

Pacific Islands Fishery News

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Council Officers Identify Their 2018 Priorities



From left: Council Chair Edwin A. Ebisui Jr., Council Vice Chairs Michael Duenas, John Gourley, Dean Sensui, and Archie Soliai.

Hau'oli Makahiki Hou, Manuia Le Tausaga Fou, Biba Añu Ñuebu, Ubwutiwel Layúl Luugh Me Ragh Ffé, Happy New Year! The start of 2018 provides an opportunity for individuals and organizations to identify their aspirations for the next 12 months. The same holds true for the officers of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council. Each was asked to indicate his top priorities for the year. The responses range from maintaining the region's sustainable fisheries and fish supply to improving data on and public understanding of these fisheries.

"Our Pacific Islands commercial, recreational, subsistence and sustenance fisheries are sustainable and well-managed," Council Chair Edwin A. Ebisui Jr. reminds us. "Fishing feeds our people and provides economic opportunities, upon which we all depend." For Ebisui, the top priority for 2018 is "to keep sustainable fishing, fishing."

Archie Soliai, Council vice chair representing American Samoa, notes that the Territory's livelihood is highly dependent on the tuna industry. "In the last two years," he reflects, "we've seen just how much of a negative impact the cannery shutdowns can be for this fragile economy." For Soliai, a priority this year is to "ensure that sustainable and uninterrupted fish supply is protected." To reach this goal, he recommends "more collaboration and consultation at all levels."

John Gourley, Council vice chair representing the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, notes that the foundation for making sound fishery management decisions is quality data. "Unfortunately, these data sets are not always available during the time we need them the most," he says. "Occasionally difficult management decisions must be made, and sometimes these decisions can affect our fishing communities." He recollects that Congress "requires the Council

to maintain sustainable fishing practices so you will have fish for your plate." For 2018, Gourley would like to see the Council move toward improving data collection systems and data quality in the Pacific island region. "Better data means better decisions," he proffers.

For Michael Duenas and Dean Sensui, vice chairs from Guam and Hawai'i, improving public understanding of the region's fisheries takes precedence. "One of my top priorities is to help others understand that the Pacific Islands are different than any other region in the United States and that each island area is unique," Duenas says. "In our small communities fishing is not as clear cut as terms like commercial and recreational; it means much more, such as food security, sustenance and culture. The method of harvest and the distribution into the community are aspects of great cultural significance."

Sensui echoes those thoughts: "Among the biggest challenges is to provide the general public with a better understanding and appreciation of the many fisheries that help feed the people of our island state. It's hoped that more can better understand how well fisheries are managed so they are sustainable in the long run, while helping Hawai'i to achieve its goal of becoming less reliant on imported food."

Ebisui also views a better informed public as essential to maintaining sustainable fisheries in the region. He acknowledges the existence of "misinformation out there about the Council, its mission and effectiveness in fulfilling its mission."

More collaboration and consultation, better data collection and quality, and improved public understanding about the region's fisheries, these are the 2018 priorities of the Council officers so as to sustain the region's fishing and fish supply.

Council on Track with Five-Year Priorities

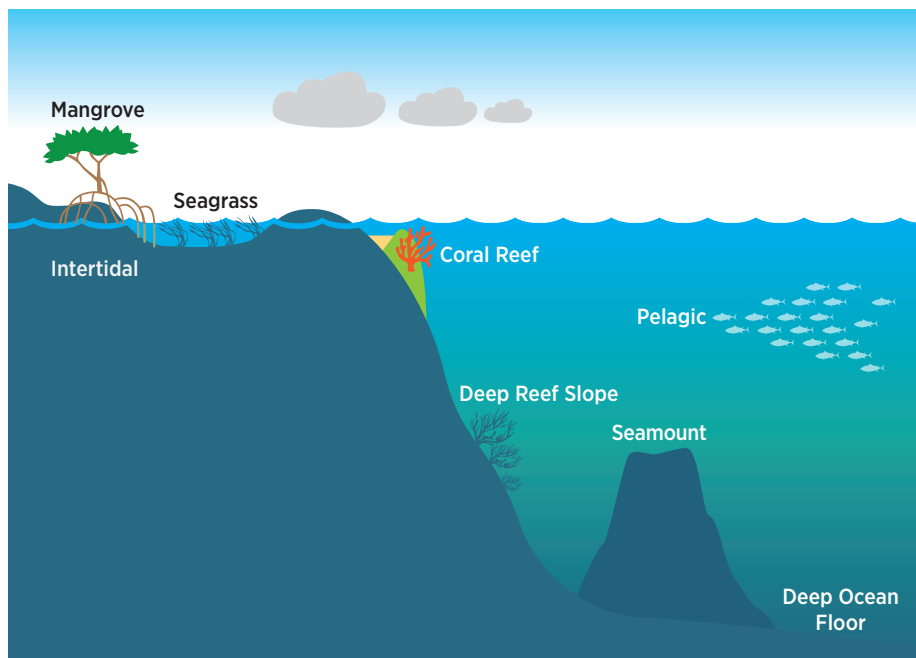
The start of a new year is a befitting time for organizations to not only identify new goals but to also review the progress that has been made on ones previously set. The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council operates under a five-year program plan. The Council's current 2015-2019 plan includes five priorities. In this article, Council staff reviews what has been successfully completed under each.

Goal 1: Review Fishery Ecosystem Plans

In 2009, the Council reorganized its five species-based fishery management plans to five place-based fishery ecosystem plans (FEPs), i.e., the Pelagic FEP, the Pacific Remote Islands Area FEP and the American Samoa, Hawai'i and Mariana (Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI)) Archipelago FEPs. The plans were codified in 2010.

In 2014 the Council began its five-year review of the FEPs. The Council recommended revisions to the plans' management policy, goals and objectives. The Council's advisors and others reviewed the FEPs and proposed revisions during a series of meetings held across the region to solicit input.

At its 165th meeting in March 2016, the Council approved proposed modifications to the FEP objectives and directed staff to work with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Pacific Islands Regional Office (PIRO) to facilitate NMFS timely review of all five revised FEPs and then to transmit the revised plans for Secretarial review as soon as possible. The revised plans would not change the current regulatory or management regime but would set forth considerations to be made during future management decisions. The Council continues to work with NMFS on the review in hopes that the revised FEPs can be transmitted to the Secretary for final approval without further delay.



Schematic of the marine ecosystems that comprise EFH in the Western Pacific Region. From: Minton, Dwayne. Non-fishing effects that may adversely affect essential fish habitat in the Pacific Islands region. Prepared for NOAA NMFS PIRO. March 2017.

Goal 2: Integrate Ecosystem Information into the FEPs

The Council's Ecosystem Program has been geared towards filling in information gaps and building capacity in order for the Council to make science-based fishery management decisions. The focus in the future will be on implementing ecosystem-based fishery management through development of ecosystem models and application of Management Strategy Evaluation approaches to fishery management.

ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT

Through the five-year review process, essential fish habitat (EFH) maps were found to be missing in the FEPs. Council and PIRO staff developed draft maps and geographic information system data for each of the federally managed species around the region. The complete EFH maps will be a part of the living FEPs, once they are approved by the Secretary of Commerce.

Between 2015 and 2016, the Council, NMFS Pacific Islands Fisheries Science

Center (PIFSC) and PIRO developed and signed an EFH agreement outlining roles and responsibilities for EFH consultations and a five-year EFH review. The agreement has enabled the Council to operationalize the EFH review process outlined in its FEPs.

Several EFH reviews have been initiated in recent years. Between 2015 and 2017, the Council, PIFSC and PIRO reviewed non-fishing impacts to EFH. This review and one for precious coral EFH were vetted by the Council's Plan Team in April 2017 and then forwarded to the Council. The Plan Team is comprised of scientists, fishery managers and industry representatives who make recommendations to the Council based on their annual review of the region's fisheries. Funding through the Coral Reef Conservation Program is currently supporting a review of reef-associated crustaceans EFH, which is scheduled for delivery to the Plan Team in April 2018. The crustaceans EFH review is timely, aligning with the PIFSC delivery of a Kona crab stock assessment.

The Council initiated a data discovery activity in October 2017

to support EFH reviews of other species in need of conservation and management. Looking ahead, the use of habitat classification schemes and fish distribution data could aid in distinguishing essential habitats from all habitats used by a managed species and may lead to refinement of the Council's current EFH designations.

ANNUAL SAFE REPORTS

As required by the FEPs, the Council produces annual reports to assess the success of management measures in meeting the objectives of the FEPs and to determine the need to adjust and/or enhance these measures. As part of the Council's five-year FEP review, the Council noted that the requirements of the FEP annual reports overlap with those of the annual stock assessment and fishery evaluation (SAFE) reports required by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA). The Council decided to restructure its annual reports to additionally meet the requirements of the SAFE reports as this would improve the Council's adaptive management process. The SAFE reports provide information needed to determine annual catch limits (ACLs); document significant trends or changes in the resource, marine ecosystems and fisheries over time; implement EFH provisions of the MSA; and assess the success of state and federal fishery management programs. Beginning in 2015, the Council, PIFSC and PIRO collaborated to expand the contents of the annual fishery reports and renamed them the annual SAFE Reports. Work is currently underway on the 2017 SAFE Reports for publication in June 2018.

Each annual SAFE Report includes chapters on fishery performance, ecosystem considerations and data integration. The ecosystem considerations chapter was added following the Council's review of the FEPs and adoption of their revised objectives. The chapter includes sections on fishery independent ecosystem survey data, human dimensions, protected species, climate and oceanographic conditions, EFH and marine planning.

Drafts of the annual SAFE reports are reviewed by the Council's



The Marine Planning and Climate Change Committee at its 6th meeting, held in 2017 in Honolulu.

Social Science Planning Committee, Protected Species Advisory Committee (PSAC), Marine Planning and Climate Change Committee (MPCCC), Plan Team and other advisory bodies. Their recommendations for research, assessment, data needs and outreach help to improve knowledge about the socioeconomic factors, fishery-related protected species interactions, marine planning initiatives and oceanographic conditions that may impact fishery performance. This information improves Council discussion on future fishery management decisions.

For example, the review of 2015 SAFE report by the PSAC during the spring of 2016 identified a potential increase in black-footed albatross interactions in the Hawai'i longline fishery. This discovery led to a workshop held in 2017 to improve the understanding of oceanographic and operational factors influencing interaction patterns in recent years. The results from the workshop will be carried forward in advisory group discussions in 2018. Similar efforts are underway with sea turtle interaction trends and patterns identified through the SAFE report review process. This process has also strengthened the coordination among the Council, PIRO and PIFSC, helping to align priorities and jointly implement recommendations resulting from the SAFE Report reviews.

At the recommendation of the MPCCC, the Council partnered with NOAA to conduct a series of trainings on fisheries and climate change throughout the region in 2017. The

trainings may lead to community workshops on the topic. Information gathered from the trainings and future workshops may help to inform the climate indicators being monitored in the annual SAFE Reports.

The data integration chapters of the reports are under development. The Council hosted a Data Integration Workshop on Nov. 30 and Dec. 1, 2017, with participants from PIRO and PIFSC, to identify relevant fishery ecosystem relationships. A contractor conducted an analysis of 30 fishery-environmental indicator combinations for the three archipelagic FEPs. Several Council advisory bodies will review the results and provide input on what should be tracked in the SAFE Reports.

Goal 3: Support Monitoring, Data Collection and Research Programs

Over the years, the Council has worked with PIFSC and PIRO to improve the science used to manage fish stocks in the Western Pacific Region. For example, the three organizations worked together to finalize and update the Western Pacific Stock Assessment Review (WPSAR). NMFS accepts this regional peer-review process to determine the best scientific information available for the Council to use when making fishery management decisions.

Between 2015 and 2018, seven scientific products were reviewed through WPSAR: 1) a model that integrates

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catch and maximum sustainable yield (MSY); 2) methods to estimate bycatch in the Hawai'i longline fishery; 3) a method to assess coral reef fish stocks based on fish length; 4) a Kona crab stock assessment; 5) assessment updates for the bottomfish complex of American Samoa, Guam and the CNMI; 6) benchmark stock assessment of 27 coral reef fish species in the main Hawaiian islands (MHI); and 7) benchmark stock assessment of seven species MHI bottomfish (i.e., the Deep-7 complex). These products are currently being used to set ACLs and develop model ensembles for future use.

To organize the region's science and monitoring improvement efforts, the Council created the Fishery Data Collection and Research Committee (FDCRC). The committee oversees implementation of data collection advancements and coordinates research in the region. The FDCRC is comprised of the leadership of the Council, PIFSC, local fishery management agencies in the US Territories and the State of Hawai'i, the Guam Bureau of Statistics and Plans and the US Fish and Wildlife Service's Sportfish Restoration Program.

Part of the FDCRC's mandate is to manage the Pacific Island Fisheries Research Program. Some of the research projects funded under this program are 1) Alternative estimation methods for annual catch of federally managed species in the Western Pacific; 2) Trophic models supporting ecosystem-based fisheries management and climate change planning in American Samoa; 3) Movement patterns and connectivity of bigeye tuna (*Thunnus obesus*) exploited by Hawai'i-based pelagic fisheries; and 4) Fishing community perceptions of the marine protected area (MPA) siting process and its implications. The Council also funded several projects to improve the data collection and research that supports stock assessments and ecosystem-based fishery management.

A project funded by the NMFS Marine Recreational Information Program collects much needed non-commercial catch and effort information in Guam and the CNMI through club-based reporting and roving surveys. The Council worked with the Marianas

Underwater Fishing Federation based in Guam and the Marianas Apnea Spearfishing Club to encourage their members to report on the online catch reporting platform. The project generated more than 500 catch interviews and self-reports. This project sheds light on the extent of non-commercial fishing activities in the Mariana Archipelago not normally captured in the existing fishery-dependent surveys.

The Council supported the improvements in the Commercial Purchase Receipt System in the American Samoa and Mariana Archipelagos. This project, funded through the NMFS Territory Science Initiative, improves the capacity of fish retailers to complete the Commercial Logbook in an accurate and timely manner. The project resulted in more than 60 fish retailers reporting to the system. Contractors hired through this project built up the capacity of the local fishery management agencies in American Samoa and Guam that have absorbed data collection responsibilities.

The Council's Cooperative Research Program focused its efforts to pilot test a fishery-independent survey in Hawai'i for bigeye scad (*Selar crumenophthalmus*), an important commercial species known locally as akule. This project, conducted in close partnership and collaboration with fishermen, tested the efficacy of aerial surveys to visually estimate fish abundance. A pilot flew around the island of O'ahu to spot akule schools and record the observations and estimates of fish abundance. The project also collected length frequency and bycatch information from the catch of the same school that was spotted by the pilot. The data collected from this project can result in the development of a regular fishery-independent survey for stock assessment use.

The Council also supported the development of stock assessment models for data limited stocks like coral reef fishes. The Integrated Catch-MSY model, developed in collaboration with Steve Martell, PhD, and Merrill Rudd, PhD, uses long-term catch data, absolute abundance estimate or index of abundance information to generate MSY estimates that can be used to determine stock status and for specification of ACLs.

The Council also supported the development of stock assessments for the Hawai'i kumu (*Parupeneus porphyreus*), Kona crab (*Ranina ranina*) and parrotfish species complex. The Kona crab assessment was reviewed and used for setting the 2017 ACLs. Some of the information in this assessment was borrowed from an Australian spanner crab fishery. The Council supported a field and laboratory experiment to determine the post-release mortality in the Kona crab fishery. This project was done in collaboration with the Kona crab fishermen and the Waikiki Aquarium. The Kona crabs were collected from the field through the cooperating fishermen and were reared in the open circulation tank at the Waikiki Aquarium. Partial and full limb loss were simulated to reflect the level of injuries as described by the local



Kona crab showing regrowth of lost pincher, previously unknown to occur for this species.

fishermen. Results showed very high survival rates compared to the proxy information used in the assessment. This information will be used by PIFSC in the next stock assessment for this species.

Several projects were geared to address ACL implementation and future revisions of the FEPs. The Council explored that feasibility of developing a catch projection method using data gathered from creel surveys to support the near-real-time monitoring for ACL management. The Council also evaluated whether there is a need to change the current use of catch per unit effort as the criteria to determine stock status. Given the data limited situation of most fisheries in the Western Pacific Region, a different biological reference point may be more appropriate.

Goal 4: Support Capacity Building and Fishery Development

COMMUNITY-BASED FISHERY MANAGEMENT

The Council has been working to improve community participation in the development and implementation of fishery policies in the Western Pacific Region. Different strategies have been pursued in each island area as the social and political framework differs within the region.

In the Mariana Archipelago, the Council worked through the village mayors, the Mayor's Council of Guam and community workshops to engage communities on fishery management issues and programs. Through these efforts, the Council identified Merizo as a village that had a cultural history as a fishing village, direct access to the ocean, a public boat ramp and small harbor, an offshore island, competing ocean activities and an adjacent MPA. Through a series of follow-up workshops, the Council assisted in the development of a community-based management plan that included community issues and concerns, management priorities and recommendations for addressing concerns. The success of the project inspired the mayor of Yigo in Guam and the mayor of the Northern Islands in the CNMI to request similar assistance. Council staff provided planning workshops to both communities, which resulted in draft community-based fishery management plans. These plans are being vetted by their respective community before becoming finalized.

In Hawai'i, the Council pursued increasing community participation in the federal fishery decision-making process by sponsoring a series of Puwalu (conferences) involving traditional native Hawaiian practitioners. As a result of this effort, the State of Hawai'i formally recognized the traditional 'Aha Moku system of resource division and management. The Puwalu also led to the development of Fishers Code of Conduct, which has been embraced region-wide in and outside the fishing community. Posters, signage, postcards and public service announcements highlighting the Code have been translated in seven languages by

request and have been in demand by boat owners, harbor masters, lifeguards, hotels, canoe clubs, cultural groups and educators. The Council continues to support the 'Aha Moku system as an appropriate and informed way to engage with practitioners in indigenous fishing communities.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

In 2015, the Council created the US Pacific Territories Fishery Capacity-Building Scholarship as a means to fulfill the aspirations of the territories to have the capacity to hire their own people as the scientists and managers of their fishery ecosystems. The scholarship is offered to persons with strong ties to American Samoa, Guam or the CNMI who have completed their sophomore year in college and are pursuing either an undergraduate or graduate degree in a fishery-related program at the University of Guam, University of Hawai'i at Hilo, Hawai'i Institute of Marine Biology or Hawaii Pacific University. It requires a summer internship at the Council and post-graduation employment at a local fishery-related agency for one year for each year the scholarship received. Currently, three students have completed the program and are currently employed at their local fishery agency in American Samoa and CNMI. Two other students are pursuing their undergraduate degrees and one student is completing his graduate degree. Scholarship recipients for the 2018-2019 scholarship will be selected in late March 2018. PIFSC and PIRO

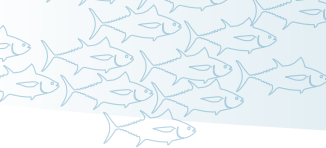
provide financial assistance for this program.

The Council's Fisheries Internship and Student Help (FISH) project provides high school and college students in Hawai'i, American Samoa, Guam and the CNMI with practical experience in coral reef ecosystem, bottomfish and/or pelagic fisheries management. The mission of the FISH project is to increase the ability of local people to steward their fishery resources by providing training and experience in fisheries science and management. A primary aim of the program is to increase local fisheries management capacity over time. Secondary aims are to introduce young professionals to the Council process so they can participate more fully in the bottom-up management of fisheries and to increase available data by facilitating research in regional fisheries issues. Starting in 2015, the FISH project has hosted three interns that worked with the Council on projects relating to bottomfish, annual reports, community management and data analysis.

In addition to these new education initiatives, the Council continues to provide a host of other education and outreach opportunities that have been ongoing since 2006. It provides a high school summer course on fisheries resources and management in each of the island areas. It works with local community organizations, schools and fishermen to produce calendars that are based on the lunar cycle rather than the solar cycle and highlight



Council members and staff met with Aunu'u chiefs in 2015 and 2017 to discuss their fishing facility needs.



Top: View of American Samoa's main island of Tutuila from the harbor at Aunu'u. Middle: Longline vessels tied up at Malaloa Marina wharf, Pago Pago. Bottom: Garapan Fishing Base boat ramp and parking area.

traditional ecological knowledge in fisheries. The calendars also provide an outreach benefit as school children provide drawings for the calendars through annual Council-sponsored contests that include lesson plans on various traditional fisheries-related themes. The Council also runs teacher and community workshops and student symposiums on a variety of issues, and it sponsors many other outreach efforts, such as radio talk shows on fishery-related issues, informational booths at fishing-related events and videos on fishery-related subjects, to name just a few.

FISHERY DEVELOPMENT

Through NOAA cooperative grants, the Council continues to use funds received from foreign fishing fines incurred in the Pacific Remote Island Areas in support of the region's Marine Conservation Plans, including development of sustainable fisheries in the Territories. Among the projects ongoing since 2015 are design of a longline dock extension in Pago Pago harbor, American Samoa; development of ice-making capacity on Aunu'u island, American Samoa; a fishing platform at Hagatna, Guam; and improvements to the Garapan Fishing Base in the CNMI. The extension of the Malaloa Marina wharf in Pago Pago harbor would accommodate the locally based US longline fleet in American Samoa. The Aunu'u project also includes a storage bin and would support fisheries development on the island. The Hagatna fishing platform would provide a safe fishing location for all of Guam's anglers, including senior citizens and disabled citizens. The Garapan fishing base improvements include extended seawall and shoreline revetment, maintenance dredging and new floating docks, aids to navigation, solar lights for the parking lot and ice machine.

Goal 5. Support US Fisheries on the International Level Related to Trade, Compliance and Highly Migratory Species Management

Fisheries for tuna, billfish and other pelagic species in the Western Pacific Region are the largest in terms of volume and value. These fisheries use

purse-seine, longline, troll and hand-line fishing gear. In 2016, over 19,000 metric tons (mt) of pelagic species were landed by Council-managed fisheries operating out of American Samoa, Guam, the CNMI and Hawai'i. The combined dock-side value of these fisheries is nearly \$120 million. These values do not include non-commercial fishing vessels that also harvest pelagic species such as yellowfin, mahimahi and billfish in substantial numbers. These values also do not include the economic revenue generated by recreational sports fishing within the region. The values also do not include the \$300 million of fish annually landed by about 40 US distant-water purse-seine vessels that catch around 250,000 mt per year in the equatorial waters of the Pacific. Several US purse-seine vessel homeport out of American Samoa and land their catch at the local cannery.

The Council manages pelagic fisheries through the FEP for Pacific Pelagic Fisheries of the Western Pacific Region. A substantial portion of Council-regulated regulations apply to the Hawai'i and American Samoa longline fisheries, which are both subject to limited entry permit programs that cap the number of vessels participating in the fishery. The regulatory framework of these fisheries has been assessed against the UN Food and Agriculture Organization's Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, both receiving scores of over 90 percent. The suite of regulations that apply to these fisheries include daily catch reporting, satellite-based Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS), high levels of observer coverage, vessel and gear marking, protected species mitigation requirements, spatial closures, and much more. The Hawai'i longline fishery is comprised of a deep-set component targeting bigeye tuna and a shallow-set component targeting swordfish. The American Samoa longline fishery targets albacore.

Tuna, billfish and other tuna-like species are considered highly migratory species made up of huge populations that occur in large expanses of the Pacific Ocean. Effective conservation and management of these species requires international cooperation. There are two international regional fishery management organizations (RFMOs) for tuna in the Pacific. The Western and Central Pacific Fisheries

Commission (WCPFC) and the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) cover the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO) and Eastern Pacific Ocean, respectively. The United States is a member of both commissions. American Samoa, Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands are Participating Territories of the WCPFC. Catch limits and other conservation and management measures set by the WCPFC and IATTC apply to US fisheries including the Hawai'i and American Samoa longline fisheries.

In recognition of the importance of international management of pelagic species, Council members and staff regularly participate on US and Participating Territory delegations to the WCPFC and the US delegation to the IATTC. The Council often coordinates international meetings related to pelagic fisheries. For example, the Council recently co-organized conferences on albacore and bigeye management and workshops on disproportionate conservation burden on Small Island Developing States and bigeye movement research.

Research prioritization is also a component of the Council's pelagic fisheries activities. For decades, the Council was a coordinating member of the Pelagic Fisheries Research Program (PFRP), which was funded with federal funds and administered by the University of Hawai'i. Although the PFRP is no longer funded, the Council continues to advocate for pelagic fisheries research through its five-year research priorities to NMFS, as required under the MSA. The Council also funds pelagic research when resources are available, including recent research on high latitude bigeye movement using satellite tags.

Pelagic fisheries are incredibly important to the State of Hawai'i, American Samoa, Guam and the CNMI not only in terms of economic revenue but also for food security and cultural reasons. Over half of the private sector workforce in American Samoa is directly related to the local fish processing industry. Per capita consumption of seafood in the Council's region is double the national average. Fish has sustained indigenous populations in the Western Pacific Region for thousands of years. The Council is committed to the sustainability of the pelagic fisheries that it

manages. The Council recognizes that, in its region, fish is culture and fish is life. The Council works to ensure that future generations will have pelagic fish forever.

Monitoring and mitigating protected species interactions are critical components of the ecosystem-based management approach implemented by the Council through its FEPs. The MSA also requires federal fishery management plans to be consistent with laws such as the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA). National Standard 9 of the MSA requires conservation and management measures to minimize bycatch to the extent practicable.

The Council is actively engaged in efforts to address fisheries interactions with protected species. Significant reductions were achieved in sea turtle and seabird interactions in the Hawai'i-based longline fishery through the adoption of various mitigation technologies in the early- to mid-2000s. The Council has continued its involvement in developing long-term solutions that not only reduce protected species interactions but also minimize operational burden on the fisheries. Unlike the simple technological fixes identified for sea turtles and seabirds, finding a solution to false killer whale interactions in the Hawai'i longline fishery has been challenging. The Council has worked over the last three years with the industry and other partners to test a depredation mitigation device for false killer whales in the Hawai'i longline fishery. This project recognizes that fishermen encounter target catch depredation events by false killer whales far more frequently than an incidental hooking or entanglement. There are economic incentives for reducing depredation on target catch. The Council believes that these collaborative efforts with the industry and researchers are essential to managing protected species interactions in fisheries and to sustaining fisheries in the Western Pacific over the long term.

American Samoa US Longliners Deliver MSC Catch

The US longline fleet in American Samoa has been certified by the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC). According to a Nov. 30, 2017, StarKist press release, "StarKist Co. funded and managed the effort as part of the company's commitment to promote and source from sustainable fisheries according to science-based standards. StarKist worked with members of the Tautai-O-Samoa Longline & Fishing Association, other independent US vessel owners, the Western Pacific Region Fisheries Management Council and the Pacific Island Regional Office to successfully complete the fishery assessment."

Among the vessels to be certified is the *F/V Sivaimoana*, one of three vessels from Tuna Ventures Inc. The vessel left port shortly after the vessels were granted the MSC certificate. When it returned, an excited crew unloaded the first MSC-certified albacore catch to StarKist Samoa.

The MSC is an organization that supports fisheries that are sustainable and well managed. According to Christinna Lutu-Sanchez, president of the Tautai O Samoa Longline and Fishing Association, "This MSC certification is recognition that our fleet's fishing practices are sustainable and are in line with or exceed the high standards set forth by the Marine Stewardship Council." Lutu-Sanchez and her husband Carlos Sanchez own and operate five longline vessels included in the MSC certification.

At a time of difficulty for the US longliners based in American Samoa, the MSC certification is seen as a glimpse of hope. StarKist, with the assistance of the Council, made it possible for the US longliners to receive this recognition. In turn, the US longliners say they are excited to be able to deliver MSC-certified albacore to support StarKist.



F/V Sivaimoana crew unloads the first MSC-certified albacore catch to StarKist Samoa.

Kayak Fishing

SEES RAPID GROWTH on GUAM



by Felix S. Reyes, Guam Advisory Panel chair

Kayak fishing is in a major growth spurt on Guam. The growing interest with this unique fishing technique coincides with the arrival of some expert fishermen soldiers and the advent of social media.

On any given weekend, “Yakers,” a catchy moniker they call themselves, launch either solo or as a group off beaches and marinas around Guam. They hunt for fish in the open ocean, shallow or deep, and even up the rivers for fresh- and brackish-water fish.

As evidenced by the photos posted online, these brave Yakers paddle out to the fish aggregation devices (FADs) for sailfish, mahimahi, wahoo and even sharks! When the open-water bite is slow, they switch gears and drop bait for deep bottom species or, using light tackle, cast for surface feeders like giant trevally.

This close-knit group of fishing enthusiasts also fishes far up Guam’s many southern rivers for tilapia, brackish water red snapper (*Lutjanus argenimaculatus*) and even jacks (*Caranx sexfasciatus*). On occasion, they may even catch mullet and catfish. The butterfly peacock bass (*Cichla ocellaris*) is an introduced species brought to Guam by the military for sport fish. This strong fighter can be found in some river

headwaters and in abundance inside Fena Lake Reservoir. Fishing on Fena Lake is prohibited, but the feisty bass has slowly made its way out of the reservoir and into Guam’s rivers, competing with endemic fishes for food.

Raf Vargas arrived on Guam more than two years ago with the Air Force as a lieutenant colonel. An accomplished bass fisherman, he fell in love with Guam’s saltwater adventures and started the Guam Yakers when he first arrived on Guam. The group is growing. They use kayaks on steroids with electronic sounders, GPS, coolers and complete safety equipment.

Raf calls himself a fisherman who kayak fishes. His young daughter accompanies him on his many fishing adventures around Guam’s waters. He wants to continue to support Guam’s local kayak fishing and plans to have more derbies.

Raf is an active duty member of Heroes on the Water (HOW), a nation-wide non-profit organization helping veterans with or without disabilities to rehabilitate and reintegrate through therapeutic qualities of kayak fishing. In 2016, he was featured in the *Stars and Stripes* military newspaper. In the article, he said that, as an active-duty member, he feels very passionate about the mission of HOW

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Kayak Fishing Sees Rapid Growth on Guam

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and spent two years organizing kayak fishing tournaments across the Midwest to benefit the HOW Nebraska chapter. The response and support from the kayak community was so great and overwhelming that another chapter was created in Kansas during work with some of the Veteran Affairs hospital's post-traumatic stress disorder divisions.

Local born Yaker Peter Aguero started fishing as a youth using basic rod-and-reel gear from shore. Then he discovered kayak fishing and has not looked back. He takes videos of his adventures along the reef edge and up the rivers and photos of his abundant landings.

Another avid Yaker is local tattoo artist Jimmy Snaer Badong. Jimmy can be found on all the social media outlets, especially Facebook, where his exquisite quality photos are found. He targets the hardy giant trevally but catches all the other sport fish found on Guam. Jimmy will launch from wherever there is access to the prime fishing grounds and easily shares

his skills and techniques with anyone interested in learning the art of kayak fishing.

Local businesses are catching on to the growing kayak phenomena. Alupang Beach Club (ABC) is now importing souped up kayaks rigged for fishing. Coral Reef has kayaks ready for Guam's waters.

Raf recommends those thinking of joining the growing kayak fishing group on Guam invest in safety gear such as a VHF radio, a GPS unit, a personal flotation device, navigational lighting, plenty of water and sunscreen. He also recommends checking the tide, weather and wind direction before launching. A buddy system is also highly recommended.

He says Guam is a beautiful place but can be unforgiving when it comes to the surrounding waters. The perimeter reefs can pose a grave threat to any kayak angler, regardless of his/her experience level.



Jimmy Badong demonstrates that kayak fishing is good in all types of waters for all types of fish: fresh, brackish, deep bottom and open ocean.



Council Family Update

Brian Peck has replaced Matthew Brown as the non-voting Council member representing the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Brown will continue as the USFWS representative on the Hawai'i and Guam Regional Ecosystem Advisory Committees.

To subscribe to *Pacific Islands Fishery News* and other Council communiques, sign up at www.wpcouncil.org.

New Outreach Material



Western Pacific Region Status of the Fisheries 2016 summarizes the findings of the Council's 2016 annual reports along with socioeconomic highlights from several NOAA reports for the fishery that year. The six-page document provides a glimpse of the importance of the fisheries to the region. To download a copy, go to www.wpcouncil.org/education-and-outreach/educational-library/.

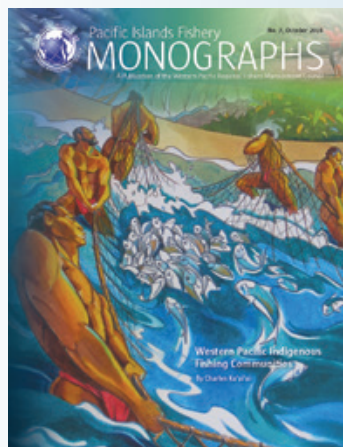
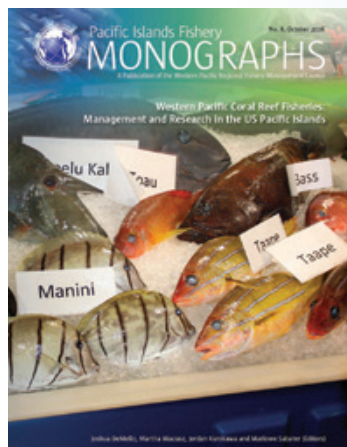
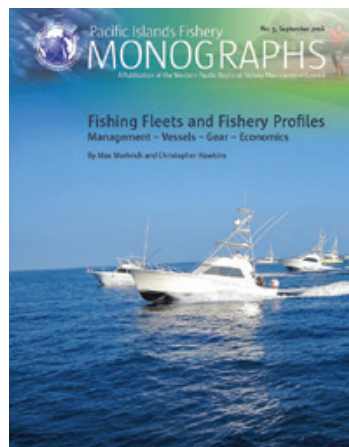
2018 Eskaleran Pulan Chamorro and Refaluwasch Pápaál Maram (2018 traditional lunar calendars in the Chamorro and Refaluwasch languages) are available for the CNMI in hard copy. The 2018 lunar calendars for American Samoa, Hawai'i and Guam are available online at www.wpcouncil.org/education-and-outreach/lunar-calendars-2/.

Pacific Islands Fishery Monographs No. 5 (Fishing

Fleets and Fishery Profiles), No. 7 (Western Pacific Indigenous Fishing Communities) and No. 8 (Western Pacific Coral Reef Fisheries) have been reprinted due to popular demand. To download copies, go to www.wpcouncil.org/fishery-plans-policies-reports/monographs/.

Fish Forever Favorites has also been reprinted by popular demand. The recipe book features seafood dishes from Hawai'i, American Samoa, Guam and the CNMI that have been published in the Council's newsletter or featured at the Council booth at the NOAA Fish Fry and other events. To download copies, go to www.wpcouncil.org/education-and-outreach/educational-library/.

To get a hard copy of any of these publications, email info.wpcouncil@noaa.gov or call (808) 522-8220.





2018 Council Calendar

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March

12-16

6th International Marine Debris Conference, San Diego, Calif.

13-16

172nd Council meeting, Honolulu

20-22

Pacific Scientific Review Group, La Jolla, Calif.

April

11-12

Marine Planning and Climate Change Committee, Honolulu

10-13

False Killer Whale Take Reduction Team, Honolulu

19-20

Protected Species Advisory Committee, Honolulu

April 30 - May 2

Archipelagic Plan Team, Honolulu

May

3-4

Fisheries Data Collection and Research Committee—Technical Subcommittee, Honolulu

14-18

9th Scientific Advisory Committee meeting, Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission, La Jolla, Calif.

15-17

Pelagic Plan Team, Honolulu

22-24

Councils Coordination Committee, Sitka, Alaska

June

5-7

129th Scientific and Statistical Committee, Honolulu

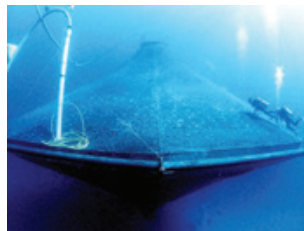
12

Fishery Data Collection and Research Committee, Honolulu

12-15

173rd Council meeting, Honolulu

Upcoming Events



Aquaculture management is one of 10 action items that the Council may consider at its 172nd meeting, March 14-16, 2018, in Honolulu.

172nd Meeting of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council will take place March 14 to 16, 2018, at the Laniakea YWCA, Fuller Hall, 1040 Richards St., Honolulu. The Council may take action on up to 10 items, including Ecosystem components species classification, Aquaculture management, Precious corals essential fish habitat, Sea turtle interactions in the Hawai'i shallow-set longline fishery, US Territory longline bigeye catch limit specification, Catch and effort limits for US pelagic fisheries in the Western Pacific Region to implement international measures, US Participating Territory catch and effort limit, American Samoa Large Vessel Prohibited Area, American Samoa swordfish trip Limit and American Samoa Marine Conservation Plan. For a copy of the agenda and a summary of these action items, please go to www.wpcouncil.org/category/upcoming-council-and-advisory-body-meetings.

Fishers Forum on "Hawai'i Fisheries: Getting the Full Story" provides an opportunity for the fishing community members who cannot attend the Council meeting during the work hours to learn about fishery issues and share their opinions about them with Council members and staff and their fellow fishermen. The upcoming Forum will focus on media coverage of Hawai'i fisheries and will include nearly a dozen informational tables and a panel of renowned journalists and fishing experts. This free family-friendly event will be held March 14 from 6 to 9 p.m. at the Pomaika'i Ballrooms at Dole Cannery, 735 Iwilei Rd., Honolulu. Refreshments will be served, and parking is validated. Door prizes provided by Hana Pa'a, Hawaii Fishing News, Nico's at Pier 38, Pacific Islands Fisheries Group, POP Fishing & Marine, Stan Wright and others. For more information, go to www.wpcouncil.org/category/upcoming-council-and-advisory-body-meetings/ or contact the Council at info.wpcouncil@noaa.gov or by phone at (808) 522-8220.



RECIPE Spicy A'u Tartare

Courtesy of Chef Grant Sato, Kapiolani Community College's Culinary Institute of the Pacific, Honolulu

These and other tasty fish recipes can be found in the Council's *Fish Forever Favorites* recipe book, featuring traditional dishes from Hawai'i, American Samoa, Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. For a copy, go to www.wpcouncil.org/education-and-outreach/educational-library/ or contact the Council at info.wpcouncil@noaa.gov or (808) 522-8220.



Ingredients

1 lb small diced a'u (swordfish)
1 tbsp salt
2 tbsp water
1/2 cup green onions, chopped
2 tbsp wasabi tobiko
1 tsp sriracha sauce
1 tbsp oyster sauce
1 tbsp red ebi flakes
1 tbsp toasted sesame seeds
2 tbsp mayonnaise
1/4 lb sweet potato or taro chips

Method

Salt the a'u, and sprinkle with water. Toss lightly, and set aside for a minute. Place the a'u in a bowl, add the other ingredients and stir well to combine.

Plating

Serve chilled with chips.

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