



WESTERN
PACIFIC
REGIONAL
FISHERY
MANAGEMENT
COUNCIL

Report of the Hawaii Archipelago FEP Advisory Panel Meeting

Friday, May 29, 2020

9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Gil Kualii, Hawaii Advisory Panel (AP) Vice Chair, opened the meeting at 9:13 a.m. Hawaii AP members in attendance included: Clay Tam, Carrie Johnston, Chad Pacheco, Nathan Abe, and Basil Oshiro.

Also in attendance was: Council staff-Zachary Yamada, Joshua DeMello, Mark Mitsuyasu, Asuka Ishizaki, Mark Fitchett and Kitty Simonds.

Public in attendance included: Maxx Phillips (Director-Hawaii Division, Conservation for Biological Diversity), T. Todd Jones and Michael Parke (PIFSC), Thomas Remington (Contractor)

2. Review of Last AP Meeting and Recommendations

Council staff provided the recommendations made by the Hawaii AP at its last meeting and provided a status of the recommendations. Staff noted that the Council took up most of those recommendations and they are working on plans for engaging the fishing community through the small-boat fisheries proposed action; working with the WPSAR steering committee to include AP members in its reviews; and adding community FADs as a priority project in the PRIA Marine Conservation Plan.

3. Council Issues

A. Pacific Remote Island Areas Marine Conservation Plan

Council staff presented on the PRIA Marine Conservation Plan (MCP) noting that the Council will be looking to approve the MCP at its 182nd meeting in June. He provided a background on the MCP and its process and noted the additions made by USFWS and the State of Hawaii. Staff then reviewed the projects and asked for comments from the AP.

An AP member asked if someone is monitoring for foreign incursions. Staff replied that the US Coast Guard does that monitoring. Another AP member suggested that this data could be used by the USCG to determine if there was a reduction in fishing effort around Hawaii during the COVID-19 pandemic. Another AP member asked if Global Fishing Watch was able to provide this information. Staff replied that it could be used but noted that foreign fishing hasn't decreased; the distribution has just shifted as the number of incidents was greater during those months than the same months in prior years. Staff agreed to provide the AP with this information.

B. Mandatory Electronic Reporting

Council staff presented an overview of mandatory electronic reporting (ER) noting that the Council recommended January 1, 2021 to implement ER in the Hawaii longline fishery. The issue that remains is should ER be implemented in American Samoa. Staff went over how the ER systems work and is being implemented, with a timeline on a full roll-out of ER to the Hawaii longline fishery. He noted that staff is working on implementation in American Samoa with the American Samoa AP.

An AP member commented about non-compliance rates noting the big difference between Hawaii and American Samoa fisheries and participants. Another AP member asked if this will be for all fisheries or just longline. Staff replied just the pelagic longline, but ER can be looked at for use in other fisheries that require mandatory permitting and reporting as well.

C. 2019 Annual SAFE Reports

Remington provided a presentation on the 2019 Annual Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) Reports developed by the Council's Plan Team. The Annual SAFE Reports provide a tool for monitoring the fisheries. He provided the trends in bottomfish and pelagic fisheries landings and revenue, as well as ocean and ecosystem variables and indicators.

An AP member said that 2020 will have impacts from COVID-19 that will have to be considered and may look like an anomaly. She said some impacts from COVID-19 include changes in global climate change due to fewer interactions which may increase the anomalies in 2020 and future years. Remington replied that the 2020 fishing data will be interesting and that is something the Council will have to look at. Another AP member said that in Kona, the brokers aren't taking bottomfish and only taking tuna right now so that should be considered for next year. This is because the brokers don't have anyone to sell the fish to because the restaurants are closed. It is a concern because there is a high level of unemployment and these folks have been going out fishing and there is no market for bottomfish.

D. Update on Small-boat Fisheries Management

Council staff presented an update on small-boat fisheries management, noting that the AP participated in scoping meetings in February on small-boat fishery management issues. He said that after presenting this information to the Council, staff is now tasked with developing options for mandatory permitting and reporting for the Hawaii small-boat fisheries. Staff is working with DAR, NMFS, and NOAA OLE as well as fishermen to develop an options paper to take out to public scoping sessions in August. He requested the participation of the AP in these future meetings and to assist the Council in the logistics and recruiting meeting participants.

An AP member commented that Hawaii should do something about the number of charter boats going out daily without licenses; they are taking tourists, a sizable percentage of which is on Oahu, and they don't want to be listed as charter fishermen.

E. Considerations for Developing Reasonable and Prudent Measures and/or Reasonable and Prudent Alternatives for the Hawaii Deep-set Longline Fishery

Council staff presented on the alternatives being considered by the Council for the Hawaii deep-set longline fishery. She reviewed the history of the need to develop reasonable and prudent measures due to sea turtle interactions and asked the AP about what the Council should consider regarding these measures and alternatives.

An AP member asked if there is a turtle tagging program. Council staff reported that with Leatherback turtles, they need to bring the animal on board to attach the tag and they are too big, so they are working on having a turtle tag that can be attached at the side of the vessel. This will allow scientists to look at post-hooking mortality. She also said handling of the turtle can also improve survivorship such as removing as much line as you can.

Another AP member said that in terms of trolling and handlining and encounters with protected species, he hasn't encountered these types of turtles in his fishing. It is a very rare occurrence with small boats and even with the longlines it is very low. Using tags in this fishery can be quite expensive but there could be other approaches being used internationally that might be used that are more cost-efficient. Understanding the bigger picture of the habitat in which they occur and frequent will be more important to know down the road.

Council staff noted that the RPM on the deep-set fishery will be a recurring discussion for the AP and will be kept informed and will be back with more questions and considerations in the coming months.

4. Hawaii Reports

Council staff reported on Hawaii groups and meetings that staff participate in Hawaii that deals with fishing and fisheries. These meetings include the Scientist and Fishermen Exchange (SAFE) that discussed COVID-19 impacts; the NWHI Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve Advisory Committee; electronic reporting discussions; and CARES Act funding discussions.

An AP member noted that some of the shortline fishermen are the fishermen that feed the people and they are still fishing during this time. They provide affordable fish to the community but there are concerns that not all of it is being reported.

5. Report on Hawaii Archipelago FEP AP Plan Activities

Vice Chair reported that COVID-19 has impacted the AP plans for tournament outreach and uku planning but provides the AP with more time to do more planning. Staff added that many fishing tournaments were canceled so the plan to provide outreach will need to be moved back to tournaments in the fall. For the uku tournament plan, there have been cancelations as well that the AP will need to look at.

An AP member noted that the Big Island Tournaments that will still happen include: Rock and Reel June, 13-14; Kona Kickoff, July 4-5; Lazy Marlin Hunt, July 7-9; Hawaii Lure Makers Challenge, July 10-12; Firecracker Open, August 8-9; Kona Throwdown, Aug 11-13; Skins Marlin Derby, August 14-16; Big Island Marlin Tournament, August 21-23; It's a Wrap

sometime in September. Another AP member asked if these tournaments will provide an outreach opportunity. He said that the AP will have to inquire to see if there are times when the fishermen are available. Another AP member said that they worked to do surveys with those tournaments and there were a couple of tournaments with banquets but many of the participants were from the mainland and were more high-end so we should look at the community-oriented tournaments.

6. Island Fishery Issues and Activities

On Hawaii Island, In Hilo, the bite is still happening but moving south at this time. On the Kona side, there are problems with homeless and drug use at Honokohau Harbor has increased as COVID-19 pandemic and issues with vandalism and they suggested locking up the gates. Facilities are being damaged and are not being maintained. An AP member suggested that the concerns from the fishing community can be sent to Hawaii Fishing News to assist in publicizing the information.

On Maui, there continues to be an increase in turtles, concerns about radiation, and shark predation. They've also seen less monk seals than normal on the north side of the island.

On Kauai, the ahi bite is going off, but they are having a hard time selling the fish because there are many people giving fish away and preparing meals. There are also folks selling on the side of the road as well as wholesalers selling directly to the public. The fish have been coming in early in Kauai-*akule* came in February, *opelu* coming in right now. The people not being in the water are bringing the fish in closer, and the dolphins, turtles and seals are coming closer as well. The fish have been coming in earlier and in bigger numbers so it's interesting that no one is working, more people are fishing, and yet the fish are still around. The fishermen have been asking about tilapia that escaped to the ocean off the north shore and they want to remove it. Commercial fishermen complain that because people are not working or going to school, they are in the ocean and competing with them. Lure makers have seen an increase in sales as well.

On Oahu there was a huge recruitment of *uku* (6 inches and under) this year, but now they are getting larger. They are trying to keep track of seasonality of this species by recording information reported from fishermen. There was also a pile of fish outside of Waikiki that was reported to be *oama*, but when someone fished it (a quarter acre in size) they said it was *halalu* and sardines. Another pile was found outside of Ala Moana. The lack of tourism has shown that the conditions changed but the impacts have also been beneficial for the resources. It shows that activities with the commercial industry (tourists, jet skis, parasail, etc.) where there is constant influx of people, it has an effect on the resources and recruitment, especially nearshore. The *oama* and *halalu* are in early this year, and that the ecological indicators being looked at should be more than just impacts to coral. There is also a movement to make Kaena Point a National Heritage Area and we don't know what the impacts will be to the ocean areas used by fishermen.

In general, the market for the tuna fishery is getting back on its feet. In the last week or so prices have gone back up. As summer continues and we see more *ahi* around Oahu, things will get better. The problem with the Hawaii bottomfish fishery is that there has been high shark depredation so even if they could get high prices, up to 30-40% of their catch is being hit by sharks so some folks have moved over to tuna fishing to make ends meet.

7. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

8. Discussion and Recommendations

The Hawaii Advisory Panel made the following recommendations:

Regarding Hawaii Fishery Issues:

- **The Hawaii AP recommended the Council take into account the impacts of COVID-19 to Hawaii's fisheries in developing the Annual SAFE Report for 2020, and requests the Council look at the impacts of COVID-19 on ALL fishing around Hawaii.**
- **The Hawaii AP was concerned with impacts of vandalism to fishing boats and facilities and recommended the Council request the State of Hawaii to work with fishermen to address and resolve the issues.**
- **The Hawaii AP was concerned that there may be fishing impacts with a potential monument at Kaena Pt and requested the Council monitor the impacts this area may have to the fisheries.**

Regarding Considerations for Developing RPM and/or RPAs for the Hawaii Deep-set Longline Fishery:

- **The Hawaii AP recommended the Council prioritize improving handling and release methods to improve post-hooking survival rate in developing potential mitigation measures in the Hawaii deep-set longline fishery, noting that the interactions with leatherback turtles and giant manta rays are rare, and tagging data indicate handling methods can improve post-hooking survival. The Hawaii AP further recommended the Council work with the Hawaii longline fishery participants in evaluating potential impacts of mitigation measures on fishing operations and fishery participant.**

Regarding Marine National Monuments:

- **The Hawaii AP agreed with the Council's recent letter to the President and recommended the Council continue to follow-up with the President on removing the fishing prohibitions within the Marine National Monuments.**

9. Other Business

Council staff provided an update on 2021 BET specifications and options that the Council may look at for next year. He noted that the BET is not overfished nor experiencing overfishing. The AP was concerned that not all of the territories were participating in the quota transfer and encouraged Guam to participate. The AP Chair agreed to provide the Hawaii AP's concern to the Guam AP.

Council staff also noted that the recent EO by President Trump requests the Council to submit, within 180 days, a prioritized list of recommended actions to reduce burdens on domestic fishing and to increase production within sustainable fisheries, including a proposal for initiating each recommended action. Actions may include changes to regulations, orders, guidance documents,

or other similar agency actions. The Council will be developing the list and providing it to the Secretary of Commerce within the time period.

The AP agreed that the removal of fishing prohibitions in the Marine National Monuments was a priority and agreed with the letter sent by the Council to President Trump and requested the Council to follow-up.