

## Get to Know Your Council Members: Howard Dunham



Howard Dunham

*Learn about the people who balance competing interests while trying to make fishery management decisions for the overall benefit of the nation.*

**Howard Dunham** was appointed to the Council as the vice chair for American Samoa in 2019. He has been a commercial fisherman, using an *alia* (traditional double hulled fishing catamaran), and certified diver for more than 20 years. He is the president of the American Samoa Alia Fishing Association and enjoys participating in regional tournaments.

### Why did you want to be part of the Council?

I joined the Council to foster new relationships which could help revive the traditional *alia* fishing fleet in American Samoa and better preserve our significant marine resources for future generations.

### What changes have you seen in the American Samoa fishing industry in the past 20 years?

I have noticed a decline in foreign longline vessels in our waters. Only a handful of local *alia* are now operating commercially; many remain tied-up and are only used for occasional family and cultural purposes. In the past 20 years, the local *alia* fleet has not been modernized with current technology/equipment and still requires lots of manual labor.

### What are some challenges that American Samoa fisheries are facing?

American Samoa is currently facing a possible closure to bottomfish fishing due to overfishing. I feel this may be a premature closure because of a lack of accurate and current data collection locally. We are now working toward improving this data collection.

Access to new markets both on- and off-island is possible today with some modest improvements to infrastructure

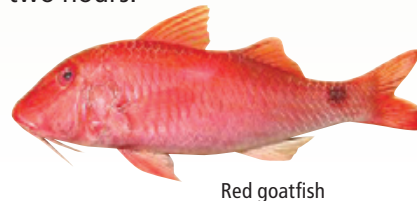
onshore. We currently need a crushed ice machine and packing facility in Pago Pago to ship fish to more lucrative markets off-island.

### What was your first impression after your first Council meeting?

To be honest, I was a bit nervous at first but gradually became more confident each day. It is a new experience for me to be a part of the policymaking side of the industry. I have so many new acronyms to learn! I am excited to meet new people in the industry and look forward to strengthening those relationships in the future.

### Tell me about one of your most exciting fishing experiences.

Every fishing experience is exciting. My greatest memories are those of being a teen and spearfishing from the reef or my *paopao* (canoe) in the mid-1970s. I still remember one time catching a tuna in the waters near the airport and having it pull me around in my canoe for two hours.



Red goatfish

### Lastly, what is your favorite fish to eat and how do you prepare it?

My favorite fish to eat is the red goatfish, or *veke'ula*. I prefer the fish cooked over an open-flame, but still enjoy it fried or steamed.

I prefer my sashimi to come from either yellowfin tuna or deep-sea barracuda. 🐟



Dunham and his fishing friend, Abe Jemiah, proudly display their long-tail red snappers. Photo courtesy of Howard Dunham.

## Congressional Corner



**In response to the COVID-19 pandemic,** Congress passed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act that includes \$300

million in funding for fisheries and aquaculture with \$4,337,445 allocated for Hawai'i, \$2,553,194 for American

Samoa and \$1 million each for Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands. Section 12005 of the CARES Act stipulates that funds are authorized to aid tribal, subsistence, commercial and charter fishery participants affected by the novel coronavirus. This section of the bill is aimed at supporting independent operators who are not otherwise covered by agriculture di-

saster assistance programs. To be eligible for relief, participants must have "revenue losses greater than 35% as compared to the prior five-year average revenue, or any negative impacts to subsistence, cultural or ceremonial fisheries." Funds may be awarded on a rolling basis "and within a fishing season to ensure rapid delivery of funds," which will remain available

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until Sept. 30, 2021. More information can be found at the Council's website at [www.wpcouncil.org/coronavirus](http://www.wpcouncil.org/coronavirus).

A bill introduced in March 2020 would establish a regulatory system for sustainable offshore aquaculture in the US exclusive economic zone. H.R. 6191, also known as the Advancing the Quality and Understanding of American Aquaculture (AQUAA) Act, would provide national standards for sustainable offshore aquaculture; require the Secretary of Commerce to promulgate regulations for permitting and siting of aquaculture activities; and not consider offshore aquaculture as fishing for the purposes of the Magnuson Stevens Act. The Council is keeping an eye on this bill as it may have impacts on its actions to develop a permitting framework for aquaculture in the Western Pacific Region.

In addition, the White House issued an Executive Order (EO) on May 7, 2020 promoting American seafood competitiveness and economic growth. The EO specifically proposes to remove outdated and unnecessarily burdensome regulations; strengthen efforts to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing; and remove barriers to aquaculture permitting and project development.



## Council Family Updates

**At the 181st Council meeting**, the Council supported the following advisory body changes:

- **Nonu Tuisamoa** and **Joseph Fa'a'ita** are joining the American Samoa Advisory Panel.
- The Archipelagic Plan Team welcomes three new members: **Michael Quach**, NOAA Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center (PIFSC); **Bryan Ishida**, Hawai'i Dept. of Aquatic Resources; and **Marc Nadon**, NOAA PIFSC.
- The Pelagic Plan Team welcomes four new members: **Donald Kobayashi**, **Michael Quach** and **Michael Kinney**, NOAA PIFSC; and **Sean Felise**, American Samoa Dept. of Marine & Wildlife Resources (DMWR).
- The Fishery Data Collection and Research Committee-Technical Committee welcomes two new members: **Michael Quach** and **Joseph O'Malley**, NOAA PIFSC.
- The Education Committee welcomes two new members: **Alexandra Bayless**, NOAA PIFSC; and **Maria Mauga-Vaofanua**, American Samoa DMWR. 🐟

## 2020-2021 US Pacific Territories Capacity-Building Scholarship Winners Announced



**From left:** Aveipepa Fua, Jude Lizama and Leilani Sablan are the three recipients of the US Pacific Territories Fishery Capacity-Building Scholarship for 2020-2021.

**The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council** is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2020-2021 US Pacific Territories Fishery Capacity-Building Scholarship. The scholarships are offered annually to college students with close connections to American Samoa, Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) who are pursuing degrees that will bolster the Territories' capacity to manage their fishery ecosystems. Students who accept a scholarship agree to work with their local fishery agency upon graduation for an equivalent amount of time that they receive the scholarship.

The 2020-2021 recipients include Aveipepa Fua (American Samoa) who will be pursuing a bachelor's degree in marine science at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo; Jude Lizama (CNMI) who will be pursuing a bachelor's degree in oceanography with a concentration in fisheries science at Hawai'i Pacific University; and Leilani Sablan (Guam) who will be pursuing a master's degree in biology at the University of Guam.

Since the scholarship program began in 2016, five recipients have graduated, with three having fulfilled their work requirements in American Samoa and the CNMI and two beginning their work commitment in 2019; and six recipients are poised to graduate in 2020 (two students) and 2021 (four students).

The scholarship program was established through a memorandum of understanding involving several federal agencies, the local fishery agencies in the Territories and several colleges and universities in Hawai'i and the Territories. It is funded by the Council, NOAA Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center and NOAA Pacific Islands Regional Office. 🐟