



WESTERN
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MANAGEMENT
COUNCIL

Report of the American Samoa Archipelago FEP Advisory Panel Meeting

Tuesday, November 16, 2020

6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Nate Ilaoa, American Samoa Advisory Panel (AP) vice Chair, opened the meeting at 6:07pm and welcomed the members. American Samoa AP members in attendance included: Joseph Faaita, Samuel Meleisea, Dustin Snow, Brian Thompson, Frank Barron, and Pafuti Ana Tupua.

Also in attendance was: Archie Soliai (Council Chair), Will Sword (Council member); Diana Kitiona, Zach Yamada, Marlowe Sabater, Josh DeMello (Council staff); Domingo Ochavillo, and Justin Hospital (SSC members).

2. Review of Last AP Meeting and Recommendations

Council staff reviewed the report and recommendations from the last AS AP meeting held on September 7, 2021. The AP made recommendations on bottomfish rebuilding plan, the Sustainable Fisheries Fund, and AS fishery issues. She noted that the bottomfish rebuilding plan issue was deferred to an intersessional meeting in October so DMWR can consult with the AS Governor. At the 188th Council Meeting in October, the Council recommended alternative 4. The rebuilding plan was transmitted to NMFS.

3. AS SFF Project Reports

A. Manua Kids Fishing Tournament

Brian Thompson gave an update on efforts to conduct the student fishing tournament in Manua. He said that Manua coordinator in Ofu is currently unavailable to transport supplies due to limited flights to the islands. Other government agencies who will be traveling to Manua in the upcoming weeks have volunteered to transport supplies to Ofu. Due to shipping delays, water and food items for staff and students need to be shipped as well. Government employees in Manua are assisting with planning and preparations.

B. AS PSAs and Curriculum Development

Council staff said that DMWR's Outreach and Education division is reviewing the PSA script that was developed by the AP. DMWR staff has been in contact with AS-DOE to schedule the timing of the PSA development and teacher workshop to fit in the current school year calendar.

C. Longline Improvement Projects

i. Alia Fishing Upgrades

Council staff reported that DMWR just finalized and approved the vessel criteria and requirements for this project. Part of the criteria requires recipients of alia upgrades is to register and report on the Catchit, Logit app. Some concerns that delayed the finalization of the vessel criteria came from DMWR staff who noticed that most of the alia owners were not reporting on the Catchit, Logit app. DMWR will work with potential recipients to register and report on the Catchit, Logit app. A memorandum of understanding (MOU) is being written by DMWR staff.

ii. Longline Albacore Jigging

Council staff said that the owners of the longliners are waiting for their vessels to be dry-docked. Only one vessel has been fully outfitted with equipment for jigging. Owner Vince Halleck reported that the Manaolemoana is currently dry-docked for installation of two additional 800-gallon fuel tank for jigging in Northern waters. For Fetuolemoana, rigs have been fabricated for jig fishing but have not been installed. Other vessels under this project are also waiting to be dry-docked.

iii. Ice Project

Council staff said that DMWR is looking at getting quotes for the trailer and storage bins for the ice delivery project. Two trailers and two storage bins will be held in Tutuila, with one trailer and one storage bin in Ofu, Manua. DMWR understands that there is currently no ice source in Manua and is looking at ways to acquire a flake ice machine for the Manua Islands. A MOU between DMWR and a local vendor is being put together to house one trailer and storage bin at the a vendor near the dock.

An AP member asked if sportfishermen will be able to use the ice from this project. AP vice chair said that this project is to support small boat fisheries, including sportsfishermen.

4. AS Outreach and Education

Council staff reported that the AP was involved in several outreach events this year. The AP was able to give out brochures and flyers at the annual Coast Weeks Family Fun Day. During this event, AP was also able to share their fishing activity sheets with science teachers from three different elementary schools. The local TV station has also extended the broadcasting of the Catchit, Logit infomercial with Will Sword for another three months.

5. AS Fishery Issues and Activities

A. AS Bottomfish Data Workshop/Evaluation

Council staff presented on the AS bottomfish data workshop with DMWR. The 2019 benchmark stock assessment in 2019 concluded that AS bottomfish was overfished and that overfishing was occurring. The Council advised that Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center (PIFSC) work with the council and local stakeholders to ensure that the stock assessment capabilities improve in accordance with regional mandates and regulations. PIFSC conducted a data workshop with DMWR to review datasets that is available for American Samoa in preparation for the 2023 stock assessment. PIFSC generated a data evaluation report that looks at six different datasets: diver's survey, commercial receipt book, biosampling data, boat-based creel survey, shore-based creel survey, and historical catch information. This report is meant to look at what information is currently available and what are some of the issues with the datasets. Data for ten of the eleven BMUS species is available for data assessment. DMWR staff who participated in the workshop gave input regarding each dataset.

Ilaoa asked about the status of the AS Commercial Fisheries BioSampling (CFBS) project headed Joseph O'Malley (PIFSC). Council staff said that Gataivai Talamoa (NOAA Field Operations Liaison American Samoa) is coordinating a meeting with bottomfish fishermen but not sure about the progress and the AS contractor for the CFBS program.

B. Territorial Bottomfish FMP Domingo Ochavillo

Ochavillo gave a update on the Bottomfish Fishery Management Plan (BFMP). The BFMP looks at managing territorial waters where fisheries for bottomfish are mostly caught within three nautical miles. Current measures are catch limits and closed areas, which are MPAs and no-take areas. Shallow-water BMUS were mostly caught beyond three nautical miles in federal waters, namely Taputapu. Deepwater BMUS were mostly caught within three nautical miles in territorial waters. Data shows that most fishing grounds around AS are closed. Most BMUS are caught in Manua islands. Aunuu and Taputapu are also top fishing grounds. DMWR held consultation meetings in Tutuila and Manua. The objectives for these meetings were to explain to fishermen bottomfish species resource, trends, and spatial distribution. Management plan objectives include improve data collection, improve data quality, and raise catch limits. Regulations suggested by fisherfolk include fishing liscensing, bag limits, size limits, limited entry, and complete closures of areas for fishing grounds.

C. Council Coral Reef Program

Council staff informed the AP about the Council's efforts to start a coral reef program. AP members were asked if there are any ideas on coral reef projects to please submit them to council staff.

An AP member member mentioned that an NGO, Ridge to Reefs, is currently working on a project in the village of Vatia to mitigate impacts of effluent from piggeries. Many piggeries in Vatia use the wash-down method to clean their pig pens. Waste water from these sites goes into ravines and streams that leads to reefs.

D. AS Fishermen Observations Nate Ilaoa

AP member said weather has not been that great in the recent months. She noted that not much fishing activity has occurred in the last quarter.

Another AP member said that there have not been much fish sold to vendors. Street side vendors have been selling mostly reef species.

Council staff said that in conversations with fishermen, irregular weather patterns have slowed down fishing effort. Some fishermen have been catching *aku* and some bottomfish species, but not many.

E. Advisory Panel Issues

AP did not bring up any topics for AP issues.

6. Annual Report of AS AP Activities

A. 2021 Activities

AP vice chair gave a brief overview of 2021 activities. The AP was involved in the collection and compilation of pictures, recipes, and information for the lunar calendar. The lunar calendar for 2022 will be out soon and distributed to the public.

Former vice chair Will Sword filmed a 30 minute infomercial about the use and purpose of the app with the local TV station. The infomercial has been broadcasted during vacant slots on the local channel. It was also shared with local cinema but due to the length of the video it cannot be used. AP is looking at other ways to share the video.

To promote Catchit, Logit app usage, AP set up an internet and sign in station during the first fishing tournament to help fishermen log their catch.

Two advisory panel members were able to put together two activity sheets for school aged children to learn about fishing and fishing terms. The activity sheets have been shared with local schools and at outreach events.

B. Planning for 2022/End of term

Vice Chair noted that the end of term of AS AP is December 2022. AP members should work to wrap up current AP projects and complete them before the end of next year. AP members were asked to review the AP workplan to see what projects to need to be added or completed.

7. Public Comment

There was no public comment

8. Discussion and Recommendations

The AP had no recommendations during the meeting.

Council chair Soliai commended the AP for the work that they do and reminded the AP that recommendations that they make are for the benefit of the people of American Samoa.

9. Other Business

AP member asked about the status of the CARES Act and when funds will be released to the public. Council chair said that difficulties obtaining required documents for the CARES Act (ie. W-9 forms and affidavits) slowed the processing of applications. He noted that he received confirmation from the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission that they are working on issuing checks to the territories soon. CARES Act funds have been distributed for the territory of Guam and American Samoa should be receiving their funds soon. Those who did not qualify for the first round of relief can reapply for the second round.