



165th Meeting of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council

March 15-17, 2016

Laniakea YWCA, Fuller Hall, Honolulu, HI 96813

Synopsis

WPRFMC Fishery Ecosystem Plan Revisions (ACTION ITEM)

At the 164th meeting, Council staff provided the revised FEPs for to the Council to approve the new management policy and goals; the revised plan objectives; and the transition to a “living plan.” These revisions are technical and administrative in nature and do not change the current regulatory or management regime. While the new (or revised) plan objectives will influence future management activities, those actions will be subject to agency review per the standard review process. Council members indicated they were satisfied that the revised plans substantially addressed the major issues discovered in the year-long management plan review.

PIRO provided “critical elements” review comments regarding the Pelagic FEP on December 15, 2015. Council staff used these comments to improve all five FEPs and sent those drafts to PIRO on January 15th to initiate formal agency review of the revised plans.

On February 16th PIRO informed Council staff that the nature of the modifications to the FEPs (administrative adjustments rather than changes to how the fisheries are managed or regulated) probably mean that most of the changes are eligible to be categorically excluded from NEPA analysis. However, a final determination has not been made at the time of this writing. PIRO staff also suggested at that meeting some minor revisions to the FEP objectives may be in order, so as to avoid being too directive or proscriptive. Since the Council, at its 164th meeting, voted on the revised FEP objectives as presented by Council staff, the action at the 165th meeting is to:

1. Review and approve (or suggest modification to) minor changes to the FEP objectives based on PIRO comments, and;
2. Direct staff to, when appropriate, transmit the revised FEPs for Secretarial approval.

FEP Action Synopsis Enclosures

Table 1. MAIN OBJECTIVES

Approved Revised Objectives (from 164th Council Meeting)	Proposed Revisions to Objectives Based on PIRO SFD Comments
Support Fishing Communities	No suggested change
Prevent Overfishing on Council-managed Stocks	Prevent Overfishing while Achieving on a Continual Basis the Optimum Yield from Each Fishery
Improve Fishery Monitoring and Data Collection	No suggested change
Promote Compliance	No suggested change
Reduce Bycatch and Minimize Interactions and Impacts to Protected Species to the Extent Practicable	No suggested change
Refine and Minimize Impacts to Essential Fish Habitat	Refine Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Designations and Minimize Impacts to EFH
Increase Traditional and Local Knowledge in Decision-making	No suggested change
Rebuild Overfished Stocks	No suggested change
Consider the Implications of Spatial Management Arrangements in Council Decision-making	No suggested change
Consider the Implications of Climate Change in Council Decision-making	No suggested change

Table 2. SUBOBJECTIVES (*indicates a potential modification)

Objective	Approved Revised Objectives (from 164th Council Meeting)	Proposed Revisions to Objectives Based on PIRO SFD Comments
1a	Identify the various social and economic groups within the region's fishing communities and their interconnections.	Identify the various social and economic groups within the region's fishing communities and their interconnections.
1b *	Ensure that regulations designed to meet conservation objectives are written to be as minimally-constraining as possible.	Ensure that regulations designed to meet conservation objectives do not unnecessarily constrain fishing operations.
1c	Select alternatives that minimize adverse economic impacts to fishing communities when possible.	Select management alternatives that minimize adverse economic impacts to fishing communities when possible.
1d *	Eliminate regulations that are no longer necessary (i.e., eliminate access barriers).	Identify and consider removing conservation and management measures that are no longer necessary or ineffective in meeting management goals and objectives.
1e *	Increase communication between fishery sectors.	Increase communication between the Council and the various fishery sectors.
1f	Support fishery development, training and processing opportunities.	Support fishery development, training and processing opportunities.
1g	Support projects, programs and policies that increase sustainable fishing opportunities.	Support projects, programs and policies that increase sustainable fishing opportunities.
2a *	Develop status determination criteria for all stocks and stock complexes in the fisheries.	Develop status determination criteria for all stocks and stock complexes that require conservation and management.
2b *	Monitor fisheries to understand when overfishing may be close to occurring.	Monitor fisheries to understand when overfishing is occurring and when a stock may be approaching an overfished condition.
3a *	Increase the number of fishery ecosystem elements being monitored.	Increase the number of fishery ecosystem parameters being monitored.
3b	Improve the timeliness of data availability.	Improve the timeliness of data availability.
3c	Improve the quantity and quality of relevant fishery data.	Improve the quantity and quality of relevant fishery data.
3d	Encourage research to improve precision of data regarding protected species populations and distributions.	Encourage research to improve precision of data regarding protected species populations and distributions.
3e	Increase research coordination between the Council, the state, and federal agencies.	Increase research coordination between the Council, the state, and federal agencies.
3f	Increase the quality and quantity of monitoring and enforcement data through improved technology.	Increase the quality and quantity of monitoring and enforcement data through improved technology.
4a	Understand factors that may result in non-compliance.	Understand factors that may result in non-compliance.
4b *	Consider ways to develop or increase buy-in from affected parties.	Consider and develop ways to increase compliance with fishing regulations.
4c *	Ensure that regulations are written and implemented so as to be easy to follow and enforce.	Ensure that regulations are written and implemented so they are easy to follow and enforce, to the extent possible.

4d	Develop codes of conduct specific to individual fisheries.	Develop codes of conduct specific to individual fisheries.
5a *	Promote viable methods and technologies that may reduce interactions with seabirds, marine mammals, sea turtles, corals, and other protected species.	Promote the development and use of viable methods and technologies that may reduce interactions with seabirds, marine mammals, sea turtles, corals, and other protected species.
5b	Increase fishermen's knowledge about protected species issues and regulations and ways to minimize interactions.	Increase fishermen's knowledge about protected species issues and regulations and ways to minimize interactions.
5c *	Continue to work with federal and state agencies to protect relevant threatened and endangered species.	Continue to work with federal and state agencies to protect threatened and endangered species that are relevant to Council-managed fisheries and Council-identified fishing communities.
5d *	Encourage programs to obtain or improve information regarding the status of relevant threatened or endangered species.	Encourage programs to obtain or improve information regarding the status of threatened or endangered species that are relevant to Council-managed fisheries and Council-identified fishing communities.
5e *	Encourage research that examines whether and to what extent bycatch is an issue in the fisheries covered by this management plan.	Encourage research to understand and reduce bycatch to the extent practicable in Council-managed fisheries.
6a *	Review and update EFH and HAPC designations on regular schedule (5-years) based on the best available scientific information of a higher EFH level than was used for the original designation.	Regularly review EFH and HAPC designations and update such designations based on the best available scientific information, when available.
6b *	Identify and prioritize research to: assess adverse impacts to EFH and HAPC from fishing and non-fishing activities, including, but not limited to, offshore energy developments, aquaculture, and mining; and activities that introduce non-point source pollution into the coastal environment.	Identify and prioritize research to: assess adverse impacts to EFH and HAPC from fishing (including aquaculture) and non-fishing activities, including, but not limited to, offshore energy developments, and mining; and activities that introduce non-point source pollution into the coastal environment.
7a	Identify relevant indigenous and local practices and knowledge that may improve scientific inquiry regarding Council-managed fisheries.	Identify relevant indigenous and local practices and knowledge that may improve scientific inquiry regarding Council-managed fisheries.
7b	Utilize cultural practitioners, concepts, and bodies in the analysis of management alternatives.	Utilize cultural practitioners, concepts, and bodies in the analysis of management alternatives.
7c	Utilize fishermen knowledge in the analysis of management alternatives.	Consider fishermen's knowledge when analyzing management alternatives.
8a *	Maintain the <i>Hancock Seamounts Ecosystem Area</i> .	Consider maintaining the <i>Hancock Seamounts Ecosystem Area</i> until best scientific information available indicates a management action is in order.

8b *	Maintain the fishing moratorium within the Hancock Seamounts Ecosystem Area, until surveys show that the armorhead stock has been rebuilt.	Consider maintaining the fishing moratorium within the Hancock Seamounts Ecosystem Area, until surveys show that the armorhead stock has been rebuilt.
8c	Participate in international conservation and management efforts to rebuild armorhead stocks.	Participate in international conservation and management efforts to rebuild armorhead stocks.
8d *	Identify research priorities for armorhead and other relevant species within the Hancock Seamounts Ecosystem Area.	Identify research priorities for armorhead and other species as determined appropriate within the Hancock Seamounts Ecosystem Area.
9a *	Identify and prioritize research that examines the positive and negative consequences of current no-take fishing areas to fisheries, fishery ecosystems, and fishermen, such as the Bottomfish Fishing Restricted Areas, military installations, NWHI restrictions, and Marine Life Conservation Districts.	Identify and prioritize research that examines the positive and negative consequences of areas that restrict or prohibit fishing to fisheries, fishery ecosystems, and fishermen, such as the Bottomfish Fishing Restricted Areas, military installations, NWHI restrictions, and Marine Life Conservation Districts.
9b *	Consider whether the goals of any spatial-based fishing restrictions proposed in federal waters appear to be achievable.	Recommend removing.
9c	Establish effective spatially-based fishing zones.	Establish effective spatially-based fishing zones.
9d *	Remove spatial-based fishing restrictions that are no longer necessary.	Consider modifying or removing spatial-based fishing restrictions that are no longer necessary or ineffective in meeting their management objectives.
*		Recommend adding: As needed, periodically evaluating the management effectiveness of existing spatial-based fishing zones in federal waters.
10a *	Identify and prioritize research that examines the effects of climate change on Council-managed fisheries and fishing communities.	Identify and prioritize research that examines the effects of climate change on fishing communities and fisheries covered by this management plan.
10b *	Ensure climate change considerations are incorporated into the analysis of management alternatives.	Consider the potential effects of climate change in the analysis of management alternatives.
10c *	Monitor climate-change related variables via the Council's Annual Reports.	Identify and monitor climate-change related variables via the Council's Annual Reports.
10d *	Engage in climate change outreach with US Pacific Islands communities.	Engage in outreach and communication activities with US Pacific Islands communities related to fisheries.