretary of Commerce through NOAA shall have responsibility for management of activities and species within the monument expansion area under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA). Per the proclamation, the Secretary of Commerce is required to prohibit commercial fishing and may permit non-commercial fishing and Native Hawaiian practices, including subsistence practices.

To accomplish this responsibility under the MSA, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) in a letter dated Sept. 23, 2016, tasked the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council to amend the Hawai'i Archipelago and Pacific Pelagic Fishery Ecosystem Plans to establish appropriate fishery management measures consistent with the Presidential proclamation.

The Council, at its 168th meeting held Oct. 11-14, 2016, in Honolulu, recognized that the Native Hawaiian subsistence practices includes fishing, which is subject to the Council's management efforts.

"The impacts to the Hawai'i fishing and seafood industries and indigenous communities as a result of monument expansion are considerable," said Council Chair Edwin Ebisui Jr. at the meeting. "The Council will write to the President about these and request the Department of Commerce to mitigate them."

The Council at the 168th meeting asked NMFS to analyze the impacts of the monument expansion, including changes in troll-caught yellowfin tuna around the main Hawaiian Islands as longline effort shifts away from the NWHI.

The process to amend the FEPs began in December with public scoping sessions held around the Hawaiian Islands to gather information on potential options for fishing regulations in the monument expansion area. Upon the completion of the public scoping sessions, Council staff will develop a draft amendment to present to the Council at its 169th meeting in March 2017 for initial action, such as selection of a preliminary preferred alternative. Public comment will be accepted throughout the process, including at upcoming meetings of the Council and its advisory groups, as well as during the public review process. The Council expects the process to take at least a year and the regulations to be completed in early 2018 at the earliest.

American Samoa Tuna Canneries Suffer under Obama Administration

In 2015, StarKist Samoa announced a hiring freeze due to minimum wage increases and provided notice that planned investments into the plant have been shelved. StarKist is owned by South Korea's Dongwon Industries and is one of two tuna canneries in American Samoa. In October 2016, it ceased operations for several days due to a lack of fish supply. On Dec. 11, 2016, Samoa Tuna Processors (STP) suspended its cannery operations.

The STP closure resulted in the laying off of about 800 employees, which is about 5 percent of American Samoa's workforce. While canned tuna is a global commodity produced in dozens of countries, it has been the backbone of American Samoa's economy since the 1950s. As a global commodity, the production of canned tuna is highly competitive and subject to a range of economic factors including labor costs, supply and market demand to name a few. Like other industries, however, fish processing is also susceptible to government actions.

Government officials and industry representatives in American Samoa have stated that several decisions by the Obama administration have hurt the supply of fish available to the American Samoa canneries.

First, the US government agreed to high seas effort limits for US purse-seine vessels operating in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO) under measures established by the Western and Central

Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC). The result increased the reliance of the US purse-seine fleet on fishing in the waters of Pacific Island countries. Access to fish in waters of these countries under the South Pacific Tuna Treaty comes at exorbitant costs (approximately $12,000 per fishing day).

At the 168th meeting of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) reported that the American Samoa fisheries and canneries were impacted by implementation of the WCPFC-developed Effort Limit Area for Purse Seine (ELAPS). The Council recommended that NMFS continue to develop rulemaking to address disproportionate impacts to the economy of American Samoa from high seas effort limits applicable to US purse-seine vessels. It also recommended that a study be undertaken on the impacts of the ELAPS closure on the American Samoa economy as a whole.

Second, the Obama administration expanded the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument in 2014, which closed productive tuna fishing grounds in the US EEZ around Jarvis Island.

The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) with 11 Asia Pacific countries, which would open up duty free access for tuna canned in TPP countries, such as Vietnam, would likely be devastating to American Samoa canneries.

The Obama administration has also not been effective in ensuring American Samoa's competitive advantage of duty free access to the United States over foreign canneries that pay a fraction of the labor costs. The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) with 11 Asia Pacific countries, which would open up duty free access for tuna canned in TPP countries, such as Vietnam, would likely be devastating to American Samoa canneries.

The long-term viability of American Samoa's canning industry is in serious doubt. While market forces certainly influence the bottom line, the actions of the Obama administration appear to have done more harm than good with regard to protecting this critically important industry to the American Samoa's economy. The extent of the damage remains to be seen, but the current situation with the STP closure and StarKist Samoa's announcements leaves the American Samoa canning industry, and the local economy that it supports, teetering on a cliff's edge.

American Samoa Tuna Cannery Closes

In October, Tri Marine International announced that it would be suspending its tuna canning operations at its subsidiary Samoa Tuna Processors (STP) in American Samoa. The announcement sent shockwaves through the Territory of American Samoa. According to the company, the canning plant will likely be closing effective Dec. 16, 2016. Chief Operating Officer Joe Hamby said the shutdown is due to the globally unfavorable economic environment for the fishing industry and the need for the company to "stop its current financial hemorrhaging."

STP has about 1,000 employees in its American Samoa canning plant. The absence of those paychecks in the Territory as well as the money generated through services and taxes paid by the company and its employees will create a huge financial crisis in American Samoa.

American Samoa Gov. Lolo Moliga predicted "devastating social and financial impact on the territory and the lives of its people." He said he was committed to do everything possible to change the current problems that are forcing the company to shut down.

Among these is Tri Marine's exclusion from the 30A American Samoa tax credit in 2015. The bill Congress passed to extend the American Samoa Economic Development Credit for two years was written such that Tri Marine was ineligible because the credit was available only to companies with plants open prior to Jan. 1, 2006. STP opened in January 2015 after Tri Marine invested $70 million to repair and renovate the old Chicken of the Sea plant.

While the canning operations will be suspended, the company will continue to operate STP as a logistics hub for the Tri Marine Group, albeit with a greatly reduced workforce. The employees of the company were informed of the company's decision last month. There is still uncertainty as to how many employees will be kept on staff.

In a press release, Tri Marine International's Chief Executive Officer Renato Curto said "the challenging economics of canning tuna in American Samoa combined with external factors facing STP make Tri Marine's private label focused business model for operating the plant economically unsustainable in today's market." Tri Marine is currently evaluating alternatives for the facility including outright sale. AVM Bernardo, a Philippine-based company set to open a food processing plant in the territory, has expressed interest in the plant.

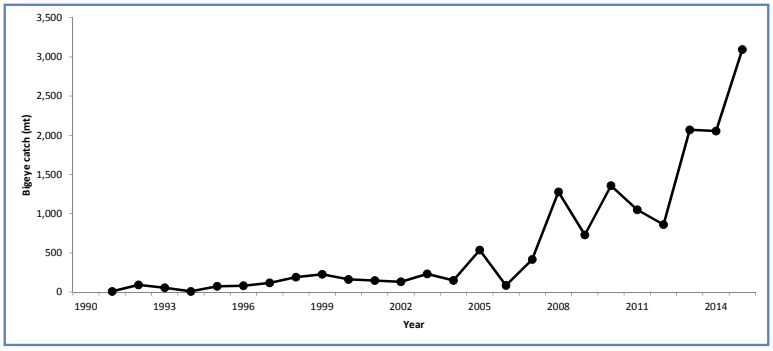
In a move that could potentially assist unemployed workers, Honolulu-based United Fishing Agency has reached out to Tri Marine International about potentially relocating some employees to Hawai'i. The United Fishing Agency's assistant vice president and auction manager, Michael K. Goto, who is also a Council member, sent information to Tri Marine International on various positions within the auction's operation.

American Samoa Council members Ruth Matagi-Tofiga, Christianna Lutu-Sanchez and Tastasi Archie Soliai, Council Advisory Panel Chair Krista Corry and Council On-Island Coordinator Nate Ilaoa met with the American Samoa Fisheries Task Force on Nov. 21 to discuss the closure and other issues. Solip Hong, chair of the Task Force, reported on the Territory's Rapid Response Program to assist the STP employees to secure meaningful employment with the government. A survey of the employees is being conducted to determine the most appropriate placements for them. It was also reported that AVM Bernardo has expressed interest in possibly hiring some of the employees and receiving fish from American Samoa longline owners.

Hawai'i Longline Fishery Takes an Eastern Shift!

Fisheries are dynamic. A good example is the evolving importance of the Eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO) fishing grounds for the Hawai'i longline fleet. Until 2005, Hawai'i-based longline catches in the EPO were less than 500 metric tons (mt). Over the past decade, this catch has seen a steady, six-fold increase, reaching 3,000 mt in 2015. About a dozen Hawai'i longline fishermen have strongly committed to fishing in the EPO by moving their fishing operations to be based out of San Francisco.

Just as fisheries are dynamic so, too, are fishery management measures. Between 2004 and 2006, the Hawai'i longline fleet was subject to a catch limit of 150 mt in the EPO, stemming from the IATTC 2004 Resolution. From 2007 onwards the fleet has been subject to a 500 mt bigeye catch limit in the EPO, based on the IATTC 2006 Resolution. This 500-mt limit initially applied to all longline vessels, but the IATTC in 2009 amended the catch limit to apply only to longline vessels greater than 24 meters in length.



Bigeye tuna catches by US (Hawai'i) longline vessels in the Eastern Pacific Ocean between 1991 and 2015. Source: IATTC (2013) and NMFS Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center data (unpublished).

In 2013, NMFS closed the fishery to the US Hawai'i-based longline vessels greater than 24 meters in length on Nov. 11, when it judged that the vessels had reached their 500 mt limit. Similar closures occurred in October 2014, August 2015 and July 2016.

Given the greater presence of Hawai'i longline vessels in the EPO, the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) have pursued an increase to the current quota, which affects 15 percent of the Hawai'i longline fleet. The Council would like to see a 1,000 mt quota for the larger vessels, while NMFS has advanced an increase to 750 mt. Neither proposed quota would likely undermine the IATTC conservation objectives for EPO bigeye tuna, a stock that is not overfished or subject to overfishing. Moreover, an increase in the EPO limit could serve to decrease Hawai'i longline catches in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean where bigeye is considered to be experiencing overfishing. Also, Asian fleets, whose net catches comprise about two-thirds of the total IATTC allocation of bigeye tuna, are catching below their longline bigeye quota in the EPO. Japan's longline fishery has contracted markedly over the past decade, especially in the East and continues to fish well below its IATTC catch limit. The one nation that has caught above its limit is China, with the 2015 catch being more than three times its allocation; however, Japan has transferred some of its unused quota to China.

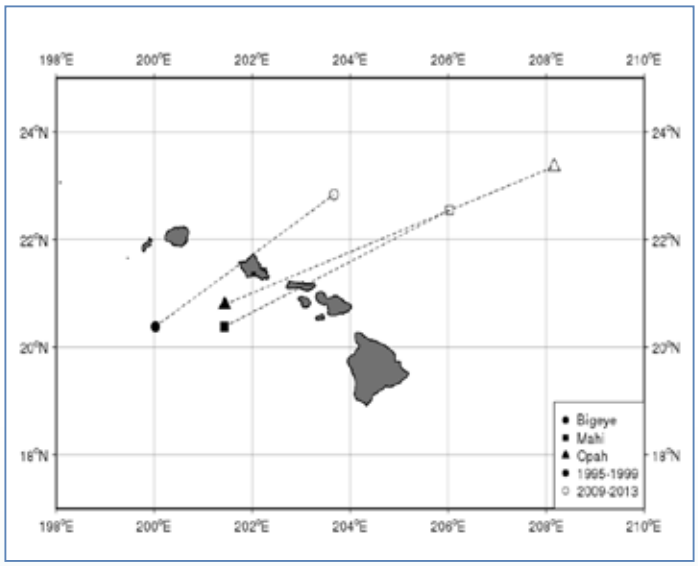
EPO annual bigeye catch limits for the Asian longline fleets

Source IATTC (2013b and IATTC website)

Country	Bigeye Catch Limit (mt)	2012 catch (mt)	% catch limit
China	2,507	8,486	338.49%
Japan	32,372	13,184	40.73%
Korea	11,947	10,107	84.60%
Chinese Taipei	7,555	5,538	73.30%
Total	**54,381**	**37,315**	**68.62%**

The 500 mt quota for bigeye longline vessels larger than 24 meters in the EPO is currently implemented through IATTC resolution C-13-01, which governs the conservation of EPO tuna during 2014-2016. The IATTC met twice in 2016 but failed to find consensus on a replacement resolution, which includes both purse-seine and longline fisheries. An extraordinary meeting of the IATTC will convene Feb. 7 to 10, 2017, to discuss replacement for C-13-01 among other issues.

The Hawai'i longline fleet's dynamic shift eastward is also occurring in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO), where it catches the majority of its bigeye tuna, subject to a catch limit developed by the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission. The shift eastward in the WCPO is clearly seen in a recent study by Jeffrey Polovina, NMFS Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center (PIFSC), on the center of mass for catches of several species in the Hawai'i-based longline fishery from 1994 to 2014. It shows the fishery's center of catch has moved from south of the main Hawaiian Islands to north and east of the archipelago.



The center of mass of the catch (Oct-Dec) for several species in the Hawai'i-based longline fishery 1994-2014 has shifted eastward. Source: J Polovina, NMFS Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center.

PIFSC research on the performance of the Hawai'i longline fishery between 2013 and 2015 concluded that the fishery may have expanded to the northeastern fishing grounds because the area has experienced higher catch per unit effort (CPUE) in recent years. The CPUE increase is attributed to a strong recruitment of two- to three-year-old bigeye in 2013.

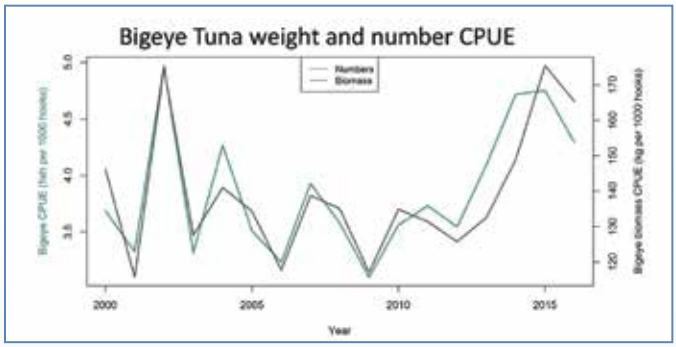
2017 WCPO Tuna Measure Still in Limbo

At its 13th regular meeting held Dec. 5 to 9, 2016, in Nadi, Fiji, the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) left unresolved a new conservation and management measure for the world's largest tuna fishery. The current measure, which restricts purse-seine, longline and other fishing gears targeting tropical tuna (bigeye, yellowfin and skipjack) in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO), is scheduled to expire at the end of 2017.

The difficulty in developing the new measure is balancing bigeye overfishing with the diverse interests of WCPFC members, Participating Territories and cooperating non-members. Among the most complex issue is avoiding a disproportionate conservation burden on Small Island Developing States (SIDS), including Participating Territories. The crux of the issue is determining the fair cost for each country based on its impact on bigeye and the benefit from conservation.

Many SIDS are members of the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA). Eight FFA member countries and one territory comprise the Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA), which collectively receive around $450 million annually from selling fishing access to foreign and domestic purse-seine vessels. The incidental catch of juvenile bigeye by purse-seine vessels fishing on fish aggregation devices (FADs) has increased bigeye fishing mortality beyond sustainable levels. However, the FFA argues that seasonal closures of purse-seining on FADs to conserve bigeye create a disproportionate burden on their members because they target skipjack and receive little benefit from bigeye conservation.

Bigeye conservation benefits longline fisheries that target adult bigeye for sashimi markets. The WCPFC imposes national quotas on bigeye longline vessels operating in the WCPO. For example, between 2006 and 2008, the WCPO bigeye limit for the United States was 4,121 metric tons (mt), which was based on the total bigeye catch of the Hawaii'i-based longline fleet in 2004. This 2005 WCPFC measure was modified in 2008, reducing the US bigeye longline annual quota in the WCPO to 3,763 mt from 2009 to 2013. In 2013, the WCPFC further reduced the US catch limit by 10 percent to 3,345 mt to be implemented in two 5 percent increments between 2014 and 2017.



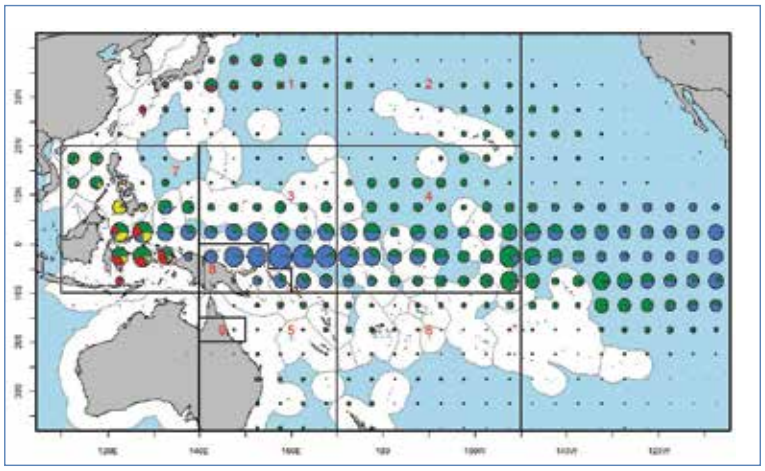
Factors resulting in recent increase in bigeye catch-per-unit effort resulting in the Hawai'i fishery reaching the US longline-caught bigeye quota early in recent years. Source: J. Wren, P. Woodworth-Jefcoats and J. Polovina, NMFS Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center.

In recent years, Hawai'i has reached the US quota for longline-caught bigeye in the WCPO progressively earlier in the year, which has increased reliance on quota-sharing agreements with the US Participating Territories. As presented by Jeffery Polovina, NMFS Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center, at the Council's 168th meeting, the increased catch per unit effort beginning in 2014 through mid-2016 was due to a large year class of bigeye moving through the population that resulted in higher catch rates and larger caught fish.

About 40 countries and territories participate in the WCPFC, including the United States as a member and American Samoa, Guam and the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands as Participating Territories.

During the WCPFC deliberations, the United States outlined what it views as important elements for the new measure. They include flag-based limits for FAD sets and longline bigeye catch limits that are spatially delineated.

The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council participates in the WCPFC as part of the US and US Participating Territory delegations. The Council has long argued that longline catch limits should correspond to where the highest bigeye impact occurs. The best available science indicates that fishing pressure is primarily in the equatorial area between 10° North and South and is minimal in subtropical latitudes, where the Hawai'i longline fishery predominately fishes. Hence, fishing mortality needs be reduced in the equatorial band for conservation to be most effective.



Distribution of bigeye catch (2003-2012) by method (longline green, purse-seine blue, pole-and-line red and other yellow) and sub-regions (boxes) used in bigeye stock assessments. The Hawai'i longline fishery operates principally in sub-region 2, which has among the lowest bigeye exploitation rates in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean. Source: Secretariat of the Pacific Community

At its 168th meeting in mid-October 2016 in Honolulu, the Council recommended that the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) develop a proposed measure for WCPFC that includes spatially based longline bigeye catch limits, which would take into account sub-regional exploitation rates.

The next WCPO bigeye stock assessment will be available in mid-2017 and is critical to the next tuna measure. Various subsidiary bodies of the WCPFC will meet the second half of 2017, with the 14th regular WCPFC meeting set for December 2017 in the Philippines.

The Council will be working diligently with others in 2017 on the development of the new tropical tuna measure and will rely on past Council-coordinated workshops and conferences that examined bigeye tuna movement, disproportionate conservation burden and alternative management measures to purse-seine FAD closures.

Unless the Commission develops a new management measure that does not involve FAD closure periods, the complex issue of disproportionate burden will continue to plague WCPFC measures and likely result in continued exemptions that reduce effectiveness.

Alarming News on Foreign Crews in the Hawai'i Fleet Was Misleading

On Sept. 8, 2016, the Associated Press (AP) reported on the employment of foreign crews on Hawai'i longline vessels. The Hawaii Longline Association (HLA) has responded calling the article inaccurate and full of omissions. The HLA statement was sent to US Rep. Coleen Hanabusa to present at a Dec. 6 forum in Washington, DC, sponsored by Democrats on the House Natural Resources Committee. It notes that the primary incident referenced in the article occurred six years ago on a vessel based in San Francisco and not in Hawai'i and that no prosecutions or convictions for human trafficking or forced labor were ever secured in the case or in the Hawai'i fishing industry.

The HLA has, nonetheless, responded to the AP story by imposing a universal crew contract for all foreign crews. It has also conducted a rapid assessment survey involving 207 of 622 foreign crewmembers on 105 of the 144 Hawai'i longline vessels to better understand the contracting practices and work experience. HLA has also prepared a code of conduct for socially responsible fisheries to inform vessel owners and operators, manning agencies and others. Additionally, HLA has received guidance from the US Department of Labor and has communicated with the US Customs and Border Protection (CBP).

HLA says foreign crews are allowed off the boats but must remain in the port area because they do not hold visas to enter the country. Passports of the crew are held by the vessel owners/captains not as an indicator of forced labor, as the AP story implied, but because that is required by CBP.

HLA has reached out and gained the support of a variety of community groups and agencies concerned about the welfare of the foreign crews, including the Seafarer's Ministry, the Philippine Consulate, the Indonesian Community Group in Hawai'i, the Honorary Consul for Kiribati in Honolulu, the Pacific Gateway Center and the Pacific Survivor Center.

In November, Jusuf Kalla, vice president of Indonesia, visited the port of Honolulu to check on the welfare of the Indonesian crew. He said he was satisfied with the working conditions and expressed the importance of these employment opportunities and remittances to the crew, their families and communities and the nation. His only concern was the lack of visas to allow the crew to fly into Honolulu. Currently, crewmembers fly in to foreign ports or American Samoa and are picked up by the vessels.

At its 168th meeting in Honolulu in October, the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council encouraged the National Marine Fisheries Service to request that the law and/or policy that prohibits foreign fishing crew from flying into Hawai'i be reviewed. Allowing foreign crew to fly into Honolulu could facilitate monitoring and documentation by the Department of Homeland Security and eliminate impacts to Hawai'i longline vessels from picking up contracted foreign crew in distant ports.

Lawsuit Filed to Stop Military in CNMI

Environmental and cultural preservation groups have filed a lawsuit to stop the US military's decision to conduct live-fire training on the islands of Tinian and Pagan in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). The groups also formally opposed the permanent relocation of thousands of US Marines to Guam.

The lawsuit filed July 27, 2016, in Saipan names the US Department of Navy, the Navy Secretary, the US Department of Defense and the Defense Secretary as defendants. The plaintiffs are Guardians of Gani, Center for Biological Diversity, Pagan Watch and Earthjustice, representing the Tinian Women's Association.

The plaintiffs have asked the court to enter a declaratory judgment that the defendants have violated and are violating the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Administrative Procedures Act by adopting and relying on the legally deficient Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and the Supplemental EIS to issue records of decision regarding the relocation of Marines from Okinawa to the Mariana Islands. They further asked the court to vacate and set aside the 2010 and 2015 Records of Decision regarding the relocation of Marines from Okinawa to the Mariana Islands.

Source: www.cnmijointmilitarytrainingeis.com/about

In a press statement, Earthjustice described the proposed training as "intense and destructive." It would include the use of "artillery, mortars, rockets, amphibious assaults, attack helicopters and warplanes and, on Pagan, ship-to-shore naval bombardment."

The CNMI government also issued a statement indicating that some of the allegations in the lawsuit mirror concerns it has raised over the past several years.

First, there is the question of whether the live-fire training proposed under the Guam Relocation Project and Combined Joint Military Training (CJMT) Project are consistent with the Covenant between the United States and the CNMI. That is one of the topics under discussion in the ongoing Section 902 consultations between the two governments.

A second concern is the cumulative effects of ongoing and proposed Defense Department activities in the archipelago, including the Guam Relocation Project, the Divert Project, the Mariana Islands Training and Testing Project, and the CJMT Project. The CNMI government said it generally agrees with the portions of the complaint alleging that these cumulative effects have never been properly disclosed, studied or mitigated. It notes that the Governor's office had raised the same concern in its comments on the Draft EIS.

According to the CNMI government, all of these proposals share a common geography and a common timing and will impact the same economic and environmental resources. They appear to be part of a common Department of Defense (DoD) development plan. The CNMI government said the four proposals should have been presented to

the people of the CNMI at the same time, so their cumulative effects would be properly considered and subject to meaningful public input as is required under NEPA.

At its 168th meeting in October 2016, the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council discussed the DoD activities in the Mariana Archipelago. The Council subsequently asked the DoD to explore the possibility of "splitting" usage at Farallon de Medinilla similar to W-517 in Guam, whereby fishing can occur in unused portions of the training area. The Council also recommended that notice of upcoming military training activities in the Mariana Archipelago be broadcast as Notices to Mariners on VHF channel 2 to provide greater outreach to fishermen.

Third Company Eyes O'ahu Offshore Energy Leases

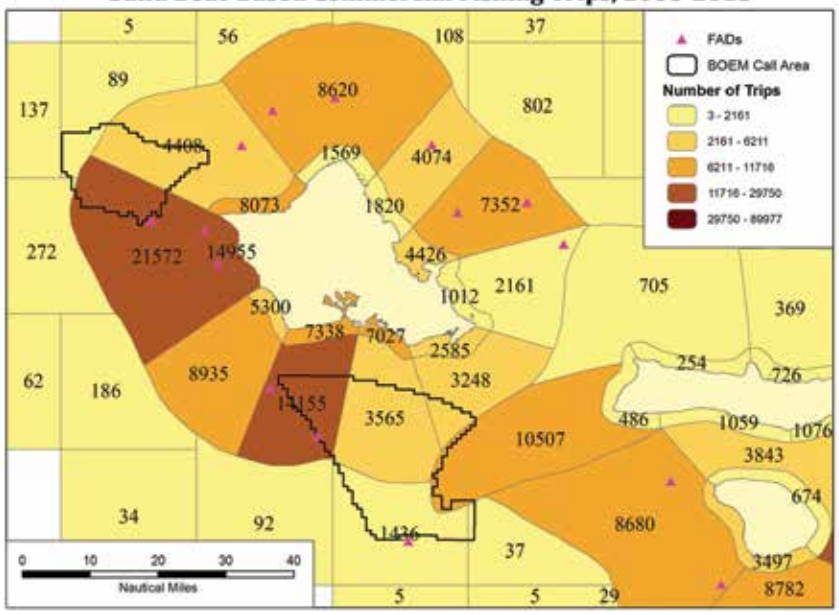
Three companies have responded to a recent call for information from the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) on two potential commercial wind lease areas offshore of O'ahu. BOEM made the call after receiving unsolicited lease requests from AW Hawaii Wind (AHW) and Progression Hawaii Offshore Wind. In response to the call, Progression Hawaii Offshore Wind renewed its previous lease request; AWH renewed its two requests; and a third company, Statoil Wind US expressed interest in both the south and northwestern proposed wind lease areas.

The proposed lease areas overlap the two most highly used fishing areas off O'ahu for State of Hawai'i commercial license holders. Fishermen are concerned about potential impacts of the proposed developments on fishing.

The impacts of the proposed wind turbines and their submerged floating platforms on the environment are also of great concern. Due to their size, the structures may behave more like artificial reefs than fish aggregation devices. The turbines and transmission cables may impact fish migration patterns, fish-finding birds and benthic habitat.

To support environmental impact review for the construction and operation of offshore wind or other renewable energy projects, BOEM and the NOAA National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) in September published the "Marine Biogeographic Assessment of the Main Hawaiian Islands." The report presents an overview of the physical environment, benthic habitats and corals, fishes, sea turtles, marine mammals and seabirds of the proposed lease areas. An interactive map that complements the report depicts marine biogeographic patterns around the islands. The report and its products provide BOEM and other federal and State of Hawai'i management agencies with current and comprehensive information on ecosystems of the main Hawaiian Islands. They can be found at https://coastalscience.noaa.gov/projects/detail.aspx?key=163.

The Council encourages local fishermen to stay involved throughout the leasing process. If you have fishery-related questions or comments about the proposed leases, contact Rebecca Walker at the Council office at rebecca.walker@wpcouncil.org or (808) 522-6040.



Number of boat-based commercial fishing trips per statistical grid area around Oahu for the years 2006-2015. Nonconfidential data are shown. Data are considered confidential when fewer than three records by fishing method per area per year exist. Commercial license holders often fish in the same area using different gears during a trip, therefore, this generates a separate trip count for each gear.

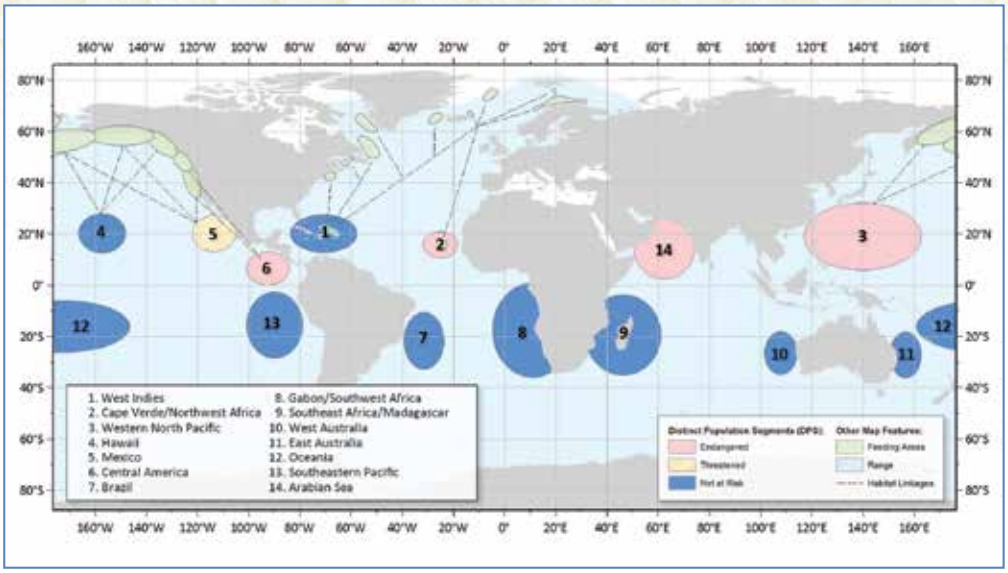
Marianas Marine Monument Plan Still Not Done

According to the National Marine Fisheries Service's Pacific Islands Regional Administrator Michael Tosatto, work is still underway to complete a final draft of the Marianas Trench Marine National Monument (MNM) plan with draft regulations. Tosatto said he hoped the plan would be finished soon since the submerged lands from 0 to 3 miles from shore in the Islands Unit of the monument are in the process of being transferred to the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI).

"I don't understand the difficulty in developing a management plan over an area where basically nothing is allowed to take place," said John Gourley, CNMI vice chair on the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, upon hearing news that work is still ongoing to finalize the MNM management plan. "After seven years, I'm sure this plan will be a doozy."

According to Presidential Proclamation 8335 announced on Jan. 6, 2009, which established the Marianas Trench MNM, "The Secretaries of the Interior and Commerce shall, within 2 years of the date of this proclamation, prepare management plans within their respective authorities and promulgate implementing regulations that address any further specific actions necessary for the proper care and management of the objects identified in this proclamation."

Gourley has asked that information be provided from the US Coast Guard on the hours of enforcement effort by year for the marine national monuments in the Western Pacific Region and from the USFWS about the number of employees and their positions for each of the monuments. The MNMs are located in American Samoa (Rose Atoll), Hawai'i (Papahanaumokuakea) and the Pacific Remote Island Areas (Pacific Remote Islands) as well as CNMI (Marianas Trench).



What Does ESA Recovery Mean?

On Sept. 8, 2016, Hawai'i's humpback whales were removed from the list of endangered and threatened species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The delisting was prompted by separate petitions in 2012 from the Hawai'i Fishermen's Alliance for Conservation and Tradition and from the State of Alaska. The National Marine Fisheries Service subsequently conducted a status review of the global humpback whale population and issued a proposed rule in 2015 to designate 14 distinct population segments (DPSs) and to remove 10 DPSs from the ESA. The final rule removed nine of the 14 DPSs and retained four DPSs as endangered. The Western North Pacific DPS, including Guam and the CNMI, will continued to be listed as endangered. All southern hemisphere DPSs, including the Oceania DPS that includes American Samoa, were removed from the ESA.

The goal of the ESA is to recover species to the point that they no longer need the "intensive care unit" protection of a federal statute. The humpback whale, the Eastern population of Steller sea lions and the Eastern North Pacific population of gray whales are the only three marine species to be declared recovered since ESA came into effect in 1973.

Recovery under the ESA was intended to return management of delisted species to the applicable state and territorial agencies. In reality, protections for humpback whales will remain under federal control through the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA). The humpback whale vessel approach rules have already been shifted from the ESA umbrella to the MMPA and will continue to be in effect.

From the perspective of fishery management, the de-listing under ESA removes the administrative burden of required section 7 consultations. However, that change will be subtle because fisheries in Hawai'i and elsewhere in the Pacific Islands have little to no interactions with the species.

As we celebrate the recovery of Hawai'i humpback whale population and the removal of the first marine species in our Council region from the ESA list, it is worth pausing to consider what the future holds. Will we see more marine species removed from the ESA as populations recover or will this occur only for species, like the humpback whale, that are federally protected under other authorities? Will management of any recovered species return to local governments?

Workshop Identifies Need for False Killer Whale Research

In mid-October, staff of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council participated in the Recovery Planning Threats Workshop for the Main Hawaiian Islands (MHI) Insular False Killer Whales convened by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Pacific Islands Regional Office (PIRO). MHI insular false killer whales were listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) as a distinct population segment (DPS) in 2012. While false killer whales as a species can be found in all tropical and temperate oceans around the world, the MHI insular population was determined by NMFS to be largely separated from other false killer whale populations and includes about 150 individuals.

The workshop aimed to identify potential recovery actions to address threats thought to be impacting the population, including non-longline commercial fisheries interactions, nutritional issues (e.g., prey competition with fisheries), noise and contaminants. Through presentations and discussions, workshop participants identified numerous uncertainties and unknowns, including the basic characteristics of threats and their impacts on the false killer whale population, as well as fundamental demographic data of the population (including the current population trend). Most of the potential recovery actions identified were related to research and monitoring, based on the recognition that management action cannot be taken without proper characterization of the threats.

The workshop was held in lieu of convening a Recovery Team. NMFS will develop a draft recovery plan based on input from the workshop. NMFS anticipates the draft plan will be available for public review and input in 2017 and the final recovery plan completed in 2018, followed by its implementation.

Rare Events Bycatch Workshop

Sea turtle interactions in the Hawai'i-based longline fishery are generally considered rare events, with less than a handful to no interactions observed annually for some species. At the same time, the number of interactions observed from year to year can vary, making it important to tease out the difference between variability that is expected from normal conditions and actual changes from the expected level.

Natural resource managers and scientists attending the Rare Events Bycatch Workshop convened by the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council on Oct. 18 to 20, 2016, in Honolulu, focused on this very issue. They reviewed past methods used to predict anticipated level of interactions as well as novel approaches being developed in other industry sectors such as wind power, oil and gas. They also discussed how model-based predictions are applied in the management context. Discussions underscored how different sides of management (i.e., fisheries under the Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Conservation and Management Act and protected species under the Endangered Species Act) approach this question with seemingly contrasting objectives.

One option discussed was to look at interactions on a longer-term horizon than one to three years, which would help smooth out the inter-annual variability in the observed interactions. Tools being developed in other industry sectors may also help provide timely analysis and consideration of interaction data.

The full workshop report will be presented at the March 2017 meetings of the Council and its Scientific and Statistical Committee.

Offshore Aquaculture

Feds Take Steps to Manage Growing Industry

The Kona kampachi (Almaco jack or Seriola rivoliana) aquaculture operation off Kailua-Kona, island of Hawai'i , was permitted under the Special Coral Reef Ecosystem Fishing Permit. Photo (circa 2005) courtesy of the Hawaii Aquaculture Development Program.

In September and October 2016, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), in coordination with the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council, held a series of public meetings regarding NMFS's proposed establishment of a Pacific Islands Region aquaculture management program and development of a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) to review its potential impact to the fishery ecosystem.

Currently, aquaculture operations in the Western Pacific Region do not require a permit in federal waters with the exception of some coral reef ecosystem species, which require a Special Coral Reef Ecosystem Fishing Permit. Without a management program, NMFS is concerned that future aquaculture operations would develop in an ad hoc manner without federal review or control.

The Council has long recognized the role aquaculture has played in the Pacific Islands and its increasing use in the world. In 2007, the Council developed an aquaculture policy to encourage aquaculture operations to adhere to guidelines that protect the ecosystem and wild capture fisheries. Following the approval by the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (GFMC) on a Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Aquaculture, inquiries to expand aquaculture into the federal waters in the Western Pacific Region increased. In 2010, the Council approved an amendment to its Fishery Ecosystem Plans (FEPs) to allow for permitting and reporting for aquaculture in the region, which was forwarded to NMFS for review. Over the past six-years, the amendment was stalled while NMFS awaited the National Aquaculture Policy as well as the outcome of the GFMC's FMP.

The Council has long recognized the role aquaculture has played in the Pacific Islands and its increasing use in the world.

During this time, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) was interested in determining the feasibility and logistics of aquaculture in its waters. The Council worked with the Northern Marianas College to co-sponsor an "Open Ocean Cage Culture Symposium" in Saipan, CNMI, in January 2011 and provided an expert panel on open ocean aquaculture. The result of the symposium showed that CNMI has many steps to take before it can begin offshore aquaculture operations.

The recent decision by NMFS to develop a PEIS to review any potential impact of an aquaculture program in the region to the fishery ecosystems is a welcome move forward. Upon the completion of the PEIS, the Council will review the environmental impacts of the proposed management program and may decide to implement further regulations beyond the permitting and reporting requirements it proposed in 2010.

For more information on aquaculture in the Pacific Islands Region and the PEIS, visit www.fpir.noaa.gov/SFD/SFD_aq_pacific_islands_peis.html. To view the Council's Aquaculture Policy, go to www.wpcouncil.org/documents/Final%20Council%20Aquaculture%20Policy.pdf.

Documenting the Historic Importance of Bottomfishing in Hawai'i

From left: Bottomfish vessel. Council Advisory Panel member Layne Nakagawa of Maui with bottomfish catch. Deep 7 bottomfish catch is much prized during the Holiday season.

Deep-water hook-and-line fishing is a well-documented part of the fishing history of Hawai'i. Circle hooks made of shell or bone and sennit line were gradually replaced by modern steel hooks and braided line. But the technique used and skill needed to target elusive deep-water snappers have not changed much over the centuries.

Of all the fisheries in the islands, many argue that bottomfishing is one of the hardest techniques to master as it demands very specific knowledge, skill, patience and luck.

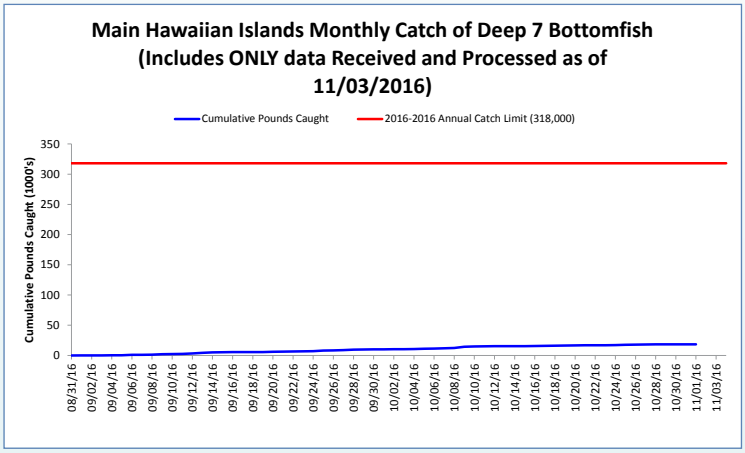
"If someone is not teaching you how to do it, you will probably fail from frustration," says longtime bottomfish fisherman Basil Oshiro. As president of the Maui Fishermen's Cooperative, Oshiro has represented commercial bottomfish fishermen on Maui for decades to negotiate top bottomfish prices with the local seafood buyers. Oshiro is also a longtime advisor to the Council.

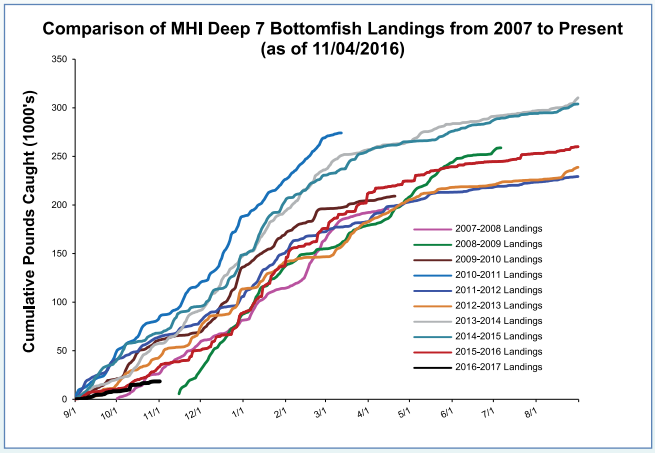
Because the fishery depends on such specific knowledge being transferred from one fisherman to the next, Oshiro says, documenting the fishery's past is really important. So much history and knowledge about the Hawai'i bottomfish fishery has already been lost with the passing of many old-time highliners who used to line the piers at Kewalo Basin on O'ahu and Ma'alaea Harbor on Maui.

Documenting the history of this fishery has been a high priority of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council and its advisory bodies for years. Over the next year, the Council will be supporting a project that looks to do just that. The Hawai'i Bottomfish Oral History Project, funded by a Preserve America Grant, will be administered by the Pacific Islands Fisheries Group in close coordination with and guidance of the Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center and the Council. The goal of the project is to document traditional knowledge and fishing traditions in the fishery and identify changes in the fishing conditions and the fishery's major players and social networks. The project aims to identify longtime bottomfish fishermen throughout the Hawaiian Islands who are willing to participate in one-on-one taped interviews. One of the hopeful project outcomes is information that will improve future stock assessments and management efforts.

You can assist in this project by contacting the Council if you know active bottomfish fishermen who might be interested in sharing their experiences. Contact Mark Mitsuyasu at (808) 522-8220 or mark.mitsuyasu@wpcouncil.org.

Bottomfish Landings Drop in Start of New Fishing Year





The 2016-2017 main Hawaiian Islands Deep-7 bottomfish fishing season began on Sept. 1, 2016, with a total annual quota of 318,000 pounds. Through early November, statewide landings have accumulated at a record low pace.

Ask any of the steady bottomfish fishermen why the landings have fallen off this year and the answer will be clear—weather. This fall has seen a steady blowing of stiff trade winds, which impact the small-boat fishery's ability to target bottomfish. In typical years, trade winds are interrupted by intermittent periods of low winds allowing fishermen opportunities to get on the water and bring bottomfish back to market.

In the first two months since the fishery opened this year, 81 fishermen made 201 trips and landed 18,416 pounds of bottomfish. This represents less than half of what has typically been landed over the same period of time in past years. In the same time period last year, 155 fishermen made 368 trips and landed 37,633 pounds of Deep-7 bottomfish.

Let's hope that the fishermen can get out to bring home the red fish for the traditional new year's celebrations!

Council Chair Edwin Ebisui Jr. with bottomfish catch.

Fishermen Knowledge to Inform Next Bottomfish Stock Assessment

The fifth Hawai'i Bottomfish Data Workshop came to a close this November at the NOAA Pier 38 conference room. Scientists and fishermen walked away with a much better understanding of the fishery and the data that can be used to improve the stock assessment for the main Hawaiian Islands (MHI) Deep-7 bottomfish stock complex.

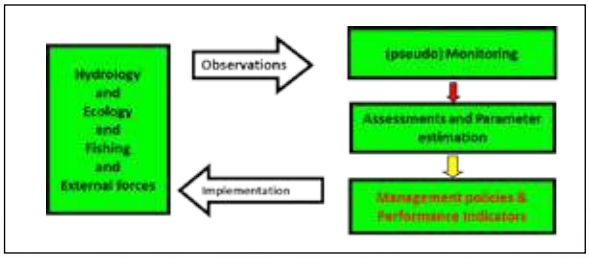
Pacific Island Fisheries Science Center stock assessment staff and Hawai'i bottomfish fishermen discussed the intricacies, nuances and art of bottomfishing in the islands and the complexities and difficulties of trying to incorporate such information into stock assessments.

Fishery scientists will use the knowledge learned as they develop the next assessment of the MHI Deep-7 bottomfish stock complex. The assessment is projected to be released in the fall of 2017. The Deep-7 species include six deep-water snappers and a grouper.

Are Main Hawaiian Islands Bottomfish Fishery Regulations Effective?

The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, in partnership with the National Marine Fishery Service's Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center (PIFSC), is developing an ecosystem model for the main Hawaiian Islands (MHI) through the Pacific Islands Fisheries Research Program (PIFRP). This multi-faceted modeling project includes the coral reef fishery, protected species and, importantly, the MHI Deep-7 bottomfish fishery.

PIFSC's Mariska Weijerman, PhD, is leading the investigation, which will utilize the ATLANTIS model, a strategic, exploratory tool for investigating ecological processes, management policies and broad consequences of alternative scenarios.



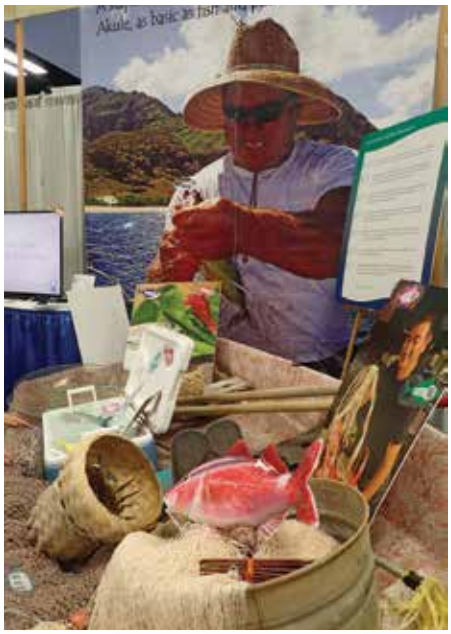
The above conceptual model simulates a one-year cycle of the management strategy evaluation used in the ATLANTIS model. Source: Mariska Weijerman, PIFSC

One facet of the project will evaluate the effectiveness of regulations in the MHI Deep-7 bottomfish fishery. This fishery is highly regulated both federally and by the State of Hawai'i. Bottomfish fishermen operating from 0 to 3 nautical miles (nm) from shore are required to follow the State regulations, including closed season, gear restriction, trip reporting, minimum size limits, non-commercial bag limits, bottomfish vessel ID number requirements and the controversial bottomfish restricted fishing areas. Fishers beyond 3 nm follow the federal regulations, including permit and reporting requirements, gear restrictions, at-sea observer coverage and annual catch limits.

The ATLANTIS model will compare the relative effects of these regulations on a set of biological, ecological and socioeconomic indicators using a management strategy evaluation framework. The results will help fishery managers decide which regulations address the different management objectives and focus resources towards the most effective ones. Hopefully, the project will enhance co-management between the State and the federal agencies and reduce the regulatory layers in this culturally and economically important fishery.

Bridging Conservation and Sustainable Fisheries at the IUCN

The IUCN World Conservation Congress (WCC) held at the Hawai'i Convention Center in September provided an opportunity to showcase Hawai'i and Pacific Island fisheries and their management by the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, which has been at the forefront of sustainable fishery management and protected species conservation for decades. As an IUCN member organization, the Council participated in various capacities throughout the 10-day event dubbed the "Olympics of Conservation."



The Council booth at the IUCN featured conservation aspects of fisheries in the Western Pacific Region. Photo courtesy of Dean Sensui

The Council's exhibit booth featured Hawai'i and Pacific Island fishing practices, cultures and successful management efforts. Following IUCN's Green Congress Guidelines, the Council opted for a paper-low exhibit, utilizing QR codes and display copies of publications linked to the website rather than paper copies. Many WCC participants and kama'aina (Hawai'i-born residents) asked about the sea turtle and seabird conservation measures in the longline fishery, looked through the publications and took pictures of the colorful nearshore fishery display. With the announcement of the Papahanaumokuakea Marine National Monument expansion in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands happening shortly before the WCC, the Council's booth also served as a platform for numerous one-on-one discussions with WCC participants, many of whom supported the expansion but were unfamiliar with the realities on the ground.

The Honolulu fish auction tour offered as part of the official IUCN excursions provided WCC participants with a more in-depth look at Hawai'i's fisheries. The excursion was provided by the Council, National Marine Fisheries Service's Pacific Islands Regional Office, the Hawai'i Seafood Council and Conservation International Hawai'i.

The first half of the WCC was the Forum, during which concurrent sessions of high-level sessions, workshops and various other events took place. Council staff served as a panelist on a community-based conservation workshop and participated in many other events with topics ranging from climate change, blue economy, integrated ocean management, indigenous communities, areas beyond national jurisdiction and sustainable use of resources.

The Council also participated as a voting IUCN member in the Members' Assembly during the second half of the week. Members deliberated and voted on conservation issues of importance, including climate change actions, marine protected areas and conservation in areas beyond national jurisdiction. While IUCN motions are not legally binding, with non-governmental organizations voting alongside governmental agencies, they are intended to set priorities for conservation. Nearly 100 motions were deliberated in session and through an on-line discussion and voting system leading up to the WCC, with all motions passing with large margins of support.

Some motions were not without their share of opposition. For example, the Council and several others opposed the motion to support designation of the 30 percent of the high seas as marine protected areas. However, the motion that received the most heated debate was about closing domestic ivory markets. There was a strong divide between those who believe closing all domestic markets is a crucial step to protecting elephants and those who defend their right to manage and sustainably use stable and increasing populations of elephants to the benefit of their communities. The Council abstained voting on this particular issue given that it is beyond our authority, but the controversy is one that is easily paralleled in the fishery management realm, where conservation and sustainable use of resources are often portrayed as being incompatible.

The Council joined the IUCN and was at the IUCN WCC throughout the 10-day event because it believes that well-managed fisheries and conservation are not only compatible but also complementary. The Council has repeatedly demonstrated that impacts of fisheries on fish stocks and protected species can be reduced and minimized while ensuring the sustainability of fisheries and fishing communities. In the US Western Pacific Region, the ecosystem has culturally and historically been viewed as including both fish and the communities that depend upon them.

IUCN Members' Assembly

Needed Support for Island Councils Identified at the ʻAha Moku Puwalu

Group photo of the Puwalu ʻEiwa, Ka Holomua ʻAna o Ka ʻAha Moku

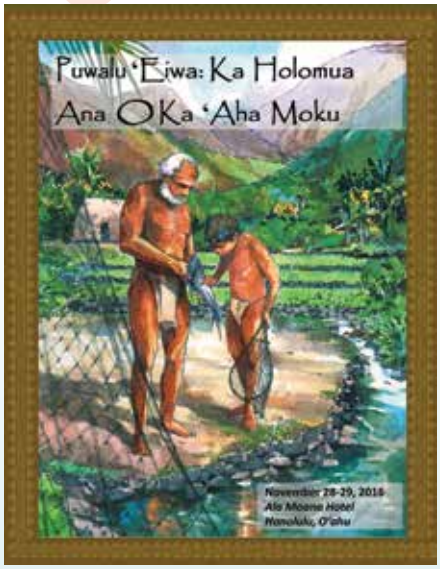
Resolutions to strengthen *ʻaha moku* island councils and place more Native Hawaiian representatives on State of Hawaiʻi boards and commissions were among the primary outcomes of the ninth meeting on the *ʻaha moku* system of natural resource management. Sixty participants from six islands deliberated for two days at the Ke Holomua ʻAna Ka ʻAha Moku Puwalu (Moving the ʻAha Moku Forward Conference) in Honolulu on Nov. 28 and 29, 2016, hosted by the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council.

In the opening remarks, Council Executive Director Kitty M. Simonds provided an overview of the *ʻaha moku* initiative since its beginning 10 years ago with the gathering of the Hoʻohanohano I Na Kupuna (Honor Our Ancestors) Puwalu series, consisting of three meetings in 2006. Five subsequent statewide puwalu were held in 2007, 2010, 2011 and 2014. The accomplishments of the ʻaha moku initiative to date include passage of State of Hawaiʻi legislative bills that established the ʻAha Kiole Advisory Committee to identify the best practices of traditional natural resources governance and that founded the ʻAha Moku Advisory Committee (AMAC) to advise the State of Hawaiʻi Department of Land and Natural Resources and provide annual reports to the Hawaiʻi State Legislature. Also accomplished was the creation of ʻAha Moku island councils on each of the eight main islands, with varying degrees of success.

Simonds said the *ʻaha moku* system has the potential of bringing everyone in Hawaiʻi together, both Native Hawaiian and non-native, to address contemporary use and management of the archipelago's ocean and land resources.

"The State of Hawaiʻi has officially recognized the *ʻaha moku* system as the best practice of traditional resource management," she said. "The *ʻaha moku* system has both the legal and cultural authority to move forward." She added, "We need more. We need an active and functioning *ʻaha moku* system at both the island and the AMAC levels. We need active traditional practitioners and an educational system that supports the teaching of traditional practices."

The Puwalu participants supported the recent adoption of the AMAC rules of practices and procedures and paid tribute to the many kupuna who were part of the initial puwalu and have since passed on: from Niʻihau: Jean Ilei Beniamina; from Kauaʻi: Dadly Bobo Hamm Young, Kalehua Hamm Young and Sharon Pomroy; from Oʻahu: Henry Chang Wo,



Artwork by Oliver Kinney

Ethereda Kahalewai, Kaoi Kaimikaua and Chief Justice William S. Richardson; from Maui: Mele Carroll and William Waiohu; from Lanaʻi: John Basques, and from Moku o Keawe: Ben Hauanio, Gil Kahele, Clement "Junior" Kanuha and Arthur "Aka" Mahi.

A survey of the participants revealed the need for funding and other support to increase awareness of the *ʻaha moku* system to island communities. Puwalu participants identified the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, Hawaii Tourism Authority and the Hawaiʻi State Legislature as potential funding sources.

Timmy Bailey of ʻAha Moku o Maui provided a concluding presentation that outlined the separate roles of the *ʻaha moku* system and the AMAC as provided in Act 288 passed by the State of Hawaiʻi Legislature in 2013.

For more on the *ʻaha moku*, visit www.ahamoku.org.

NOAA Recognizes Indigenous and Local Ecological Knowledge

With indigenous populations comprising 20 to 90 percent of its jurisdiction, depending on island area, the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council has long recognized the importance of traditional knowledge, practices and rights. Its effort to mainstream these is beginning to bear fruit.

On Oct. 18, 2016, the Council's indigenous coordinator, Charles Kaʻaiʻai, was an invited presenter to the Ecosystem Science and Management Working Group of the NOAA Scientific Advisory Board meeting in Honolulu. He, Kelson "Mac" Poepoe and Kehau Springer were tasked with discussing indigenous and local ecological knowledge at the meeting. Kaʻaiʻai provided his perspective on the access and integration of indigenous and local ecological knowledge in the Council's fishery ecosystem plans. He also covered local initiatives that affect local legislation as well as the Council's work with communities, municipal organizations and territorial agencies.

Guam Project Aims to Collect Better Spearfishing Data

Creel surveys on Guam currently are not specifically targeted to spear fishing, which presents a problem as the usual method of random selection sites is ill-suited to this fishery whose fishing grounds are spatially diverse. The time at which the fishery is normally conducted poses another challenge. Both of these reasons argue for a specialized data collection system for the spear fishery.

With an estimated population of 159,358 people, Guam holds the potential of developing a database of spear fishers from which spearfishing information could be collected. As a starting point for such a database, the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council will be working with the Marianas Underwater Fishing Federation (MUFF), the largest spearfishing club in the territory. MUFF hosts local events throughout the year, participates in annual International Pacific Spearfishing Championships and the quadrennial Micronesian Games. The members are acquainted with the majority of the non-commercial spear fishermen in various communities. In the near future, the Council will introduce the project to the club to generate a list of contacts of their members and spear fishermen outside the club with whom they are acquainted.

The Council will also utilize participant lists from spearfishing tournaments as well as roving surveys to intercept spear fishermen from known ports and known fishing areas to introduce the project and encourage them to join the data collection program. Ultimately, this project proposes to explore multiple ways of capturing data on the spear fishery using a combined self-reporting and phone inquiry method via a registry and a targeted creel survey. The project will also include a voluntary logbook component for reporting catches. Workshops will be held on the logbook reporting system.

Aside from the routine interaction with the fishers, the project will develop outreach materials in the form of brochures and flyers and will reprint existing fish posters to assist fishers in fish identification. Included in the outreach information will be reporting requirements, past data results, how data are used in management actions and sustainable fishing practices. In collaboration with Guam Division of Aquatics and Wildlife Resources, radio advertisements will be aired locally to promote fishery data collection and the need for fishermen to work with data collectors. The use of social media will also be explored to promote this campaign.

The Marianas Underwater Fishing Federation, the largest spear fishing organization on Guam, offers an avenue for making initial inroads to the territory's spear fishing community.

Guam Department of Aquatics Wildlife Resource staff record catch data from spear fishermen.

168th Council Meeting Actions

The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, during its 168th meeting Oct. 14-17, 2016, in Honolulu recommended that the longline-caught bigeye tuna limits remain at 2,000 metric tons (mt) per US Pacific territory for 2017. Pending approval by the Secretary of Commerce, the Territories of American Samoa, Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Marina Islands (CNMI) are authorized to allocate up to 1,000 mt of their limit to US fishermen through specified fishing agreements as authorized under Amendment 7 of the Pelagic Fishery Ecosystem Plan for the Western Pacific Region. The amendment, which has been in place since 2014, requires that the territory longline-caught bigeye tuna limits be reviewed and recommended on an annual basis.

Transference of a portion of their quota provides the territory with funding for fisheries development projects in their respective Marine Conservation Plans. These plans are developed by the respective governors, in consultation with the Council and approved by the Commerce Secretary.

Besides actions covered elsewhere in this newsletter, the Council recommended that NMFS evaluate the status of giant clam populations across their geographic range and not just in the US Pacific Islands if it determines that the petition to list giant clams under the Endangered Species Act may be warranted.

The Council also voted to work with the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands' Department of Public Safety to determine funding options to support the deployment of navigational buoys at the channels in Saipan, Tinian and Rota.

For more on the meeting, go to www.wpcouncil.org/category/past-council-and-advisory-body-meetings/.

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Telephone: (808) 522-8220
Fax: (808) 522-8226
info.wpcouncil@noaa.gov

CHAIR
Edwin Ebisui Jr.

VICE CHAIRS
Michael Duenas - Guam
McGrew Rice - Hawaii
John Gourley - CNMI
Christinna Lutu Sanchez - American Samoa

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Kitty M. Simonds

In October, NMFS provided Council members with a tour of NOAA's Daniel K. Inouye Regional Center at Ford Island. Photo credit: Kenda Tomita.

2018 US Pacific Territories Capacity-Building Scholarship Applications Being Accepted

The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council and its Education Committee members are pleased to announce the availability of up to three scholarships for academic years 2017-2018. These scholarships support the aspiration to build the capacity of American Samoa, Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) to effectively manage their fisheries and related resources through the employment of their own people.

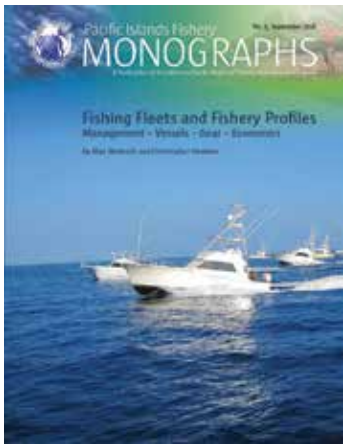
The US Pacific Territories Capacity-Building Scholarships may be used for the following:

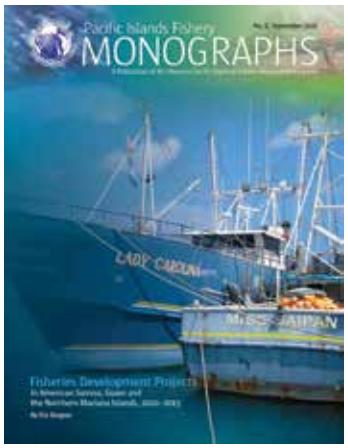
1) Completion of the junior and senior years to obtain a BA or BS in Marine Science at the University of Hawai`i at Hilo or a BS in Oceanography with a concentration in Fisheries Science at the Hawaii Pacific University; or 2) Completion of a MS or PhD in Marine Biology at the Hawai`i Institute of Marine Biology, a MS in Marine Science at Hawaii Pacific University, a MS in Tropical Conservation Biology and Environmental Science at the University of Hawai`i at Hilo or a MS in Biology at the University of Guam.

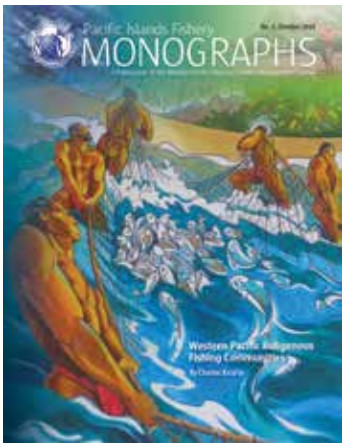
Applicants must be a US citizen or national with strong ties to American Samoa, Guam or the CNMI; have been accepted to one of the above programs for the 2017-2018 academic year; have demonstrated interest and/or previous work/involvement with fisheries, coral reef conservation or related fields; and commit to being an employee or fellow for one year for each scholarship year with the American Samoa Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources, Guam Division of Aquatic and Wildlife Resources or the CNMI Division of Fish and Wildlife after graduation. Those who do not fulfill this commitment will be required to pay back the scholarship amount that has been provided. Undergraduate applicants must also have successfully completed freshman and sophomore years of college with a grade point average of 3.0 and agree to undertake a paid summer internship with the Council.

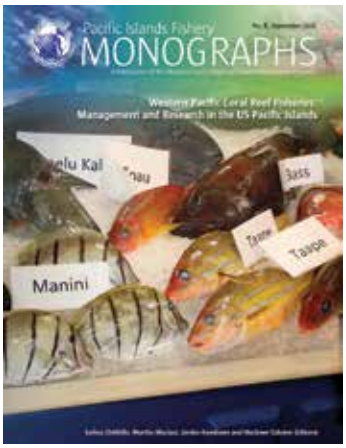
Funding for 2018-2019 will be provided based on proof of continued progress in the college program and maintenance of a 3.0 grade point average.

The application deadline is Feb. 28, 2017. For details, go to www.wpcouncil.org or email info.wpcouncil@noaa.gov.









New Outreach Materials

In September and October, the Council produced four new publications in its Pacific Islands Fishery Monographs series. The latest editions include Fishing Fleets and Fishery Profiles by Max Markrich and Christopher Hawkins; Fisheries Development Projects in American Samoa, Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands, 2010-2015 by Eric Kingma; Western Pacific Indigenous Fishing Communities by Charles Ka'ai'ai; and Western Pacific Coral Reef Fisheries: Management and Research in the US Pacific Islands by Joshua DeMello. Copies can be found online at www.wpcouncil.org/fishery-plans-policies-reports/monographs/.

The Council's 2017 traditional lunar calendars will be available on the Councils website at www.wpcouncil.org/education-and-outreach/lunar-calendars.

Postcards

from the Western Pacific Region

1. Spotted at Waimanalo Beach and shared on FaceBook, the Council-sponsored Fishermen Code of Conduct in Hawaiian and English. The code was also recently erected on the grounds of the Sheraton Ka'anapali on Maui.

2 & 3. After 14 years of not placing in the Guam Marianas International Fishing Derby due to tough competition, James and Ken Borja aboard the STONEFISH brought in the winning marlin this year. The Borjas are members of the Council's Guam Advisory Panel.

4. Council Executive Director Kitty Simonds with inaugural Council members Frank Goto (left) and Peter Fithian at a 40-year celebration of the Council and the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

5. Among several outgoing SSC members this October were Judith Amesbury (Guam), Minling Pan (NMFS) and Molly Lutcavage (University of Massachusetts).

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Council Family Updates

Council Officers: At its 168th meeting in October, the Council appointed the following officer for 2017: **Edwin Ebisui Jr.**, chair; **Christinna Lutu-Sanchez**, vice chair American Samoa; **John Gourley**, vice chair CNMI; **Michael Duenas**, vice chair Guam; and **McGrew Rice**, vice chair Hawai'i.

Scientific and Statistical Committee: At its 168th meeting, the Council approved the SSC memberships of **Graham Pilling,** PhD, Secretariat of the Pacific Community, and **Kurt Schaefer,** PhD, Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission.

Graham Pilling

Kurt Schaefer

Advisory Panel: New members include **Tom Camacho** (Guam AP), **Kelvin Char** (Hawai'i AP alternate) and **Shyla Moon** (Hawai'i AP).

Fishing Industry Advisory Committee: **Baron Miho** and **Shane Yoshimoto** have joined the FIAC as new members from Hawai'i.

Bella, Fly Me There and Back Again!

Bella Hirayama with (from left) former Council staff Tony Beeching (now with the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission in the Federated States of Micronesia) and outgoing SSC Chair Charles Daxboeck (from French Polynesia).

The area of jurisdiction for the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council spans 1.5 million square nautical miles (or 2.2 million statute miles) of the US exclusive economic zone in the Western Pacific Region, which does not include the high seas in-between the non-contiguous archipelagos and remote islands of the region. All of the meetings of the Council, its Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) and other advisory bodies require significant amounts of travel logistics to support travelers. While most of the Council staff is concerned with assembling agendas and documents, staff member Bella Hirayama is the person responsible for making sure travelers get from A to B and back again.

More than 60 percent of the voting Council members and the SSC come from islands other than O'ahu, and most are from outside the State of Hawai'i. Put simply, without Bella's guiding hand there would be no meetings of the Council and its advisory bodies. In 2015 alone, the Council supported travel for about 245 people to attend the Council meetings, Council advisory bodies and various other meetings such as the Council Coordination Committee and international fishery management meetings for the both the Western and Central Pacific and the Eastern Pacific Oceans.

In addition, the difficulty of hosting foreign personnel at federal facilities, including NOAA Fisheries, is such that the Council is occasionally asked to make our meeting facilities available for other agencies and organizations. While the travel components of these meetings are outside the Council's responsibility, it often falls to Bella and colleagues to identify and reserve accommodation rooms for the travelers.

Some may say that meetings these days can be accomplished through teleconference or a web-based program such as GotoMeeting or Webex. While this is true, it is no substitute for the inter-personal communication of a face-to-face meeting. Moreover, the Council needs to travel to different locales in its jurisdiction to experience a true sense of place and to be able to discuss with fishermen and other interested parties the issues that concern them. Sometimes people are shy of speaking in public but will unburden themselves on the margins of a meeting. These contacts are invaluable to staff for understanding the dynamics of fisheries in a particular place.

For example, the shifting demography of Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) has been brought into stark relief through the mass movements of people. Increasing numbers of Micronesians from other islands (primarily Chuuk) have moved to Guam with small scale fishing vessels used to fish for both pelagic and coral reef species. This puts them in direct competition with local Guam fishermen leading to increasing tensions between the two communities. In the CNMI, one can only appreciate the scale of the Chinese expansion into the territory by witnessing the casino and hotels under construction there. The new hotels will increase the demand for fish, which may put additional pressures on coastal fish stock in particular.

Whatever the future holds for the Council, travel from Hawai'i to meetings in the other islands of the Western Pacific Region and to the mainland will remain a constant core activity. Bella will continue to ensure that Council staff and advisors get there and back again.

Recipe

Deconstructed Sushi Rolls with Cauliflower Rice

By Council Technical Assistant Loren Bullard

Serves 2 • Preparation time 15-20 minutes

Ingredients

- 1 lb of your favorite poke (raw fish cut in cubes)
- ½ head of cauliflower
- 2 The Laughing Cow Swiss Garlic and Herb Cheese Wedges
- 1 avocado
- 1 small Japanese cucumber
- 2 nori (seaweed) sheets

Equipment

- Veggie steamer basket
- Food processor (optional)
- Sauce pan
- Scissors

Method

Cut cauliflower into bite-sized florets. Place in a vegetable steamer basket and then into a sauce pan containing 1 inch of water. Steam the cauliflower until it is soft enough to poke with a fork but still slightly firm, about 8 to 10 minutes. Place steamed cauliflower in a food processor with The Laughing Cow Cheese Wedges. Pulse food processor until the cauliflower is rice like. (If you do not have a food processor, you can mash the cauliflower and The Laughing Cow Cheese together with a fork.) Place to the side.

Dice the avocado into small bites. Peel and dice the Japanese cucumber. Use the scissors to cut the two nori sheets into thin ribbons.

Plating

Mix the poke, avocado, cucumber, cauliflower rice and nori ribbons together. Serve.

2017 Council Calendar

Connect with the Council on Social Media

Like us on Facebook (facebook.com/wprfmc)

Follow us on Twitter (@wpcouncil)

Check us out on YouTube (youtube.com/wpcouncil) and Vimeo (vimeo.com/wprfmc)

January

21
Chamorro Lunar Calendar Festival, Hagatna, Guam

February

7-10
Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission extraordinary meeting, La Jolla, Calif.

13-15
Marine Mammal Pacific Scientific Review Group, Honolulu

27-March 1
Councils Coordination Committee, Washington, DC

March

7-9
125th Scientific and Statistical Committee, Honolulu

14-16
Advisory Panel, Honolulu

20-23
169th Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, Honolulu

30-31
Protected Species Advisory Committee, Honolulu

April

3-4
Social Science Planning Committee, Honolulu (tentative)

5-6
Marine Planning and Climate Change Committee, Honolulu

18-19
Archipelagic Fishery Ecosystem Plan Team Plan Team, Honolulu (tentative)

20-21
Fishery Data Collection and Research Committee, Honolulu (tentative)

Future Newsletter by Electronic Distribution Only Unless Council Is Notified

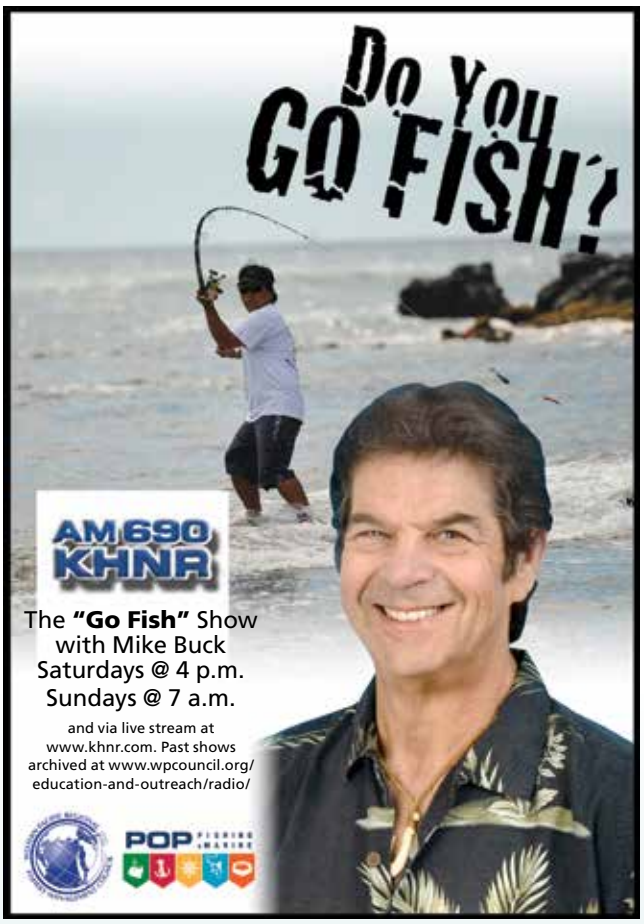
The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council's quarterly newsletter, *Pacific Islands Fishery News*, has been published since 1984. In 2014, the Council began distributing the newsletter electronically as well as by postal mail. Today, more than a thousand individuals receive the newsletter electronically and about 5,000 receive it by postal mail.

For the sake of efficiency among other reasons, the Council will be starting in 2017 to distribute the newsletter electronically only unless a hard copy by postal mail is specifically requested.

To ensure that your receipt of the newsletter is uninterrupted, sign up to receive the newsletter electronically at www.wpcouncil.org/.

If you wish to continue to receive or begin receiving the newsletter in the mail, you need to notify the Council by Jan. 30, 2017, by emailing info@wpcouncil.org or sending a written notification to the Council by fax (808) 522-8226 or via the post at Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, 1164 Bishop St., Suite 1400, Honolulu, HI 96813. **If you do not send the Council a notification with your name and mailing address, your entry to receive a printed copy by postal mail will be deleted from the mailing database.**

If you have any questions or comments or need assistance, please contact Loren Bullard at loren.bullard@wpcouncil.org or call (808) 522-8220.



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