



182nd Meeting of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council

June 23-25, 2020
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HAWAII ARCHIPELAGO COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES REPORT

1. NMFS Scientist and Fishermen Exchange Meeting

The theme of the NMFS Scientist and Fishermen Exchange (SAFE) meeting was how COVID-19 affected fisheries activities and how various organizations/agencies are responding.

The Hawaii Marine Recreational Fishing Survey (HMRFS) Program and the State of Hawaii Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR) have been conducting roving effort surveys around the Hawaiian Islands. Surveyors drive down a stretch of coastline and count the number of fishers, gear types, trailers, etc. They focused on shoreline fishers and to get an estimate of fishing effort. Rod and reel was the most common gear type seen. They found that all of the islands had an increase in fishing pressure except Molokai.

The Pacific Island Fishery Science Center (PIFSC) is working on an oral history project to capture voices from Hawaii's fishermen. The goal of this project is to capture how COVID-19 has changed the fishery, and understand overall themes of different fishing times and perspectives. They plan to repeat this in six months to get a snapshot of the progression of the fishery.

With the COVID situation, local food banks have been able to create contracts with more local farmers and fishers. They were able to go from 2 to 14 contracts with local farmers and fishers. The Hawaii Longline Association is working on a deal with the DOE to strengthen their local chain and work on a contract to provide local products for public school system.

Local fishermen are also participating in providing fish to friends, families, and food distribution networks. A local effort by fishermen is cataloging this information in a Facebook group and providing regular updates (*see 2. Hawaii Fishers Feeding Families below*).

2. Hawaii Fishers Feeding Families

Hawaii Fishers Feeding Families is a Facebook Group created for fishers by fishers. It was created to encourage the fishing community to proudly share their catch during the COVID-19 pandemic to illustrate their food contributions to their families, loved ones, and community. By doing so, fishers can begin to paint a picture answering the critical question that no one has an answer to. How many pounds of seafood are being locally produced (harvested) by non-commercial fishers and how does that contribute to local food security? In catastrophes, the people of Hawaii need to be able to survive. Our resilience as a state depends on our ability to adapt to the situation and prosper, but in order to do so; we need to base our decision-making on the basic facts. How much food can we produce locally to feed our people? To make the

calculation, we have the data for our local agriculture and local commercial seafood, but what about the seafood that is caught by the hundreds of thousands of fishers that are spearing, netting, and hooking fish every day?

The group is public and open to all, as is the stories and information. It was informed and created by a diversity of fishers and will organically change over time as the group grows. The success of the page depends on the members who share the page and post their catch. Group members are asked to provide the estimated weight of catch as well as the number of people that it fed. The posts are being analyzed by students from the Mid-Pacific Exploratory to summarize the data by island, pounds of catch, and people fed. While the group is mainly for non-commercial fishers to provide an idea of catch, some commercial fishers have provided information on fish that were donated to different organizations.

Reports on the total weight caught and how many people it fed is calculated and reported to the group regularly. Between April 15 and May 7, 2020, fishers posted about 4,625 lbs. of fish that helped to feed 8,600 people during the pandemic. In a breakdown by island, Oahu had the most weight caught (3,494 lbs.) and most people fed (7,895), followed by Molokai (340 lbs., 280 people), Hawaii (323 lbs., 196 people), Kauai (149 lbs., 93 people), and Maui (142 lbs., 74 people). The results are representative of the members in the group rather than the potential actual catch and sharing. The group has nearly 1,400 members and has seen almost 400 posts, 1,600 comments, and 16,000 reactions in the 50 days that this group has been active (as of June 4, 2020). Fishers continue to post their catch and provide information with popular posting times being in the overnight hours and on weekends.

3. Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve Advisory Council

When the NWHI Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve was established in December 2000, the Executive Order signed by President Clinton directed the establishment of a Reserve Advisory Council (RAC), in accordance with the National Marine Sanctuaries Act. The role of this council was to prepare the CRE Reserve to become a National Marine Sanctuary. With the designation and overlay of a Marine National Monument, that action has been delayed indefinitely.

Amongst the RAC's discussion items was the Promoting American Seafood Competitiveness and Economic Growth Executive Order (EO). Initially, the RAC wanted to respond to the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council's (Council) request to President Trump to remove monument fishing prohibitions. After hearing the response from the Council, the RAC decided to delay taking action until its next meeting. There was a clear consensus that they were in support of keeping the monument closed to fisheries and decided to wait and see what other regulations the Council might propose for removal.

4. Non-Commercial Species Working Group

Hawaii Fishermen's Alliance for Conservation and Tradition's intent for the Non-commercial Data Collection Project is to secure survey certification from MRIP to ensure the collected data "be treated as the best scientific information available for use in stock assessments and management actions." This working group is developing a survey instrument and pilot test criteria to fulfill the certification and implementation process. This project is focused on improving non-commercial catch and effort data in addition to the State of Hawaii Division of

Aquatic Resources and the Pacific Island Fishery Science Center's Access Point Angler Intercept Survey and Fishery Effort Survey respectively.

5. Aha Moku Nominees Hearing

The Committee on Water and Land decided to defer the nominations for the Aha Moku Advisory Council (AMAC) indefinitely and plan to look further into the AMAC system after they review the testimonies from members of the public who were in opposition to some of the nominees. Senator English suggested looking at abolishing the AMAC in the next session since it failed to meet its function. Senator Kahele stated that they will have to look further into the statutes to better understand how the AMAC can move forward as a functional advisory group.

6. West Hawaii Aquarium Fishery EIS rejected by the BLNR

There was a unanimous 7-0 vote by the State of Hawaii Board of Land and Natural Resources (BLNR) to reject the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed aquarium fishing in West Hawaii on April 23, 2020. The 2,308 page EIS was produced by a group of West Hawaii aquarium fishers and the National Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council. After reviewing the applicant aquarium fishers' proposal and testimony, the BLNR determined that the EIS without meaningful limits on future catch, adequate analysis of climate change, ocean warming and coral bleaching, did not adequately disclose the potential environmental impacts from the issuance of ten fishing permits for West Hawaii.

7. Beaches without tourists

With the current situation of the COVID-19 pandemic that shut down tourism, this provided scientists a great opportunity to study how human activities impact marine life. The Maui Nui Marine Resource Council is currently raising funds for a team of scientists to study this impact at the Molokini Crater. The scientists plan to conduct diver survey of fish and other wildlife. They will install a network of tracking receivers and tag animals with telemetry devices, while vessel activity will be counted using a time-lapse camera. This study builds on previous work by Friedlander's lab in collaboration with the Maui DAR.

There have been scientists studying the status of coral, water quality and fish behavior at Hanauma bay during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through their studies, they found that the fish have been coming in closer to shore and not as scatter as they would be if there were visitors. During this pandemic, they would observe up to two monk seals at a time resting on the beach every week and more sighting of green sea turtles, which is a rare sight before the shutdown.