



Report

Fishing Industry Advisory Committee Meeting June 6, 2022

Virtual Meeting via WebEx

1. Welcome and Introductions

Start 1:06 p.m. HST

Mike Goto, Fishing Industry Advisory Committee (FIAC) chair, called the meeting to order at 1:06 p.m. FIAC members in attendance were: Stewart Chikami; Sean Martin; Baron Miho; Eric Kingma; Kenton Geer; Sean Martin; Tony Guerrero; Kerry Umamoto

Others in attendance included: Kitty Simonds (Council Executive Director); Mark Fitchett; Mark Mitsuyasu; Asuka Ishizaki; Maria Carnevale; Zach Yamada; Josh DeMello; Matt Seeley; Felix Reyes; Floyd Masga; Rob Ahrens; Hing Ling Chan; Justin Hospital; Mark Fox; Danika Kleiber; Savannah Lewis; Tammy Harp; Joe Hamby; Cherie Kauahi; Darren Okimoto.

Goto noted 2 more agenda items under “Other Issues” (Item 14) and one presentation will be given under Item 2. Rob Ahrens will present on False Killer Whale Interaction and Depredation Analyses. This is a follow-up on previous FIAC recommendations. A proposal by the Pacific Remote Islands Coalition (PRIC) to expand the Pacific Remote Island Marine National Monument will be discussed under Item 14.

2. Status Report on Previous FIAC Recommendations

Council staff reported out on previous recommendations. A follow up on the March recommendation regarding false killer whale interaction and depredation analysis was presented (see 14.A).

3. 2023 US Territorial Bigeye Tuna Catch and Allocation Limit Specifications

Council staff presented on 2023 US Territorial Bigeye Tuna specifications on setting a catch limit of 2,000 mt per territory and allocating a portion of that from each territory to US longline vessels. Three options are presented: 1) No action, 2) Total catch and effort attributions consistent with status quo (3000 mt total attributions), and 3) A combination of attribution possibilities that may exceed 3000 mt. Option 2 subalternatives were to consider allocating up to 1,500 mt per territory, but limiting total transfers to 3,000 mt, which is consistent with the status quo since 2020. Another subalternative is to limit total transfers to 1,000 mt, consistent with the specifications from 2014 to 2019. The Standing Committee was tasked to inquire on possible tradeoffs under each option and possible subalternatives. Tradeoffs may include departing from the status quo arrangement of allowing any territory to allocate up to 1500 mt with total allocations not exceeding 3000 mt. For the last several years, only CNMI and American Samoa have been engaged in territorial agreements with

the Hawaii longline fishery.

FIAC members supported the status quo approach and recommended to continue with that option and subalternatives, with one member noting that the small boat fishery flourished when the longline US catch limit was reached early and that the small boat fishery is facing lots of challenges. The FIAC noted the overall challenges of US fisheries in the international regime.

A FIAC member asked if small island developing states (SIDS), whom do not have catch limits have exceeded 2,000 mt bigeye longline catch in the past. Council staff confirmed that some states have exceeded that and some exceeded the amount limited to the US under the WCPFC (3,554 mt).

4. Hawaii and American Samoa Small Boat Survey

HingLing Chan and Justin Hospital (PIFSC) provided an overview of the Hawaii and American Samoa small boat survey. Hawaii small boat survey was conducted in 2021, to better understand the economic and cultural contributions that small boat fishing provided to the State of Hawaii. The last study of its kind was in 2014.

The Executive Director asked if CatchIt-Logit would have an impact on these surveys and said the survey could be valuable to reconcile a low ACL for American Samoa bottomfish. Hospital said this information does have an independent source for catch with a reasonable representation of the community. The survey, conducted in 2021, is very valuable to get an estimate of fishing effort with minimal burden.

A FIAC member asked if there is there a plan to update the survey with the extreme cost in fuel, oil, and bait due to recent inflation. Hospital said having this baseline in the survey allows some sensitivity analyses on operational costs and profits.

The FIAC member said inflation as noted is problematic with the fresh fish market where external costs drive up cost for consumers out of the willingness to pay.

Chan said they can estimate the impacts these have on price per pound, but may not be particularly accurate until more information is processed.

5. NOAA Seafood Direct Marketing Project

Justin Hospital provided some information on the NOAA Seafood Direct Marketing Project. This may be part of the new US National Seafood Strategy. Direct marketing is a major gap, which the Department of Agriculture is also working on addressing. Implementation for the survey would be 2023 at the earliest. It will give the first ever US estimate of fishermen involved in direct marketing and consumer sales, including cash sales. There is also an effort to mine data from the web to get more information.

A FIAC member said cash sales are shut down when someone get successful, because eventually someone complains – even if the vendor is compliant with health and seafood standards.

A FIAC member noted web/phone applications have been helpful for subsistence fishermen to sell

fish. Of course they get inquiries on seafood health and safety standards, and any ‘rules’ on distributing product at the docks.

6. US Military Notice of Hazardous Operations

Eric Kingma and Council staff discussed notices of hazardous operations that are mostly on the high seas and these military operations exclude fishing grounds for many commercial fisheries. This is a follow-up from the previous FIAC. These notices come 30 days prior to the action. Military vessels contact vessels and tell them to move.

The FIAC wanted to know if these operations also displace foreign vessels.

The FIAC may recommend that these exercises be held in the Monument, where no fishing activities are taking place, asking the Council to provide a letter.

7. Update on American Samoa Albacore Performance & Diversification

No presentation was provided on this issue due to absence of a FIAC member.

8. NMFS Appropriations

Council staff presented the NMFS budget. These items included funding for EEJ, NMFS fisheries research and monitoring, and protected species.

FIAC members said the \$1 million in funding for fisheries training is low. There needs to be more appropriations for the Young Fishermen’s Development Act and National Seaport Support. Trump supported these efforts in his last few days in office. The FIAC hopes these funds are distributed fairly across all regions. FIAC members noted that a change in leadership in Congress may again lead to delays in appropriations or improvements for this item.

The Executive director noted FY 2023 funding will probably go into the first 4 months into the next fiscal year.

Council staff noted a forthcoming presentation on Young Fishermen’s Development Act.

9. Permanent Advisory Committee to the WCPFC

Council staff presented on the US Permanent Advisory Committee to the WCPFC (PAC) which was to be held June 8, 2022. PAC members will report out on outcomes. The FIAC weigh in on PAC priorities going into the 2022 WCPFC Annual meeting, including the execution of a new “Pacific Strategy.”

A FIAC member asked about the regional condition of the bigeye tuna stock and on what part of the albacore stock is American Samoa associated with. Council staff noted the bigeye stock associated with Hawaii is part of a larger western and central Pacific stock while albacore is two stocks – one north of the equator and one to the south. American Samoa is associated with the south Pacific stock. Council staff acknowledged a FIAC member inquiry on fishermen around Hawaii seeing fewer

albacore which could be due to climate issues.

A FIAC member asked why MSC (Marine Stewardship Council) certification is important to the Hawaii longline fishery. Council staff and FIAC members said it was to gain market access with retailers and to ensure it is competitive internationally.

A FIAC member said WCPFC progress on harvest strategies is important to achieve and retain MSC certifications.

10. Equity and Environmental Justice

A. CCC and WP Report on EEJ in Fisheries Management

Council Staff presented on the CCC EEJ WG Report, Next Steps and the recent WP EEJ Workshop. Members are encouraged to provide additional insights for WP EEJ Planning.

The Executive Director said that without funding, EEJ is meaningless for improving the situation for the WP Region.

B. NOAA Fisheries Draft Equity and Environmental Justice Strategy

Mark Fox (PIRO) provided an overview of the National NMFS EEJ Draft Strategy. NMFS will also host several in person meetings to solicit public comment. NMFS intends to finalize this strategy by November 2022. Members were encouraged to provide comments regarding the draft plan.

11. Young Fishermen's Development Act

Cherie Kauahi and Darren Okimoto (Sea Grant) presented on the preliminary results of the Sea Grant's initial YFDA Hawaii project awarded \$100,000 in September 2021 entitled, "Strengthening Hawai'i's Seafood Workforce and Educational Opportunities for the Next Generation of Young Fishers and Aquaculturists. FIAC members were provided the link to participate.

There was a survey with 154 responses in total, of which 68 were from fishers. Participants picked their top 5 technical (vessel maintenance and repair was top with water safety) and top 5 professional skills (Critical thinking was top). They self identified regarding their role in fisheries, recreation was top, and any income received. Education and skills training- many skills are self taught or taught by ohana. Next step Sea Grant will look at the skills and the related education needed, including a pipeline from K-12 thru Graduate school. Workforce development capacity is a key part of this framework.

FIAC members said market development is essential to support the next generation of fisheries related professions, noting other professions such as construction pay much higher. Members also suggested that a steering committee be stood up to inform Sea Grant's YFDA surveys and work. Kauahi agreed to facilitate the development of a steering committee.

A FIAC member said from their perspective, unless there is effort to incorporate the total market development, there's not enough funding and demand to support the next generation. Costs are too high, construction pays better. Current setup doesn't have building blocks

FIAC members said \$1 million is not nearly enough and there is a huge need to get youth engaged in fishing. They support the work that Sea Grant is doing. There should be a steering committee to help advise and guide this initiative. This would ensure they have the right questions and talking to the right folks. This is a beginning to something we see as very necessary to get going.

Kauahi noted she was happy and anxious to move this forward.

12. Outcomes from May 2022 CCC Meeting

Staff provided an overview of outcomes from the May 2022 CCC meeting.

The Executive Director noted the slow pace of getting a unified Nation Seafood Strategy that lasts through the years and have any tractable progress.

A FIAC member noted there is no on the water or on the ground implementation strategy. The U.S. is one of the world's largest seafood markets. Per NOAA's strategy - a lot of the distinction is in trade exports. The situation is grim across the country. Maine lobster, crab in the Bering Sea, pollock, etc are seeing closures and declines. Seafood strategy could help balance but it does not seem like it will under the current framework presented.

The Executive Director said the Councils are trying to improve the relationship between Councils and NMFS ESA folks. Current policy directive allows for NMFS to have discussions with Councils. None of these have happened. Bi-Ops not being completed on time and with Council involvement and now we have a lawsuit with some species. A letter on the matter was included in the briefing materials.

13. Roundtable update on Fishing/Market Issues/Impacts

FIAC members each provided comment, starting with CNMI, Guam, American Samoa, then Hawaii and provide their concerns and those of their constituents

- CNMI FIAC member: fishers have been doing well due to favorable weather and adapting to two main fishing methods (Bottomfishing and Trolling) when needed, especially due to fuel prices. He also said that the CNMI has been hit with increased fuel prices close to \$7.00 per gallon on Saipan and higher prices on Tinian and Rota.
- Hawaii Longline fisheries are doing well with one of the best swordfish seasons in some time; A FIAC member credited the new regulations implemented through the Council process.
- Purse seine fisheries are looking to get observers back on board; going into FAD closure so expect to see catch rates to go down toward end of the year (will significantly impact US purse seine catch rates).
- Tautai American Samoa longline association had a meeting recently, noted economic challenges - costs are increasing but not commensurate increase in fish price. American Samoa catch rates have been declining for years.

- From a Hawaii seamount fisherman perspective, this is best fishing in 10-12 years. Average fish 22.5lbs larger than normal right now. Last three trips maxed out vessel capacity. Market up has been phenomenal on the big island. Between Kona and Hilo, a FIAC member counted 31 different vendors, a testament to the overall production and volume.
- On Oahu for small boat fishermen and vendors, the situation has been phenomenal and prices have been steady. Local guys have been able to get their fish in.
- Council staff provided Guam update : The majority of the fishermen going out are coming back empty or coming back with small marlins and bonita. A lot of fishermen are casting from shore due to high gas prices (>\$7 per gallon). Many are taking time to work on their boats or trailers. Sea water temperatures are very high and hit 85 degrees F this past weekend.

14. Other Issues

Goto noted another agenda item under “Other Issues” (Item 14) and that presentation will be given during coverage of Item 2. And one by Staff that will be on a proposal to expand the PRIA Marine National Monument.

A. False Killer Whale Interaction and Depredation Analyses

Robert Ahrens, PIFSC FRMD, presented preliminary results of an analysis to evaluate interaction and depredation patterns between the pelagic fishing industry and false killer whales (FKW) using the Protected Species Ensemble Random Forest (PSERF) model. The analysis is in response to the FIAC’s recommendation from its March 2022 meeting. Ahrens provided a brief overview of previous studies that contribute to the current understanding of FKW interactions and depredation, which suggested there were higher rates of depredation in the winter, at lower latitudes, and with higher fishing effort, but the explanatory power (i.e., deviance explained) of the generalized additive model (GAM) was low and no covariates were identified. Previous tagging studies suggested that FKW behavior may change to foraging during the haul phase of a longline set.

Using PSERF to model FKW interactions, there were several indicators that were much better than random, including SST anomaly (SSTA), current front, soak time, and lunar radius. Increased SSTA, steeper current fronts, shorter soak times, and approaching a full moon all increase the probability of an FKW interaction, with some of these being directly counter to depredation events. Other contributing metrics could include those that characterize currents and energies within the water column; for example, the presence of an eddy will decrease the likelihood of an interaction (which is also opposite for depredation). The strongest indicators of FKW depredation events based on the PSERF model outputs was the sine of Julian day, SST, soak time, SSTA, and lunar radius. Fishing earlier in the year, increased SST and SSTA, increased soak time, fishing during a full moon, and the presence of an eddy all increase the probability of a depredation event.

Future work will include an analysis on the effect on fishing effort and FKW interactions of the Southern Exclusion Zone (SEZ) closure, and will be coordinated with the needs of the FKW Take Reduction Team (TRT). The full analysis is expected to be completed by the end of July, presented to the TRT first, then to the Council advisory bodies in September 2022.

FIAC members expressed concern that the full analysis results are scheduled to be presented to the

TRT, even though the analysis was recommended by the Council. Council staff explained that the current plan based on coordination with PIRO and PIFSC is that the TRT would hear the analysis results in a webinar prior to the September Council meeting, but would likely reconvene for a full TRT meeting after the September meeting, which would allow TRT members and Council advisory bodies to respectively review the analysis results in advance of the full TRT meeting.

A FIAC member also asked about interaction rates spatially by effort, noting higher effort areas on the high seas by non-US vessels, and anecdotal evidence from Hawaii longline fishermen that higher concentration of vessels in an area tend to result in higher incidents of depredation. Ahrens indicated that foreign fishing effort could be included in the analysis at the one-degree grid by month, and that the relationship between effort concentration and depredation can be examined through the analysis.

B. Proposal by the Pacific Remote Island Coalition

Council Staff presented a June 1, 2022 article and proposal by the PRIC to expand the Pacific Remote Island Marine National Monument off Palmyra and Howland/Baker, which are already closed 50nm seaward.

FIAC members were not sure what this proposal aims to accomplish. The US in the midst of international negotiations (fishing, relationships with Pacific Islands), and fish is one of the most important thing to talk about in the Pacific Islands. Closing US waters sends the wrong message. Sustainable management is more important than closing. The Pacific bears the brunt. Most people do not know where Howland, Baker, and Palmyra are located. This effort may not be the proper way for conservation.

The FIAC stated that the fishery is dealing with domestic vs foreign fisheries. Global fishing watch shows the US is competing with foreign-flagged vessels. Harvesting close to home is ideal, but the US fleet is being made to move.

A FIAC member, while stating his is disappointed to hear of this coalition proposal, stated that this issue is a result of not doing a good job educating the public on the impacts of US fisheries versus other fisheries. Agriculture and other industries are subsidized, but not US Pacific fisheries. The industry is looking for opportunities to fish, rather than reliant on foreign sources.

15. Public Comment

No public comments.

16. Discussion and Recommendations

Regarding the False Killer Whale Interaction and Depredation Analyses, the FIAC:

1. Recommends the Council request PIFSC consider the following in the analysis:
 - a. foreign fishing effort on the high seas
 - b. effect of effort concentration on depredation risk

Regarding 2023 US Participating Territory Bigeye Specifications, the FIAC:

2. Recommended the Council set a catch limit of 2000 mt for each US Participating Territory, with a 1500 mt transfer limit from any US Participating Territory to US vessels permitted under the Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP) and operating under approved specified fishing agreements; and limiting total transfers to 3000 mt.

Regarding WCPFC Tropical Tuna Management, the FIAC:

3. Recommends the Council request the US delegation to the WCPFC investigate the potential impacts and influence of foreign distant water fisheries in catch attributions to small island developing states (SIDS).

Regarding US Navy Notice of Hazardous Operations, the FIAC:

4. Recommends the Council send a letter to the US Navy asking: 1) that impacts of these operations on fishing be evaluated and considered, 2) requesting open communication with the Council with regard to these periodic operations, 3) clarification of whether foreign vessels are also asked to move from these areas, and 4) that these exercises be conducted in areas where fisheries are already prohibited, including the Marine National Monuments.

Regarding the Young Fisherman's Development Act, the FIAC:

5. Recommends the Council request NOAA allocate more funding for training and development associated with the Young Fisherman's Development Act.

6. Recommends the Council request Sea Grant facilitate a steering committee to inform YFDA related surveys and work.