



Report of the Hawaii Fisheries Meeting

Tuesday, October 27, 2020

10:00 a.m. to Noon

1. Welcome and Introductions

Ed Watamura, Council vice Chair, provided the opening remarks and noted the need for collaboration in managing Hawaii's fisheries. He said the end goal is to align management regulations and provide information for fishery science that can be used for management. The objective is to keep Hawaii's fishermen fishing forever and he said he hoped to get an agreement to work together on these issues.

In attendance included Mike Seki (NMFS PIFSC Director), Michael Tosatto (NMFS PIRO Regional Administrator), Brian Nielson (State of Hawaii Division of Aquatic Resources Administrator), David Sakoda (State of Hawaii DAR Commercial Fisheries Program Manager), McGrew Rice (Hawaii Council Member), Edwin Watamura (Council vice Chair), David O'Brien (NMFS PIRO Sustainable Fisheries), Jarad Makaiiau (NMFS PIRO Sustainable Fisheries), T. Todd Jones (NMFS PIFSC Fisheries Research and Monitoring Division Director), Sara Malloy (NMFS PIRO Deputy Regional Administrator). Council staff included Mark Mitsuyasu, Mark Fitchett, Marlowe Sabater, Joshua DeMello, Zachary Yamada, and Amy Vandehey.

2. Remarks

A. State of Hawaii

Brian Nielson, DAR Administrator, acknowledged the issues and data gaps from non-commercial fisheries and said there needs to be new ways to get that information. He said that DAR is currently undertaking an initiative called the Holomua 30x30 plan for nearshore fisheries and that he is open to the discussions on offshore fisheries with the Council and NMFS.

B. NMFS PIRO

Michael Tosatto, PIRO Regional Administrator, remarked that this conversation is the beginning of a longer process that all of the participants will have to go through. He said there is an example of how the Council, NMFS and the state collectively addressed the Main Hawaiian Islands bottomfish and noted that there are continuing issues and gaps in information but it lays the groundwork. He said information is not free and it's a burden on fishermen and agencies so that has to be kept in mind to make sure there is a need and purpose for what that information is going to be used for. He hoped to be able to identify the need clearly and the cost that everyone is willing to bear to meet those needs. Over time, outside the core need to manage the fisheries sustainably for economic benefit, there is also a need to have information on protected species interactions with fisheries as well to minimize those interactions through fisheries management.

C. NMFS PIFSC

Mike Seki, PIFSC Director, added that meeting with the state is very important to ensure that everyone is on the same page since the resources are shared. From the science perspective, he said there are a lot of pieces that are needed to conduct assessment and science and is at the core of what is needed to feed scientific models. He recognized that there is a gap in the small-boat fishery and non-commercial sector

and that it is still a long way from where it needs to be. He said that meeting is important because the resources are not fixed within management boundaries and looked forward to the discussion.

3. Management Regime Overview and Future Priorities

A. Pelagic Fisheries Ecosystem Plan

i. Federal management of non-longline pelagic fisheries

Council staff presented an overview of federal management of non-longline pelagic fisheries and a review of the fishery as recommended by the Council. He noted the issues with yellowfin tuna minimum size and the need for better and complete data from fisheries, particularly the non-commercial fishery. As part of the review, Council staff looked at the data available and noted that catch for pelagic species came mainly from federal waters and that non-commercial catch from some species was larger than the commercial catch.

ii. Transition to electronic reporting and monitoring

PIRO staff provided an overview of the transition to electronic reporting and monitoring noting that both the state Commercial marine License and the longline systems collect the same kind of information but the transition will allow for reducing the reporting lag. Complete data sets provide additional advantages if it is made available.

When asked if the state supports electronic reporting, Sakoda said the state supports electronic reporting but noted that providing more real-time data may be difficult for some fishers. Moving towards electronic reporting would be more efficient but some fishers do not have the technology to do so. The state supports emailing electronic reports as they do not have the capacity to implement electronic reporting right now.

Rice said that if there was a simple system to collect data, there would be a lot more people interested in reporting. Incentives would also be helpful to get participation. Watamura mentioned the Lokahi app that is user friendly and is providing prizes for virtual tournaments held using the app. Both Council members said there is a misconception about reporting and there needs to be more outreach to better inform the fishing community on how reporting can benefit the fishery and its management.

Tosatto noted that we are looking for a different future. The non-longline fisheries are authorized fisheries that are managed under the FEPs and covered under the WCPFC. Action on these fisheries has not been taken so is there a need for taking action on additional measures beyond what already exists.

B. Hawaii Archipelago Fisheries Ecosystem Plan

i. Aligning Federal-State regulations on MUS

Council staff presented on the current federal and state regulations regarding Council Management Unit Species. An overview of bottomfish fisheries revealed the lack of non-commercial reporting and dealer licensing. Precious corals and crustaceans have management measures such as minimum sizes misaligned. A gap in the uku fishery is the lack of near real-time monitoring of the catch to allow for proper management. Most coral reef fisheries are not predominantly caught in federal waters thus to address any potential gaps there would have to be a management need identified.

ii. Improving monitoring programs to fill information gaps

a. Alignment of State/Federal Rules

David Sakoda, DAR, reported that the state is going through the process to allow for the take of female Kona crabs, with size limits and closed seasons. The Governor has the rule package that would put into place the legislative regulations which would allow the state to request the legislature remove their regulations and potentially make changes to the Chapter 91 regulations in the future. He said for uku, the state is open to creating complementary rules but is not in favor of closing down the non-commercial fishery. They want to make sure that the resources are available and they are open to addressing the HMFS program to make sure data is being properly collected and useful for management. He said that they talked about bag limits for uku as well, but DAR's current priority is the 30x30 plan. He said that there are no plans for a non-commercial permit anytime soon but that dealer licensing is on their priority list but they need to get buy-in so that a requirement can be implemented effectively. He also said that while they would support increasing the yellowfin tuna minimum size limits, it is a lower priority that would need to go through the rule-making process and noted the opposition from some fishermen who have a market for smaller fish.

Rice noted that there is an issue with the road side fishers who cut their price and are not reporting all of their sales or paying taxes.

b. Information need to improve assessments

T. Todd Jones, PIFSC, reported on data needed to improve stock assessments. He said the issue is overcoming the bad data to avoid terrible situations such as the American Samoa bottomfish fishery. The current stock assessments use data from the state CML fisher reporting system which is only commercial data. HMRFS was used for the uku stock assessment and noted that the mail survey now used by HMRFS is much better than the phone survey. He cited examples of how non-commercial catch data could be improved and that stock assessments would be better served by incorporating data directly instead of using an estimator.

Sakoda said the state is willing to share their BF Registry to get more information out and asked if a non-commercial bag limit would help. Jones said that the number one way to improve the system is by increasing the number of intercept points/interviews.

c. ACL monitoring process

Council staff presented on monitoring Annual Catch Limits and noted there needed to be a way to monitor catch in near real-time. Trip level monitoring rather than monthly reporting would remove the uncertainty in the ACL specifications for species such as uku. Staff reiterated the need to close data and regulatory gaps in the dep seven bottomfish fishery such as the lack of non-commercial data and dealer licensing.

4. Next Steps and Outcomes

Sakoda said the uku fishery is a lot more diverse and will be a challenge to get a more comprehensive data set. The change from monthly to trip reporting may be difficult to implement because of this. Council staff noted that Chapter 91 rule-making would require support from PIFSC for additional resources for that transition to trip reporting.

Tosatto noted that the discussion went into depth on what the gaps are that can be closed and said that everyone needs to identify the low hanging fruit. A logical approach to find out what is needed and

planning how to go forward, with commitments is needed. He said the encouraging part is all of the participants are willing to do it.

Seki said he heard the challenges, especially with uku and the need to demonstrate the complexity of the data.

Nielson thought it was a great discussion in regards to the data challenges. He said the State's priority is to address this issue and are committed to improving their monitoring and reporting, but this will take a long time since staff and resources are limited. Sakoda concurred and said a lot can be done through rule-making but it is a lengthy process, but they are happy to participate.

Watamura asked if the Council had their support in reaching the goal and commitment to providing resources. All participants agreed.

Participants noted the benefits of meeting and the positive tone, spirit of collaboration. The identified misalignment will be used to focus time and energy.

5. Other Business

There was no other business.