



Fishing Industry Advisory Committee Meeting

Tuesday, September 6, 2022

2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Virtual Meeting

<https://wprfmc.webex.com/wprfmc/j.php?MTID=m12b2e5dc5a8c80149e6192e48432d26f>

Event number (if prompted): 2450 661 9219

Event password (if prompted): FIAC0906mtg (34220907 from phones)

Meeting Report

1. Welcome and Introductions

Michael Goto, Chair, opened the meeting. Member present include Stewart Chikami, Jonathan Hurd, John Kaneko, Baron Miho, Eric Kingma, Kenton Geer, Lino Tenorio, Tony Guerrero, Tim Perez, Kerry Umamoto

Non-members participating and/or listening in: David Gershman, Krista Corry, Marlowe Sabater, Nate Ilaoa, Bryan Ischida, Linette M(?), Clay Tam, David Sakoda, Rebecca Walker, Tammy Harp, William Aila Jr., Mark Ladao, Melvin Faisao, Frank Roberto

2. Status Report on Previous FIAC Recommendations

Mark Fitchett, Council staff, reported on the status of recommendations from the FIAC at its June 2022 meeting.

There were no comments or questions from the FIAC.

3. Roundtable update on Fishing/Market Issues/Impacts

FIAC members provided a roundtable discussion of issues throughout the Western Pacific Region

CNMI: Tony Guerrero noted that the situation in CNMI is doing well, but not at pre-COVID levels

Guam: In the absence of member Tim Perez, Council staff reported on the current issues with Guam fisheries. The 2nd Annual Greg D. Perez International Fishing Tournament was held over the August 20-21, 2022 weekend. Out of two marinas, the largest marlin caught was 184 pounds. 78 boats participated.

Chinese small boats continue to be intercepted as they land on Guam's shores. The US Coast Guard, working with Guam and CNMI law enforcement agencies are intercepting boats as they leave the CNMI. Around ten boats are currently being held. The Chinese nationals who come on these small boats are now being arrested for illegal entry. Law enforcement recently noted larger boats are now

transporting these nationals close to Guam's shores then passengers come ashore on small inflatables or small boats.

Gas prices in Guam are slowly decreasing. But boaters are typically staying closer to shore or are bottomfish fishing to save on fuel.

American Samoa: Krista Corry reported on American Samoa issues. Fuel prices at \$4.78, which is an increase in cost. Vessels this season returned with catch, containerized them, and shipped them off-island. For the first time since the pandemic, the feeling of the fishery was of general success. Diversification performance of the American Samoa longline fishery transitioning to trolling on the high seas was reported on in a following agenda item.

Hawaii: Michael Goto reported that United Fishing Agency auction prices are stabilized but still on the high side. Some of the white fish species (like mahimahi) remain high. Eric Kingma reported that he hopes catch rates pick up. The Hawaii longline fishery is reaching its US catch limit in August. The Hawaii longline fishery achieved Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification for WCPFC bigeye and yellowfin tuna, as well as swordfish fishery. Kenton Geer reported the fishery has been excellent for the small inshore boats around Kona. It seems like when the longline fleet is slow, the Hawaii small boat fishery in Kona is doing well. Kerry Umamoto corroborated Goto's observations. Jonathan Hurd noted that fuel costs remain high. Tuna fishing is slow this summer for vessels in Kauai and participation seems to be down.

4. Status Deep-set Longline and American Samoa Biological Opinions

Asuka Ishizaki, Council staff, provided a brief update on the status of the Hawaii deep-set and American Samoa longline biological opinions (BiOps). Council received an update from PIRO on August 31, 2022, indicating that NMFS is preparing supplemental BiOps addressing oceanic whitetip sharks and giant manta rays, which are anticipated to be completed by October 31, 2022. NMFS will also prepare a new BiOp addressing all species, and will provide the Council and SSC the opportunity to review that biological opinion at an appropriate time as permitted within the consultation process. NMFS will also coordinate with the Council on Reasonable Prudent Measures or, in the case of any jeopardy finding, Reasonable and Prudent Alternatives.

A FIAC Member asked if a draft of the supplemental BiOps would be made available for review. Ishizaki responded that whether a draft review opportunity will be provided for the supplement is unknown.

5. Alternatives for an Aquaculture Management Framework in the Western Pacific

Zach Yamada, Council staff, provided a presentation on the Council action item to develop an aquaculture framework for the Western Pacific Region.

Offshore aquaculture is currently operating in State of Hawaii waters and has expanded into Federal waters in Hawaii and will likely do so in other parts of the western Pacific as demand for seafood increases in the face of limited wild supplies. If managed sustainably, aquaculture has the long-term potential to satisfy seafood demands in island communities and enhance export commerce while

providing employment and easing any potential pressure on wild fish resources. In order to ensure that any aquaculture activities are environmentally sound, economically sustainable and minimizes impacts to wild fish stocks and capture fisheries, the Council and NMFS must have the ability to implement a program to review, permit, and monitor proposed aquaculture projects and activities.

The purpose of this amendment is to establish long-term sustainable aquaculture in federal waters by establishing a federal management program for developing a sustainable aquaculture industry in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of the Pacific Islands Region (American Samoa, Guam, Hawaii, the Pacific Remote Islands, and the Northern Mariana Islands). An aquaculture management program is needed to provide the Council and NMFS with a framework that provides for a review and authorization of where, how, and how much aquaculture is developed, to regulate and manage aquaculture activities in federal waters of the EEZ.

At its 190th meeting, the Council reviewed the Draft Aquaculture Management Framework Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) alternatives and supported NMFS publish the Final PEIS. Further the Council supported PEIS alternative 3 as its preliminary preferred alternative. Therefore, the Council directed staff to incorporate the PEIS into an omnibus aquaculture FEP amendment that includes management measures and procedures and present the analysis of the alternatives for the Council's consideration.

At its 192nd meeting, the Council may consider taking final action on Aquaculture Management Framework in the Western Pacific.

Jonathan Hurd asked if there was no new information on aquaculture designation areas, assuming they would be in leeward areas. Yamada said that Aquaculture Opportunity Areas have not designated in our region yet.

John Kaneko asked about impacts on collecting broodstock, adding it could have forage fish implications, mentioning the issue with Bluefin tuna ranching and the impacts on local forage fish resources. Yamada was unsure of any such issues in this region.

6. Value of Tuna Cannery to American Samoa

This paper is underway and delayed due to confidentiality issues.

7. American Samoa Longline Performance & Diversification

Krista Corry provided an update to the American Samoa Longline Performance and Diversification project. The project included five vessels, including the Mana O Le Moana ("Mana"). Jig rigs, installation, and increased fuel capacity. They went from 8,000 to 14,000 gallons for fuel. It took a lot of time and money. The Mana was set for jig fishing at the beginning of this year. It took two weeks to get down there to the fishing grounds. The crew enjoyed it very much. The fish were offloaded in American Samoa and placed in containers to go off island. They felt like the trip was a success. However, over vessels likely do not have the ability to make the trip due to up front costs and need for increased fuel capacity.

Three additional vessels had gone fishing last year, and all three of those vessels as well as the Mana are planning to go back out again this year.

8. Proposal to Expand Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument

William Aila Jr., Dr. Bob Richmond, and Sol Kaho'ohalahala presented on the Pacific Remote Islands Coalition proposal to expand the Pacific Remote Island Marine National Monument.

Aila introduced the proposal and asked the Council to support the expansion of the monuments. Aila also claimed that the monument will provide refuge for fish that his children will be able to eat.

Richmond said climate change is affecting fish reproduction resultant fish populations. Richmond made the comparison with a "Bank of account with high interest rate versus one with interest going down". Richmond claims fish populations are declining worldwide and are getting smaller. Richmond also said plastics are increasing in fish and that the monument expansion can help mitigate this.

Sol Kaho'ohalahala provided an overview of the monument expansion from a cultural benefits side. Richmond and Kaho'ohalahala said the science is clear in findings and there is a cultural connection which is as important as the science. There is a source of cultural information which ties all, including the last ruling Queen Liliuokalani and the Kumulipu with the Pacific Remote Islands. In the 1900's a group of native Hawaiian men were recruited to help the US to colonize the islands and call themselves the palana'u. They brought with them their cultural practices. During the period just prior to WWII, the islands were attacked by Japanese bombers. Two of the men killed, one was Kaho'ohalahala's uncle from Lana'i. As elders, it is their responsibility for the care of those islands for the generations to follow. One of the oldest corals found in these waters dated back nearly 5,000 years ago and seamounts remain untouched in these areas. The cultural component should not be left out of any discussions and decisions.

Geer challenged the notion that the science is settled that show the benefits of the proposed closed areas. The idea of closing to improve stocks does not seem proven, given the stocks are assessed and not deemed overfished. Richmond claimed he was not here to "play the stock assessment game" but present the best science available in his opinion. Aila thanked the FIAC and shared that it's okay to disagree.

Hurd found the proposal to be aggressive and the monument process not to be "bottom-up" and equitable.

Kingma stated that the Hawaii Longline Association does not support the proposal. MPAs have some utility, but more closures is "death by a thousand cuts" for US fisheries. Most of the US longline fleet fishes the high seas north of the proposed expansion area. The current longline fleet does fish around Johnston Atoll along with foreign fleets. The issues with 30x30, when you couple the monuments and fishing, have a large impact on one of Hawaii's largest fish producers. While we support ocean biodiversity and ensuring protection of healthy tuna stocks, the proposed expansion is not shown to have much conservation benefit and likely a major benefit to foreign fisheries like China because it

marginalizes US fisheries and their presence in the Pacific.

Kaho'ohalahala agreed that it was clear that we are coming into changing times and acknowledged a need for more dialogue. He acknowledged that the proposal is using the EEZ to 'draw lines' while fish do not see these boundaries.

Fitchett thanked the presenters but noted the current stock assessments are internationally recognized as best available information. These assessments are data rich and do account for the biology of the species assessed. Stocks have been improved over the last 15 years and management systems in place have demonstrated progress and achievement. The Pacific Islands region is carrying a disproportionate onus of the national '30 by 30' aspiration as well.

Goto outlined issues expressed with respect to WCPFC management how this complicates existing management.

Kingma added that fisheries are key with COVID recovery in the Pacific Islands. Potential impacts to the US fishery industries are absorbed by political influences and this situation would be allowing China more influence in the region.

Goto requested that the proposal consider the geopolitical matters arising out of China. The outcome with foreign flagged fisheries having a complete take over of the region is not something anyone wants.

Chikami agreed with the comments from Kingma and Goto, noting these fisheries are multi-generational and closing off areas is 'a death by a thousand cuts'. Fisheries are not static and they are always adapting. Fisheries need the ability to move and shift as fish stocks move. There are significant considerations when looking at areas with vulnerable economies. The US purse seine fleet is waning is in jeopardy of being supplanted by foreign fisheries.

9. Outcomes of Final BBNJ Session

Fitchett provided an overview of the outcomes and ongoing negotiations on the Intergovernmental Conference on Marine Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ). BBNJ Fifth Conference was held August 15 to 26, 2022 at the UN Headquarters in New York. The US position, as prescribed in Article 4 of the draft BBNJ text, is to maintain the competency of regional fishery management organizations (RFMOs) by using BBNJ as a mechanism to recommend area-based management tools (including MPAs) on the high seas. The RFMO would be the implementing body of recommendations. The Council had provided letters and comments to the State Department on BBNJ, particularly on the use of area-based management tools.

The FIAC had no comments or questions on BBNJ.

10. June 2022 Permanent Advisory Committee to the WCPFC

Mike Goto went over 2021 recommendations to the US Permanent Advisory Committee (PAC) to the WCPFC and outcomes of the PAC meeting held in June. Additionally, emerging issues will be

provided to the Council with respect to outcomes of the SC18 and SMD. Council staff, Hawaii Longline Association, American Tunaboat Association, and NMFS will have had a series of meetings before the SSC and Council to formulate potential recommendations to the PAC. The Council may recommend that recommendations on drafting a new tropical tuna measure be put forth at the PAC, even though the current measure expires at the end of 2023.

The FIAC said the Council should continue to recommend the NMFS and State Department to continue to work on the tropical tuna measures, even if it is not up until 2023. There is a lot of work that needs to be done between now and the end of 2023. There should be in-person meetings to talk and negotiate to develop ideas with the measure.

Simonds said the Council can provide ideas. The Council is also ready to discuss proposals and wants to start discussions now. The U.S. had a good proposal going into December 2021 to work off of.

Stuart Chikami said with the meeting this year, if we are able to do it early, we can have other committee meetings to review these things so the US will have more of a chance to get a satisfactory proposal negotiated. Having recommendations from the PAC should be put forward this year, not next year.

11. National Seafood Strategy

Fitchett discussed the National Seafood Strategy and slides provided by Sarah Shoffler, SWFSC and National Seafood Strategy lead. The CCC will discuss the National Seafood Strategy at its October 2022 meeting.

Kingma said the National Seafood Strategy elements are refreshing coming from NOAA. Several from the Hawaii longline industry participated in calls with NOAA to make them aware of their positions. HLA is supportive but wants some demonstration that this is actually going to materialize.

12. Other Issues

A. State of Hawaii Vessel CML

David Sakoda, Hawaii DAR, gave updates on the on the new Hawaii vessel CML (commercial marine license) and CARES Act 2 funding. Non-resident license and draft vessel license have been in the works. Public hearing will be early next year, about a year or a year and a half after the legislature proposed it.

Kingma said the vessel CML is important for the longline fleet. This takes pressure off the crew from having to get individual CMLs. The entire Hawaii fishing community want these to go through. Kingma asked if there there any other rulemaking actions associated with this process, including changes to the Kona crab regulation.

Sakoda said the Kona crab and vessel CML will be two separate entities with two separate hearings.

Geer said system is changing on how to report licensing information and catch data to DAR.

B. CARES Act 2 Status

Sakoda reported on the current state of the CARES Act for HI. He has been in some communications with the PSMFC. Some states are still working on their application processes. Hopefully sometime in September they may finalize things for review.

The PSMFC is charged with not only Hawaii but other Pacific states and territories. Some states are being prioritized before they get to Hawaii. Review of applications are ongoing but not yet finalized. The Hawaii deadline was a year ago.

Kingma said HLA members are looking forward to receiving help and ask if there is anything the State of Hawaii can do to speed up the process.

Corry said American Samoa just barely received the first CARES Act money a couple months ago. They were also asked to turn in their CARES 2 applications. Corry asked for CARES Act 2 monies to be expedited.

13. Public Comment

Melvin Faisao wrote a public comment that he “agrees that collaborating increasingly with each other is needed to protect and secure our respective self-interests in the face of global challenges such as environment management of our ocean rights”.

14. Discussion and Recommendations

Regarding the WCPFC, the FIAC:

Recommends the Council request NMFS to draft a proposal towards amending components of the tropical tuna measure at the December 2022 WCPFC Regular Session, in order to introduce potential changes of the measure well in advance of the expiration of CMM 2021-01 at the end of 2023.

Regarding CARES Act funding, the FIAC:

Recommends the Council to request the State of Hawaii, territorial agencies, and the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission expeditiously distribute CARES Act funding for its second round, particularly recognizing the hardship on American Samoa.