



WESTERN
PACIFIC
REGIONAL
FISHERY
MANAGEMENT
COUNCIL

Report of the Hawaii Archipelago FEP Advisory Panel Meeting

Friday, June 11, 2021

Virtual Meeting via Webex

1. Welcome and Introductions

Clay Tam, Advisory Panel (AP) Chair opened the meeting at 9:10 a.m.; Members in attendance include Basil Oshiro, Carrie Johnston, Khang Dang, Nathan Abe, Eddie Ebisui, and Chad Pacheco. Hawaii AP vice Chair Gil Kualii was excused due to personal issues. Michael Lee was absent.

Also in attendance was Joshua DeMello, Zachary Yamada, Asuka Ishizaki, Mark Fitchett, Marlowe Sabater; Maria Carnevale (Council staff); Thomas Remington (Council Contractor); Justin Hospital (NMFS PIFSC); and public members Raina Grigg, Ross Tyler, Lane Johnston

2. Review of Last AP Meeting and Recommendations

Council staff provided an update on the recommendations from the last meeting.

3. Council Issues

A. MHI Deep 7 Bottomfish ACL Specification

Council staff presented the supplemental environmental impact analysis specifying the multiyear annual catch limit for the Main Hawaiian Islands deep 7 bottomfish fishery. The Council at its 185th meeting recommended rolling over the 492,000 lb. ACL and the in-season accountability measure that tracks the catch relative to the ACL and would close the federal waters once the ACL is projected to be reached. The effects analysis showed no significant adverse effects on the physical and biological resources, socio-economic and management setting, and cumulative impacts. The supplemental environmental assessment document updated the 2019 environmental assessment document for any potential changes in the fishery and the environment brought about by the Council recommendations.

An AP member asked about the ACL management relative to the removal of the BRFA's. Staff reported that DAR provided a draft data summary on the catch and effort from the four BRFA's opened in 2019. The number of fishermen that reported fishing in the opened BRFA's is low and there was no sign of a rush to fish the area. The AP member added that at least for the Maui BRFA, bottomfish fishermen do not bother to fish the opened BRFA due to the distance and rough waters. There are potential poachers in the area but fishermen want to be able to patrol the area. The AP supported a work item for the State of Hawaii to report on the catch and effort on the recently opened BRFA since it was already opened for two years and prepare an interim report since part of the condition in opening the BRFA was to conduct a review of the data. The evaluation of the recently opened BRFA's should be considered in light of the 30x30 issues.

The AP supported the recommendation to roll over the 492,000 lb. ACL

B. Monitoring the Hawaii Uku Fishery

Council staff presented the issues associated with the monitoring and management of the uku fishery. The incorporation of the HMRFS data into the benchmark stock assessment allowed for the estimation of an annual catch limit (ACL) with the commercial and non-commercial fishery combined. The monitoring issue for the commercial fishery is the monthly level reporting and for the non-commercial fishery is the bi-monthly wave estimation for catches. There is a high level of uncertainty associated with the HMRFS bi-monthly wave estimation. The management issues include developing parallel management strategies between the federal and state jurisdiction. Allowing the recreational uku fishery unmanaged relative to the catch limit will result in an overage adjustment that would affect both sectors.

The Hawaii AP evaluated whether the uku fishery should be managed as a whole or if a sector allocation should be used. The Hawaii AP expressed serious concern regarding the variability and reliability of the HMRFS data for management use. The high variability will contribute to the unfair allocation of the quota in favor of the non-commercial sector. This would lead to conflict between the two sectors. An AP member stated that the commercial sector should have a higher allocation because the data is more reliable and the sector is more accountable to the management measures. An AP member said that allocation may lead to under-reporting which would make the data quality worse. There is a tendency to circumvent the reporting where the commercial guys would not report due to an absence of reporting requirements for the non-commercial fishery. The uku management should be elevated to the same standard as the deep 7 bottomfish fishery.

If the monitoring and enforcement are not improved sector-based management should not be used. It would not be fair for the commercial sector to be pushed down while the non-commercial sector is required not to report. This will result in an un-level playing field.

The AP agreed that the uku fishery should be managed as a whole under a total ACL and ACT. Sector allocation will create a user conflict in the uku fishery. The current monitoring and enforcement are not up to par with the requirements of sector-based management. The AP was in favor of managing the uku fishery like the Deep 7 and improving the accountability.

C. Gear and Release Requirements to Improve Post-Hooking Survivorship of Oceanic Whitetip Sharks in the Longline Fisheries

Council staff provided an overview of a draft regulatory amendment considering prohibition of wire leaders and requirement to remove trailing gear in the longline fisheries operating under the Pelagic FEP. The Council is scheduled to take final action at the June meeting, and will be specifically considering whether the trailing gear removal requirement would apply to the Hawaii deep-set fishery only, or to all longline fisheries operating under the Pelagic FEP.

An AP member affirmed their resolve to transition to monofilament line the voiced in favor of option 2B. He expressed concern about the one-meter option that operationally does not make any sense. The major concern is the crew and observer safety. Another AP member asked if this is something that the US fishery is taking a lead on hoping that the international fleet will follow. Staff confirmed that the measure is applied domestically but should be recommended to the international level as well. It is difficult to show an example as a leader in conservation if the US

Council staff also stated that there are other mitigation measures for preventing interaction with OWT. The region is halfway there but there are lots of intervening steps prior to reaching that milestone but the Hawaii longline fishery is ahead of the pack.

The AP recommended the Council select Alternative 2B. Regulatory language on removal of trailing gear should prioritize crew and observer safety, while having a target of less than 1 meter from the hook.

D. Developing Draft Tori Line Specifications for the Hawaii Deep-set Longline Fishery

Council staff presented preliminary draft tori line specifications for the Hawaii deep-set longline fishery based on recent design and fieldwork conducted in the fishery. The Council is expected to take action on a regulatory amendment to modify seabird mitigation measures for the deep-set fishery later in 2021. The draft regulatory specifications include tori line length, attachment point height, and streamer length and spacing. Other details such as materials and alternative streamer designs may be included in non-regulatory design guidance.

An AP member described the application of Tori lines. The fleet is interested in the removal of other measures if they are to transition to Tori lines. None of the fleets is using it currently and will need to find out how many would be interested in using it moving forward. The AP is looking forward to the results of the experiment in the September meeting.

The AP supports the preliminary draft tori line specifications, with the length to be specified as 50m aerial length and total length of three times vessel length.

E. Pelagic Issues Updates

Council staff provided an update on different pelagic issues that the Council is working on; the Council is taking action on the 2022 specification for territory bigeye tuna as well as a multiyear specification for 2023 and beyond; There will be a tropical tuna workshop, blue marlin stock assessment, and striped marlin stock assessment that will provide the science for the international organizations that will feed into the catch limits for those species. There are other research projects on non-target pelagic species including mahimahi, ono, and monchong, to look at the feasibility of developing a stock assessment.

4. Discussion on Fishery Impacts From Offshore Wind Energy

At its 183rd meeting, the Council adopted its Offshore Energy Policy and the AP had heard a presentation at previous meetings of a proposed offshore wind farm and noted concerns that fishermen had regarding the project. Council staff solicited potential fishery impacts from offshore (wind) energy and other potential ocean uses from the AP members. He noted that he has been receiving an increasing amount of requests from potential offshore wind developers and would provide the AP's concerns to those that are interested. The Chair suggested staff include AP members and other Council advisors in those discussions and requested volunteers to assist staff.

The AP had the following concerns:

- Interruption to migratory patterns that disrupt fish movement away from natural ko'a
- Seabirds
- Being able to continue to fish in the area, particularly if it was a traditional fishing area

- Sight lines/disruption of view
- Traditional rights/give back to the community
- Corrosion of the metal parts that fall in the water and the accountability of clean up
- The impacts of the transmission cables to the bottom habitat and fishes, including the size and voltage of the cables as well as where it will be brought onto land
- Vibrations from propellers and how it affects the fish
- Consider having their anchors serve as artificial reef
- The salinity and depth (pressure) will be problems for the projects.

BOEM is doing lots of studies in terms of feasibility. It is still in the planning stage and has not delved into the details of the project. Staff encouraged AP members to be engaged in the scoping discussions. A subcommittee of the AP can be formed and collectively discuss and raise questions regarding offshore energy.

AP members Abe, Pacheco, Tam, Oshiro, and Ebisui volunteered to assist staff in future discussions with developers to provide the AP and the fishing community concerns.

5. Hawaii Reports

A. 2020 Annual Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation Reports

Thomas Remington, Council Contractor, provided the highlights of the 2020 archipelagic and pelagic annual SAFE reports. The deep 7 bottomfish fishery had a general decrease in participation, effort, and catch. This could be attributed to COVID impacts, oceanographic conditions, and demand. He reported that the Ecosystem Component Species fishery-dependent variables also showed a general decrease. There was also a decrease in catch and effort in Kona crab but there was an increase in CPUE. He noted that there was a decrease in the catch in the pelagic fish caught with a noticeable decrease in billfish, tuna, and other species. He also reported that a new section was added called the Fishermen Observation that provides a narrative from the perspective of the fishing community.

The coral reef fish survey data was not updated due to the lack of fieldwork conducted during COVID. The life history section included new information for ehu, onaga, and uku. Regarding the revenue for the archipelagic fishery decreased by 32-57 percent. The price per pound decreased for most MUS except crustaceans. For the pelagic fishery, revenue declined by \$80M. The archipelagic protected species module included the ongoing consultation for OWT and GMR and the proposed rule for critical habitat for threatened coral species. On the pelagic protected species module, the SSL remained open throughout the year. There were 9 interactions with fur seals in the SSL in 2020. On the environmental indicators, the annual mean of atmospheric CO₂ is higher compared to the previous year. Oceanic pH is also continually getting lower (acidic). The region transitioned from a neutral phase to a La Nina phase. The SST also increased in waters around Hawaii and areas where the LL fishery operates. Tropical storm in the Hawaiian island was lower in 2020 with only one storm entering the Hawaii vicinity. The pelagic size structure in 2020 was larger.

An AP member asked about studies for invasive species. Ta'ape is a concern for the bottomfish fishermen where these species are caught at 90 fathoms which may prey upon juvenile deep 7

species. Remington responded that the annual report tracks the catch of ta'ape and to'au, but the fishery-dependent data are not analyzed to determine ecosystem impacts.

The Chair asked if the changes in management are monitored and incorporated into the interpretation of the trends. Remington confirmed that this information is captured in the narratives to describe the charts in the report.

B. Fisheries Research and Priorities

The Chair opened the discussion to any fishery research needs and priorities from the Hawaii AP. Some of the research areas include:

- Address the shark depredation in Hawaii and development of potential deterrents;
- Conduct a fishery-independent survey for uku and mapping of the uku habitats;
- Monitoring of the habitat shifts in Penguin Banks for Kona crab and nearshore areas for ecosystem components;
- Ecosystem impacts of increasing turtle abundance;
- Measure the economic impacts of longline depredation by FKW and sharks;
- Modeling the impacts of non-point source pollution relative to fishing impacts;
- Effects of tourism in nearshore ecosystems;

C. Potential Native Hawaiian Fisheries Training and Cultural Honu Take

Council staff reported that the Council is working with community groups to look at developing fisheries training to get Native Hawaiians involved in fisheries as well as looking at the availability of a cultural take of green sea turtles. These ideas are still at the initial stages of development and the Hawaii AP will be provided reports as these projects develop.

An AP member asked about the status of the Aha Moku system. Staff responded that Aha Moku Island Councils are still functioning and that they are looking to organize into an association.

6. Report on Hawaii Archipelago FEP AP Plan Activities

Council staff reported on the status of the Hawaii Archipelago FEPs. Staff reported on the Hawaii Fishing News that featured Nathan Abe as an AP member engaged in the fishery. Staff asked the AP if there are issues that the AP wants to bring up for HFN publication.

7. Fishery Issues and Activities

An AP member reported that the fish is coming back and the fishermen have been sending their fish out. The Tuna is coming in from the north shore of Kauai. He also said they continue to have problems with boaters and swimmers in the boat channels which is a concern because the Father's Day fishing tournament for shoreline/boats is coming up. In terms of Aha Moku, they are having problems with the leadership and there are issues with enforcement in Ha'ena. He said that Aha Moku is a good system but he would like to see a way for enforcement to come in and follow through with the regulations.

An AP member noted that Kahalu'u beach park is closed due to coral spawning. They think that keeping people out of the park will help increase the probability of spawning. He reported that the uku bite is on and he is getting \$7/pounds for uku. He also noted that 2021 is going to be an anomaly due to COVID and the changes in regulations.

An AP member noted that not much is happening with tournaments on Maui and more 100 pound ahis are showing up. They are planning to work with the US Coast Guard to do training on June 20 and extend the trailer safety till 2025.

An AP member noted that the fish prices have been strong in 2021. Prices have been around \$3-5/pound but this is correlated with weak catches. He also said that the restaurant business is crazy and super strong. He also reported that when swordfish was going for \$6/pound imports from South America and Canada drove down the prices.

An AP member reported that this is the worst ahi and ono run for the north shore of Oahu he has seen. He said it is not due to the lack of effort, but the harbors are being overtaken by tourism. He said that because fishing hasn't been good, prices have been high with opakapaka prices in the \$20/pound range. He noted that the State FADs are failures and there are no buoys to help with fishing.

The Chair noted that an independent bottomfish survey will go out on July 1st. he encouraged the AP to let the communities know that there will be flagged boats that are only doing research. He also reported on a fishermen's meeting about FADs.

8. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

9. Discussion and Recommendations

The Hawaii Advisory Panel made the following recommendations:

Regarding the MHI deep 7 bottomfish fishery ACL

- The Hawaii AP recommended the Council roll over the 492,000 lb ACL.

Regarding the MHI uku fishery

- The Hawaii AP supports managing the uku fishery as a whole under a total ACL and ACT. Sector allocation will create a user conflict in the uku fishery. The current monitoring and enforcement are not up to par with the requirements of sector-based management.

Regarding improving the survivability of oceanic whitetip sharks

- The Hawaii AP recommended the Council select Alternative 2B and suggested that regulatory language on the removal of trailing gear should prioritize crew and observer safety while having a target of less than 1 meter from the hook.

Regarding the draft tori line specification

- The Hawaii AP supports the preliminary draft tori line specifications, with the length to be specified as 50m aerial length and a total length of three times vessel length.

10. Other Business

Next meeting for the next informal Hawaii AP tentatively slated for July 9.

The meeting adjourned at 12:05 p.m.