



**WESTERN  
PACIFIC  
REGIONAL  
FISHERY  
MANAGEMENT  
COUNCIL**

## **Report of the American Samoa Archipelago FEP**

### **Advisory Panel Meeting**

Friday, September 23, 2016,

4:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.

Pacific Petroleum Conference Room

Utulei Village, Tutuila, American Samoa

### **1. Welcome and Introductions**

Advisory Panel Chair, Krista Corry, called the meeting to order and welcomed the members as well as Council family and the members of the public who attended. Members who attended the meeting were Chair Krista Corry, Isaiah Hunkin, and Gordon Yamasaki of the Pelagic Subpanel, and Mac Aveina of the Ecosystem and Habitat Subpanel. Alternate Allen Snow also attended the meeting.

Council family attendees were Plan Team members Tepora Lavatai and Peter Eves of Department of Marine and Wildlife Department (DMWR), and MAFAC member for American Samoa, Henry Sesepasara.

There was one member of the public in attendance, Vaitinasa Dr. Salu Hunkin, Director of Education and candidate for American Samoa's Congressional Delegate seat.

### **2. Outstanding Council Action Items**

The Council's Island Coordinator for American Samoa discussed the one main outstanding action item, which is the pending resolution of the shark law conflict that the Advisory Panel members were tasked with engaging both the DMWR staff as well as the Governor's Legal Counsel. Members of the Island Fisheries subpanel have volunteered to meet with Legal Counsel Alema Leota and discuss the implementation of the draft legislation he has created to resolve the conflict and have the local statute match the federal law, which is having whole shark landings legal. Gordon Yamasaki reminded the members that WPCFC has a ban on two shark species – silky and oceanic white tip sharks. The action will be tabled pending return of the Island Fisheries subpanel members.

### **3. Council Issues**

#### ***A. 2017 U.S. Territory Bigeye Tuna Limits***

The American Samoa Island Coordinator presented slides from the Council staff on the 2017 US Territory Bigeye Tuna Limits. Members were given a summary of the background of the Territory Limits, including an overview of Amendment 7 and a history of the previous two limits that were used, 2,000 metric tons as the limit, with 1,000 metric tons transferable. The presentation provided three options for members to consider – keeping the status quo of 2,000 mt with 1,000 mt transferable, increasing the transferable limit to 2,000 mt while maintaining the existing overall limit, and lastly increasing both the limit and the amount transferable.

#### ***B. Council Coral Reef Projects***

A PowerPoint presentation was provided by the American Samoa Island Coordinator on the proposed themes, priorities and projects for the Coral Reef Conservation Program (CRCP). Members were given a background of the CRCP and previous projects in the different island areas. Also provided was an overview of the 2017 – 2019 funding opportunity's program priorities, grant themes, and proposed projects. Members were asked to consider the listed items and decide if they agreed with what was listed, and also if there were any items they felt were missing or unnecessary.

#### ***4. Update on Council Projects in American Samoa***

##### **A. Data Collection Projects**

Fishery data collection projects ongoing in American Samoa include the seafood vendor data collection efforts, spearheaded by AP member, Mac Aveina and the DMWR staff, under the supervision of Plan Team member, Tepora Lavatai. The project takes market data from local vendors regarding fish purchased and fish sold. The other ongoing data collection effort is the Creel survey collection, carried out by DMWR.

##### **B. Fishery Development Projects**

A brief update was provided on the longline dock project. Members were given a history of the collaboration between the local government (through the Port Administration) and the Council to provide a dedicated longline dock for the Territory. Also included in the summary were details of the type of support provided by Council financially to conduct a feasibility study and begin the process of hiring a contractor to develop the plans for the longline dock construction. The question was raised about the commitment of the American Samoa Government to fund the actual construction and the source of the money to be used for the project. The coordinator shared that the Port Administration staff had indicated that Capital Improvement Project (CIP) funds were identified by the local government as the designated source of funding to construct the longline dock.

The Fagatogo Fish Market was also discussed during the meeting and the inability of the local government to successfully utilize the fish market as it was intended. The members discussed how the market has been run only as a private business and the original vision of having a local fishermen's cooperative run the market and share costs with support of the government has never been realized. Previous managers were described as having been unable to cover the costs required for rent and operations and that was why two managers gave up on operating the fish market. Details of the award of the lease to the Tautai O Samoa Longline Association were also discussed as further evidence that the government's demands are unreasonable. It was reported that the Department of Commerce required nearly \$2,000 in monthly rent as well as an insurance policy in excess of \$1M from the Tautai O Samoa Association as terms of their operation of the fish market. This was given as the reason for the association rescinding their proposal to operate the market. The coordinator provided a brief update on the reported plans of the Department of Commerce to lease the market to a new manager in the near future, and also that it will once again be operated as a business as opposed to a fishermen's cooperative run by a group of fishermen or one of the local fishing associations.

#### **5. American Samoa FEP Community Activities**

An update was given on the local government's efforts to assist some of the local fishermen in marketing and having a venue for selling their catch. Plan Team member and event coordinator, Tepora Lavatai was asked to brief the members on the American Samoa

Departments of Marine and Wildlife Resources and Commerce recent event titled “Local Fishermen Day Amerika Samoa”. She stated that the goal was to showcase some of these local fishermen to the communities, and was planned by the two departments to assist some of the local fishermen with making the public aware that fresh fish is available to purchase from fishermen of the alia and spear fishing fisheries. The event was held in the Department of Marine and Wildlife parking lot and local fishermen were invited to sell their catch to the public. A large quantity of fish was sold that morning – one alia owner sold over \$1,000 before the first hour of the event was done. Seafood vendors from the business community were also invited to participate in the event. Lavatai also indicated that both departments touted the event as being a highly successful one, and the fishermen have already asked for the event to be a regular occurrence. She also said that the event will now be held every first and third Saturday of the month to meet the demand of both the fishermen and the consumers.

## **6. American Samoa FEP AP Issues**

### **A. Report of the Subpanels**

#### ***i. Island Fisheries Subpanel***

There were no members present from the Island Fisheries Subpanel at the meeting so issues were not discussed.

#### ***ii. Pelagic Fisheries Subpanel***

Chair Krista Corry reported to the AP on the recent Longline Association meeting and the idea of having a recommendation regarding US flag fishing vessels in the Pacific having a unique designation for their tuna. This would put a greater emphasis on US caught fish to help the fleet. Military and school contracts were mentioned as existing agreements, but she asked if there could be a recommendation to look into a specific designation.

#### ***iii. Ecosystems and Habitat Subpanel***

Mac Aveina reported there were no new updates from the Ecosystem and Habitat Subpanel since the last meeting.

#### ***iv. Indigenous Fishing Rights Subpanel***

There were no members present from the Indigenous Fishing Rights Subpanel.

### **B. Other Issues**

There were no other issues.

## **7. Public Comment**

Regarding the CRCP presentation, Henry Sesepasara suggested adding alamea (crown of thorn starfish) eradication on the list of projects. During discussion, it was pointed out that there is an ongoing collaborative effort by the local government and other federal agencies in American Samoa (National Park Service and NMSAS) and that the alamea removal fits under some of the listed priorities of the CRCP proposed items already.

Sesepasara also shared with the AP that an agreement had been reached between the American Samoa Government and the Hawaii Longline Association (HLA) for the transfer of bigeye tuna quota for the amount of \$100K. He also shared that he had been the chief negotiator for the agreement with members of the HLA.

Regarding the Fagatogo Fish Market, Henry Seseapasara commented on the need to have Public Health inspectors crackdown on roadside fish selling as it is a health issue. Also he said the Government needs to subsidize the fish market with the market to make it feasible for the fishermen to take over the market. Members added that there is no marketing strategy and that the market hasn't been utilized properly thus far. Vaitinasa also added that with the push to promote a healthier life style, that the market could be better used to provide that location for fresh seafood products to be sold to the public.

Both Vaitinasa and Seseapasara also chimed in on IUU fishing and the unlevelled playing field that our US tuna fishery is dealing with in the Pacific as other countries are not nearly as highly regulated as ours. Seseapasara brought up a global effort to snuff out IUU fishing. Peter Eves added that IUU fishing is problematic when you look at the closures that don't prevent IUU fishing in the Pacific, but cripple our US fisheries viability.

## **8. Discussion and Recommendations**

The American Samoa FEP Advisory Panel made the following recommendations:

### **A. Regarding the bigeye quota specification 2017, the American Samoa Advisory Panel recommends that the limit for American Samoa be set at 3,000mt with 2,000mt transferable.**

The members discussed the 2017 bigeye quota specification and the unanimous consensus was that the quota should be increased as well as the transferable amount in an effort to provide more funding for the territory's fisheries development capability. The suggestion was made that both the limit of 2,000 metric tons and 1,000 metric tons be increased by 1,000 metric tons. Gordon Yamasaki suggested it was not good to limit the amount as an increase could benefit the Territory later. All of the members agreed with this suggestion and the recommendation was made and agreed upon.

### **B. Regarding the proposed CRCP priorities, themes and projects for 2017 to 2019, the American Samoa Advisory Panel supports and endorses the listed items.**

The members all agreed with the CRCP presentation's listed priorities, themes and proposed projects. Members agreed that a recommendation supporting the proposed CRCP items should be made.

### **C. Regarding the Marine National Monument expansion of the Main Hawaiian Islands and any potential future Monument expansions, the American Samoa Advisory Panel recommends NMFS conduct an economic impact study.**

The AP Chair brought up the suggestion to make a recommendation regarding the expansion of the Hawaii Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument, and asked if the members were in agreement of providing a recommendation. Members discussed the lack of scientific basis for the closure and also the disregard of local opposition, with Henry Seseapasara referencing the Marine Sanctuary expansion and LVPA here in American Samoa as a parallel. Krista Corry suggested recommending that an economic impact study of the Monument expansion be conducted by the National Marine Fisheries Service to justify the closure of the fishing area. Members also agreed and suggested that additionally, the

recommendation include that NMFS be required to conduct economic impact studies for any future Marine National Monument expansions.

**D. Regarding the US Pacific tuna fishery, the American Samoa Advisory Panel recognizes the importance of US flag vessel tuna and recommends the Council assist in exploring a possible designation for tuna caught by those US flag vessels.**

Chair Krista Corry reiterated that the recommendation would provide support for our American Samoa based fishing vessels providing fish to the canneries. The members discussed the need for a more level playing field with regard to international fishing effort in the Pacific.

Gordon Yamasaki mentioned that Hawaii is having a foreign labor and human trafficking issue currently as those crew members board vessels in American Samoa because they don't have visas to enter Hawaii. They can't get off the boat in Hawaii, but they're on the crew. He said this is a problem in Hawaii State currently. The question was asked whether the dolphin safe tuna designation was still used. It was discussed that while it isn't mentioned as much in the ad campaigns, the regulations are all still in place according to Corry. Isaiah Hunkin added that the regulation is aimed primarily at the consumer with MSC and dolphin safe designations.

Krista Corry also mentioned that the US has the most stringent regulations and the playing field is not level with international fisheries as other countries don't have the same regulations. Gordon Yamasaki added that the US Pacific tuna fishery is the most regulated fishery in the world. Members then agreed that it would be best to recommend a more exploratory recommendation on this issue, and see if the Council could provide further guidance on the feasibility of having such a US tuna designation.

**9. Other Business**

There was no other business discussed in the meeting, and Chair Krista Corry thanked the members, as well as the attending Council family and public members before adjourning the meeting.