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Micronesia

Saving Sushi



The Conservancy is helping Pacific Islanders maintain the last stronghold for tuna and protect species that are the unintended victims of tuna fishing.

Yellowfin (also sold as ahi) and bigeye tuna are in crisis. If you are trying to place how you recognize these species, look no further than the menu at [your local sushi restaurant](#).

Sixty percent of the world's annual tuna catch, valued at \$7 billion, is harvested in the waters of 16 island nations in the Pacific Ocean, including Palau which owns and manages five percent of these waters. This is the last stronghold of global tuna stocks in an industry that is overfished and provides modest revenues to the local countries where fish are caught.

HOOKED, LINE AND SUNK

Overfishing — which is already occurring for bigeye tuna — could lead to the imminent collapse of Pacific tuna fisheries.

Many fishing practices, especially in the longline fisheries that target these two species, result in significant bycatch of sea turtles, sharks, rays, dolphins and seabirds.

Here's what's been reported in Palau's longline tuna fisheries alone:

- One out of every 10 fish catches snag silky sharks instead of tuna.
- Scientist extrapolate that around 3,500 olive ridley sea turtles were caught as bycatch in one year.

Sadly, most of these bycaught creatures are severely injured—or simply not returned to the sea.



REVITALIZING TUNA FISHERIES IN THE PACIFIC

Building on our successful fisheries reform projects in California and Maine--and beginning in Palau where the Conservancy has a longstanding presence, we will demonstrate a new model for fisheries management that will enable island nations across the Pacific to exercise more control over their fishery resources to provide better environmental and economic outcomes for Pacific Islanders.

Because foreign fleets dominate the regional fishery, less than 10 percent of the value of the tuna is returned to the local government and to the people who are the resource owners.

At the invitation of the government of Palau, the Conservancy evaluated the country's tuna fisheries and made recommendations on how to improve their economic and environmental performance.

As a result, the Conservancy is working closely to execute a longline fishery with a market-based approach called a Vessel Day Scheme that will cap the overall fishing effort to levels consistent with healthy tuna stocks.

Our other actions include:

- **Establishing conservation standards** for longline fishing vessels, including increasing human observers and implementing electronic monitoring on fishing boats to better document and reduce bycatch and changing hook and bait types to minimise bycatch.
- Building a durable, cost-effective surveillance, monitoring and enforcement program to help **reduce illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing**.
- Establishing **Fishery Improvement Projects (FIPs)** to bring tuna fisheries up to the sustainability criteria of the Marine Stewardship Council, an international nonprofit that creates standards and provides market recognition for sustainably sourced products. FIPs bring together multiple fishery stakeholders improve fishing practices and management systems.

Success here will serve as a model for replicating these crucial fishery reforms throughout the region, with the goal of maintaining this last stronghold of tuna and saving other species from being caught unnecessarily. We see this as an important way to improve financial and environmental outcomes for people and nature across the Pacific, around the globe—and in your local sushi restaurant.

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