



185th Meeting of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council
March 23-25, 2021

Regional Communications and Outreach Report

This report summarizes regional communications and outreach efforts conducted by the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council since its 184th meeting in December 2020, as well as describes some plans for 2021.

Publications

The Council added four historical issues to its *Pacific Islands Fishery Monographs* series between November 2020 and January 2021.

(#10) *History of the Billfish Fisheries and Their Management in the Western Pacific Region* by Michael Markrich - From 1900, competition began in the Western Pacific between wealthy big-game fishermen in the United States who wanted to preserve the rare and iconic Pacific blue marlin for display and entertainment, and local commercial fishermen in Japan and Hawai‘i who caught it with special longline vessels for use as a fish cake—an important food for the working class. This competition grew in intensity until it had geopolitical implications that affected the world’s oceans, while commercial tuna fisheries and sportfisheries expanded to meet their respective current demands. Markrich gave a presentation on this topic Feb. 18, 2021, as part of the University of Hawai‘i History Department’s seminar series.

(#11) *University of Hawai‘i Pelagic Fisheries Research Program* by Paul Dalzell – This monograph is a history of the PFRP, a grant awarding program, which primarily funded research on tuna and tuna-like species. Without it, pelagic science across many disciplines would have trailed behind the fishery and social dynamics over the past three decades. The PFRP meetings dealt with leading-edge studies, such as improving electronic tagging, saving and archiving data streams that cover several decades or longer and bringing scientific rigor to the issues surrounding bycatch of protected species.

(#12) *Fishery Ecosystem Management in the Western Pacific Region* by Liz Martell and Sylvia Spalding – The Western Pacific Council was the first in the nation to develop an ecosystem-based fishery management plan (completed in 2001 and implemented in 2004). It then began converting all of its fishery management plans to fishery ecosystem plans. To help inform this endeavor, the Council convened three workshops of renowned marine ecosystem scholars between 2005 and 2007 to review the biophysical, social science and policy aspects of ecosystem-based management. The monograph provides a summary of these workshops, the Council’s ecosystem-based accomplishments since the workshops and its current and planned actions to refine its fishery ecosystem plans and corresponding annual reports, organizational structure and project priorities.



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(#13) Fishery Data Collection Systems: Evasive as an Elusive Fish by Marlowe Sabater – This publication gives the Council’s history of data collection activities and the efforts expended to improve the data over almost four decades. It documents the evolution of the fishery management requirements via the different reauthorizations of the Magnuson-Stevens Act and the increasing need for data at each iteration.

Pacific Islands Fishery News – The winter 2021 issue of the quarterly Council newsletter highlights new government administration changes and fishery-related legislation, Council-supported coral reef and nontarget species catch in the Hawai‘i longline fishery research projects, proposed critical habitat for coral species in the U.S. Pacific Territories, Catchit Logit app updates and the socioeconomic context for fisher-shark interactions in the Mariana Archipelago, among others.

Within the newsletter, we have created a section called Science and Management 101 that attempts to explain difficult topics in layman’s terms. In past issues, we have explored the difference between overfished and overfishing, the definition of bycatch, what Kobe plots are and why we collect fish life history information. In this issue, we give a short summary about fish stock assessments and how they relate to bottomfish stock statuses in the Territories.

Hawaii Fishing News – The Council submitted articles on recent advisory committee meetings on noncommercial fishery issues and the fishing industry, updates on U.S. government stimulus packages for fishing communities and Council contractor Poseidon Fisheries Research’s efforts to work with fishermen to provide scientists with better data for stock assessments and to inform management decisions.

U.S. Pacific Territories Fishery Capacity-Building Scholarship Program Update

Since its inauguration in 2015, the scholarship program has supported 15 students.

- Six students have graduated: two from American Samoa and four from the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). The two graduates from American Samoa have fulfilled their post-graduate requirement of employment in their local fishery agency. Three of the graduates from CNMI are working at their local fishery agency (Maria Angela Delacruz started 3/15/21 as a Data Analysis Officer with the Department of Fish and Wildlife). The sixth graduate (from the CNMI) has completed the required employment with the local agency and is now pursuing a graduate degree with financial assistance from the scholarship program.
- Eight students from American Samoa, Guam and the CNMI are finishing the requirements for graduation; five are expected to graduate in 2021.
- One student from American Samoa withdrew from the program after the first year for medical reasons.

There are more students concurrently accepted into the scholarship program than ever before. Some students continue to take longer to graduate than the originally expected four semesters



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with additional semesters added on as necessary, including summer sessions which help students maintain their progress. Reasons for taking longer include a lack of preparation and generally a small number of classes available for students in the Territories' 2-year colleges. The more intensive 4-year degree programs in marine science and biology generally require a student to start early earning prerequisites to the more intensive junior and senior level classes and taking classes in an appropriate order. Class scheduling also plays a role in student progress and good advising helps with planning and maintaining progress, especially when a student has difficulty in a particular class or needs tutoring support. In addition, COVID 19-related restrictions continue to make schoolwork more difficult with online classes, particularly for labs and some field studies.

To address some of these issues, the Education Committee Scholarship Subcommittee, consisting of Frank Camacho, Erik Franklin, Keith Korsmeyer and Craig Severance, developed an advising agreement, which all current students have signed, and agree to regularly consult with an assigned advisor and not make course changes without consultation. We were able to find funds to cover the shortfall in 2021, but program changes for future students need to be discussed.

Regional Initiatives – Council Advisory Panel 2021 Outreach Plans

The Council regional Advisory Panels plan to connect with their communities in 2021 in the following ways:

Hawai'i

- School outreach
- Virtual tournament assistance (Lokahi app)
- *Hawaii Fishing News* articles
- Lunar calendar assistance

American Samoa

- Fisheries curriculum
- AS Fisheries PSAs
- Know Your Fisheries brochure
- Manu'a kids tournament
- Lunar calendar assistance

CNMI

- Tournament outreach
- Partner with Tasi to Table for school outreach
- Lunar calendar assistance

Guam

- Bottomfish fishing tournament
- Tournament outreach
- Lunar calendar assistance



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Regional Initiative - Hawai‘i

Go Fish! with Mike Buck radio program: The radio show airs Saturdays from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. and is repeated on Sundays from 7 a.m. to 8 a.m. with approximately 7300 weekend listeners on AM 690 and FM 94.3. Podcasts are available on the Council website (www.wpcouncil.org/educational-resources/educational-audio-files) and on the radio station webpage (<https://theanswerhawaii.com/radioshow/659>). Council staff and family and invited guests have recently covered topics, such as uku annual catch limits and main Hawaiian Islands deep-seven bottomfish assessment updates, Advisory Panel projects for 2021 and fishery data collection efforts in Hawai‘i, including the Lokahi app.

As part of our agreement with Salem Media, we aired a 30-sec PSA with general information about the Council voiced by Vice Chair for Hawai‘i Ed Watamura. The segment ran three times per day for two weeks (Feb. 15-28, 2021) on six radio stations—AM690/94.3FM, AM760/95.1FM, 95.5FM, 97.5FM, 99.5FM and 107.9 FM.

Regional Initiative – CNMI

KKMP radio interview: On March 2, 2021 (ChST), Council Vice Chair for CNMI John Gourley and Council staff Floyd Masga encouraged the public to get involved in topics and initiatives important to the region, including:

- Marianas Trench Monument proposed management plan.
- Coral Critical Habitat proposed rule, with process designation details and potential problem areas.
- Catchit Logit app promotion and updates.
- CNMI Advisory Panel that residents can use to address concerns on Rota, Tinian and Saipan.