

# NOAA Fisheries Service

Pacific Islands Regional Office

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## REPORT TO THE 161ST WESTERN PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL MEETING

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Pacific Islands Regional Office (PIRO) is responsible for assisting the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) in the development of fishery management plans and amendments, initiating Federal fishing regulations, issuing Federal fishing permits, and monitoring fisheries through the observer program. Other major responsibilities include the conservation and recovery of protected species, conservation and restoration of marine habitats, including the Pacific marine national monuments, and coordination with international organizations to implement fishery agreements and treaties. The following information is provided to update the Council on NMFS and PIRO activities since the 160th Council meeting.

### RULEMAKING

On July 29, 2014, NMFS issued a proposed rule (79 FR 43373) to implement a decision of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) that would revise the 2014 limit on the fishing effort by U.S. purse seine vessels on the high seas and in the U.S. EEZ in the western and central Pacific Ocean. The comment period on this proposed rule closed on August 25, 2014.

On August 22, 2014, NMFS issued a proposed rule (79 FR 49745) to implement decisions of the WCPFC for fishing restrictions on the oceanic whitetip shark, the whale shark, and the silky shark in the western and central Pacific Ocean. The comment period on this proposed rule closes on October 6, 2014.

On October 20, 2009, NMFS was petitioned by the Center for Biological Diversity to list 83 species of coral under the ESA. A proposal was published in the Federal Register on December 7, 2012, announcing the proposed listing of 66 coral species, 59 of which are found in the Pacific, and seven in the Caribbean. The Council and the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council hired coral expert Dr. Charlie Veron to provide new distribution and abundance information for 64 of the 66 species, and his final report was received by PIRO in February 2014. This new information helped inform the final listing rule, which was published on September 10, 2014. The final rule listed 20 coral species as threatened, 15 of which are found in the Pacific, and five in the Caribbean. Of the 15 listed Pacific species, none are found in Hawaii, but some are found in Guam, CNMI, American Samoa, and the PRIAs. NMFS is currently soliciting input from the public to help inform future 4(d) rules for the newly-listed species. The final listing rule becomes effective on October 10, 2014.

On August 14, 2011, NMFS received a petition from WildEarth Guardians and Friends of Animals requesting that the scalloped hammerhead (*Sphyrna lewini*) be listed as

endangered or threatened under the ESA and that critical habitat be designated. The petitioners requested that we list either the entire global species or any of the Distinct Population Segments (DPSs). On November 28, 2011, NMFS made a positive 90-day finding (76 FR 72891), determining that the petitioned action may be warranted. A comprehensive status review was conducted to inform the 12-month finding and underwent peer review. On April 5, 2013, NMFS published a 12-month finding and proposed rule (78 FR 20718) to list four of six identified DPSs. In the Pacific Islands region, the Indo-West Pacific DPS (which includes the U.S. Pacific territories and all Pacific Remote Island Areas except Johnston Atoll) was proposed as threatened, the Central Pacific DPS (which includes the Hawaiian archipelago and Johnston Atoll) was determined not to be warranted for listing, and the Eastern Pacific DPS was proposed as endangered. The public comment period closed on June 4, 2013 and approximately 670 comments were received. The final rule was statutorily due on April 5, 2014. A final rule was published on July 3, 2014 (79 FR 36281) announcing that four of the DPSs are listed under the ESA: the Indo-West Pacific DPS and the Central and Southwest Atlantic DPS are threatened, and the Eastern Pacific DPS and the Eastern Atlantic DPS are endangered. We intend to consider critical habitat for the Central and Southwest Atlantic, Indo-West Pacific, and Eastern Pacific DPSs in a separate rulemaking.

On September 22, 2011, NMFS and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service published a final rule to list nine DPSs of the loggerhead turtle under the ESA, in response to two 2007 petitions (from Center for Biological Diversity and Turtle Island Restoration Network). A proposed rule to designate critical habitat was published on July 18, 2013 (78 FR 43005). A final rule was published on July 10, 2014 (79 FR 39856), designating critical habitat for the Northwest Atlantic Ocean DPS within the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico. Critical habitat was not designated for the North Pacific Ocean DPS and thus there is no critical habitat for loggerheads within the Pacific Islands region.

The 2015 List of Fisheries (LOF) proposed rule was published on August 25, 2014 (79 FR 50589). Proposed changes to Pacific Islands fisheries, developed in coordination with and/or at the recommendation of PIRO SFD and/or Hawaii DLNR/DAR, includes: addition of the HI aquarium collecting fishery (as Cat III); removal of the HI lobster tangle net and HI charter vessel fisheries; name changes for seven fisheries; splitting of the HI trolling, rod and reel fishery in two Cat III fisheries (HI trolling and HI rod and reel); removal of the Hawaiian monk seal from the list of species injured or killed in the HI bottomfish handline and HI lobster trap fisheries; addition of the humpback whale (Central North Pacific stock) to the list of species injured or killed in the HI crab trap fishery (fishery remains Cat III); and updates to the number of participants in numerous domestic and high seas fisheries.

## **PROGRAM ACTIVITIES**

### **Sustainable Fisheries**

On July 25, 2014, PIRO announced approval of a marine conservation plan for the Northern Mariana Islands, effective from August 4, 2014 through August 3, 2017. View the *Federal Register* notice and plan at [regulations.gov](http://regulations.gov) here.

On August 1, 2014, PIRO announced approval of a Marine Conservation Plan for Pacific Insular Areas other than American Samoa, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands, effective from August 4, 2014 through August 3, 2017. View the *Federal Register* notice and plan at [regulations.gov](http://regulations.gov) here.

On August 12, 2014, PIRO announced approval of a Marine Conservation Plan for Guam, effective from August 4, 2014 through August 3, 2017. View the *Federal Register* notice and plan at [regulations.gov](http://regulations.gov) here.

NMFS PIRO continues to provide protected species workshop (PSW) training to the longline fishing communities. From January 1 through September 30, 2014, PIRO trained 206 Hawaii longline vessel owners, captains, and other interested individuals, either at the Pier 38 Service Center in Honolulu Harbor or online. Another 59 vessel owners, captains, and crewmembers completed the PSW training in American Samoa. In American Samoa on September 22-26, 2014, PIRO updated the local training program and materials for the protected species workshops. PIRO staff led one classroom session for observer program staff at the American Samoa NOAA facility and a second session aboard a local longline fishing vessel for the captain and crew.

PIRO continues to update Information on fish catch limits in Pacific Island fisheries at [www.fpir.noaa.gov/SFD/SFD\\_regs\\_3.html](http://www.fpir.noaa.gov/SFD/SFD_regs_3.html).

PIRO continues to provide up-to-date information about interactions between the Hawaii shallow-set longline fishery and sea turtles at [www.fpir.noaa.gov/SFD/SFD\\_turtleint.html](http://www.fpir.noaa.gov/SFD/SFD_turtleint.html).

From July 22-24, 2014, PIRO staff participated in the NOAA catch share working group meeting held in Seattle, WA. Topics discussed at the meeting included regional catch share updates, catch share program cost recovery, and recreational fisheries and catch share programs.

PIRO participated in the 6<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Seabird Bycatch Working Group (SBWG) held in Punta Del Este, Uruguay, September 10-12, 2014. The SBWG advises the agreement on actions that assist in assessment, mitigation and reduction of interactions between fishing operations, and albatrosses and petrels. PIRO provided expertise on the use of seabird mitigation measures in the Hawaii longline fisheries and learned from international experts on new mitigation measures being studied for fishery applications.

From September 2-15, 2014, PIRO hosted a visit by Dr. Mariluz Parga, a veterinarian and expert in the medical treatment of marine turtles from Spain who has worked aboard longline fishing vessels in the Mediterranean, Latin America, and the U.S. Atlantic and Pacific. Dr. Parga's organization, Submon, is exploring new ways to reduce bycatch and increase post-release survival of accidentally captured sea turtles and other protected species. Her visit included meetings with individuals and groups throughout PIRO, as well as other Hawaii longline fishery stakeholders, an Open Science Seminar presentation at the IRC, and a sea turtle dehooking demonstration at the PIFSC necropsy lab.

On September 3-5, 2014, PIRO staff attended the 2014 West Coast Forum held in San Diego, California. This forum, hosted by the Fisheries Leadership & Sustainability Forum, attracted approximately 50 participants from the various regional fishery management councils, NMFS regional offices, and science centers. The purpose of the forum was to explore the roles of co-management and cooperative research in advancing fishery management objectives and promoting innovation and efficiency through sharing of responsibilities. The forum featured presentations from the fishing industry, Native American tribes, academia, and state and federal government agencies on various models and approaches of co-management and cooperative research.

On September 23-25, 2014, PIRO staff attended a workshop on NOAA Fisheries economic considerations of allocation decisions in Seattle, WA. This workshop consisted of an overview of research conducted by NOAA research economists and academics across the country. PIRO staff also participated in a group working on updating the NOAA Fisheries economic guidelines for regulatory analysis.

Hawaii longline permit holders may now apply to renew their permits online. PIRO rolled out online renewal for Hawaii longline limited access permits via the NMFS National Permit System in early 2014. PIRO mailed instructions and a unique Permit Access Code to all current permit holders that allows them to access only their permits. They may now review and update their permit information, and pay online with a credit card, debit card, or e-check. Some applicants have renewed their permits on the computers at the NMFS Honolulu Service Center at Pier 38. Applicants must still possess a current Protected Species Workshop certificate and provide a current USCG document to PIRO to complete the renewal. Through the end of August 2014, 33% of the Hawaii longline permits were renewed online. PIRO is working to make more permits available online.

PIRO issued ten additional American Samoa longline limited access permits in June 2014 (nine Class A and one Class C). These were permits that had not been renewed or had been returned to NMFS because they were not registered to a current vessel within 120 days. The total number of current American Samoa longline permits is 55 (out of 60). PIRO will announce the availability of additional permits soon. You may find more information on the National Permits System at [www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/fis/projects/permits.html](http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/fis/projects/permits.html).

## Pacific Islands Fishing Permits

(As of September 30, 2014. Current permit status, applications, and other information are available at [www.fpir.noaa.gov/SFD/SFD\\_permits\\_index.html](http://www.fpir.noaa.gov/SFD/SFD_permits_index.html).)

<i><b>Permit</b></i>	<i><b>Number</b></i>
<i><b>Pelagic</b></i>	
Hawaii longline (limited entry)	137 (of 164 available)
American Samoa longline (limited entry)	55 (of 60 available)
Western Pacific general longline	1
Receiving vessel	30
PRIA troll & handline	7
Pelagic squid jig	0
<i><b>Hawaii</b></i>	
MHI non-commercial bottomfish	4
Special coral reef ecosystem	0
Precious coral	1
Crustaceans	2 lobster, 7 shrimp
<i><b>American Samoa</b></i>	
Special coral reef ecosystem	0
Precious coral	0
Crustaceans	1 lobster, 1 shrimp
<i><b>Mariana Islands</b></i>	
GU large vessel bottomfish	2
NMI bottomfish	7
Special coral reef ecosystem	0
Precious coral	0
Crustaceans	0 lobster, 0 shrimp
<i><b>Pacific Remote Island Areas</b></i>	
Bottomfish	2
Special coral reef ecosystem	0
Precious corals	0
Crustaceans	0 lobster, 0 shrimp
<i><b>Monuments</b></i>	
Non-commercial and recreational charter	0

### Protected Resources

#### Hawaiian Monk Seal Critical Habitat Proposed Revision (ESA)

On July 9, 2008, NMFS received a petition from Center for Biological Diversity, Kahea, and the Ocean Conservancy to revise critical habitat for the Hawaiian monk seal. On June 12, 2009, NMFS published a 12 month finding announcing that a revision was warranted (74 FR 27988). On June 2, 2011, NMFS published a proposed rule to revise critical habitat for the Hawaiian monk seal by adding critical habitat in the main Hawaiian Islands and extending critical habitat in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (76 FR 32026). Public

comment periods were open for 150 days and six public hearings were held. NMFS continues to consider all public comments received and is working to ensure that any new information is incorporated and significant issues are addressed.

#### Eight Reef Fish Species Petition to List (ESA)

On September 14, 2012, NMFS received a petition from the Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) to list eight species of pomacentrid reef fish, including one orange clownfish and seven damselfish, as threatened or endangered under the ESA and that critical habitat be designated concurrently with any listing (one species is in the Caribbean and seven in the Pacific). The 90-day finding was statutorily due by December 13, 2012 to the maximum extent practicable. On September 25, 2013, NMFS received from CBD a 60-day Notice of Intent to sue for failure to issue a timely 90-day finding. On September 3, 2014, NMFS announced a 90-day finding (79 FR 52276) that the petition provided substantial information indicating the petitioned action may be warranted for one species, the orange clownfish (*Amphiprion percula*). NMFS found substantial information was not provided for the other six Indo-Pacific species. The finding therefore initiates a status review for the orange clownfish and solicits information on all aspects of its behavior, biology, threats, and demographics.

#### Humphead Wrasse Status Review (ESA)

On November 1, 2012, NMFS was petitioned by WildEarth Guardians to list the humphead wrasse (*Cheilinus undulatus*) as either endangered or threatened under the ESA. NMFS reviewed the petition and on February 28, 2013, announced that the petitioned action may be warranted (78 FR 13614). A 60-day public comment period was open until April 29, 2013, and eight comments were received. A status review of the species was conducted to inform the 12-month finding. A 60-day public comment period was open until April 29, 2013, and eight comments were received. A Not Warranted 12-month finding was published on September 26, 2014 (79 FR 57875).

#### Great Hammerhead Petition to List (ESA)

On December 21, 2012, NMFS was petitioned by WildEarth Guardians to list the great hammerhead shark (*Sphyrna mokarran*) as either endangered or threatened under the ESA. Petitioners also claim that if scalloped hammerheads are listed under the ESA, then the great hammerhead should be listed under the similarity of appearance clause of the ESA. NMFS received a second petition from Natural Resources Defense Council on March 15, 2013, to list the species. After reviewing the petitions and information, NMFS determined that the petitioned action may be warranted and published a positive 90-day finding on April 26, 2013 (78 FR 24701). Public comments were accepted until June 25, 2013. A status review of the species was conducted to inform the 12-month finding, which was statutorily due on December 21, 2013. On June 11, 2014, NMFS published a Not Warranted 12-month finding stating that no distinct population segments (DPSs) of the great hammerhead shark exist and the global species is not at risk of extinction and does not warrant listing under the ESA at this time (79 FR 33509).

### Green Turtle Status Review (ESA)

On February 15, 2012, NMFS and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) received a petition from the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs to classify the green sea turtle in Hawaii as a DPS and delist the DPS. On August 1, 2012, NMFS and USFWS published a 90-day finding that the petitioners presented substantial scientific and commercial information indicating that petitioned action may be warranted. A global status review of the species has been conducted and undergone peer review, and the agencies are in the process of drafting their finding.

### Humpback Whale Status Review (ESA)

On April 17, 2013, NMFS received a petition from the Hawaii Fishermen's Alliance for Conservation and Tradition, Inc. to delist the north Pacific population of humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*). After reviewing the petition and information in the files, NMFS determined that the petitioned action may be warranted and published a positive 90-day finding on August 29, 2013 (78 FR 53391). A status review of the species to determine if an endangered listing is still appropriate for the global taxon is being completed and will inform the 12-month finding.

### New ESA-MMPA Permit for Hawaiian Monk Seal Research and Recovery (including Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for NEPA compliance and Section 106 consultation for NHPA compliance):

On June 18, 2014, the NMFS Office of Protected Resources issued scientific research and enhancement Permit No. 16632-00 (under the ESA and MMPA) to the NMFS Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center (PIFSC) Hawaiian Monk Seal Research Program to carry out recovery actions on Hawaiian monk seals over a five year period. The new permit authorizes the PIFSC to carry out research and enhancement activities designed to conserve and recover the endangered Hawaiian monk seal. Activities are authorized on beaches and in nearshore waters throughout the Hawaiian Archipelago (Northwestern Hawaiian Islands and main Hawaiian Islands) and Johnston Atoll, and in facilities housing captive monk seals. The permit may be viewed online at <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/permits/monkseal16632.htm>. A Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) and Section 106 consultation were completed in compliance with NMFS' statutory obligation to fulfill the requirement of the National Environmental Policy Act and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. More information on the PEIS is available at: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/permits/eis/hawaiianmonkseal.htm>. Please note that this permit does not authorize any translocation option that involves taking seals born in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands and releasing them in the main Hawaiian Islands. The activities authorized in the permit are consistent with the Preferred Alternative (Alternative 3: Limited Translocation) in the Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for Hawaiian Monk Seal Recovery Actions.

### Hawaiian Monk Seal Recovery Team (ESA)

Under the authority of the ESA, PIRO has reconvened the Hawaiian Monk Seal Recovery Team with new organizational structure and revised membership to meet changing needs

for Hawaiian monk seal recovery implementation. The team is composed of 12 members who are not representative of any constituency, organization, or affiliation but were selected for and serve as individuals based on their own knowledge and experience. The team will continue to serve in an advisory capacity to NMFS and will primarily assist with and advise on aspects of the development and implementation of the Hawaiian Monk Seal Recovery Plan and other associated program planning and guidance documents (e.g., new ESA-MMPA permit and PEIS, Main Hawaiian Islands Monk Seal Management Plan, etc.). The first meeting of the new team was held on August 27-28, 2014 at Pier 38 in Honolulu, HI. The objectives of the first meeting included team introductions, orientation to the current Hawaiian monk seal recovery program, discussion of the team role and tasks, and discussion of overarching issues in the draft Main Hawaiian Islands Monk Seal Management Plan. A summary of the meeting's discussions will be available once the team submits it to PIRO.

#### Main Hawaiian Islands Hawaiian Monk Seal Management Plan (ESA)

The Hawaiian Monk Seal Recovery Plan (2007) directs NMFS to create a Main Hawaiian Islands (MHI) Hawaiian Monk Seal Management Plan that addresses the full scope of monk seal management needs in the MHI. The MHI Hawaiian Monk Seal Management Plan will serve as a non-regulatory guiding document to the Hawaiian Monk Seal Recovery Program and partners. Since 2012, NMFS has held a variety of agency and stakeholder workshops, focus groups, and individual meetings with community members and stakeholders to develop and refine issues and strategies for Hawaiian monk seal management in the MHI. PIRO has and will continue to engage important groups, such as fishermen, ocean safety, law enforcement, partner agency staff, and the Hawaiian Monk Seal Recovery Team in the development of the plan. NMFS is currently reviewing the plan, including coordination with DLNR (as the primary partner with statutory authority to manage monk seals in the MHI), in preparation for public availability and review by additional partners. A draft version of the plan is expected to be completed and released by late 2014 or early 2015.

#### Sea Turtle Recovery Program (ESA)

The Sea Turtle Management and Conservation Program continues to provide oversight and support to multiple projects which implement priority activities of the U.S. Sea Turtle Recovery Plans. Sea turtle recovery-based projects are ongoing in Hawaii, the territories, and other parts of the Pacific. In FY14, 12 projects received funding. These efforts include sea turtle fishery bycatch mitigation research, sea turtle research and conservation, and community educational outreach and public management projects. PIRO also continues to implement the "Fishing Around Sea Turtles" program. This is a multi-agency program that includes NOAA, the State of Hawaii (including the Division of Conservation and Resource Enforcement), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Council. The program provides mitigation options to recreational hook-and-line fishers through practical fishing tips, increased awareness, and best practice suggestions to reduce injury to sea turtles following an accidental interaction. For additional information, visit: [http://www.fpir.noaa.gov/PRD/prd\\_fishing\\_around\\_sea\\_turtles.html](http://www.fpir.noaa.gov/PRD/prd_fishing_around_sea_turtles.html).

### Deep-set Longline Biological Opinion (ESA)

On June 5, 2013 PIRO began the Section 7 ESA consultation on the deep-set longline fishery. The triggers for reinitiating included the newly listed Main Hawaiian Islands insular false killer whale DPS and an interaction with a sperm whale. On September 19, 2014 the non-jeopardy biological opinion for eight ESA listed species was completed including an incidental take statement (ITS) for the eight species.

### Negligible Impact Determination (NID) (MMPA)

On June 12, 2014 (79 FR 33726), NMFS proposed to issue a permit under MMPA section 101(a)(5)(E) to vessels registered in the Hawaii deep-set longline fishery to incidentally take individuals from the Central North Pacific (CNP) stock of humpback whales, the Hawaii stock of sperm whales, and the Main Hawaiian Islands Insular stock of false killer whales (MHI IFKW) under section 101 (a)(5)(E) of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA). NMFS solicited comments on the proposal to issue a permit and on the draft NID and received comments from the Marine Mammal Commission (MMC), non-governmental organizations (The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) on behalf of themselves and the National Resources Defense Council (NRDC), Earthjustice on behalf of the Center for Biological Diversity and Turtle Island Restoration Network, Cascadia Research Collective (CRC), the Hawaii Longline Association (HLA)), the Western Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Council (Council), and three individuals. NMFS anticipates the final NID and permit to be completed in October 2014.

### Hawaii False Killer Whale Take Reduction (MMPA)

Section 118(f)(1) of the MMPA requires NMFS to establish a Take Reduction Team (TRT) to develop a Take Reduction Plan (TRP) designed to assist in the recovery or prevent the depletion of each strategic stock of marine mammals. In January 2010, a TRT was established to address the bycatch of Hawaii pelagic and Main Hawaiian Islands insular false killer whales in the Hawaii-based deep-set and shallow-set longline fisheries. On July 18, 2011, NMFS published a proposed rule to implement a False Killer Whale Take Reduction Plan, based on the TRT's recommendations. The final rule published in the Federal Register on November 29, 2012 (77 FR 71260). All regulations became effective December 31, 2012 except for gear requirements for the deep-set fishery, which went into effect February 27, 2013. The Take Reduction Plan includes a "Southern Exclusion Zone" (SEZ), which will be closed to deep-set longline fishing if there are two observed false killer whale serious injuries or mortalities in the fishery inside the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone around Hawaii in a single year. Full-Team teleconferences were held in March 2013 and April 2014 in response to observed false killer whale serious injuries in the deep-set fishery that counted toward the Southern Exclusion Zone trigger in 2013 and 2014. A closure of the Southern Exclusion Zone was not triggered in 2013 and has not been triggered in 2014 to date.

## **Habitat Conservation Division**

### **Pacific Islands Region Habitat Blueprint**

NOAA Pacific Islands Region Habitat Blueprint Focus Areas obtained funding from NMFS Office of Habitat Conservation for a third party to implement efforts in West Hawaii and Manell-Geus Guam starting October 2014. Additionally, in July 2014 the Director of NMFS Office of Habitat Conservation made a site visit to the West Hawaii focus areas and accompanied the Habitat Blueprint co-chairs (two) to the Manell-Geus to meet with a cross section of partners to facilitate building an implementation plan. These meetings were well received and provided significant insight to the opportunities for this effort. NOAA intends to internally define how each of the NOAA offices will contribute to the two focus areas while also reaching out to Federal, State, non-profit, and community entities to form an integrated and collaborative effort. In August 2014, the NOAA Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, Eileen Sobeck, made a site visit to the West Hawaii focus area along with the Nature Conservancy and NOAA partners. During their visit, they met with a variety of communities working in the area. NOAA also met with Council staff in July 2014 to provide an update on the Blueprint and to continue to define opportunities where efforts can be partnered or supported in both focus areas.

PIRO chaired the 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Hawaii Conservation Conference at the Convention Center from July 15-17, 2014. The Conference theme was Navigating Change in the Pacific Islands and hosted the largest participation in the history of this annual event, featuring over 1300 participants.

PIRO participated in the Coral Reef Task Force meeting hosted in Maui in August and continues to lead multiple efforts in advancing the Federal coral reef compensatory mitigation and offset protocols.

### **Hawaii**

PIRO continues to work with the State on a number of essential fish habitat (EFH) consultations on harbor improvement. Fisheries Extension has focused on a variety of fisheries community education and support activities.

### **CNMI**

PIRO provided staff support to conduct and analyze the coral reef resilience survey and assessment work in Rota, Tinian, and Saipan, as well as EFH consultation and review of the DoD Mariana Islands Training Testing. Also, CNMI staff provided support to the CNMI Joint Military Training efforts with the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Marines. Staff also provided technical assistance for vessel grounding removal on Saipan.

### **Guam**

PIRO provided technical assistance for the response and salvage of a grounded fishing vessel in Coco's Barrier reef, on a whale stranding, and continued to expand the Guam Community Coral Reef Monitoring Program sites and partners. Also, Guam staff provided support for the Habitat Blueprint Initiative. NMFS continues to provide technical evaluation of the supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for proposed military building and is coordinating review with the U.S. Navy.

### American Samoa

PIRO is partnering toward improving conservation and management in Pala Lagoon, and Nu'uuli project (CRCP funded project) and community resilience efforts in Aunu'u and Vatia.

PIRO continues to manage a variety of EFH project reviews and assist in refining the fisheries local action strategy.

### U.S. Army Kwajalein Atoll (USAKA)

PIRO continues to work under the USAKA Environmental standards, completing environmental reviews, as well as, coral consultations.

### **International Fisheries**

PIRO participated in the third meeting of the technical drafting group for the renegotiation of the South Pacific Tuna Treaty in July 2014 in Honiara, Solomon Islands. In May, the fourth meeting of the technical drafting group was held in Auckland, New Zealand along with the 12<sup>th</sup> negotiation session. The next meeting of the technical drafting group and the 13<sup>th</sup> negotiation session was held on October 3-4, 2014 in Honolulu, Hawaii.

PIRO attended the 87<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) July 14-18, 2014 in Lima, Peru. The IATTC decided to maintain the provisions of the current tropical tuna measure, and amended the resolutions on a vessel monitoring system (VMS) and the regional vessel register. Effective January 1, 2016, vessels that are at least 100 gross tons or 100 gross registered tons must have an International Maritime Organization or Lloyd's Register number. A continuation of the 87<sup>th</sup> meeting of the IATTC will be held October 27-29, 2014 followed by an extraordinary meeting October 31-November 1, 2014 in La Jolla, CA.

The 14<sup>th</sup> meeting of the International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific Ocean (ISC) was held from July 16-21, 2014 in Taipei, Chinese Taipei. The ISC completed stock assessments for North Pacific albacore, Pacific Bluefin tuna, North Pacific swordfish, and North Pacific blue shark. For North Pacific albacore and north Pacific blue shark, current fishing mortality rates are below fishing mortality rates at maximum sustainable yield (MSY) and biomass is above biomass at MSY. Additionally for North Pacific albacore, fishing mortality is below the adopted interim reference point ( $F_{SSB-ATHL}/F_{MSY} = 0.72$ ) for this stock. For Pacific bluefin tuna, fishing mortality remains above fishing mortality at MSY and biomass is below biomass at MSY. The stock assessment for North Pacific swordfish split the assessment into two stocks, a western Pacific and an eastern Pacific stock. For north Pacific swordfish in the western Pacific, average harvest rates are below harvest rates at MSY and average biomass is greater than biomass at MSY. For the north Pacific swordfish in the eastern Pacific, latest harvest levels are greater than harvest levels at MSY, but average biomass is still greater than biomass at MSY.

PIRO staff participated in the 10th regular session of the WCPFC Scientific Committee, August 6-14, 2014 in Majuro, Republic of Marshall Islands. In addition to reviewing the ISC stock assessments, the Scientific Committee also reviewed stock assessments for bigeye, yellowfin and skipjack tuna. The stock assessment for bigeye indicated that fishing mortality exceeds fishing mortality at MSY, biomass levels are less than biomass levels at MSY and the Commission's Limit Reference Point has been breached. The stock assessments for yellowfin and skipjack indicated that fishing levels were less than fishing mortality at MSY and biomass levels were greater than biomass levels at MSY.

PIRO staff also attended the 10th regular session of the WCPFC Northern Committee (NC) September 1-4, 2014 in Fukuoka, Japan. The NC recommended a new Pacific bluefin tuna measure, which sets effort and catch limits indefinitely, for consideration by the WCPFC at its next regular session in December 2014. The NC also recommended that the WCPFC adopt specific elements of a management framework for North Pacific albacore, including a limit reference point for stock size.

PIRO staff participated in the 10<sup>th</sup> regular session of the Technical and Compliance Committee of the WCPFC September 25-30, 2014, in Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Scientific Committee Meeting of the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organization October 1-7, 2014 in Honolulu, Hawaii, and a meeting of the Permanent Advisory Committee to advise the U.S. Section (Commissioners and Department of State) to the WCPFC October 6-7, 2014, in Honolulu, Hawaii. PIRO staff plan to attend the 11<sup>th</sup> regular session of the WCPFC December 1-5, 2014, in Apia, Samoa.

### **Observer Program**

The coverage for 2014 (through September 2014) for the Deep Set fishery was 21.4%, and for the Shallow Set fishery was 100% with 58 departures observed, and 17 observed deployments out of California. The coverage for the American Samoa Fishery was 16.9%. The next observer training class is scheduled for January 2015. During 2013, 6,472 sea days were observed in the deep set fishery by observers, 1,641 sea days were observed in the shallow set fishery, and 774 days were observed in the American Samoa fishery. To date in 2014, 4,973 sea days were observed in the deep set fishery by observers, 2,083 sea days were observed in the shallow set fishery, and 460 sea days were observed in the American Samoa fishery.

The Program provided observer training and a project description for capacity building work for the NOAA-Republic of Korea Joint Project Agreement.

The Program participated on a conference with Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Ambassador Nina Hachigian in Jakarta. This call served to inform the ambassador about which US offices address issues related to Southeast Asian fisheries, aquaculture, and ocean conservation and management. Food security and illegal, unregulated, and unreported (IUU) fishing were two main topics of the phone call.

The Program held a one week workshop, from September 22-26, to help Indonesia build capacity to manage their nascent fishery observer programs. This workshop was part of on-

going NOAA-USAID collaborations in Indonesia. Eight people from three different Indonesian fisheries management offices were in attendance. The workshop focused on three main topics: program policies, data handling and reporting, and a review of Indonesia's efforts and experiences regarding observer training.

The Program always participates in the quarterly fishing vessel Owners Meeting hosted by U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

## **Marine National Monuments Program**

### **Marianas Trench Marine National Monument**

The 10<sup>th</sup> Marianas Trench Monument Advisory Council meeting was held on Tinian Island, September 16, 2014. The purpose of the meeting was to: provide response to action items from previous meeting; provide general updates on agency activities, support annual in-person collaboration between MTMAC members, NOAA, and USFWS managers; and allow for public participation in the Monument planning process.

At the meeting, USFWS provided updates on three permits issued for research in the Monument and progress of the draft Monument management plan and environmental assessment. NOAA provided updates on: 2014 climate change and marine invasive species grants awarded; forthcoming PIFSC Marianas Archipelago cruises, research, and science plans in development; and the Saipan, Tinian, and Rota meetings planned for the MTMAC to solicit recommendations from the public on the future proposed Monument visitor center. Action items reported on included the status of the Maug vessel grounding and pending active enforcement investigation as well as a discussion on the legal authorities used to establish the two National Wildlife Refuges within the Monument.

During 2014, the MTMAC established a visitor center working group and five subcommittees to prepare initial recommendations to NOAA and USFWS regarding the type/purpose, location, potential funding sources, and operational management of the visitor center. The MTMAC solicited input from the CNMI community on their initial recommendations to the federal agencies. A total of 51 individuals attended the three sessions (Saipan, Rota, and Tinian) with 207 individual responses, 46 consensus responses, and 39 group responses received. The MTMAC will incorporate these comments with their initial recommendations in a final report to be submitted to NOAA and USFWS in December.

### **Pacific Remote Islands Area Marine National Monument**

On September 24, 2014, President Obama announced his plans to expand the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument to approximately 370,000 square nautical miles using the Antiquities Act. On September 29, 2014, Presidential Proclamation 9137 was published in the Federal Register, codifying this Presidential order. The expanded Monument includes the entire EEZ at Wake, Johnston, and Jarvis Islands, and includes a prohibition on commercial fishing in this expanded area. The Monument area at Howland,

Baker, and Palmyra Islands and Kingman reef remains the same. PIRO, PIFSC, and USFWS will be working to implement the Proclamation requirements.

#### Rose Atoll Marine National Monument

PIRO staff met with representatives from NOAA, NOS, USFWS, ASDOC, and ASDMWR on August 26 – 27, 2014, at the Tauese P.F. Sunia Ocean Center in Pago Pago, American Samoa for the most recent quarterly meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee for Rose Atoll MNM. The meeting was an opportunity for the Monument managers to share information on current and future research projects and outreach activities and to identify potential areas of collaboration related to the Monument.

#### Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument

Five applications for work in the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument (PMNM) were submitted for the September 1, 2014 deadline. Permit application totals for 2014 are as follows:

- 13 Conservation and Management (6 issued, 2 withdrawn)
- 16 Research (13 issued)
- 6 Special Ocean Use (1 issued, 5 withdrawn)
- 3 Native Hawaiian Practices (3 issued)
- 1 Recreational Activities - allowed only at Midway Atoll (1 withdrawn)
- 2 Education

Three permit amendments were also submitted and approved. All submitted PMNM permit applications are reviewed by PIRO to ensure compliance with regulations pursuant to the Endangered Species Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act, and Magnuson Stevens Act.