



WESTERN
PACIFIC
REGIONAL
FISHERY
MANAGEMENT
COUNCIL

Report of the Non-Commercial Fishery Advisory Committee Meeting

Wednesday, June 9, 2021
Virtual Meeting via Webex

1. Welcome and Introductions

Dean Sensui, Non-Commercial Fisheries Advisory Committee (NCFAC) Chair, opened the meeting at 1:10 p.m. NCFAC members in attendance included Steve Kaneko, David Obrien Hongguang Ma, Phil Fernandez, and Ben Walin

Others in attendance included Joshua DeMello, Marlowe Sabater, Zach Yamada, Maria Carnevale, Floyd Masga, and Felix Reyes (Council Staff); Justin Hospital (NMFS PIFSC); Mark Fox (NMFS PIRO); and Russ Dunn (NOAA Fisheries)

Others in attendance included Bryan Ishida (State of Hawaii), Mark Ladao (Honolulu Star-Advertiser) and Leonard Yamada (Fisherman).

2. Review of Last NCFAC Meeting

Council presented the report of the last NCFAC meeting and reviewed the recommendations made at that meeting and provided an update on the status of those recommendations.

3. Regional/National Non-Commercial Fishing Efforts

A. Regional Roundtable

Russ Dunn, National Policy Advisor for Recreational Fisheries in NOAA, provided an update on recreational/non-commercial fishing activities at NOAA. He reported that NOAA is working to get the best understanding possible of primary concerns and priorities from the non-commercial fishing community and is soliciting ideas for discussion at a Recreational Fishing Summit to be held in 2022. He said the new Administration's priority is to improve the ocean economy through seafood resilience, competitiveness, and respond to COVID. The administration is also pushing to advance ecosystem science for management with climate change (climate ready and resilient fisheries) and renewable energy key priorities. NOAA is also working with the Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee (MAFAC) on developing a guidance document as well as on ocean space uses such as offshore energy, aquaculture and conservation. He said that more intense use of the ocean could create conflict so recreational/non-commercial fishers need to be at the table to voice their priorities.

A member asked if a formalized framework, such as the Obama coastal and marine spatial planning process, was going to be used to understand the user priorities and conflicts. Dunn said he hadn't heard of any comprehensive effort like that under Obama.

The NCFAC pointed out that the Pacific Islands are an island culture so equity is important in non-commercial fisheries as it is food, whereas recreational fishing in the mainland is for recreation. He said that equity in these activities needs to be considered. Dunn said that there are similar issues with the Caribbean and it would be worth having talks between the Councils to see if they are the same.

A member asked about the MAFAC electronic reporting guidance document. Dunn said that the agency was slow off the mark and struggling on how to move forward with electronic reporting. They know that there are hurdles like avoiding reporting bias and retaining people in an electronic reporting program over time so NOAA tasked MAFAC with looking realistically at what data gaps electronic reporting can and cannot fill. This would provide a roadmap to move forward to implement electronic reporting rather than a specific protocol and regime. He said the report should highlight or identify the challenges that are needed to be navigated and provide any solutions as well.

Another member asked if there were any complaints from the fishing community regarding wind energy in the Northeast. Dunn said the biggest concern from recreational fishing community is that they have been left out of the conversation. He said that is an artifact of 1) traditionally the challenge has been the commercial industry in other countries; and 2) the spatial data available is almost exclusively commercial. He said recreational fishing location information is not collected because the fishing community doesn't want to provide it. They think they are being ignored and want to be at the table during the discussions so are now providing anecdotal information. For-hire businesses have started coming together to chart out where they go. The member asked if their regional fishery management councils have representation for recreational fishermen in their region. Dunn said they have recreational fishing interests in various advisory groups but not a set recreational fishing committee.

The NCFAC asked if it would be worth having fishermen identify areas on a map be useful. Members had concerns that activities such as wind energy could have massive influence on migratory patterns of fish and affect the natural ko'a. Dunn responded it would behoove the fishing community to begin that effort if they think something is coming up to provide themselves with an enormous head start and noted that the Catchit, Logit is one way that might help bring data together if it has location information.

The NCFAC agreed that this would be a good start for the fishing community prior to any offshore activities and encouraged the Council to look at participatory mapping of NC fisheries.

O'Brien provided a report on the NMFS Pacific Islands Regional Office Non-Commercial Fisheries Grant Program. He said the grant provides funding to support small, local and impactful projects to promote non-commercial fishing, maintain sustainability of fish stocks, and promote cultural fishing. Projects are for one year and can receive up to \$30,000. In 2020, four projects were funded for a total of \$117,252. The 2021 projects are currently being reviewed for approval and they hope to fund a similar amount of projects. O'Brien said he hopes that this program becomes an annual grant program and they hope to get a Request for Proposals out in late October for a 2022 grant solicitation.

Ma presented on the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP), HMRFS and the territorial creel surveys. He reported that the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Math (NASEM) was contracted by MRIP to review estimates of ACL-based fisheries. Representatives from NMFS, the Council and the State of Hawaii met in February with NASEM

to discuss the improvements made to HMRFS which included implementing the certified surveys for Hawaii as well as developing a plan for a shore-based roving survey. Discussions also talked about the MRIP review of surveys in the territories and noted the uku stock assessment was the first in the region to use HMRFS catch estimates.

Hospital provided a report on NMFS socio-economic research and noted that a project to characterize Hawaii's non-commercial fishery and engage stakeholders was funded earlier this year. This project would define and describe communities and demographics to understand community needs and interests. He solicited any suggestions and strategies from the NCFAC.

The Chair asked if similar surveys were going to be conducted for other island areas. Hospital responded that they don't have plans right now but are looking at the Hawaii survey as a pilot or template on how it could be expanded to other island areas.

B. National Recreational Fishing Summit 2022

Dunn provided an update on plans for a Recreational Fishing Summit in 2022. He said that NOAA Fisheries and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission is working to host the summit on May 29-30, 2022 in Arlington, VA. The summit would be a two-day meeting and Dunn said that he is soliciting potential agenda topics through internal discussions, with the Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee (MAFAC), and through roundtables being held around the country. Once that is complete, it will be condensed and provided to a steering committee that will guide the agenda for the summit and determine the methods for meaningful discussion. He reviewed topics at the last summit and then provided potential topics for the 2022 summit and then solicited topics, priorities, and concerns for non-commercial fisheries in the region that could be discussed at the summit. He also noted that if the members had any further ideas or discussion, they could forward that input to him over the summer.

A member noted that the main concern is how to engage fishermen to participate in the fishery management process. There needs to be a way to build capacity to recruit fishermen into committees, share engagement ideas, and come up with recommendations on what we could be doing to build capacity within the non-commercial fishing communities and increase engagement. The result of the summit should be a call to action on what can be done to move these topics forward.

C. Western Pacific Initiatives

Council staff noted the previous efforts to look at filling the non-commercial data gap through existing registries and the effort is continuing but there is no update. He noted that the non-commercial uku fishery analysis was the focus since the last meeting and would be presented later in the meeting.

4. 2020 Annual SAFE Report Non-Commercial Modules

A. Pelagic Fisheries

Council staff provided a draft report on the non-commercial module for pelagic fisheries in the 2020 Annual Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation Report. Charter fishing was heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic as charter landings, effort and trips were all well below 2019 numbers and nonexistent in CNMI. For Hawaii, non-commercial catch was up over 13%

which might also be attributed to the pandemic as well, as more people went fishing for food and recreation. He noted that the module was not yet complete and hoped to get the data to complete the module in a few weeks.

An NCFAC member noted that commercial fishing was down in 2020 while recreational fishing was much higher, although the data doesn't seem to show a big jump in fishing. He said that the fishing tackle and boating sales saw an increase of four to five times higher than previous years with sales at 200-300% of normal. Another member responded that part of the reason might be that fishing wasn't be captured at some point during the pandemic as surveyors were only counting gears and not doing in-person interviews. He also noted that even if people went fishing and bought gear, it doesn't mean they were catching. Many people bought fishing supplies because it was a way to get out of the house and get to the beach rather than to actually catch fish. It was noted that where there was lack of interview data, catch rate estimation utilized an average from the previous two years. Data from 2021 will also be used to re-estimate 2020 data as well.

The NCFAC was concerned about the jump in the number of trips in the Hawaii Marine Recreational Fishing Survey (HMRFS) data from 2017-2018. A member noted that HMRFS funding went down from full time to half time around that time and another noted that in 2018, the effort survey switched from telephone to a mail-in survey. They agreed this was the reason and should be noted in the report. The Chair asked if HMRFS could calibrate the angler trips prior to the switch so that it compares similar numbers. A member noted that it is being done on the mainland but hasn't been done here.

The NCFAC recommended that HMRFS calibrate the angler trips to account for the change in survey or at least make the graph discontinuous between the data sets.

B. Update on Development of Non-Pelagic Non-Commercial MUS Module

Council staff noted that the NCFAC discussed a non-pelagic, non-commercial module for the Annual SAFE Reports and staff is working with NMFS PIFSC to be able to develop a module. The uku analysis presented later in the agenda is that first attempt to look at the non-commercial catch for these species.

C. Ecosystem Component Non-Commercial Species (incl. Coral Reef)

Council staff provided a history of Ecosystem Component Species (ECS) and noted that this came about because there were thousands of species in the Fishery Ecosystem Plans that would require fishery conservation management measures (CMM). The Council's original intent with designating that many species as Management Unit Species (MUS) was to provide a mechanism for ecosystem-based management. With the reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA), a new mandate to develop Annual Catch Limits (ACL) made that approach unwieldy for management but the National Standard 1 guidelines allowed for species to be designated as ECS so that it can be contained in an FEP but wouldn't require CMM. ECS are retained for monitoring of the ecosystem while MUS are directly managed under the CMM in MSA. However, all management regulations in place prior to designation are retained.

5. Legislative Update

Council staff provided an update on Hawaii legislation that was recently signed into law that would affect non-commercial fisheries. In particular there is a non-resident non-commercial fishing license that will be implemented in January 2022 that would require non-residents to procure a license to fish in Hawaii. Another bill that would lead to the state of Hawaii to allow the catch of female Kona crab and shark fishing prohibitions will also be developed due to another bill that was signed that makes it illegal to knowingly capture, harm or kill sharks in state waters.

A member asked about the shark bill and if fishermen were still able to use sharks for bait. Another member noted that an exemption was provided in a previous iteration of the bill but was not included in the final bill.

Another member asked if the non-resident license applied to military as well. It was noted that the bill requires proof of residency through legal identification.

6. Monitoring and Management of Hawaii Non-Commercial Uku Fishery

Council Staff presented on options for the management of the Hawaii uku fishery and provided a background on uku management and noted a stock assessment was released last year that resulted in the fishery being deemed neither overfished, nor experiencing overfishing. He noted that this stock assessment included HMRFS non-commercial data rather than using a ratio estimator unlike other regional stock assessments. He provided the process for developing an Annual Catch Limit (ACL) for the fishery and noted that the Council is considering an ACL of 294,419 lbs. with an Annual Catch Target (ACT) of 291,010 lbs. and Accountability Measures could be used to adjust the ACL should the limit be exceeded. The question for the NCFAC was whether the ACL should be managed separately between the commercial and non-commercial sector.

He provided an analysis of non-commercial uku catch and showed the variability in the data. Analyzing different scenarios of catch ratios between commercial and non-commercial, staff was able to determine what the ACL split would be and calculate the chance of exceeding the target limits. In most scenarios, the commercial catch would likely have a 50-60% chance of exceeding the limit while non-commercial would have a 20-30% chance of exceeding the limit. Should the ACL be managed as a whole, that chance of exceeding the limit goes down to around 10%. This management would also be dependent upon the complementary management from the state of Hawaii. The State is interested in installing a bag limit for uku to slow down the non-commercial catch to avoid hitting the limits and closing the fishery.

The Chair asked if monitoring the non-commercial sector is through reporting or surveys. Council staff responded that the current mechanism is through HMRFS but there are also issues with delays in getting estimates as the expansion is done every two months. A member added that the expansion is delayed even more as it takes an additional 45 days beyond those two month waves to receive the estimates.

A member noted that the data presented shows that the fishery doesn't have an apparent seasonality and asked if a moving average could use to more accurately reflect the long term

trend. Staff responded the longer you go the more stable the trend gets but if you go too far out the line becomes flat.

Members asked if the State had suggestions for the bag limit as if it is too low it might force people to obtain a commercial license instead. Staff responded that he is working with the state to determine if HMRFS data can be used to determine the number of participants and numbers caught per trip. In general, the members were not in favor of bag limits without knowing how many people are trying to access it.

The members did not feel comfortable about pitting the sectors against each other and thought that there isn't a hard dividing line between the sectors anyway.

The NCFAC agreed that MRIP should increase the frequency of catch interview surveys to capture more information. *The NCFAC also recommended that management of an uku fishery ACL should be done on the fishery as a whole rather than split by sectors.*

7. Cultural Take of Green Sea Turtles

Council staff reported that there has been recent interest by the community to seek a cultural take of green sea turtles. He noted that the Council has been looking at this since the 1980s and provided a history of green sea turtles including a petition to delist from the Endangered Species Act (ESA) by the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs and the resulting Discrete Population Segment established for Hawaii. Staff reported that they are working with community members to determine a process for being able to seek a take of green sea turtles.

The Chair asked staff not to restrict their work to Hawaii as there is an overabundance everywhere and all of the islands should be able to seek a cultural take.

A member noted that the reason why NMFS continues to list the species as threatened is because of the nesting habitat in the NWHI and its potential loss from climate change is a threat to the species. He said it isn't based on the number of turtles available but because of the habitat.

Another member noted that this is a big item that the community would be interested in and the non-commercial fishery would be important to collecting data and communicating with the public. He was supportive of having a registry to allow a limit of turtles that could be taken and suggested that this might be a good issue for the NCFAC to assist the community as it is looking to put food on the table. The NCFAC agreed to assist this effort in pushing it along as needed.

8. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

9. Discussion and Recommendations

The Non-Commercial Fisheries Advisory Committee made the following recommendations:

Regarding Non-Commercial Fishery Data Collection:

- The NCFAC recommends the Council request MRIP calibrate the HMRFS data prior to 2018 to account for the switch from telephone to mail in the effort survey. Further, the NCFAC recommends the Council request MRIP to determine the feasibility of HMRFS to increase the frequency of catch interview surveys to allow for increased coverage.
- The NCFAC recommends the Council look at participatory mapping of Non-Commercial fisheries to allow non-commercial fishermen to have a seat at the table in ocean use discussions.

Regarding MHI Uku Annual Catch Limits

- The NCFAC recommends the Council manage the Hawaii Uku fishery ACL as a whole rather than split by sectors.

Regarding NCFAC Administration:

- The NCFAC requests the Council add the following members to its committee:
 - Lee Alameida
 - Leonard Yamada
 - Wayne Pangelinan,
 - Alex Castro Jr
 - Brian Yoshikawa

10. Other Business

A. Membership

The NCFAC, at its previous meeting, discussed the need to include more fishing voices as part of the committee. The additional members could provide insight on non-commercial fishing from a wide range of fishing styles as well as a different perspective. Members provided names to recommend to the Council to be invited to participate on the committee. The Chair said he would work with Council staff to make a bigger push to include fishermen from American Samoa and Guam as well.

B. Meeting Schedule

The Chair tentatively set the next NCFAC meeting for Wednesday, September 1, 2021 at 1:00 p.m.

The Chair and Council staff also agreed to work on getting participation from American Samoa and Guam on the NCFAC, look at adding participatory mapping and socio-economics on future agendas, and developing a roadmap for the NCFAC.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.