WESTERN PACIFIC REGIONAL FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

115th Meeting of the Scientific and Statistical Committee
Council Office
March 11-13, 2014

6. Insular Fisheries

A. MHI BRFA Management Plan

Alton Miyasaka (Hawaii DAR) presented the DLNR Chair's decision and plan to revise the State's BRFA Management Plan. The revision would open 6 BRFAs and keep 6 BRFAs closed. Monitoring of BRFAs would continue based on available funding. The Chair's plan includes increasing the Recreational bag limit from 5 to 10 bottomfish. A voluntary non-commercial reporting option could be initiated.

SSC discussion centered around the lack of a baseline for the current evaluation, and the potential for some information to be gained if there was finer scaled information gathered by subdividing reporting grids, as some of the BRFAs were reopened, but not for those that remained closed. The SSC also noted that two of the BRFAs that would remain closed (Makapuu and Penguin Bank) were the most important fishing areas for fishermen from three islands and had created the greatest economic hardship for fishermen, as well social interaction issues through the crowding of effort into the remaining open areas. DAR requests that SSC provide input into potential modifications to the BRFAs monitoring study design.

B. Report from MHI Bottomfish Working Group Research Priorities

Council Staff reviewed recommendations made by the bottomfish working group regarding possible revisions of the BRFA management plan and possible research priorities for the MHI Bottomfish. It was suggested that the Council could simply open the BRFAs in federal waters to allow fishing. The Executive Director noted that that option was under legal review and that a number of the National Standards could be utilized to justify the elimination of MHI BRFAs in federal waters.

The SSC reiterates the recommendation from the 114th SSC: "…the SSC recommends that all BRFAs be eliminated in federal waters and encourages the state to consider removing all BRFAs in state waters as well, because their management utility has been superseded by mandatory catch limits."

SSC member Alton Miysaka (DAR) is on record as being opposed to the above recommendation.

The SSC further recommends that the Council should consider asking the State to subdivide the fishing reporting grids so that finer scale information could be gained on spatial patterns of the fishery.

C. Report on the CNMI Bottomfish scoping (Action Item)

Council staff presented options for removal of the large vessel (> 40 ft.) closure areas in the CNMI for the bottomfish fishery. The presentation included catch and effort trends in the deep and shallow bottomfish fishery and a review of the characteristics of the fishery including the participation, permitting, and an overview of the fishing grounds. The recent and current catch is significantly below ACLs for the fishery. Tourism in CNMI is increasing and the local bottomfish fishery could provide fresh local fish to the expanding tourism industry. Jurisdictional issues for waters 0-3 nmi from shore are complex following transmission of control to CNMI and an Executive Order to reclaim portions of those areas.

The SSC notes that there does not seem to be a resource issue. Therefore the SSC has no objection to "Option 3 – Removal of the 50 mile large vessel closure around the CNMI southern islands", and removal of the closure around Alamagan.

D. Informing creel survey adjustment factors using village-based fisheries profiles

Dr. Ochavillo (SSC Member) presented a progress report on interview data used to profile the American Samoan village-based fisheries and estimate use of fishing gears and demographics of fishers in the un-sampled villages. He noted that the existing creel survey design misses important data. The results of the profile will be used to guide the design and implementation of an improved creel survey for American Samoa. The SSC looks forward to improved creel survey data.

E. Estimation of Catch Weight of Reef Fish from HMRFSS

Dr. Hongguang Ma (NOAA PIFSC) presented results of a study on re-estimation of recreational catch of reef fish from Hawaii Marine Recreational Fishing Survey (HMRFS). The results demonstrate that including the missing weights increases and improved total catch estimates. It was noted that even when the recreational catch estimates were dramatically increased, the fishery has little impact relative to current biomass estimations.
An SSC member noted that a newly funded MRIP project (Pilot Survey of Shoreline Fishing Effort for HMRFS) to completely redesign the program, may further improve the data.

The SSC notes that this study on missing weights is a potentially useful tool and encourages further work to improve sampling methodology for HMRFS/MRIP.

F. Hawaii Kumu (White-saddle Goatfish) Stock Assessment

Ms. Maciasz (HPU) presented on results of a Hawaii kumu (white-saddle goatfish *Parupeneus porphyreus*) stock assessment. The presentation included trends in kumu commercial landings by gear type (handline, trap, spear). A best fit for a surplus production model resulted in an estimated MSY of 7,199 lbs, and suggested that the stock is not overfished but overfishing is occurring. The SSC thanks Ms. Maciasz for her presentation.

G. Public Comment

Public Comment included distribution of a commentary letter from a fisherman who could not attend that made the point that environmental effects, including decadal cycles need to be considered in bottomfish stock assessments. Public comment also noted that juvenile opakapaka were not found in the BRFAs, but near estuaries suggesting that fresh water may be important to their life history. It was pointed out that fishermen did not fish in the area of the Makapuu BRFA that includes the precious coral bed so that was not a legitimate justification for keeping that BRFA closed. Concerns about impacts of poaching within BRFAs were expressed. The closure of the Makapuu BRFA continues to create additional economic burdens and safety concerns through fishermen having to travel further to alternate fishing grounds.

7. Program Planning

A. Report from P* Working Group

Council staff presented the SSC with an overview of the outcomes from several recent meetings of the P* Working Group. The SSC was then asked to (1) review and comment on the soundness of the overall P* process, (2) review and comment on a comparative analysis of the Biomass Augmented Catch-MSY (BAC-MSY) model and the PIFSC stock assessment model estimates for MHI and Territories bottomfish MSY, (3) recommend the appropriate *k*-revised approach for the BAC-MSY model, and (4) comment on the P* working group rationale for the species groupings.

The SSC made the following comments and recommendations:

1. The SSC concurs with the use of the P* process for CREMUS stocks as this currently represents the most practical approach to reducing the risk of overfishing and specifying ABCs for CREMUS stocks. Furthermore, this approach is consistent with a similar P* approach used by the Council for the MHI Deep 7 BMUS.

2. The SSC notes that the BAC-MSY approach resulted in differences in MSY compared to the MSY estimates from PIFSC for the MHI and American Samoa, CNMI and Guam bottomfish. While the SSC encourages the Council to support further refining the model, **the SSC recommends the adoption of the BAC-MSY approach for CREMUS because it provides a reasonable approach to estimating MSY-based reference points for these otherwise data poor stocks. The SSC further notes that the BAC-MSY method makes more use of the available data.**

3. **There are two approaches in the model for revising the range of *k* values to be explored: A and B. The SSC recommends the B approach and subsequent MSY estimates because the model results in a more complete range of plausible *r*- and *k*-combinations compared to the A approach. The B approach also yielded *r*-*k* density plots that generally corresponded better to the estimated MSY than the A approach.**

4. **The SSC recommends that in each island area, individual species of CREMUS continue to be grouped to the family level and that an individual ABC/ACL be set for each family group that comprises the majority of coral reef fishery landings. The family groups that comprise the remaining component of landings, and those taxonomic groupings established in data**

collection systems for species not identified to the species or family level (e.g. miscellaneous reef fish) should continue to be grouped into a single stock complex termed "All other CREMUS Combined" with a single ABC/ACL.

The SSC notes that the catch of individual species within all taxonomic groups will continue to be monitored (if identified to the lowest taxonomic level in the original data collection method), and may be removed in the future for consideration of a separate ABC/ACL specification, if warranted.

5. **In American Samoa, and the Marianas, the SSC recommends that humphead wrasse, and bumphead parrotfish continue to be removed from their respective taxonomic groups (i.e. Labridae and Scaridae, respectively) and ABC/ACL be set separately for those two species. The SSC notes these species as well as reef sharks (Carcharhinidae) are regarded as rare occurrences in catch records and underwater visual surveys and may be vulnerable to overfishing. These species are therefore of special management interest to the Council.**

6. **SSC further recommends that in each island area bigeye scad (*Selar crumenophthalmus*), continue to be removed from the taxonomic group (Carangidae) for the purpose of ABC/ACL specification. The SSC notes that in all island areas, this coastal species is culturally important and in certain years, may account for nearly half of the total coral reef fishery landings. In Hawaii, the SSC recommends that the other coastal pelagic species, roundscad (*Decapterus spp.)* also be removed from the taxonomic group (Carangidae) for the purpose of ABC/ACL specification for the same reasons.**

7. **In Hawaii, the SSC further recommends two coral reef associated Hawaii bottomfish MUS – kahala (*Seriola dumerili)*, and taape (*Lutjanus kasmira*) continue to be included in the Hawaii CREMUS groupings Carangidae (jacks) and Lutjanidae (snappers), respectively. These species are commonly harvested in coral reef fisheries, and are not considered in the NMFS stock assessments used to establish ACLs for Hawaii bottomfish MUS.**

The SSC supports retaining family-level groupings for four years to reduce the management and compliance burden for the fishery. However, in cases where individual species stock assessments become available within the four year period, the SSC will review these and determine the appropriate ABC.

B. Specifying Acceptable Biological Catches for the Coral Reef

Council staff presented the SSC with an overview of methods for analyzing acceptable biological catches for coral reef species. The SSC made the following comments and recommendations:

1. **Using the 50 percent risk of exceeding MSY as a proxy for the overfishing limit (OFL).**

2. **Rounding final P* values to the nearest 5% and 10%.**

3. **Specifying ABCs based on catches associated with a particular P* level.**

4. **CREMUS ABCs be a multiyear specification of 4 years (2015-2018) to reduce the administrative and scientific burden of more frequent re-analyses.**

5. **When comparing catch to ACL, the SSC recommends basing catch upon an average of the 3 most recent years of catch data for a stock.** As noted by the Working Group, this would allow enough time to effectively address short-term trends in productivity and fishery dynamics while balancing random fluctuations in catch rates.

6. **The SSC supports the P* WG analysis and P* percentiles and the SSC recommends ABC be set for coral reef ecosystem family groups as follows:**

American Samoa

Family Group	MSY (lbs)	ABC (lbs)	Probability of overfishing
Selar crumenophthalmus – atule or bigeye scad	45,300	38,400	40%
Acanthuridae – surgeonfish	148,600	133,800	40%
Carangidae – jacks	24,300	20,800	35%
Carcharhinidae – reef sharks	2,300		
Crustaceans – crabs	7,800	4,700	30%
Holocentridae – squirrelfish	16,800	15,500	35%
Kyphosidae – chubs/rudderfish	2,600	2,200	35%
Labridae – wrasses[1]	19,000	16,600	35%
Lethrinidae – emperors	23,700	20,400	35%
Lutjanidae – snappers	23,700	64,400	35%
Mullidae – goatfish	12,700	12,000	35%
Mugilidae – mullets	8,200	5,200	35%
Mollusks – turbo snail; octopus; giant clams	29,600	20,200	35%
Scaridae – parrotfish[2]	294,600	280,100	35%
Serranidae – groupers	30,500	27,300	40%
Siganidae – rabbitfish	200	181	40%
All Other CREMUS Combined - Other CRE-finfish - Other invertebrates - Misc. bottomfish - Misc. reef fish	28,500	20,300	35%

Family Group	MSY (lbs)	ABC (lbs)	Probability of overfishing
- Misc. shallow bottomfish			
Cheilinus undulatus – humphead (Napoleon) wrasse	-	1,743	-
Bolbometopon muricatum – bumphead parrotfish	-	235	-

[1] Family Labridae does not include *Cheilinus undulatus* (humphead or Napoleon wrasse)
[2] Family Scaridae does not include *Bolbometopon muricatum* (bumphead parrotfish)

Guam

Family Group	MSY (lbs)	ABC (lbs)	Probability of overfishing
Selar crumenophthalmus – atulai or bigeye scad	70,700	63,300	30%
Acanthuridae – surgeonfish	80,900	67,100	35%
Algae	10,500	9,500	35%
Carangidae – jacks	30,600	28,500	30%
Carcharhinidae – reef sharks added to Species of Management Interest (see below)	2,900		
Crustaceans - crabs	14,000	10,300	35%
Holocentridae – squirrelfish	12,100	10,800	35%
Kyphosidae – chubs/rudderfish	9,700	9,100	35%
Labridae – wrasses[1]	33,300	29,100	35%
Lethrinidae – emperors	78,000	58,000	35%
Lutjanidae – snappers	23,900	20,000	35%
Mollusks – turbo snail; octopus; giant clams	49,500	35,800	35%
Mugilidae – mullets	26,200	19,400	35%
Mullidae – goatfish	12,800	11,600	40%
Scaridae – parrotfish[2]	87,100	75,000	35%
Serranidae – groupers	28,600	23,700	35%
Siganidae – rabbitfish	19,700	19,500	40%
All Other CREMUS Combined - Other CRE-finfish - Other invertebrates - Misc. bottomfish - Misc. reef fish - Misc. shallow bottomfish	211,300	191,300	35%
Cheilinus undulatus – humphead (Napoleon) wrasse	-	1,960	-
Bolbometopon muricatum – bumphead parrotfish	-	797	-

[1] Family Labridae does not include *Cheilinus undulatus* (humphead or Napoleon wrasse)
[2] Family Scaridae does not include *Bolbometopon muricatum* (bumphead parrotfish)

CNMI

Family Group	MSY (lbs)	ABC (lbs)	Probability of overfishing
Selar crumenophthalmus – atulai or bigeye scad	122,500	89,400	40%
Acanthuridae – surgeonfish	361,200	324,600	40%
Carangidae – jacks	55,300	47,400	35%
Crustacean – crabs	9,100	5,300	35%
Holocentridae – squirrelfish	78,500	69,300	35%
Kyphosidae – chubs/rudderfish	29,500	24,600	35%
Labridae – wrasses[1]	73,500	59,900	35%
Lethrinidae – emperors	69,700	58,200	40%
Lutjanidae – snappers	225,800	202,700	40%
Mollusks – turbo snail; octopus; giant clams	16,700	11,600	40%
Mugilidae – mullets	7,700	5,300	40%
Mullidae – goatfish	31,000	29,200	35%
Scaridae – parrotfish[2]	189,900	157,300	35%
Serranidae – groupers	110,300	92,800	35%
Siganidae – rabbitfish	12,000	10,400	35%
All Other CREMUS Combined - Other CRE-finfish - Other invertebrates - Misc. bottomfish - Misc. reef fish - Misc. shallow bottomfish	14,500	8,500	40%
Cheilinus undulatus – humphead (Napoleon) wrasse	-	2,009	-
Bolbometopon muricatum – bumphead parrotfish	-	797	-

[1] Family Labridae does not include *Cheilinus undulatus* (humphead or Napoleon wrasse)

[2] Family Scaridae does not include *Bolbometopon muricatum* (bumphead parrotfish)

Hawaii

Family Group	MSY (lbs)	ABC (lbs)	Probability of overfishing
Selar crumenophthalmus – atule or	1,150,800	1,025,000	35%

Family Group	MSY (lbs)	ABC (lbs)	Probability of overfishing
bigeye scad			
Decapterus macarellus – opelu or mackerel scad	538,000	459,800	35%
Acanthuridae – surgeonfish	445,500	367,900	35%
Algae			
Carangidae – jacks[1]	185,100	168,100	40%
Carcharhinidae – Reef sharks	12,400		
Crustaceans – crabs	43,100	35,400	30%
Holocentridae – squirrelfish	159,800	150,000	30%
Kyphosidae – chubs/rudderfish	122,800	108,600	35%
Labridae – wrasses	229,200	211,000	35%
Lethrinidae – emperors	39,600	36,600	35%
Lutjanidae – snappers[2]	359,300	338,200	40%
Mugilidae – mullets	50,300	38,200	30%
Mullidae – goatfish	24,600	20,100	30%
Mollusks –octopus	195,700	173,100	35%
Serranidae – groupers	271,500	251,700	35%
Scaridae – parrotfish	141,300	132,200	40%
All Other CREMUS Combined - Other CRE-finfish - Other invertebrates	540,800	496,500	35%

Note: *Bolbometopon muricatum* (bumphead parrotfish) and *Cheilinus undulatus* (humphead or Napoleon wrasse) do not occur in Hawaii.

[1] Carangidae includes the BMUS, kahala (*Seriola dumerili*) since this species is not included in NMFS bottomfish stock assessments, and is a reef associated species.

[2] Lutjanidae includes the BMUS, taape (*Lutjanus kasmira*) since this species is not included in NMFS bottomfish stock assessments, and is a reef associated species

C. Social Science Program

Council staff Chris Hawkins reviewed the legal mandates for social science within the Council activities and outlined his vision and plans. Among other things, this science will be policy relevant, anticipatory, and will take into account the well-being of the fishermen, providing for their participation and minimizing negative economic impacts. Hawkins will soon revitalize the Council's Social Science Research Committee.

D. Public Comment

A public comment was provided on encouraging fishermen to become more involved in the fishery management process to increase their sense of empowerment.

Pelagic Fisheries

A. Longline Fisheries Quarterly Reports

Russell Ito (PIFSC) presented a summary of 2013 annual report on the Hawaii longline catches. SSC members continues to note that the number of hooks deployed in the Hawaii longline fishery continues to increase, and that it would be useful to have more detailed information from observer data in order to document and track changes in longline gear configuration, such as spacing of hooks, extent of fishing area etc. This information would make it possible to standardize BET CPUE over time and thus be more useful for stock assessments

Kimberly Lowe, PIFSC presented a summary of the 2013American Samoa longline fishery in 2013. Although there were fewer sets made, fewer hooks deployed, and fewer trips, the number of hooks per set was increasing. Tunas, mostly albacore comprise the bulk of the fishery, but YFT is being targeted because of better price. Both albacore and skipjack catches were the lowest since 2000. CPUE decreased for tunas, while non tuna species (including mola, escolar, and pomfret) have increased, they comprise a small percentage of catch.

Council Staff noted the surprisingly low mahi mahi CPUE in the South Pacific, as opposed to an increasing trend in the North Pacific in the Hawaii longline fishery. SSC members recalled similar declines in minor species elsewhere in the Pacific, and recommended that these declines should be investigated because they might indicate shifts in ecosystem structure.

The SSC recommended that the mahi mahi CPUE changes be investigated, and that the potential effects of non tethered FADs on mahi mahi and other floating object associated species be investigated.

The SSC further notes that it is not clear who would conduct this investigation given the demise of PFRP and LPRC programs. There are now no independent pelagic fishery research programs in the USA.

B. Economic collapse of American Samoa Longline Fishery.

Council staff provided the SSC with a review of the collapse of the American Samoa Fishery.

SSC members suggested that the decline in the catch of albacore by American Samoa longliners was due to sub-regional depletion because stock estimates for the Southern Albacore stock as a whole are quite high.

SSC Member Minling Pan (PIFSC) presented a review of cost, revenue, and cash flow history of the American Samoa longline fishery, comparing surveys conducted in 2001 and 2009. Dr. Pan's sensitivity analysis revealed a very thin profit margin in 2009 and further decline in 2013. The SSC heard with interest Council staff review of discussions with diverse members of the American Samoa fishing industry concerning the longline fishery.

C. Experimental Fishing Permit – American Samoa large vessel prohibited area

Council staff presented the steps required for an EFP. There is some interest in American Samoa for fishing with vessels > 50ft in the current large pelagic vessel area closure.

D. Modifying Hawaii Longline Fishery EPO Bigeye Tuna Catch Limit (Action Item)

Council Staff presented information and options for US proposals regarding catch limits in the Eastern Pacific Ocean. The SSC noted that the EPO BET is a fully utilized stock and there is no surplus available. In contrast, the WCPO BET stock continues to be subjected to over-exploitation.

E. Bigeye Tuna Movement Workshop

SSC Member David Itano (PIRO) and Council staff presented information on the objectives of this workshop, to be held in April this year at the Council office.

F. Disproportionate Burden Workshop.

SSC Member Paul Callaghan outlined a workshop on the disproportionate burden of conservation actions on small island developing states (SIDS). The meeting is tentatively scheduled for September 2014 at the Council office.

G. Workshop on Ecosystem Approaches to Pelagic Fisheries Management

Jeff Polovina, PIFSC discussed a potential workshop on ecosystem approaches to Pelagic Fisheries Management. The SSC agreed that there was a need for comparative ecosystem modeling but that there was no consensus on need for a workshop. The SSC expressed interest in exploring ecosystem indicators as they relate to management decisions in the Council process.

H. International Fisheries

1. WCPFC 10

Council Staff Eric Kingma discussed measures adopted at WCPFC 10 in Cairns Australia. The most important of these was the measure for tropical tunas which resulted in additional cuts to the Hawaii longline bigeye quota.

2. ISC

Gerard DiNardo presented on the forthcoming ISC assessments on NP bluefin, albacore, blue shark, shortfin mako shark, swordfish and striped marlin.

I. Public Comment.

A member of the public Morioka requested that NOAA continue to track developments relating to the Billfish Conservation Act and the exemption for Hawaii and US Territories to market billfish to the US mainland.

WESTERN PACIFIC REGIONAL FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

115th Meeting of the Scientific and Statistical Committee
Council Office
March 11-13, 2014

9. Protected Species

A. Leatherback Turtle Bycatch Analysis and Revised TurtleWatch

Jeff Polovina (PIFSC) provided an update on the next generation of TurtleWatch, with a targeted application to avoid interactions with leatherback turtles, in addition to loggerhead turtles for which it was originally developed. However, leatherback turtles appear less regular in their movements and migration pathways in comparison to loggerhead turtles making their inclusion in TurtleWatch more challenging. SSC members suggested integrating TurtleWatch with observations of other pelagic species (e.g. *Molidae*) and supported a linkage to jellyfish forage and productive swordfish grounds.

B. SSC Subcommittee Review of the Insular False Killer Whale Photo-ID Data Analysis

SSC member Jim Lynch and Council staff presented a summary report of the SSC False Killer Whale Subcommittee that reviewed FKW photo-ID data analysis conducted by the Cascadia Research Collective (CRC). The Subcommittee reviewed the analyses as presented by Dr. Robin Baird (CRC), and identified several issues with the analysis, including the admittedly "ad hoc" nature of the surveys, the lack of accounting for temporal (seasonal) and environmental variables in survey effort, the inclusion of data from outside sources (e.g., photographs from tour boats) and the fact that the analyst who conducted the analysis was not available at the time of the review to respond to detailed questions regarding the modeling approach. The SSC Subcommittee concluded that they were not able to conduct a thorough review of the analyses.

Based on these findings, the Subcommittee determined that the analyses and results of the study, earlier versions of which have been used in NMFS' decision making that impacts fishery management, should not be considered reliable in the context of the National Standard 2 Guidelines[1].

The SSC endorsed the Subcommittee's report and recommends:

1. **That PIFSC obtain the full photo-identification dataset used in the analysis of the**

[1] As recommended by the National Research Council (2004), MSA National Standard 2 guidelines provide that in determining whether scientific information constitutes the Best Available Scientific Information (BASI), the following elements should be evaluated: relevance, inclusiveness, objectivity, transparency, timeliness, verification, validation, and peer review of fishery management information as appropriate. See 78 Fed. Reg. 43066 (July 19, 2013).

insular false killer whale population for the Council in order to determine whether additional modeling could improve the analysis;

2. **That the Council request that PIFSC prioritize conducting systematic surveys of the main Hawaiian Islands insular false killer whale population to establish a dataset suitable for estimating abundance; and**
3. **That the Council explore alternative approaches to provide robust estimates of false killer whale abundance.**

C. Update on the Marine Mammal Stock Assessment Reports

Erin Oleson, PIFSC, provided an update of Hawaii Stock Assessment Reports (SARs) in 2013 under the MMPA to incorporate new information of marine mammal stocks occurring in waters under U.S. jurisdiction. The reports included data from 2010 marine mammal surveys and updated mortality and serious injury (M&SI) criteria and data, including retrospective analysis, and updated fishery descriptions for all Hawaii fisheries.

Most stocks remained very similar to previous SARs. More significant changes were noted for the more data rich stocks that resulted in melon headed whales being divided into two stocks and pantropical spotted dolphins into four Hawaiian stocks based on genetic evidence. Stock boundaries are complex and delineations remain preliminary for several other species. Other species may be island-associated stocks, but data quality and quantity are insufficient to proceed with designation at this time. No significant changes were noted for the Hawaiian false killer whale SAR.

Oleson also provided an update of recent Marianas cetacean surveys that concentrated in the leeward nearshore areas of the southern Marianas archipelago. These are small-boat based surveys utilizing photo ID, biopsy sampling and satellite tagging and two acoustic sites off Saipan. The surveys have documented a typical mix of Indo-Pacific odontocetes but provide new insights into spinner dolphins, FKWs, and pilot whales in this region, particularly movement data from satellite tags. Three additional surveys are planned for 2014 from small boats and large NOAA vessels. Genetic samples are a large component towards assisting stock designation. Current plans are to analyze photo ID catalogs, analyze genetic samples, deploy more satellite tags and continued acoustic monitoring. A SARs type analysis, with abundance estimates, is at least several years away.

D. Analysis of Impacts under the Deep-set Longline Biological Opinion

Dawn Golden, PIRO noted that review and analyses of the ESA Section 7 consultation of the Hawaii deep-set longline fishery is underway but the presentation of analyses is not expected until the June 2014 SSC meeting.

E. Updates on Endangered Species Act and Marine Mammal Protection Act Actions

1. Results of an Update of the Corals of the World Information Base

Council staff reported on an effort to increase the amount and detail of data currently

available on 66 coral species proposed for listing under the Endangered Species Act. To address some of these issues, the Council partnered with coral authority Dr. J.E.N. Veron and the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC). Dr Veron provided updated species-specific distribution and abundance data resulting in a detailed report provided to the NMFS. The report indicated that most of the corals proposed for listing in the western and central Pacific are widely distributed and occur in numerous and wide ranging eco-regions, suggesting a low risk of extinction. Only two species were categorized as "rare" with narrow distribution and are located in the far western Indian Ocean and the western extent of the tropical Pacific.

2. Proposed Rule to List 66 Species of Coral as Endangered or Threatened under the ESA

Dawn Golden, PIRO provided an update on the proposal to list 66 species of coral, 59 of which exist in the Pacific. On September 20, 2013, NMFS announced a 6-month extension of the deadline for final determinations of the 66 proposed corals, given that substantial disagreement exists regarding the sufficiency and accuracy of data and analyses relevant to the listing determinations. The new deadline to publish the final rule or a notice of withdrawal is June 7, 2014. New information will be used in formulating the final decision, including the study conducted by Dr. J.E.N. Veron.

3. Green Turtle Status Review

Dawn Golden, PIRO provided an update on the petition to designate the Hawaii population of green turtles as a distinct population segment (DPS) and to delist this DPS. NMFS has initiated a global status review of green turtles as currently listed to determine whether the petitioned action is warranted. The 12-month finding of the petition was due on February 16, 2013, but no determination has been published to date.

4. North Pacific Humpback Whale Petition

Dawn Golden, PIRO provided an update on the petition to delist the north Pacific population of humpback whales. NMFS had a deadline of April 2014 to make a 12-month finding which is underway.

5. Proposed 2014 List of Fisheries

The Final 2014 List of Fisheries (LOF) is expected to be published on March 14, 2014. No significant changes were made in the 2014 LOF for the Western Pacific.

6. Other Relevant Actions

Dawn Golden, PIRO provided updates on ESA listing status for scalloped hammerhead shark, pomacentrid reef fish, humphead wrasse, great hammerhead shark and an update on loggerhead critical habitat. No significant changes were noted since the previous Council meeting. The petition to list whale shark was determined

to be not warranted.

A false killer whale interaction was recorded in February 2014. NMFS is currently conducting the review process to determine if this constitutes a serious injury.

F. Report of the Protected Species Advisory Committee Meeting

Jim Lynch, SSC member and Council staff updated SSC on the agenda and the results of the inaugural meeting of the Protected Species Advisory Committee (PSAC). Council staff provided PSAC members with an overview of the council process and key current and upcoming protected species issues. PSAC also reviewed the MSA 5-year Research Priorities and provided input into the Council's 2015-2019 program plan.

G. Public Comment

There was no public comment.