WESTERN PACIFIC REGIONAL FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Fact Sheet

# Hawaii Pelagic Fisheries

- Hawaii=s pelagic fisheries generate about 34 million pounds of fish annually, with a landed value of nearly $55 million.

- About 84 percent of the production is from the longline fleet, which includes vessels that fish mainly for bigeye tuna south of Hawaii, those that target predominantly swordfish north of Hawaii and vessels that target both bigeye and swordfish on the same trip.

- The longline fishery=s annual catch includes 7 million pounds each of bigeye tuna and swordfish; significant amounts of yellowfin tuna, albacore and marlin; and about 100,000 sharks (6.2 million pounds whole weight), of which 95 and 98 percent are blue sharks having little to no local market demand apart from the fins.

- Other Hawaii pelagic fisheries include trolling (6 percent), handlining (3 percent) and aku bait boat fishing (2 percent).Yellowfin tuna forms about half of the small-scale troll-handline catch, with tunas as a group amounting to about two-thirds of the total. Blue marlin, ono and mahimahi are other important components of the fishery, while bigeye tuna comprises less than 4 percent of the catch.

- Perceived competition between the longline and troll-handline fleets for yellowfin tunas is not supported by catch data from the longline and charter-troll fisheries.

- Perceived competition between longliners and charter/recreational trollers for blue marlin is also not substantiated. A long-term decline in the average size of blue marlin in the charter troll fishery in Kona predates by a decade the expansion of the longline fishery, and declining blue marlin catch rates per unit of effort are linked with an increase in charter vessel effort at Kona. A recent Pacific-wide stock assessment of blue marlin conducted by the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission, using Japanese longline catch data extending over nearly three decades, indicates that Pacific catches of blue marlin are currently below the maximum sustainable yield.

- Other pelagic fisheries management issues include 1) interactions between longliners and protected species; 2) underestimates in the production figures for the troll-handline fishery due to the Hawaii catch reporting system, which does not require catch reports for recreationally caught fish, and 3) the rise of finning activity in the longline fishery.

- At its meeting in June, the Council will adopt regulations to reduce interactions between longline vessels and seabirds and discuss longline-turtle interactions and possible mitigation measures. The Council will elect a chair for a Recreational Task Force being established to find methods

to better monitor recreational catches, and it will review studies on shark finning and shark utilization. It has asked for a Pacific-wide stock assessment of blue sharks by the Honolulu Laboratory in collaboration with the Japanese Far Seas Laboratory.