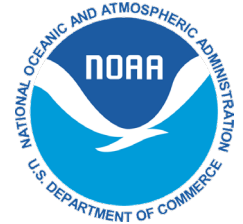


**National Marine Fisheries Service****Pacific Islands Regional Office**

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**REPORT TO THE 193rd  
WESTERN PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL MEETING**

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Pacific Islands Regional Office (PIRO) is responsible for assisting the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) in the development of fishery management plans and amendments, initiating Federal fishing regulations, issuing Federal fishing permits, and monitoring fisheries. Other major responsibilities include the conservation and recovery of protected species, conservation and restoration of marine habitats, including the Pacific marine national monuments, and coordination with international organizations to implement fishery agreements and treaties. The following information is provided to update the Council on NMFS activities since the 192nd Council meeting.

**SPOTLIGHT - The Permanent Advisory Committee**

The Permanent Advisory Committee (PAC) to advise the U.S. Commissioners to the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) was established under the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Convention Implementation Act. The PAC is composed of "*...not less than 15 nor more than 20 individuals appointed by the Secretary of Commerce...from various groups concerned with the fisheries covered by the WCPFC Convention...*" as well as the chair of the Council's Advisory Committee (or designee), the officials of the fisheries management authorities of American Samoa, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (or their designees), and a member of each of the Council and the Pacific Fishery Management Council (or their designees). Each appointed member of the PAC serves for a term of two years and can be reappointed.

NMFS, particularly the Executive Secretary of the PAC (Emily Reynolds, PIRO International Fisheries Division), supports the PAC by planning meetings, distributing materials, facilitating discussions, arranging travel, and notifying the public about meetings.

The PAC meets about twice a year, with an annual in-person meeting typically occurring in October. PAC meetings are announced in the Federal Register and open to the public. The PAC advises the U.S. Commissioners and U.S. Government on the development of U.S. positions in the WCPFC. In particular, the annual PAC meeting provides the opportunity for the PAC to give advice to the U.S. Section to the WCPFC on the development of U.S. policies, positions, and negotiating strategies with respect to U.S. participation in the WCPFC annual meeting, generally held in December.

PIRO hosted the most recent PAC annual meeting on October 27-28, 2022. The PAC provided recommendations on a number of topics that will be considered by the WCPFC at its regular annual session in December, including tropical tunas, Pacific bluefin tuna, North Pacific striped marlin, South Pacific albacore, sharks, harvest strategies, at-sea transshipment, and electronic

monitoring and reporting. In particular, the PAC discussed the U.S. proposal to revise conservation and management measures for sharks, recommendations on a management procedure for skipjack tuna, and a proposal for a conservation and management measure for north Pacific swordfish.

## **RULEMAKING**

NMFS will soon publish a proposed rule to implement 2022-2025 annual catch limits (ACL) for main Hawaiian Islands deepwater shrimp and for black, pink, red, and bamboo precious corals. The proposed ACLs are unchanged from past years. Harvests of these species have been sporadic over the last 15 years and have never exceeded their ACLs since first implemented in 2012. There are currently two active Federal permits for deepwater shrimp and none for precious coral. The current gold coral harvest moratorium – implemented in 2008 due to uncertainty in estimates of age and growth parameters – will expire on June 30, 2023 (83 FR 27716, June 14, 2018). The moratorium serves as the functional equivalent of a gold coral ACL of zero. Should the Council wish to extend or end the moratorium after June 30, 2023, NMFS and the Council would need conduct a separate analysis of that action together with appropriate rulemaking.

## **PROGRAM ACTIVITIES**

### **Directorate**

#### **NOAA Fisheries Leadership Council - November regional meeting in Hawaii:**

The NMFS Leadership Council (LC) visited the islands of Hawai'i O'ahu during the weeks of November 7 and 14, 2022. LC members are NMFS Assistant Administrator Janet Coit, Deputy Administrators, Chief Scientist, as well as program office, regional office, and science center directors, and senior policy analysts. The LC is coordinated by the NMFS Office of Policy to discuss and make decisions on large scale NMFS policies. They meet twice a year, once in the regions and once at NMFS headquarters.

Janet Coit began in Hilo with a visit to the Pacific Islands Climate and Equity Pilot Project, [Kea'ahuli O Pana'ewa](#), to learn about the importance of place-based indigenous local knowledge (ILK), practices, and biocultural approaches in natural resource management. Community members shared about blending traditional and innovative farming practices for enhancing community resilience to climate change and food security. The next stop was the [Mokupapapa Discovery Center](#) with Office of National Marine Sanctuaries Regional Administrator Kristina Kekuewa on the proposed sanctuary designation for Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument. LC members then traveled to Kona for visits to Kīholo Fishpond to learn about restoration and conservation actions as part of NOAA's West Hawai'i Habitat Focus Area; [Blue Ocean Mariculture](#) hatcheries and cages; a meeting with aquaculture companies at the State of Hawai'i Ocean Science and Technology Park; and the Marine Mammal Center's Ke Kai Ola Hawaiian monk seal hospital.

O'ahu meetings and site visits included meeting with Council leadership, the Honolulu Fish Auction, Hawai'i Longline Association, and visits [Kāko'o 'Ōiwi](#) and [Paepae o He'eia in Kāne'ohe](#). The latter two sites are within the [He'eia National Estuarine Research Reserve](#) and were an opportunity to experience traditional fish farming and methods of coastal ecosystems management; indigenous approaches to habitat restoration; and a sense of the interrelatedness between ILK and western science.

### **Habitat Conservation**

NMFS staff continue to provide support, technical assistance, and coordination to local partners in American Samoa, Guam, and Hawaii with the development of Jurisdictional Coral Reef Fisheries Management Plans (JCR-FMPs). This effort involves high coordination with the Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center (PIFSC) to enable completion of the fisheries component of the JCR-FMPs.

In American Samoa, NMFS continues to support the implementation of the American Samoa Coral Restoration Action Plan and related initiatives for management of coral reef fisheries and habitats.

In the CNMI, NMFS continues to oversee the Saipan Coral Nursery Pilot and coral sexual propagation projects and coordinate a reef resilience study for Rota and Tinian. NMFS is working with the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the CNMI government to improve post-disaster preparedness.

At the U.S. Army Kwajalein Atoll (USAKA), NMFS continues to work under the USAKA Environmental Standards (UES) completing environmental assessments and reviews as well as consultations and coordination for UES protected species.

NMFS and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service partnered with the Center for Environmental Conflict Resolution (aka the Udall Foundation) to support the establishment of a Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument (PRIMNM) Community Group that can contribute a stakeholder and community perspective to the development of the PRIMNM Management Plan. The PRIMNM Community Group met on September 28-29, 2022 in Honolulu for a two-day in-person meeting to provide community and stakeholder perspectives on the development of a draft management plan for the PRIMNM. The agencies anticipate that a draft of the management plan may be completed by the end of 2023 and with the target of a final plan by the end of 2024.

The Council, PIRO, and PIFSC Ecosystem-Based Fisheries Management (EBFM) Workshop was held on October 4, 2022, at the Ala Moana Hotel. The goal of the workshop was to bring staff from the three offices together to discuss goals, priorities, and coordinate on the implementation of EBFM in the Pacific Islands Region. Approximately 40 staff attended the meeting in-person, while another 10 attended virtually. Based on the discussions from the workshop, an EBFM Working Group will be established and tasked with identifying projects that

further the EBFM priorities of all three offices. A workshop report has been drafted and will be made available to the public in near future.

From July 12-14, 2022, PIRO supported the Council and PIFSC during the Western Pacific Stock Assessment Review (WPSAR) of Level 1 and 2 Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Models for uku (*Aprion virescens*) in the Main Hawaiian Islands. PIRO staff provided an “EFH 101” presentation describing EFH designations for uku and other federally managed fish species, while also describing the consultation process for the external panel. WPSAR is a cooperative effort between the Council, PIFSC, and PIRO to improve the quality, timeliness, objectivity, and integrity of stock assessments and other scientific information used in Pacific islands region fishery management. While PIFSC and the Council developed and presented the models discussed at this WPSAR meeting, PIRO is responsible for implementing EFH designations during consultations with Federal agencies to mitigate potential adverse effects to EFH that supports federally managed fish stocks (see below). To this end, PIRO would implement any refinement of EFH, which follows a five-year Magnuson-Stevens Act-driven process for each individual management unit species that may occur due to the information that these models provide.

Since June 2022, PIRO has consulted on 19 EFH consultations, including five under a programmatic consultation with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and four under our programmatic with PIFSC. In late August of 2022, PIRO HCD, as a cooperating agency, completed the Navy’s proposed submarine dry dock upgrade project in Pearl Harbor, which is part of their Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Program. NMFS proposed submarine dry dock upgrades in Pearl Harbor. PIRO also has completed consultation on the USACE permit for the City and County of Honolulu’s stream clearing and maintenance activities on O’ahu. In addition, we have completed consultations on research activities, coastal protection, U.S. Coast Guard training, and transportation projects. We are currently developing an EFH 101 training event (December) at the request of the U.S. Coast Guard. Lastly, PIRO continues to update our EFH outreach documents for Hawai’i, American Samoa, and the Marianas.

### **International Fisheries**

PIRO staff participated in the 18th Regular Session of the WCPFC Technical and Compliance Committee (TCC18), held online from September 20-26, 2022.

PIRO staff attended the 10th Regular Session South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organization Scientific Committee, held in hybrid format, from September 25-29, 2022.

PIRO staff participated in the 18th Regular Session of the WCPFC Northern Committee, held online from October 3-5, 2022.

PIRO staff attended the Secretariat of the Pacific Community’s 5th Regional Technical Meeting on Coastal Fisheries and Aquaculture, held in hybrid format, from October 9-13, 2022.

PIRO staff hosted the Permanent Advisory Committee (PAC) to advise the U.S. Commissioners to the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), held in hybrid format, on October 27-28, 2022.

### **Protected Resources**

NMFS observers have recorded five interactions with false killer whales in the deep-set longline fishery in 2022. Two of those interactions occurred inside the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and resulted in serious injury. The trigger value for the Southern Exclusion Zone closure is four observed mortalities or serious injuries of false killer whales incidental to the deep-set longline fishery within the EEZ (85 FR 81184). The False Killer Whale Take Reduction Team convened for a webinar on August 30, 2022 and a multi-day meeting from November 7-10, 2022. During the November meeting the Team considered options for measures to reduce mortalities and serious injuries of false killer whales.

On January 25, 2021, NMFS received a petition to list the shortfin mako (*Isurus oxyrinchus*) under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) from Defenders of Wildlife. As part of the response to this petition, an Extinction Risk Assessment (ERA) team was convened and is comprised of experts from across NMFS. After reviewing the best scientific and commercial data available, including the Status Review Report, NMFS, on November 14, 2022, determined that listing the shortfin mako shark as a threatened or endangered species under the ESA is not warranted (87 FR 68236).

NMFS has convened an internal working group to develop a 3-part Recovery Plan (Recovery Status Review, Recovery Plan, and Recovery Implementation Strategy) for the three listed humpback whale Distinct Population Segments (DPS) that occur in U.S. waters (Western North Pacific DPS, Central America DPS, and Mexico DPS). We anticipate publishing draft versions in late 2022. On Sept 8, 2016, NMFS issued a final rule identifying 14 DPSs of the humpback whale (81 FR 62260). Four DPSs are listed as endangered, 1 as threatened, and 9 do not warrant listing.

On November 27, 2020, NMFS proposed critical habitat for several listed corals in American Samoa, Guam, CNMI, and PRIAs. During the six month public comment period, the Council, the territorial governments, and others provided new information on the historical records of listed corals and their application to critical habitat. Subsequently, NMFS worked with the territorial governments to gather and review all records of listed corals in American Samoa, Guam, and CNMI, and developed a new methodology for application of the records to the final coral critical habitat rule. We anticipate publishing a rule in 2023.

In coordination with USFWS, NMFS is in the process of identifying areas for green turtle critical habitat designation, including areas in Hawaii, American Samoa, Pacific Remote Islands, Guam, and Commonwealth of Northern Marianas Islands. Critical habitat is being evaluated for the Central North Pacific DPS listed as threatened, the Central West Pacific DPS listed as endangered, and the Central South Pacific DPS listed as endangered. In May 2022, portions of the Draft Biological Report were distributed to our state and territorial partners for review. A final

draft of the Biological Report and the Draft Economic Report will be available for review and public comment when a proposed rule to designate critical habitat for green turtle is published in the Federal Register, which is expected in 2023.

### **Sustainable Fisheries**

PIRO Sustainable Fisheries Division (SFD) and the Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center (PIFSC) are jointly supporting an electronic monitoring (EM) detailee. PIFSC has been testing EM since 2017 on 20 volunteer longline vessels, showing promising results. PIFSC and PIRO are interested in transitioning from a volunteer EM research program to EM implementation that would supplement observer coverage. Through December 31, 2022, the detailee will engage vessel owners and operators, the Council, and PIRO and PIFSC programs to assess perspectives and needs for EM, with a focus on developing a proposed roadmap for implementing EM in Hawaii longline fisheries. This will include a presentation at the Council's December meeting. They will also participate on the Electronic Technologies Steering Committee (ETSC), which was reconvened on October 24, 2022. The ETSC includes representatives from the fishing industry, the Council, PIRO, and PIFSC, and is currently evaluating the potential objectives and pathway to develop a future EM program in the longline fishery.

In October, the SFD Observer Program with assistance and feedback from the General Counsel released a PIRO Non-disclosure Agreement (NDA) for use when sharing confidential data collected by fisheries observers. NOAA Administrative Order 2016-100 on Protection of Confidential Fisheries Statistics requires that users of confidential observer data understand and agree to our policies concerning non-disclosure and disclosure of these data. Historically, the Observer Program required users to sign an NDA provided by NMFS Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center (PIFSC) because observer data was housed in a PIFSC database. In 2020, observer data moved from the PIFSC database to a PIRO database creating the need for a PIRO NDA.

In October, the Observer Program hosted a fisheries observer training class, graduating 13 students into the ranks of qualified regional observers. This allows the Observer Program to meet the coverage needs of an anticipated increase in fishing effort this swordfish season.

Between November 1 and 10, PIRO staff joined Council staff in statewide meetings to solicit community input on alternatives for fishery management in the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument Expansion (PMNM Expansion). This area is located between 50 to 200 nautical miles offshore of the Northwest Hawaiian Islands and west of 163° West longitude. These meetings were associated with the proposal to establish a National Marine Sanctuary at PMNM. Through the meetings, the Council sought to learn more about Native Hawaiian and other historical uses of the area; and community perspectives on potential components of proposed regulations, including how to define subsistence fishing, allowances for customary exchange and non-commercial fishing, and a prohibition on commercial fishing. Comments received at the meetings and in writing will be summarized for Council consideration at its 193rd

meeting. The Council is expected to take final action on proposed fishing regulations for the PMNM Expansion and provide those recommendations to NMFS for implementation.

On November 11, 2022, PIRO facilitated a site visit and roundtable discussion for visiting NMFS leadership team members with Hawaii Island aquaculture facilities. They discussed goals and challenges for aquaculture development with six aquaculture companies located in the Hawaii Ocean Science and Technology Park in Kona. On November 14, 2022, PIRO also facilitated site visits for NMFS Office of Aquaculture Deputy Director Dave O'Brien at the Waikalua Loko I'a and the Sea Grant hatchery in Kāne'ohe on O'ahu.

As of November 7, 2022, observer coverage is approximately 21 percent in the Hawaii deep-set longline fishery, and 100 percent in the Hawaii shallow-set longline fishery. Coverage in the American Samoa longline fishery is 10 percent. Coverage in the Hawaii deep-set longline fishery for 2021 was approximately 18 percent and coverage in the Hawaii shallow-set longline fishery was 100 percent. Coverage in the American Samoa longline fishery was 5 percent. More information about the Observer Program is at [www.fisheries.noaa.gov/pacific-islands/pacific-islands-region-observer-program](http://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/pacific-islands/pacific-islands-region-observer-program).

NMFS staff continue to participate in national grant programs that support the management and sustainability of U.S. fisheries.

- On October 6, 2022, the Fisheries Information System (FIS), Electronic Technologies, and Catch Share programs announced proposals that will be funded through the FY23 Federal funding opportunity (contingent upon final budget allocation). This annual funding opportunity supports initiatives that improve the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of fisheries-dependent data collection and management. This year, the program will fund four projects in the Pacific Islands:
  - Feasibility of protected species data collection from Hawaii longline fisheries through EM video using artificial intelligence automated detection and assessments for post-interaction mortality.
  - Electronic reporting in American Samoa, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (year 3).
  - PIRO Observer Program continued development of an eReporting application and platform (Phase 3)
  - Modern Data Governance for Pacific Islands Logbook Data
- More information on FIS and the annual funding opportunity is at [www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/commercial-fishing/fisheries-information-system-program#funding-innovative-projects](http://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/commercial-fishing/fisheries-information-system-program#funding-innovative-projects).

NMFS continues to provide required annual Protected Species Workshop (PSW) training to the longline fleet. From January 1 through November 4, 2022, NMFS completed 221 PSW

certifications for Hawaii and American Samoa vessel owners and operators. NMFS offers an online PSW recertification training that may be taken two out of every three years, and a live webinar PSW certification course every Friday morning. Additionally, NMFS recently reopened our Honolulu Service Center at Pier 38, held our first in-person PSW training on November 4th, and we are developing an in-person training schedule for 2023. For more information, fishermen may contact us at [pirosw@noaa.gov](mailto:pirosw@noaa.gov) or (808) 725-5178, or visit the PIRO PSW webpage at [www.fisheries.noaa.gov/pacific-islands/resources-fishing/pacific-islands-protected-species-workshops](http://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/pacific-islands/resources-fishing/pacific-islands-protected-species-workshops). Lastly, for additional outreach to fishermen, an animated PSW handling and release video is online at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=ydcG1y7oNhg&t=6s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ydcG1y7oNhg&t=6s).

NMFS continues to update information on fish catch limits at [www.fisheries.noaa.gov/pacific-islands/commercial-fishing/pacific-islands-annual-catch-limits](http://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/pacific-islands/commercial-fishing/pacific-islands-annual-catch-limits).

NMFS continues to manage fisheries in consideration of status changes and incidental take events of protected species. Information about interactions between the Hawaii shallow-set longline fishery and sea turtles is at [www.fisheries.noaa.gov/pacific-islands/bycatch/sea-turtle-interactions-hawaii-shallow-set-longline-fishery](http://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/pacific-islands/bycatch/sea-turtle-interactions-hawaii-shallow-set-longline-fishery).

NMFS is currently accepting renewal applications for Hawaii longline limited entry fishing permits. Hawaii longline permits must be renewed by March 3, 2023. All Pacific Islands region fishing permit applications and payments are processed electronically. Instructions are at [www.fisheries.noaa.gov/pacific-islands/resources-fishing/pacific-islands-fishing-permits](http://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/pacific-islands/resources-fishing/pacific-islands-fishing-permits). 2023 MMAP certificates are also available on the permit site. Applicants may contact NMFS for individual assistance at [piro-permits@noaa.gov](mailto:piro-permits@noaa.gov) or (808) 725-5190. Current fishing permit status is at [www.fisheries.noaa.gov/pacific-islands/resources-fishing/pacific-islands-permit-holders](http://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/pacific-islands/resources-fishing/pacific-islands-permit-holders).

Permits as of November 16, 2022:

<b>Permit</b>	<b>Number</b>
<b>Pelagic</b>	
Hawaii longline (limited entry)	149 (of 164)
American Samoa longline (limited entry)	38 (of 60)
Western Pacific general longline	-
Receiving vessel	2
Pelagic squid jig	-
Experimental fishing permit	1
<b>Hawaii</b>	
Main Hawaiian Islands non-commercial bottomfish	1
Special coral reef ecosystem	-
Precious coral	-
Crustaceans	2 (shrimp)
<b>American Samoa</b>	
Special coral reef ecosystem	-
Precious coral	-
Crustaceans	-



<b>Permit</b>	<b>Number</b>
<b>Mariana Islands</b>	
Guam large vessel bottomfish	-
Northern Mariana Islands bottomfish	9
Special coral reef ecosystem	-
Precious coral	-
Crustaceans	-
<b>Pacific Remote Island Areas</b>	
Pelagic Troll & Handline	-
Bottomfish	-
Special coral reef ecosystem	-
Precious Coral	-
Crustaceans	-
<b>Marine National Monument</b>	
Recreational Fishing	-
Recreational Charter	-