



**Remarks by Eric K. Kingma, PhD
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**US House Committee on Natural Resources Forum on the
Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act
February 21, 2020
Bishop Museum, Honolulu**

Aloha Representative Case and Representative Huffman, members of the panel, and those in the audience. Mahalo for providing the opportunity to be on the panel and to provide these remarks.

My name is Eric Kingma, and I am the Executive director of the Hawaii Longline Association (HLA). HLA was established in 2000 to advance the interests of the fishermen and related industries involved in the Hawaii longline fishery (deep-set targeting bigeye tuna; shallow-set targeting swordfish). There are currently 150 Hawaii longline permitted vessels fishing, most operating out of Honolulu Harbor.

The Hawaii longline fishery is the largest food producing industry in the State of Hawaii, making it important to local food security. Around 80% of landings stay in Hawaii, with about 20% going to the US mainland markets. Little to no fish are exported to foreign markets. The fishery produces high quality, fresh, ice chilled seafood, responsible for over 80% of US domestic landings of bigeye and yellowfin tuna and 55% of the Nation's domestic supply of swordfish. The ex-vessel landed value of the fishery, which is around \$105 million annually, consistently ranks Honolulu Harbor in the Nation's top ten ports in terms of fisheries economic value.

There is no doubt that in today's world, major fisheries produce commodities, but fish and seafood still have strong cultural linkages for many. Seafood is a healthy food choice and we all know people crazy for poke, locals and visitors alike. In fact, Hawaii residents consume seafood at twice the national average. The fishery provides healthy, sustainable seafood to Hawaii residents that is also culturally valued by Hawaii's diverse community. Adding to the demand is Hawaii's tourism-based economy, with visitors seeking to experience fresh Hawaii fish. Due to this varied interest, the Hawaii longline fishery and associated seafood businesses, restaurants, retail markets, and supply industries together support thousands of direct and indirect jobs. In addition, the fishery supports hundreds of federally funded jobs through NOAA, US Coast Guard, and other federal agencies.

While being a major contributing industry to Hawaii, the fishery is minor compared international fisheries for tuna and billfish operating in the Pacific. For example, the fishery lands less than 2 percent of the total Pacific tuna catch. Because the main target species of the fishery are bigeye tuna and swordfish – highly migratory species with populations dispersed across ocean basins – international management is necessary. While measures developed by the two Pacific tuna RFMOs apply to our

fishery, such as bigeye tuna quotas, most of the RFMO management measures of which our fleet are subject to, were first developed in our fishery under the MSA.

These include:

- daily logbooks
- satellite based vessel monitoring systems
- vessel and gear marking
- protected species mitigation and handling
- high levels of observer coverage (100% in shallow-set fish; 20% in deep-set)
- spatial management areas and prohibited zones

The fishery is transitioning into electronic reporting and video monitoring and supports several federally-funded cooperative research projects annually. An interesting fact about our fishery is that it has disproportionately contributed to research and monitoring as compared to foreign fleets. For example, a search of Google Scholar with terms “tuna longline fishing” reveals around 27,000 articles, half of which involve the Hawaii longline fishery. With regards to at-sea monitoring, for decades the Hawaii fleet produced over 80% of the longline observer data in the Pacific. Only recently have foreign fleets been subject to 5% observer coverage. Due to the extensive monitoring on Hawaii longline vessels and cooperative research history, Hawaii vessels can be viewed as research platforms that are regularly sampling ocean waters, which is important in understanding ecosystem health and climate change impacts.

Because of the MSA and associated federal management framework, the Hawaii longline fishery is highly monitored and comprehensively managed.

Because of the MSA, the United States is a global leader in fisheries management. It is well known that management measures developed in our fishery become international standards. I believe many people seriously involved in US fisheries management including conservation organizations and the fishing industry understand that the MSA is effective. Fishery management under the MSA works because overfishing is not allowed and management measures have to be based on the best scientific information available. The MSA also works because the regional fishery management council system is participatory, deliberative, and adaptive.

In our view, what doesn't work are non-MSA fisheries, but not subject to MSA mandates like environmental, economic, and social impact review, use of best available science, and public review process requirements. Examples non-MSA actions that have unnecessarily harmed the fleet and associated industry are Marine National Monument closures and the 2018 Amendments to the Billfish Prohibition Act. The 2018 amendments, which eliminated the sale of billfish to the US mainland and prohibits export, is estimated to have had a \$20 million impact to Hawaii vessels and seafood businesses.

The recent expansion of Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument was a tough issue here locally, causing division within the local community and between family, friends, and colleagues. Supporters of the monument closures say that there were no economic impacts from the monument designations because catches were maintained or even increased. However, significant impacts have been and continue to be felt to individual vessels that historically know where and when to fish in what

is now monument waters (primarily Johnston Atoll and the EEZ around the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands from 50 nm to 200 nm). Highly migratory species of fish move in and out of areas based on oceanographic conditions, so understanding when they are present or not is key to fishing success.

Currently, only 17 percent of the US EEZ around Hawaii is open to our fleet and nearby Johnston Atoll EEZ waters are fully closed. Johnston Island was an important fishing ground to our fleet. Displacing Hawaii vessels from closer fishing grounds to the high seas, for little to no conservation gains, is not good fisheries management. Negative factors include safety at sea, greater trip costs, longer trip lengths and associated fish quality concerns, and foreign competition. Many of these factors are compounding, which motivates vessels to fish harder and to land more fish. One telling sign is that number of average hooks per set in our fleet has been steadily increasing, which may be an indicator of competitive pressure.

Foreign competition on the high seas is a problem and exacerbated when foreign subsidized vessels compete in the same US markets as our fleet. Hawaii-based longline vessels fish along-side heavily subsidized foreign vessels on the high seas. It is well known to the fishing industry that foreign fleets are not subject to the same comprehensive requirements applicable to the Hawaii fishery. In the Pacific, Asian distant water fishing nations dominate longline fishing, with Japan, Taiwan, Korea and China combining for around 80% of the catch. In fact, Japan just recently transferred 6,000 mt of bigeye quota to China and 2,000 mt bigeye to Korea to fish in the Eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO). The EPO is only 500 nm from Hawaii and representative of 1/3 of Hawaii longline effort. The 8,000 mt of transferred bigeye quota is about the entire annual catch of bigeye tuna in Hawaii longline fishery (combining WCPO and EPO catches). Much of the bigeye longline catch by Asian distant water fleets fishing in the EPO is caught by poorly monitored large scale longline vessels that take 18 month fishing trips, super freeze the catch, and transship it at sea on to carrier vessels, which are also poorly monitored.

Another substantial threat to our fishery outside of the MSA is the emerging international convention for the protection of biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. The major component of the convention is the establishment of high sea protected areas (MPAs). High seas MPAs that restrict fishing for our fleet in combination with Marine National Monument closures, would be devastating for our industry.

Non-MSA fishery actions are often unnecessary because the 10 National Standards and other provisions of MSA make it effective in managing the Nation's fisheries. Some MSA sections could use some updating, but no major overhauls to the MSA's National Fishery Management Program are necessary. There are, however, several general areas where improvements can be made, including the following:

- 1) The MSA needs to prioritize fisheries science including life history, stock assessment, and effects of climate change. Good science facilitates good management, which is needed to effectively manage important fisheries subject to a changing ocean.
- 2) The MSA needs to ensure that fishery dependent monitoring is efficient and prioritize funding for the development of integrated monitoring systems.
- 3) More funding needs to be allocated for gear innovation and cooperative fisheries research. Involving the fishing community to be part of the solution rather than the problem builds trust, collaboration, and innovation.

- 4) The MSA could be a powerful tool employed to improve foreign fisheries. An amended MSA could include potential import restrictions to US seafood markets if foreign fisheries do not demonstrate equivalent US measures. The Marine Mammal Protection Act has a similar provision. Leveling playing field between US vessels and foreign vessels should be a goal of the MSA, which will also improve management of foreign fisheries. Recent research on global fisheries indicates fish stocks subject management and monitoring are largely sustainable, whereas unmanaged fisheries are likely over-exploited. The MSA could be better used to restrict imports of poorly managed fisheries, and using the strength of the US market to drive global fisheries conservation and management.
- 5) The fisheries disaster provision should be amended to include potential impacts from climate change. Hawaii longline fishermen risk their lives to produce high quality food and the fleet is not major contributor greenhouse gas emissions. Loss of access to fisheries resources due to climate change impacts should be considered as criteria for potential fisheries disaster relief funding.
- 6) The MSA could do more to support fishing communities through greater funding for training and education. The Nation needs strong well managed fisheries. Currently, the seafood trade deficit is a threat to national security. In Hawaii, threats to our fishing industry have impacts broader than just economic but socio-cultural as well. Recall that Hawaii's seafood consumption rate is at a minimum twice the national average.
- 7) The MSA could be improved through mandating quicker rule making periods and streamlining the rule making process. In our region, it often takes more than 2 years to implement a new regulation due to the review requirements and consistency with other applicable laws (e.g. National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act, Coastal Zone Management Act, etc.). This goes against good government practice and reduces potential benefits of adaptive management. The MSA should include provisions that reduce the length of time associated with rulemaking.

In summary, the Hawaii longline fishery and its associated benefits are supported by an effective MSA management regime. The MSA does not require major changes; however, updating sections, small changes, and funding prioritization should be considered and not expected to degrade the effectiveness of the Nation's primary fisheries statute.

Mahalo again to Representatives Case and Huffman, other panel members, and public for the opportunity to provide these remarks.