



## **REPORT OF THE AMERICAN SAMOA ARCHIPELAGO FEP ADVISORY PANEL MEETING**

Thursday, October 11, 2018

4:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.

Native American Samoa Advisory Council Building  
Pava'ia'i Village, Tutuila, American Samoa

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

American Samoa Advisory Panel Chair Krista Corry welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked everyone for taking the time to attend the official meeting of the American Samoa Archipelago FEP Advisory Panel. She acknowledged the effort of the members who participated in the last informal meeting and worked on developing the draft recommendations before the official meeting.

### **2. Report on Previous Advisory Panel Recommendations**

Council staff provided an update on the status of the American Samoa FEP Advisory Panel recommendations made at the last official meeting in May of this year.

### **3. Council Issues**

#### **A. Specification of American Samoa Bottomfish MUS Annual Catch Limits for Fishing Year 2019**

Council staff reported that there has been no new scientific information regarding the specification of American Samoa Bottomfish MUS Annual Catch Limits, and therefore no assessment to base a new ACL for 2019 fishing year. Members were also provided with information on the ACL alternatives for bottomfish MUS.

For option 1, there would be no action and an ACL would not be specified. This however would not be in compliance with the MSA or specify an acceptable biological catch (ABC) as required by the American Samoa FEP. With this option, large, adverse effects on the conduct of the fishery (including gear types used, areas fished or level of catch and effort) because based on best available commercial and scientific information, the territory harvests less than the stock's MSY. Option 2 would keep the status quo retaining ACLs based on the 2015 stock assessment. AS would be subject to an ACL of 106,000 lbs for 2019 fishing year and impacts to the fishermen would be similar to those in option 1.

In discussion of this agenda item, members agreed that the best options would be to either have no ACL for the upcoming fishing year, or to keep the status quo and specify the current 106,000 pounds. There was a question of whether this ACL was for deepwater bottomfish only.

#### **B. Precious Corals Essential Fish Habitat Refinement Options**

Council staff updated the AP members on the status of the precious corals EFH refinement options. He reported that during the 173<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery

Management Council, the recommendation was made directing Council staff to develop an analysis of options to redefine EFH and any habitat of particular concern (HAPC) for precious corals for the Council to consider for an FEP amendment.

**C. Update on Aquaculture Management**

Council staff also reported on the previous Council Meeting’s recommendation for NOAA PIRO and General Counsel to expedite its review process to ensure publication of the draft programmatic environmental impact statement (DPEIS) and public comment period prior to the Council Meeting in the Marianas this month for final action. Council staff was also directed to communicate to the Administration the Council’s policy and position on aquaculture, including potential impacts, due to any potential aquaculture legislation. In June, a letter was sent from the Council Executive Director to the Regional Administrator requesting that expedited review of the DPEIS. The Executive Director also wrote to the U.S. Secretary of Commerce communicating the Council’s aquaculture policy and position. The DPEIS is still under review by NOAA General Counsel and has yet to be put out for public comments which the Council needs to consider for the omnibus amendment to the FEPs. Members were also informed of two pieces of legislation (S.3138 in the Senate and a companion bill in the House) introduced which would create a regulatory system for marine aquaculture within US EEZs and establish an Office of Marine Aquaculture within NMFS to permit aquaculture facilities and remove aquaculture from “fishing” under the MSA while establishing a research and development grant program. The Council is following both bills to determine its impact on Council’s aquaculture action. Island Coordinator was directed to provide a link for members to follow the bills progress in Congress.

**4. American Samoa FEP Community Activities**

**A. AS Marine Conservation Plan (MCP) Projects**

Council staff reported that this past July American Samoa Governor Lolo Moliga sent the territory’s MCP to NMFS Regional Administrator, Michael Tosatto. The month prior, the Council concurred with the document – drafted by the Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources – with the addition of a project to support research activities on pelagic fisheries that include the collection of life history information, ecosystem indicators, economics and fishing communities, and fisheries interactions and management. The projects prioritized in the MCP document are listed in the following table.

| Project                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Priority Level |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| Enhancement of fishing infrastructure (e.g. docks, ramps, moorings, ice machines, fish storage, processing facilities, and fish markets)<br><i>Evaluative Criterion: Improved and additional fishing infrastructures that provide benefits to the fishermen.</i>                                       | Very high      |
| Enhancement of fisheries development in Manua (reviving the fishermen’s coops, repair of alia boats and replacing the ice machines, developing the fish storage/holding facilities and shipment of fish for local markets.)<br><i>Evaluative Criterion: Hiring of managers for each of the coop in</i> | Very High      |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |        |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| <p><i>Tau and Ofu-Olosega, alia boats repaired and ice machines replaced and fish storage facilities developed. The aim is to ship the fish to Tutuila which is the main market.</i></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |        |
| <p>Development of fish canning, preservation and packing technologies especially for the Manua Islands</p> <p><i>Evaluative Criterion: Local communities in Manua trained in fish canning and eventually fish canned to identified markets.</i></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | High   |
| <p>Promotion of sport fishing tournaments</p> <p><i>Evaluative Criterion: Sustained international sport fishing tournaments held in the Territory to increase the profile of the Territory as a fishing destination recognition of fishing as part of the fa 'asamoa or Samoan way of life</i></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Medium |
| <p>Development and application of mariculture technologies and development of broodstocks</p> <p><i>Evaluative Criterion: Mariculture and development of broodstocks (e.g. giant clams, sea urchins) not only promote other forms of fisheries but also enhances sustainable fisheries of exploited species from the wild.</i></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | High   |
| <p>Identification and development of markets for fishery resources</p> <p><i>Evaluative Criterion: Market feasibility research developed to identify fishery products for export and trade markets identified.</i></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | High   |
| <p>Development of fishing technologies and boat design and construction.</p> <p><i>Evaluative Criterion: New vessels operating in the territory that replace the aging alia fleet. These vessels would be able to multiple fishing operations and equipped with bottomfishing, trolling, and longline gear, capable of storing ice, and having various fishing and navigation technologies to improve efficiency and safety at sea. New or modified vessels in the domestic large vessel longline fleet capable of conducting diversified operations.</i></p> | High   |
| <p>Training for fishermen (e.g. boat design, construction, repair and maintenance, fish handling)</p> <p><i>Evaluative Criterion: Trained fishermen will be able to fish more effectively and safely, increased fish catches and produce better quality fish.</i></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | High   |
| <p>Provide fisheries subsidies for fuel, dockage, and repair</p> <p><i>Evaluative criteria: The use of funds increases fisheries participation and diversification determined in number of vessels and landings.</i></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | High   |

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|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| Develop seafood waste utilization programs<br><i>Evaluative criteria: established seafood waste collection and utilization programs for use in agriculture and aquaculture applications</i> | Medium |
| Establish a fishermen lending program<br><i>Evaluative criteria: Increased number of fishermen and diversified fishing activities.</i>                                                      | High   |

**B. NMFS Longline Large Circle Hook Cost-Benefit Analysis**

Council staff reported that at the last Council meeting, a recommendation was made for the annual SAFE reports for PIFSC to conduct an economic cost-benefit analysis on the use of large circle hooks in the American Samoa longline fishery to determine if modifying the green turtle mitigation measures might result in further reductions in interactions sans significant negative impacts on fishery operations and revenue. This recommendation was included in an omnibus letter to PIFSC in June and the staff met with their Socioeconomics Program staff who informed them that a cost-benefit analysis is feasible using available economic data for the AS longline fishery and results from the Council-funded project that tested large circle hooks in the fishery in 2009. PIFSC staff indicated that their economists are reviewing availability of data and feasibility, and will report to Council staff by the end of September on the feasibility of an economic cost-benefit analysis.

**5. American Samoa FEP AP Issues**

**A. Report of the Subpanels**

**i. Island Fisheries Subpanel**

An AP Member brought up ASG supportive efforts for alia fishing boats, including the fuel subsidy program, equipping boats with safety equipment, and attempting to provide a new, more robust alia vessel design. He asked if there could be similar support for the longline fleet, which does not receive the same level of support for ASG. He acknowledged the LVPA amendment but asked if Council could assist in some way similar to the fuel subsidy. Other members stated their agreement on a recommendation for some type of assistance for the local longline fleet.

**ii. Pelagic Fisheries Subpanel**

Members discussed Department of Interior Secretary Zinke’s visit to American Samoa and the possibility of the AS and PRIA Monuments being opened to fishing. There was a question of whether there has ever been any data provided that shows the Marine National Monuments have any value to fish stocks. There was also discussion about the lack of enforcement and whether foreign fishing boats are fishing in restricted areas within the EEZ.

**iii. Ecosystems and Habitat Subpanel**

A suggestion was made that guidelines should be established for a potential precious corals fishery. It was also reported that black coral had been found in Utulei Beach near

Goat Island.

**iv. Indigenous Fishing Rights Subpanel**

There were no issues reported from the subpanel.

**B. Other Issues**

**i. Rose Atoll Marine National Monument**

Members discussed the Monument and a potential opening of the 50 mile area for fishing. There were again questions about the Monument's value to the fish stocks. USFWS Brian Peck was asked about the presence of a large vessel photographed off of Rose Atoll by installed cameras.

**ii. Fish Export**

Council staff provided an update on the new Island Fisheries business which plans to export fresh fish from local fishermen to the U.S. West Coast. He reported that they hope to buy fish from alia, longline and recreational fishermen.

1. *Flake Ice Availability* – Council staff reported that Island Fisheries had received the ice flaker purchased by DMWR with disaster relief funds from the 2009 tsunami. It has been installed in the Fagatogo Fish Market and is ready to produce flake ice for fishermen that need it.
2. *HACCP Certification* – Island Fisheries representative, Dustin Snow will be traveling to Honolulu later in the month to meet with John Kaneko and get HACCP certification training. Snow plans to share that knowledge with fishermen to improve the quality of fish to be exported to off island markets. Those in attendance agreed that this was a good opportunity and that Island Fisheries was fortunate to have the support of the local government.

**6. Public Comment**

The American Samoa AP Chair invited any members of the public to make comments or ask questions regarding the agenda items.

On the specification of American Samoa bottomfish MUS annual catch limits, Brian Peck noted that it should be included in any recommendation that the Council recognizes that the best available science is not very good. He also said spiny lobster should have an ACL. On the topic of the Rose Atoll Marine National Monument, Peck said all talk of an Executive Order opening the Monuments is just speculation. He also said the LVPA is still in place and lack of enforcement is a big problem. He also pointed out that alia fishing boats can already fish seaward of 12 nautical miles of Rose Atoll with the proper permit (cultural take allowance), although to this point, no alia have applied for those permits. Chair Corry pointed out that local longline vessels can assist with enforcement gaps while out fishing. In response to Nonu's inquiry about possible subsidies for the longline owners, Peck noted that Council had said that subsidies for longline vessels was not feasible in a previous presentation on the LVPA. He said that the issue might be best addressed in the international forum. Christinna Lutu-Sanchez pointed out that AS longline boats do not fish outside the AS EEZ.

On the fish export business, Lutu-Sanchez noted that it's a big advantage that this effort has the support of the local government. She said this was a positive thing for the endeavor. She was asked about the longline boats being equipped to handle fresh fish and she indicated that some boats have ice makers on board.

## **7. Discussion and Recommendations**

During the discussion period, members of the Advisory Panel discussed the issue of support for the AS longline fleet. They recommended that the Council investigate the possibility of providing support for the fleet while the LVPA issue is litigated and a new amendment is reviewed by NMFS.

*Regarding the American Samoa longline fleet, the American Samoa Advisory Panel:*

- **Recommends the Council research ways to provide financial assistance to the longline fleet.**

## **8. Other Business**

There was no other business. Chair Corry again thanked the members and community members for attending the meeting adjourned the meeting.