



Report of the American Samoa Archipelago FEP Advisory Panel Meeting

Wednesday, August 26, 2020
via Webex

1. Welcome and Introductions

Will Sword, American Samoa Advisory Panel (AP) Vice Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for taking the time to attend. American Samoa Advisory Panel members in attendance included: Joseph Faaita, Brian Thompson, Dustin Snow, Nonu Tuisamoa and Frank Barron.

Council staff members in support included Joshua DeMello, Zach Yamada, Asuka Ishizaki, Marlowe Sabater and Nate Ilaoa. Also in attendance were Council Members from American Samoa, Archie Soliai and Howard Dunham.

On the Webex, members of the public were also in attendance – Monette O’Connor, Joseph O’Malley, Katie Schwind, Edward Phillips, Donna Schroeder, and Jim McDonough.

2. Review of Last AP Meeting and Recommendations

Council staff provided a status update on the recommendations made by the American Samoa AP at its last meeting in May. The Council took up the AP’s recommendations for working with the DMWR to address data collection; working with the AP to train fishermen on the Catch-it, Log-it app; requesting the Pelagic Plan Team to look at south pacific albacore indicators; work with NMFS to meet with American Samoa longline owners to discuss electronic reporting implementation; and remove monument fishing prohibitions.

3. Council Issues

A. Development of an Offshore Energy Policy for the Western Pacific

Council staff provided a summary of the Council’s offshore energy policy. He reviewed the objectives and guidelines for the Advisory Panel. He talked about some of the comments that were provided by the Advisory Panel members on the offshore energy policy document.

One of the AP members asked if there were guidelines regarding wind turbine rotation speed. He also said it would be a good idea to get information on various rotation speed effects on seabirds as there is a high probability of interaction with those species. Council staff said that this was one of the issues that would be monitored.

B. Modification of PRIA Objectives and Activities for the PRIA MCP

Council staff provided an update on the modifications to the Pacific Remote Island Area (PRIA) Marine Conservation Plan (MCP). He spoke about the revisions to the projects listed within the document. The PRIA MCP will be taken up by the Council at the 183rd Meeting this month.

An AP member commented that it would be a good idea to have a better understanding of fishing activities within the PRIA. He noted that the fishing grounds were vital to the

purse seine fleet which supplies the local cannery and it would be helpful to have more information on how fishing is going in the PRIA Exclusive Economic Zone.

AP members noted the importance of the PRIA to US fishers in order to not compete with foreign fishing boats that are subsidized by their governments.

C. Bottomfish Outreach and Data Collection

Council staff informed the AP members that the Council was currently working on improving data collection in American Samoa. The territory's stock status for the bottomfish management unit species (BMUS) was determined to be overfished and experiencing overfishing, which initiated the data improvement tasks. He also explained that the Council has developed outreach materials that will help the public understand the data collection process and thus be more willing to participate in the submission of catch, trip and vendor data. He then summarized the self-reporting app and the training plans for American Samoa. He also noted that the Council is currently running radio and newspaper information to support the upcoming app training and use.

Council staff extended the Council's gratitude to the AP members for participating in the training in August and asked for their continued assistance in getting local fishers and vendors familiar with the app and comfortable self-reporting their data. He also asked for Council Member Dunham's support in getting the fishermen of his alia association to participate in the upcoming training later this month.

D. Considerations for Developing Reasonable and Prudent Measures and/or Reasonable and Prudent Alternatives for the American Samoa Longline Fishery

Council staff reported to the AP members that the Biological Opinion (BiOp) completion has been delayed again. Additionally, NOAA PIRO is projecting late fall or December as a target completion date and their staff have indicated that it is unlikely that they will have any substantive information on draft analyses, Reasonable and Prudent Measures and Reasonable and Prudent Alternatives (RPM/RPA), or a draft BiOp to present to the Council by the 183rd Council Meeting in September. Due to the lack of new information regarding the extent to which impacts may need to be reduced, the Council staff has not been able to develop options beyond what the Council had adopted as the preliminary list of considerations at the 182nd Council Meeting this past June.

E. Mandatory Electronic Reporting in the Hawaii and American Samoa Longline Fishery

Council staff provided a presentation to the AP members on the status of the electronic reporting (ER) for the Hawaii and American Samoa longline fisheries. The members were provided with the background of previous ER actions and given a summary of the purpose for implementing ER in the two fisheries. ER will allow for near real-time data submission and improve forecasting of the attainment of quotas. Implementation of ER will also improve the timeliness of catch and effort accountability measures and ensure longline vessels maximize sustainable catch of bigeye tuna to meet U.S. demands and streamline the effectiveness of catch accounting.

The AP members were also provided an overview of the final Council Action and the alternatives that will be decided on. Each alternative was compared looking at applicability as well as reporting and submission requirements. The question was posed to the AP as to whether this ER implementation should include the American Samoa longline fishery and if so, which vessel classes. The preferred is to limit large class vessels due to the system being dependent on vessel monitoring systems (VMS) to electronically submit data. VMS is not a requirement for the smaller vessels – mainly the alia boats that have federal longline permits.

The question of whether translations of the guidance for ER were necessary was discussed and one member suggested translation to Samoan language was unnecessary due to the fact that the captains of the local longline vessels already speak English. Council staff explained that one of the longline owners who were asked whether it would be necessary and that owner said the captains do speak English, but it might still be helpful to have the guidance in Samoan anyway to make it easier since Samoan is their first language.

An AP member asked about the timeline of implementing ER given the issues with COVID-19. Council staff said that even the Hawaii longline work has come to a stop and a firm timeline is not set currently for training.

F. Council Response to Executive Orders on Promoting Seafood Competitiveness (EO 13921) and Regulatory Relief (EO 13924)

Council staff provided an overview of the Executive Orders for Promoting Seafood Competitiveness and Regulatory Relief. A background on the issuance of the orders by President Trump was provided as well as the list of regulations, guidance documents, orders and other agency actions that the Council was considering.

4. American Samoa Reports

Council staff provided a summary of the reports to be given at the 183rd Council Meeting on September 14 – 16, 2020. The Council members will provide the territory's Motu Ripoti (Island Report) with Soliai covering the tuna industry and Dunham covering the island fisheries. DMWR will be reporting on the CARES Act spending plan and funding distribution as well as on legislative and enforcement activities since the last Council Meeting. The Community Activities Report will cover the AP Curriculum and Outreach Project, the Council's new office space in American Samoa and the work being done by the Council staff, the AP and DMWR to roll out the electronic self-reporting app in the territory.

5. Report on American Samoa Archipelago FEP AP Plan Activities

The Vice Chair reported that the first two phases of the app training had been complete – first the administrator training with DMWR on July 30, and then the AP training with DMWR on August 5. He said that the fishers training for later in the month would require the commitment of DMWR.

The Vice Chair also noted that no one in the fishing community has been made aware of the plans for the \$2.5 million allocated to American Samoa under the CARES Act for fisheries. He added that he and the Council Chair had inquired with DMWR about why the American Samoa Fisheries Task Force was not included in that process and were told that

there wasn't time to include others. The Vice Chair asked Dunham if DMWR had reached out to the alia association to be part of the CARES Act spending plan document drafting and he said they had not been included.

The Vice Chair also reported that two fish aggregating devices (FAD) were deployed off the south coast in anticipation of a possible fishing tournament in November. He also suggested the self-reporting app be used at that event if it takes place. He also reported that the AP Curriculum and Outreach Project was moving forward and that a vendor had signed a contract to produce the PSA videos for the initiative. He added that a draft Know Your Fisheries brochure had been created and was being revised currently.

The Vice Chair said that during the AP Chairs meeting earlier in the day, the discussion had focused on using more visual outreach methods to attract more younger people to get involved in the fisheries and that the AP's project was aligned with that objective.

6. Island Fishery Issues and Activities

An AP member asked about the status of the AP's project proposal to hold a fishing tournament for the students in Manu'a. Council staff said the project was included in the Sustainable Fisheries Fund (SFF) XII proposal which is currently under review.

There was discussion of the status of the shark law for American Samoa. The shark law is part of the administrative code and the revised statute has been submitted to the Attorney General for review and had been approved. The revised statute was also publicly noticed. The lone remaining task is the filing of the paperwork to complete the process. This has been the case for the past three years. Because the statute revision is in the administrative code, it does not require approval of the legislature.

The AP also discussed the status of the construction of the extension for the Malaloa Marina Dock. The construction company, Silva Group LLC was granted a waiver to bring in skilled workers from neighboring Samoa for the construction, but the work has yet to begin. Additionally, the piles have been shipped to American Samoa and are currently being stored. The members agreed that the stated completion date of November seems highly unlikely now.

The AP discussed the contract to repair the alia floating dock. AP members shared that they did not know the status of the repairs as the contract was approved a year ago, but the work had yet to begin.

An AP member said that his fish market is no longer associated with Island Fisheries Inc., as the company pulled out when the COVID-19 restrictions began earlier this year. The market is now named Fagatogo Fish Market and is still operating each Friday from 10:00 am to 7:00 pm.

7. Public Comment

Regarding the offshore energy policy, Brian Peck of the US Fish and Wildlife Service said that there is new research showing that there are emerging solutions for wind turbines to

reduce seabird interactions, including painting one of the turbine blades black. He suggested that this be explored further.

Regarding ER for the longline fisheries of American Samoa and Hawaii, Archie Soliai asked if the American Samoa longline owners have been included in the planning and discussion. Council staff said that they had reached out to the Tautai O Samoa Longline and Fishing Association to appoint a representative from the fishery to be included in the steering committee and the association had chosen Edgar Feliciano to be that representative.

Soliai also asked when the ER would take effect. Council staff said that there is not a firm date and that once video is up and running they can begin working on it as only 60 of the Hawaii longline vessels have been trained to this point. She added that the objective is for implementation to begin with Hawaii in January of next year with American Samoa later in the year. Virtual training could also affect the timeline.

Soliai asked if it was a possibility for American Samoa's vessels to be trained first as they were still fishing while the Hawaii longline boats are currently tied up. Council staff said that some boats in Hawaii are back out fishing but PIFSC staff is not able to get to the boats due to the current COVID-19 restrictions.

8. Discussion and Recommendations

The American Samoa Advisory Panel made the following recommendations:

Regarding the offshore energy:

- **The American Samoa Advisory Panel endorsed the policy drafted by the Council.**

Regarding the PRIA MCP:

- **The American Samoa Advisory Panel endorsed the Marine Conservation Plan as it was drafted.**

Regarding mandatory electronic reporting for the longline fisheries:

- **The American Samoa Advisory Panel recommends that the Council require mandatory ER for both Hawaii and American Samoa Class C and D longline vessels.**

Regarding the Executive Order prioritized list:

- **The American Samoa Advisory Panel endorsed the document drafted by the Council.**

Regarding the American Samoa spending plan for the CARES Act:

- **The American Samoa Advisory Panel recommended the Council request DMWR provide updates to the fishermen and the American Samoa Fisheries Task Force Members on the status of the plan.**

Regarding training for the self-reporting app:

- **The American Samoa Advisory Panel recommended the Council request DMWR staff become more involved in the process of training local fishers and vendors to self-report catch, trip and sales data.**

9. Other Business

There was no other business.