

## Council Proposes a New Pacific Strategy to Advance US Interests Through Fisheries

**With China vying for greater influence in the Pacific, concerns over food security amid the current supply chain crisis and inflation, the importance of fisheries to the people of the Western Pacific Region has never been so apparent.** Fisheries are critical to the welfare of Hawai'i, American Samoa, Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas (CNMI). **The United States must act now to ensure the prosperity of the U.S. Pacific Islands and protect national influences by strengthening its positions in international fisheries negotiations.** Specifically, to improve negotiations within the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), where 60% of the global tuna supply is managed.

Following another disappointing outcome for the United States at the WCPFC annual meeting in December 2021, the Council recommended implementing a holistic approach to advancing U.S. fishery interests in the Pacific. Rather than having negotiations related to the WCPFC be limited to specific federal agencies, this objective should be incorporated into a broader overarching goal

for the United States, including geopolitical interests such as improving trade, food security, national security and ultimately, strengthened U.S. influence in the Pacific. The Council developed an informational paper outlining these needs that was distributed to the Departments of Commerce, Defense, Homeland Security, the Interior and State. Thus far, responses have been supportive, with some commitments to prioritize fisheries through cooperating with Pacific Island nations.

The Council's requests are timely. The Biden Administration launched its *Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States*<sup>1</sup> in February and in March requested public comments for the *Indo-Pacific Economic Framework* (IPEF). The Council requested that advancing fisheries be included as an objective in the IPEF. Two of the objectives of the



Longline vessels in port at Pier 38, Honolulu, Hawai'i. Commercial fisheries for pelagic species like tuna brought in \$124.4 million in 2021.

overarching *Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States* are to "drive new resources to the Indo-Pacific" and to "partner to build resilience in the Pacific Islands." For Pacific Island nations and territories, fisheries are often the leading (and often the only) resource for national and territorial economic development. Fisheries are to the Pacific Islands as fossil fuels are for the Middle East, in terms of relative economic significance.

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## PACIFIC ISLANDS FISHERY NEWS

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## STORY ICON KEY

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#### FISHERMEN



#### EDUCATORS



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Federal



Hawaii



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American Samoa

*Dedicated to ecosystem-based fisheries management in the U.S. Pacific Islands.*



# New Pacific Strategy

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

But in order to get these goals and objectives achieved, immediate improvements are needed and the groundwork must be laid out at the WCPFC. Specifically, fishing opportunities for Hawai'i and American Samoa longline fisheries need to be enhanced, and the U.S. Pacific Territories need to have their economic aspirations acknowledged.

For American Samoa, tuna fisheries contribute to one third of the total workforce, mostly through a StarKist cannery, and 90% of exports. American Samoa is supplied mostly by U.S.-flagged purse seiners that call Pago Pago home. However, these vessels are not recognized within the WCPFC as a distinct fleet, which would afford them benefits as a Small Island Developing State and Participating Territory (SIDS/PT). The situation makes it difficult for them to compete internationally and jeopardizes the existence of a "local" American Samoa fleet to supply the cannery. This poses a threat to the economy of American Samoa.



Longline fishing vessels in Pago Pago Harbor, American Samoa.

The Hawai'i longline fishery is the largest food producer for the State and supplies more than 60% of fresh yellowfin and bigeye tuna to U.S. markets, and leads the nation in swordfish production. The fishery is the most regulated of its kind in the world and is considered the "gold standard" in compliance and monitoring. Yet no good deed goes unpunished. The Hawai'i fishery has the lowest catch limit for bigeye tuna of limits set for six countries by the WCPFC. Several "distant-water" fleets, mostly from Asia, have catch limits several times higher. While the Hawai'i-based U.S. longline fishery exceeds monitoring (human observer coverage) and reporting requirements, and does not transship catch at sea, many of these competing fisheries barely meet or fail to meet these requirements each year.



Albacore tuna are the primary target species for the American Samoa longline fishery. Photo: Flickr.

The international playing field must be level for the United States within WCPFC fisheries management, particularly to ensure American Samoa's rights as a SIDS/PT are respected and acknowledged. The Hawai'i-based U.S. longline fishery needs to have catch limits that are proportional to its fishing capacity and incentivize compliance and monitoring. The current status quo and trajectory of U.S. fisheries negotiations in the Pacific may lead Hawai'i and the U.S. Territories into a precarious economic situation and/or jeopardize their ability to sustain local food security.

This situation can only be corrected by increased engagement with other Pacific Island nations, many of which form voting blocs and alliances within the WCPFC. Although the United States is the largest sponsor of foreign aid in the Pacific, there is lack of direct engagement with these nations on fisheries matters. As a result, many of these nations do not support U.S. interventions and proposals, while sometimes favoring other competing nations. American Samoa, Guam, and the CNMI each have their own "seat at the table" along with the United States at WCPFC meetings and negotiations. The U.S. Pacific Territories, with adequate resources from the U.S. federal government, need to use shared commonalities and aspirations so that negotiations can be articulated with mutual cooperation with Pacific Island nations.

The greatest beneficiary of decreased U.S. engagement and influence is China. China is actively implementing a specific set of policies, programs and investments to expand its influence throughout the Pacific<sup>2</sup> specifically focusing on the fisheries sector. Such is the case in Kiribati, which is the closest foreign nation to Hawai'i, much closer than the continental United States. China has developed many infrastructure projects with



associated lending, including deep-water ports where there is a potential for military access. This influence began with fisheries partnerships, where Chinese tuna vessels would use Kiribati status and privileges as a SIDS/PT to gain fishing access with exemptions from conservation restrictions. Chinese fishing influence is believed to be the cause of Kiribati moving towards opening tuna-rich waters of the second largest marine protected area in the world (second to Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument), the Phoenix Island Protected Area, to tuna fishing.<sup>3</sup> In the Solomon Islands, similar influences are emerging.

While the situation may seem grim, U.S. officials are beginning to prioritize improving relations in the Pacific through the new *Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States* and the IPEF. The Council's efforts are not going unnoticed either. It is becoming apparent to leadership in Washington D.C. that unless the United States strengthens its relationships in the

Pacific, it will be replaced by China. That would not only lead to degraded fishery ecosystems, but also weakened U.S. trade and food security for Hawai'i and the U.S. Pacific Territories. It's apparent that the only way to strengthen these relationships with Pacific Island nations is to increase the significance of U.S. fisheries in the global market, which begins at the WCPFC.

The Council and the Permanent Advisory Committee to U.S. Commissioners to the WCPFC will discuss the Pacific Strategy at its June 8 meeting. 🐟

<sup>1</sup> [www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/U.S.-Indo-Pacific-Strategy.pdf](https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/U.S.-Indo-Pacific-Strategy.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2022/04/20/china-solomon-islands-security-deal-pacific-why-america-should-care](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2022/04/20/china-solomon-islands-security-deal-pacific-why-america-should-care)

<sup>3</sup> [www.1news.co.nz/2021/11/11/fears-over-chinas-involvement-in-kiribatis-ditching-of-marine-reserve](https://www.1news.co.nz/2021/11/11/fears-over-chinas-involvement-in-kiribatis-ditching-of-marine-reserve)

## Western Pacific Tuna - Complex and Delicious!



Hawai'i longline vessel heading out to sea. Photo: Joshua DeMello.

Do you ever wonder where the fish you buy comes from? The Filet-O-Fish you ordered from McDonald's? That is pollock caught in Alaska's fishery. The lobster you ordered at that fancy restaurant? Most likely from Maine's famous fishery. But what about in the Western Pacific? The answer is right there in your (poke) bowl.

Species managed under each of the eight regional fishery management councils vary and hold significant roles in the surrounding communities and cultures. For example, the Alaska pollock fishery in the North Pacific Region is the main species that allows Alaskan ports to hold the top three spots in the nation in terms of volume landed. The lobster fishery in the New England area provides that region with the most valuable commercial fishery in North America, with Maine setting a record of \$725 million for the landed value in 2021. Right here in the Western Pacific, our bread and butter is the tuna fishery—the only one in the United States.

Tuna, more commonly known by its Hawaiian name, 'ahi, can be found in poke bowls, sushi, and in plate lunches and

on white tablecloth dinner plates around the region and the world. Honolulu consistently ranks in the top 10 ports nationally by value of seafood landed annually as a result of the successes within the 'ahi fishery. The longline fishery based out of Hawai'i is one of the most regulated in the world and maintains high standards for crew safety and labor conditions. Globally, the value of the tuna fisheries in the Pacific exceeds \$26 billion for both fresh and frozen fish, as well as canned tuna.

Being a successful fresh-fish-fishery in the Western Pacific does come with the challenge that tunas are pelagic and part of a stock shared with countries from all over the world. This means it is important to manage these species on an international level to make sure that U.S. fisheries get their share of the pie. The region's closest neighbors compete for these resources making securing a piece of that pie much more difficult, especially when not all countries share the



Fresh bigeye tuna up for auction in Honolulu. Photo: Matthew Seeley.

same priorities of working towards sustainability. But despite competition for the resource, our tuna fishery remains sustainable and continues to provide fresh fish to Hawai'i and the world.

Next time you are out picking up seafood, pass on that Filet-O-Fish or Maine lobster and pick up a fresh loin of 'ahi or a pound of spicy 'ahi poke. Rest assured that the fish you are getting comes from our region's top fishery and one of the most well-managed in the world. Something to be proud of and share with your family. 🐟





# 190th Council Meeting Highlights - March 22-24, 2022

## Council to Develop Fishing Regulations for Proposed Hawai'i National Marine Sanctuary

The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council said it will develop fishing regulations as part of the proposed Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI) sanctuary designation. The NOAA sanctuary designation process includes a formal consultation with the regional fishery management councils on fisheries regulations at the start of the process. The Council will include options for permitting and reporting requirements for commercial (outside current monument boundaries), noncommercial, Native Hawaiian practices and research fishing within sanctuary boundaries.

Several Council members noted that since the proposed sanctuary boundaries are still undefined, the Council response and draft regulations should be kept broad. Matt Ramsey, Council member from Hawai'i, remarked, "It's important to have a clear understanding of what is being proposed for the sanctuary boundary. If it expands beyond the area that already restricts commercial fishing, that is a completely different story."

"I support moving ahead," said John Gourley, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) vice chair. "We have enough areas closed to fishing and should develop fishing regulations under Magnuson-Stevens Act when allowed."

The Council will amend its Hawai'i Archipelago Fishery Ecosystem Plan to analyze fishing alternatives in parallel to the sanctuary fishing regulations.

## Council Asked for Remedies to Long-Standing Issues in Western Pacific Region

### **Delayed NOAA Biological Opinions**

Chair Archie Soliai reiterated concerns about NOAA Pacific Islands Regional Office (PIRO) delays in completing Endangered Species Act (ESA) consultations for the region's longline and bottomfish fisheries.

"Our experience with ESA consultations over the last several years have left us with the impression that our Council process is not respected," emphasized Soliai. "The Council is here to ensure the sustainability of our region's fishery resources as mandated by the Magnuson-Stevens Act." Soliai added, "We ask PIRO to provide us with realistic timelines and meaningful dialogue, so we may work together to complete these biological opinions and ensure that our fisheries can continue to operate in compliance with ESA."

The Council will convey its concerns to Janet Coit, assistant administrator for the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), requesting assistance so biological opinions are completed in coordination with the Council.

### **Mariana Trench National Marine Sanctuary Nomination Review**

The Council believes the existing Mariana Trench Marine National Monument (MTMNM) management plan should be implemented ahead of any national marine sanctuary nomination in the Marianas, as it may provide protections the nomination seeks. The MTMNM boundaries, including the omission of the water column, already reflects the CNMI government's management needs.

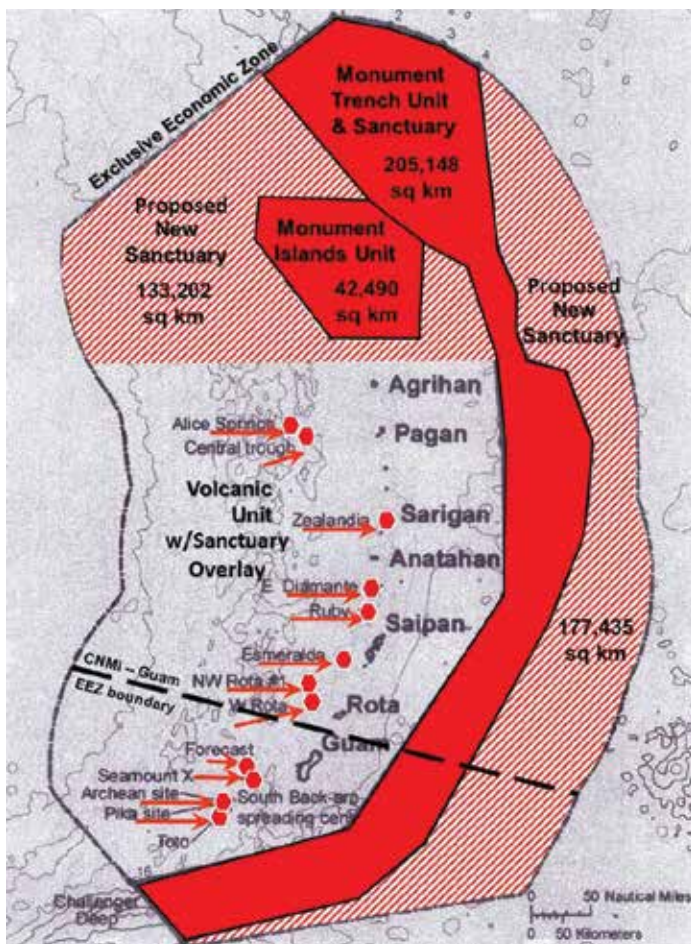
Council comments in February to NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) on the 5-year nomination review, explained the MTMNM greatly reduced the need for sanctuary protection. Concerns in the proposed sanctuary, such as fishing regulations, are already addressed through the MTMNM management plan and Magnuson-Stevens Act. Foreign fishing is prohibited.

"ONMS needs to be clear about what is proposed," said Michael Tenorio, CNMI Division of Fish and Wildlife fisheries supervisor. "The nomination seems to allude to closing fishing to the community and it's causing confusion."

The Council asked NOAA to remove the proposed sanctuary from the national inventory and assist Friends of the Mariana Trench Monument with developing a revised proposal vetted

*Subsistence and sustenance fishing is common in the NWHI off of platforms such as this traditional sailing canoe, Hikianalia, of the Polynesian Voyaging Society. Photo: Office of Hawaiian Affairs.*





Mariana Archipelago map from the Friends of the Mariana Trench 2017 sanctuary nomination package. The areas in red are closed to commercial fishing and mining. The thin red lines denote areas that could be closed to those activities. Source: Friends of the Mariana Trench.

through the CNMI and Guam communities. This would create a stronger proposal with broad community support, one of the 11 evaluation criteria for inclusion on the inventory list. The CNMI Governor Ralph DLG Torres and other community members have expressed strong opposition to the proposed marine sanctuary plan.

### Supporting Equity and Environmental Justice

Equity and environmental justice (EEJ) is a priority for the Council, and influences all programs, approaches and actions. The Council raised EEJ-related issues and opportunities throughout the meeting this week.

“I think this is very important and am glad it’s finally coming to fruition after 30 years,” said Monique Amani, Council member from Guam, referencing when the EJ social movement began. “I fully support this initiative - we’re part of the United States, but the services and investments to our communities aren’t always the same for the territories,” she added.

The Council approved a draft Western Pacific EEJ approach and will develop a regional strategy to direct future work. Together with the Council’s new Pacific strategy to advocate for equitable fisheries in the region, our fishing communities will be better positioned to benefit across global, regional and national landscapes.

### American Purse Seine Fleet Petition

The Council recommended NMFS clarify a 2015 notice of proposed rule-making that would acknowledge an American Samoa purse seine fleet, distinct from a U.S. fleet. A proposed rule is expected sometime this year.

American Samoa does not have direct access to the high seas and most purse seine fishing effort occurs within waters of small island states and tropical waters north of the territory. However, American Samoa is home to a tuna cannery that is the territory’s most important private employer.

In 2015, Tri Marine purse seine vessels petitioned the United States to remove high seas fishing limits for vessels that offload at least 50% of their catch in American Samoa, citing Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) fishing restrictions that impede their ability to support the territory’s economy. NMFS denied the petition in October 2015, but stated it could reconsider taking action if there was evidence that WCPFC restrictions have a negative impact on the territory’s economy.

“Seven years have passed and American Samoa’s dire situation is self-evident with the exodus of U.S. vessels and the need to supply our cannery,” said Council Chair Archie Soliai. PIRO Regional Administrator Michael Tosatto was unable to provide specifics on proposed regulations.

### Annual Catch Limits Set for Main Hawaiian Islands Deepwater Shrimp and Precious Coral

After reviewing recent data, the Council recommended rolling over the current annual catch limits for the main Hawaiian Islands deepwater shrimp (*Heterocarpus laevigatus* and *H. ensifer*) and precious corals for fishing years 2022-2025.



Deep-water shrimp. Photo: NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration and Research.

The Council also requested NMFS provide information to the State of Hawai‘i legislature regarding HB 1988 that proposes to prohibit the harvest, sale, import or export of coral products. Exceptions would be allowed for noncommercial harvest

or research purposes. Included in the bill’s list of species are the Council’s precious coral managed species (pink, red, bamboo and black). The language may be inconsistent with federal regulations that allow commercial harvest of precious corals, and would essentially close the sustainably managed fishery.

NMFS made themselves available to the State of Hawai‘i to provide additional information regarding federal fisheries, however the bill was stalled in conference and did not pass the legislature prior to its adjournment. 🐟



## Who ARE We in the Western Pacific Region?

**Diversity and representation matter.** Cultural diversity leads to better decisions because different views, perspectives, and ideas are brought forth for consideration. At the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, we believe that our diversity should reflect the communities we serve. While our backgrounds and cultural experiences may vary widely, that can only benefit us as we all work together toward a common goal of sustainable fisheries management.

According to census data from the Western Pacific Region through 2020, 37% of the 1.7 million residents identify as Asian, 22% as White, 18% as Pacific Islander and 23% as mixed. Census data collection is variable and limited for the U.S. outlying areas which affects our region. On April 5, 2022, several members of Congress wrote the U.S. comptroller general about these data gaps, and requested more context on the related impacts and input on potential administrative and legislative ways to solve the problem.

Taking a closer look at the Council Family, which includes Council members, advisory committee members and staff scattered across the Pacific, the breakdown varies a bit from the region as a whole. Out of 140 people, 39% are estimated to be of European descent, followed by Asian (21%), Micronesian (21%) and Polynesian (16%). The remaining 3% are split between African American, Brazilian, Filipino and Inuit Eskimo ethnicities.

With the vast majority of the region's population (1.4 million), the Hawai'i breakdown is fairly similar to the overall numbers. But when taking a closer look at ethnicities in smaller regions, different patterns start to emerge. Of the 55,000 people in American

Samoa, 89% are Samoan, and all other reported ethnicities make up 4% or less.

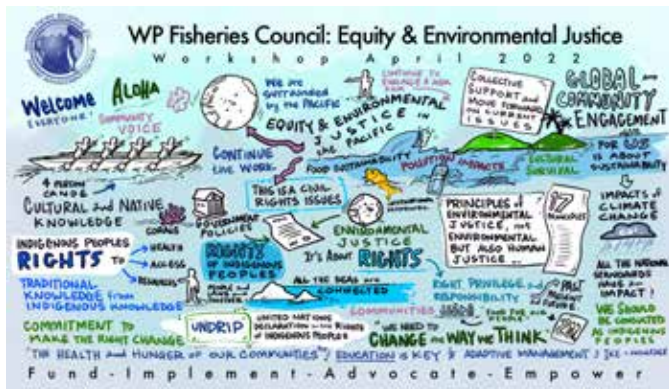
Despite their geographical closeness, the distribution of ethnic groups in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) and Guam are not the same. CNMI has one third the population of Guam (169,000), and 50% identify as Asian and 24% as Chamorro. In Guam, the largest group is Chamorros (37%), followed by Asians (31%). Both report having around 10% of residents with two or more ethnicities.

The Council's diversity broadly reflects the community and can be attributed to our longstanding indigenous leadership, who has recognized that training the next generation is key. The Council has served as a training ground and pipeline for many cohorts. Young indigenous and non-indigenous interns and staff members have taken what they learned to other fisheries-related jobs in the region. Examples include NOAA's Pacific Islands Regional Office (PIRO) and Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center (PIFSC), the Universities of Hawai'i and Guam, environmental contractor Lynker Technologies, non-governmental organizations, and state, territory and commonwealth fishery management agencies. Council staff alumni have a deep understanding of the Magnuson-Steven Act, the fishery management process, and the roles and responsibilities of the Council, PIRO, PIFSC and other stakeholders.

The Council will continue to feed the pipeline from students to professionals, and combat the general lack of diversity in fisheries management so that richer discussions can be had at the decision-making table. 🐟



# WP Council—An Organizational Leader on Equity and Environmental Justice



As part of its overall equity and environmental justice (EEJ) efforts, the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council held a planning workshop April 29, 2022, to discuss the direction and vision to develop its regional strategy. The 25 participants, spread across Hawai‘i, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and American Samoa, included Council and Advisory Panel members, NOAA, Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) and Council staff. A live scribe artfully captured the group’s discussions.

The workshop started with a panel of long-time environmental justice advocates: Uncle Charley Ka‘ai‘ai; OHA Trustee Mililani Trask; William Richardson School of Law Professor Malia Akutagawa; and Council Chair Archie Soliai. The participants then explored how:

- ✱ *EEJ integrates with the Council’s work.*
- ✱ *The Council’s EEJ actions could impact and contribute to fair global and regional fisheries for our communities.*
- ✱ *The Council can use four key organizational tools for change—Implement, Empower, Fund and Advocate—to advance EEJ aims.*

In closing, Council Executive Director Kitty Simonds shared the desire to gather with the larger community during summer 2022. Participants noted that the Council remains steadfast and continues as a voice for the community in the federal process, modeling how to respect cultural values within decision-making. Council Chair Soliai closed by empowering each attendee as an agent of change and noted each person has the ability through their own actions to promote and advance EEJ.

The Western Pacific Council is also taking a lead role on behalf of the Council Coordinating Committee (CCC) to serve as a co-chair for the EEJ Working Group. The CCC is the national body of all eight regional fishery management councils authorized by the Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Management and Conservation Act (MSA). Council and

NOAA staff members came together to evaluate EEJ in U.S. fisheries management, how the MSA can support EEJ, past and potential future council actions, and barriers that fisheries managers should consider when advancing EEJ. The report concluded:

- ✱ *While some challenges exist for meaningfully advancing EEJ, all regional councils are beginning to capture EEJ issue considerations in their work.*
- ✱ *Collaboration among the communities, regional councils and NOAA is key.*
- ✱ *The MSA allows for regional diversity and a bottom-up, open and transparent process for fisheries decision-making.*
- ✱ *There are opportunities to advance EEJ across the regions by investing in ongoing outreach, reimagining engagement and capacity-building, as a start.*

The CCC met May 17-19, 2022, in Maryland and regarding EEJ passed a motion to “establish an EEJ workgroup to share information about different approaches to meet EEJ objectives, taking into account the draft EEJ strategy. The Workgroup should consider developing a terms of reference, holding an EEJ workshop, and publishing a peer reviewed journal article on their work.”

The National Marine Fisheries Service also presented their draft strategy for advancing EEJ to the CCC. The meeting participants discussed engagement strategies, how to move the research needs identified in the CCC EEJ report forward, Western Pacific underserved and disadvantaged fisheries, how to identify underserved communities in other regions, council representation, and the importance of MSA National Standard 8 and funding territorial science. The draft strategy is open for public review and comment through Aug. 19, 2022. For a link to the draft document and comment form, and information on upcoming webinars, visit: [www.fisheries.noaa.gov/bulletin/request-comments-noaa-fisheries-draft-strategy-advancing-equity-and-environmental](https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/bulletin/request-comments-noaa-fisheries-draft-strategy-advancing-equity-and-environmental) 🐟



# Improving Survival of Oceanic Whitetip Sharks at Forefront of Hawai'i Fishing Industry's Attention



Oceanic whitetip shark. Photo: Andy Mann.



An industry-initiated conservation measure to reduce impacts to oceanic whitetip sharks became a regulatory requirement for the Hawai'i deep-set longline fishery on May 31, 2022. Just a year and a half prior, at the December 2020 Council meeting, the Hawaii Longline Association (HLA) announced that the fleet would voluntarily switch from wire to monofilament nylon leaders facilitate a shark's ability to free itself from an accidental hooking by biting through the line. The Council then developed a regulatory amendment under its Pacific Pelagic Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP), and formally recommended the change to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) at the June 2021 Council meeting.

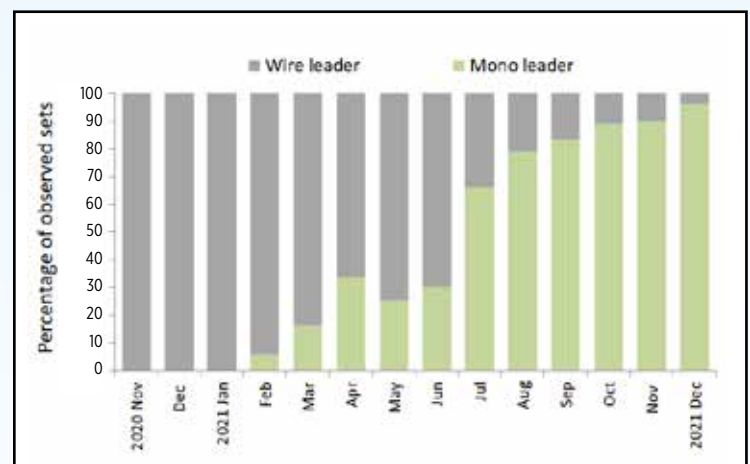
Oceanic whitetip sharks were listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act in 2018 and are subject to overfishing and overfished in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO), primarily due to foreign fishing. The U.S. longline fishery impacts only about 5% of the oceanic whitetip sharks caught in the WCPO. Recognizing the low impact on the stock and the importance of leveling the playing field for U.S. fisheries, the Council previously recommended that wire leader usage also be reduced in international longline fisheries. According to a recent study, the WCPO oceanic whitetip shark stock is expected to rebound if catch at the international level are reduced by just 10%.

The Council has long supported industry-led initiatives to solve conservation issues. Fishermen, after all, are the ones who will be most affected by conservation measures, and importantly, have the on-the-water experience to know if a

potential solution will be practical and effective. With this most recent example of HLA's efforts to transition to more shark-friendly gear, the proof of industry-wide support was in the observer data.

Approximately 20% of the Hawai'i deep-set longline trips carry federal observers who collect data on catch, bycatch, protected species interactions and operational characteristics. Observers are placed based on a randomized sampling method so that the sampled trips are representative of that year's fishing activity. One piece of information collected on all trips is the type of gear used. At the beginning of 2021, shortly after HLA's announced transition from wire to "mono" leaders, wire leaders were used on all deep-set longline trips. In the following months, the fleet started to switch gear types, with an accelerated transition after the Council's final action in June 2021. By December 2021, nearly all of the deep-set longline trips were using mono leaders, six months ahead of the new rule kicking in.

The fleet's leader transition data were first presented at the Council's Pacific Pelagic Plan Team meeting held May 3-5, 2022, and also included in the latest Annual Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) Report for the Pelagic FEP. The annual SAFE report is a tool for the Council to monitor and evaluate fishery performance to help identify future research and management needs. The Council will continue to monitor the implementation of the wire leader prohibition in the Hawai'i deep-set longline fishery in the coming years. 🐟



Leader material used in the Hawai'i deep-set longline fishery by month based on observed sets from November 2020 to December 2021. Excludes a small number of sets that did not record leader material.

The conservation measure of switching from wire to monofilament nylon leaders, together with removing trailing gear from oceanic whitetip sharks before releasing them, is expected to reduce shark catch and mortality by about 30%.



# 'Aha Moku 'O Maui Members Facilitate Native Consultation on State and Federal Decisions



Left: A mahi'ai (farmer) advocates for stream flow standards aiding efforts to replenish the environment for native fauna and flora. 'Aha Moku 'O Maui members educate and support the community in traditional regenerative farming practices to establish a more diverse economy and sustainable food system. Photo: Kaipo Kekona. Right: 'Aha Moku 'O Maui CEO Ke'eumoku Kapu (first row, center) with the members of the Lahaina branch. Photo: Ke'eumoku Kapu.

This is the second in a series on the 'Aha Moku, exploring how the 'Aha Moku 'O Maui put the system into practice and what the organization is doing today.

Following the enactment of Act 212 and 288 in Hawai'i, the 'Aha Moku 'O Maui was founded in 2013 with a mission "to incorporate appropriate native Hawaiian generational knowledge and protocols for the preservation, cultivation, and management of all native Hawaiian natural and cultural resources for future generations."

In September 2014, the non-profit group hosted a puwalu (conference) focused on how to put the 'Aha Moku System into practice on Maui and make it work for other Hawai'i communities. 'Aha Moku 'O Maui founders Ke'eumoku Kapu and Timmy Bailey explained that the group's establishment involved a series of community meetings that resulted in creating a structure that ensures cultural practitioners are consulted in decision-making processes. A charter was developed to handle local issues through a central hub.

The 'Aha Moku 'O Maui has 13 po'o (leaders), representing the 12 moku (districts/regions) of Maui. Each moku has six komike (committees)—one for 'āina (land), wai (water), kai (ocean), ea (air), iwi kupuna (bones, burial grounds), and kahakai (shoreline, beach) management.

The po'o meet quarterly with CEO Kapu and Technical Kako'o Fay McFarlane. Kapu's duties and responsibilities are to assist with administrative needs and research. He ensures that all county, state and federal agency correspondence is addressed by the 12 moku councils on Maui. Fay McFarlane's role as the Tech Kako'o (support) is to provide on-demand research to cultural practitioners, whether in the field



Fay McFarlane

or from the archives, and to ensure the group's frontline kia'i (warriors) have legal assistance, medical support, and media personnel. In addition, she maintains an island-wide network of contacts to facilitate native consultation and reporting with county, state, and federal agencies, and non-governmental organizations such as the National Lawyers Guild and the American Civil Liberties Union of Hawai'i.

## Select Current Activities

- \* The Komike Kai & Kahakai cultural practitioners have joined forces to prepare for an eventual kahea (call) to action to protect ocean and shorelines from planned nearshore and offshore dredging projects. The Komike Kahakai are involved in wetland restoration

projects in multiple moku and consult on issues with the State of Hawai'i on anticipated shoreline retreat from erosion.

- \* During the pandemic, the Komike 'Aina focused on educating and supporting communities in traditional farming practices to build ensure food security in the future.
- \* The Komike Iwi Kupuna in multiple moku continue to fight and defend Hawaiian burials in the state court while conducting ongoing interment work to malama (care) na iwi kupuna curated at the State of Hawai'i Historic Preservation Division. Members also craft burial treatment plans and design and install reinterment crypts where they offer mihi (final repentance) and final kanu (burial).

The 'Aha Moku 'O Maui is looking for kilo (observers) within the 12 different moku throughout the island. If you are interested and have a background and/or generational knowledge of land (hunters), ocean (fishers), shoreline (gatherers), water (kalo farmers) or air (ea), please contact your moku representative at [www.ahamoku.org](http://www.ahamoku.org). The 'Aha Moku System is a bottom-up management structure. Help us manage our moku the way we have been doing for centuries. 🐟





# Sustainable Fisheries Fund Working in the CNMI



Success! Mission accomplished! The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) Administration in collaboration with the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council completed the Western Pacific Sustainable Fisheries Fund (SFF) X Fisheries Training and Demonstration Project. Established by the Magnuson-Stevens Act, the SFF funds are used to implement projects in a Participating Territory's Marine Conservation Plan.

It all started with the CNMI Administration recognizing the potential to develop local fisheries to support the local economy and growing visitor industry. The CNMI Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) implemented the fisheries training program that included classroom instruction on fishing gear and equipment, fishing methods, technology, seafood handling for quality and safety, and basic vessel handling and navigation.

DLNR launched the bottomfish training program in May 2019, by hosting the first vessels maintenance and repairs at the CNMI Division of Public Safety warehouse at Smiling Cove Mariana. This was followed by the first bottomfish fishing workshop on gear, tackle, equipment, bait, fishing handling and storage



To enhance the bottomfish training, CNMI purchased a commercially outfitted vessel, the *Kirida* – a 36-foot Radon boat, configured to target bottomfish. Photo: Floyd Masga.

and strategies for targeting deep-slope species that was hosted at the Division of Fish and Wildlife offices. A total of 22 fishermen participated in the initial training sessions.

At the vessel maintenance and operations workshop, a licensed Volvo

mechanic from Hawai'i provided hands-on training on engine maintenance and repair. Training focused on routine servicing of two Volvo Penta engines that included changing the oil and filters and maintenance of the outer drive units as per manufacturer specification and service requirements.



Hawai'i commercial bottomfish fisherman Ed Ebisui III led the bottomfish classroom training at the DFW offices. Photo: Floyd Masga.

by at-sea training on vessel operations, safety, gear operations, anchoring and use of electronics that were conducted over the next three-day period.

However, the CNMI Administration experienced delays in fully implementing program activities due to the need to first obtain certain NMFS clearances. Therefore, no in-water fishing activities could be supported during the initial training events.

Regardless, DLNR continued to host training workshops and demonstrations and provided regular maintenance on the commercial fishing vessel. In addition, the Council and DLNR hosted a public bottomfish meeting Sept. 24, 2019, that included a training session on strategies and methods for targeting deep slope bottomfish. Workshop participants used nautical charts and bathymetric maps to identify potential fishing areas and how to develop a plan prior to going fishing.

After NMFS completed its review and clearances on Jan. 15, 2020, that restricted in-water activities in 2019, the project continued to experience challenges due to COVID-19 restrictions prohibiting fishing activities, meetings and gatherings. This initial action

Next, expert commercial bottomfish fishermen from Hawai'i completed a two-day fishing workshop for the participants June 1-2, 2019, at DFW. These workshops were to be followed

devastated the fishing community. However, once the government started to relax social restrictions, project activities resumed.

DLNR completed several small-boat bottomfish training and development workshops from May to September 2020. Each workshop included two classroom training sessions and one at-sea bottomfish training trip on the bottomfishing vessel, the *Kirida*. Forty-nine students completed the workshops. Activities included regular engine, electrical and hydraulic system maintenance, handling test runs, navigation system operations and removal and wash downs of the *Kirida*.

DFW staff and Micronesian Environmental Services (MES) provided training on bottomfish data collection, reviewing the data collection forms and species identification. The training also included information on the new electronic reporting application, Catchit Logit, which was developed by the Council to improve fishery data collection and stock assessments. Participants were encouraged to use the app to better track their personal fishing activity and contribute to improving fishery science and management.

Although initially delayed due to weather, the final training workshops and at-sea demonstrations in Rota were completed in June 2021.

In conclusion, 21 new fishermen have entered the CNMI bottomfish fishery as a result of this capacity-building bottomfish training project and are now reporting catches through the Catchit Logit app and selling to local fish vendors. News of the successful trainings has also reached residents and fishers on Guam who have requested to hold their own classes. 🐟



MES's Shirley Taitano takes biosamples from catch on Rota. Photo: John Gourley.



# American Samoa Longline Diversification Project Update



Manaolemoana fishing vessel crew members load albacore caught by jig fishing into a 20-foot frozen container for the start of their transport from Pago Pago, American Samoa to British Columbia, Canada. Photos: Vince Halek.

The American Samoa longline fishery is an important part of the Territory and United States' economies, but continues to operate at net revenue loss due to high operating costs and low albacore catch rates. Recent catches of albacore have been as low as four to five fish per night. This required the

organization noted that fuel costs will increase, but would be offset by the reduced number of crew numbers required to support jig fishing. Longline trips require seven crew to operate, while jig fishing only requires four crew members. Higher potential prices per pound for juvenile albacore caught by jig fishing may also offer added incentive, as the fattier cold-water albacore is often favorable in markets. Elimination of bait costs would also provide additional reductions in operating expenses as vessels switch gear types.

Vince Halek from Tuna Ventures, Inc. provided an update in April 2022 on a recent jig fishing trip: The *Manaolemoana* was the only vessel from American Samoa that traveled south to international waters near New Zealand to jig fish. The trip took two weeks to get there and two weeks to return. This included a humanitarian stop in Nukualofa where we delivered 1500 plus cases of purified water for the people of Tonga impacted by the recent volcanic eruption.

The crew caught more than 1500 albacore tuna before it had to return to port due to weather and some mechanical issues. The vessel arrived in Pago Pago and unloaded its catch into

TOSA created a proposal, funded by the Western Pacific Sustainable Fisheries Fund, to convert five American Samoa longline vessels to albacore trolling—the *F/V America*, *Rival*, *Fetuloemoana*, *Sivaimoana* and *Manaolemoana*.

owners to call the vessel back to conserve fuel and minimize expenses. In contrast, vessels in nearby exclusive economic zones completed their jig fishing season (November to April) in 2020 catching an average of 5-10 tons per day per boat. Thirteen trolling vessels caught 541 metric tons of South Pacific albacore in the austral summer (three months), while 17 longline vessels in a 12-month period caught just over 1,000 metric tons.

The Tautai O Samoa Association (TOSA) requested that the director of the Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources (DMWR) assist owners to diversify their fishing operations to conduct albacore jig fishing (trolling artificial lures off the stern of the vessel on multiple lines). TOSA created a proposal, funded by the Western Pacific Sustainable Fisheries Fund, to convert five American Samoa longline vessels to albacore trolling—the *F/V America*, *Rival*, *Fetuloemoana*, *Sivaimoana* and *Manaolemoana*. The

a 20-foot frozen container, which will be exported by way of Oakland, CA enroute to a cannery in British Columbia, Canada. The price for the fish was significantly higher than what we are receiving from the Starkist cannery for large longline-caught albacore. The size of jig-caught albacore was 10-20 pounds each.

We learned lessons from this trip that will better prepare us for the next jig fishing trip in November 2022. We are reconverting the vessel now back to longline gear. Jig fishing works if the boat goes well prepared not only with sufficient fuel and supplies, but a crew who can adapt to the fishing quickly. We were fortunate to find an American Samoan who was a jig fisherman. He knew how it all worked and taught the crew members by practicing with them on their way to the fishing grounds. They practiced and fortunately we caught fish. From aluminum poles to sonar, the equipment the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council helped us secure for jig fishing was invaluable. 🐟

Leilani Sablan (left) monitoring the ROV dive from the Nautilus for anything exciting.



## Council Scholarship Recipient Joins Research Cruise to Kingman Reef and Palmyra Atoll



University of Guam master's degree in biology candidate and Council scholarship recipient Leilani Sablan recently returned from a cruise aboard the Exploration Vessel (E/V) *Nautilus* where she joined a team "Corps of Exploration"

members. Sablan was selected to join the *Nautilus* on its trip to Kingman Reef and Palmyra Atoll. The vessel, owned by Ocean Exploration Trust and under the direction of renowned researcher Robert Ballard, sailed out of Honolulu Harbor March 14 and returned April 4, 2022.

The team onboard the *Nautilus* spent three weeks in the Central Pacific exploring the deep waters around Kingman Reef and Palmyra Atoll. Because the dive sites were areas no one had ever seen before, the main research question was very basic: What is down there?

Sablan's role as a data logger was to note observations, log any biological or geological samples collected from the deep, and take still shots from cameras on the remotely operated vehicles (ROVs). She also assisted by writing dive reports and processing samples in the wet lab.

As a master's student, Sablan felt she gained valuable experience by working together with many other scientists from different universities. Career-wise, this expedition taught her to step up to any task handed to her, even when it was tough, because everyone has an important role when all are working toward a common goal. "On a personal note, this cruise allowed me to step out of my comfort zone and experience a different discipline in marine science," said Sablan. "I felt I really grew not only as a scientist during this expedition, but as a person."

The Council is proud of Sablan's academic endeavors and congratulates her for being selected for this rare opportunity. 🐟



Left: Sablan processing biological and geological samples from the ocean floor in the lab. Right: Sablan (third from right) was joined on the research cruise by students from the University of Nevada Las Vegas, Rhode Island and Louisiana. Observations from the ROV Hercules (in the background) will be used to better understand deep water coral and sponge communities. All photos: Leilani Sablan.





## Follow the bills that impact your fisheries at [www.congress.gov](http://www.congress.gov).

Fisheries lost a champion in Congress with the passing of Representative Don Young (R-AK), who was an original author of the House version of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and

Management Act (MSA). Young often noted that the MSA should have been called the “Young-Studds Act” after himself and Representative Gerry Studds (D-MA), who drafted the nuts and bolts of the bill. Due to his passing, Representative Jared Huffman (D-CA) has paused further committee consideration of MSA reauthorization legislation until his replacement is elected to ensure that the voices of his constituents are represented.

One piece of legislation that Representative Young pushed over the past few years is the American Fisheries Advisory Committee Act (H.R. 3128). The Senate version of the bill, S. 497, was passed by Representative Young’s Senate counterpart, Senator Dan Sullivan (R-AK) and signed into law by President Biden May 12, 2022. This bill directs the Department of Commerce to establish an American Fisheries Advisory Committee to provide advice to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) on a program that awards grants for fisheries research and development projects. The Committee would identify the needs of the fishing community, develop requests for proposals for the grant program and review grant applications. In this legislation, Hawai’i, American Samoa, Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands would be included in Region 1 with Alaska. Each area would have representation by three members, with one each having experience in the following: seafood harvesting/processing, recreational or commercial fishing, and fisheries science or fishery management council representation. At-large representation will include a representative from food distribution/marketing, recreational fishing industry supply chain, commercial fishing supply chain and an NMFS employee. This is an opportunity for regional representation at a national level that the fishing community should prepare for in the coming year.

Another bill that passed the House, H.R. 4521, the United States Innovation and Competition Act, and has also passed the Senate and is now in conference

over a potential amendment. This bill is a 2,326-page conglomeration of multiple purposes, including U.S. technology and communications, foreign relations, national security, domestic manufacturing, education, trade, etc. Notably, the bill provides a provision for shark fin sales elimination. Section 2518 (on page 461 of the bill) states that “no person shall possess, transport, offer for sale, sell, or purchase



*Rep. Don Young*

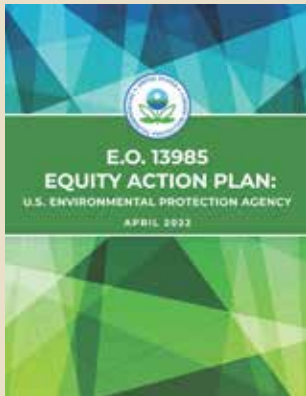
shark fins or products containing shark fins” and violations may face up to a \$100,000 fine. Shark fins, however, may be taken under state, territorial or federal license or permits to take or land sharks. The fins can either destroyed, used for noncommercial subsistence purposes, or used for display or

research (under permits). This measure has been pushed in the House and Senate through individual bills, but looks to be going to the president for signature as part of this larger bill in the near future.

There is still a push for a comprehensive aquaculture bill known as the AQUAA Act (H.R. 6504 and S. 3100). Proponents of the bill have recently been to the capitol to drum up support for the bill that would establish a regulatory process for commercial aquaculture development in the U.S. exclusive economic zone (3-200 nautical miles from shore). The Secretary of Commerce would be required to develop a process, publish rules for developing aquaculture management plans and consult with interested federal agencies and stakeholders in plan development. The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council is in the process of developing an offshore aquaculture management framework for the region and it is unknown what effect the AQUAA Act would have on this, should it be passed. The Council continues to forge its way in hopes of ensuring that whatever form aquaculture management takes, the Council and the fishing communities of the Western Pacific Region are consulted.

Without Representative Young, who will be the fisheries champion of Congress? He left large shoes to fill at a time when MSA reauthorization is long overdue. This last half of the year will likely see changes and activity increase as the election season winds down and the biennial congressional term closes. Stay tuned for further activity in the PIFN Congressional Corner or visit [www.wpcouncil.org](http://www.wpcouncil.org)

# Progress on President Biden Executive Orders—How Key Departments and Agencies are Building Momentum



**Objective 2.1:** Promote Environmental Justice and Civil Rights at the Federal, Tribal, State, and Local Levels

**Objective 2.2:** Embed Environmental Justice and Civil Rights into EPA's Programs, Policies, and Activities

**Objective 2.3:** Strengthen Civil Rights Enforcement in Communities with Environmental Justice Concerns

**Priority Action #1:** Develop a comprehensive framework for considering cumulative impacts in relevant EPA decisions and operationalize that framework in EPA's programs and activities.

**Priority Action #2:** Build the capacity of underserved communities to provide their experience to EPA and implement community-led projects.

**Priority Action #3:** Develop EPA's internal capacity to engage underserved communities and implement clear and accountable processes to act based on communities' input.

**Priority Action #4:** Strengthen EPA's external civil rights compliance program and ensure that civil rights compliance is an agency-wide responsibility.

**Priority Action #5:** Integrate community science into EPA's research and program implementation.

**Priority Action #6:** Make EPA's procurement and contracting more equitable.

Last year, President Biden signed several executive orders directing the executive branch of the federal government, its departments and offices to address equity and environmental justice (EJ) through a whole-of-government approach. Our winter 2022 *Pacific Islands Fishery News* article, "Lack of diversity is the enemy of success" – Secretary of Commerce, Gina Raimondo," shared Department of Commerce efforts. Here, we look at how two other key federal agencies are improving in this important topic.

The Department of the Interior (DOI) maintains a blog that details the focus areas of its EJ efforts:

- ✳ *Making America's public lands and waters more accessible and inclusive*
- ✳ *Cleaning up legacy pollution*
- ✳ *Fighting the climate crisis*

The DOI, under the leadership of Secretary Deb Haaland, is increasing equitable access to the outdoors for urban communities, communities of color and indigenous communities through the America the Beautiful initiative. The department is also reviewing and replacing derogatory names for national geographic features.

For offshore wind production, DOI is requiring that companies enhance engagement with Tribes, other ocean users and underserved communities. In a January press release, the department showcased new lease terms that would "hold companies accountable for improving their engagement, communication and transparency with these communities." While most of these leases are active on the mainland, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management has several lease areas in the Pacific Islands. These new DOI requirements can provide pathways for our communities to better shape project outcomes.

Under the DOI, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is the lead federal agency for EJ and provides administrative support for the White House Administration's new Environmental Justice Advisory Council. The agency also administers the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council and has an EJ small grants program. EPA partners with the Department of Justice Office of Civil Rights to adjudicate EJ claims and recently released an Equity Action Plan that carries forward the agency's intent to "break through barriers and advance equity and justice across our efforts to ensure clean water, air, and land for all communities." 🐟

Resources:

[www.doi.gov/blog](http://www.doi.gov/blog)

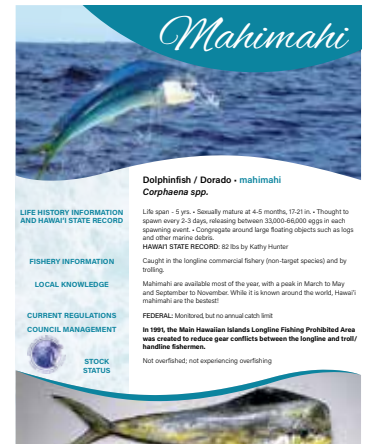
[www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2022-04/epa\\_equityactionplan\\_april2022\\_508.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2022-04/epa_equityactionplan_april2022_508.pdf)



# New Outreach Resources



Thirteen Hawai'i fish fact sheets are now available to download and print at [www.wpcouncil.org/fisheries101](http://www.wpcouncil.org/fisheries101), including 'ahi, ehu, gindai, Kona crab, mahimahi, monchong, onaga, ono, 'ōpakapaka, skipjack tuna, striped marlin, swordfish and uku. Each double-sided sheet features a species managed under the Council's Hawai'i Fishery Ecosystem Plan, and includes life history and fishery information, current regulations, management and stock status, and a delicious recipe to enjoy. 🐟



# Council Family Updates

**At the 190th meeting**, the Council appointed the following officers for 2022:

- \* **Taotasi Archie Soliai**, chair.
- \* **William Sword**, vice chair, American Samoa.
- \* **John Gourley**, vice chair, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.
- \* **Manuel Dueñas**, vice chair, Guam.
- \* **Roger Dang**, vice chair, Hawai'i.

**Also at the 190th meeting**, the Council supported the following advisory body changes:

- \* **Ian Bertram**, Fisheries, Aquaculture and Marine Ecosystems of the Pacific Communities, on the Archipelagic Plan Team.
- \* **Anthony Cabrera Guerrero**, Circle Hook Catches, on the Fishing Industry Advisory Committee (FIAC).
- \* **Timothy Perez**, Coral Reef Marine Center, on the FIAC.
- \* **Jenny Suter**, NOAA Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center, on the Archipelagic and Pelagic Plan Teams and the Fishery Data Collection and Research Committee—Technical Committee.



**Matthew Seeley** joined the Council staff in March 2022 as its ecosystem nearshore and offshore fishery specialist. Seeley brings five years of Council experience to the Western Pacific, as he most recently was employed as a fishery management specialist with the

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council. His primary duties include the staff lead for all efforts tied to the Archipelagic Plan Team, habitat, climate change, ecosystem-based fishery management and the Pacific Remote Island Areas. A native of Massachusetts, Seeley holds a master's degree in marine science from the University of Texas at Austin and a bachelor's degree in natural resources conservation from the University of Massachusetts Amherst.



**Pauline Gebauer** joined the Council staff in April 2022 as its financial officer. Gebauer brings with her three years of governmental accounting background from working at the Lyndon B. Johnson Tropical Medical Center in American Samoa as chief financial

officer. Additionally, Gebauer has worked more than 15 years in the healthcare industry, primarily for Kaiser Permanente in Northern California, where she learned to benchmark key performance indicators, to improve an organization's throughput. Her primary responsibilities for the Council will be managing financial/record-keeping systems and cooperative agreements and awards. A local born Polynesian bilingual in Samoan and English, Gebauer holds a bachelor's degree in accounting from DeVry University, Pomona, CA.



American Samoa scholarship recipients Fuamai Tago (left) and Alphina Liusamoa (right) with Henry Sesepasara in 2019.

Two recent graduates in the Council's U.S. Pacific Territories Fisheries Capacity-Building Scholarship Program from American Samoa were hired April 11, 2022, at the Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources (DMWR). Scholarship recipients commit to working a year at their local fishery management agency for every year of funding they receive for college.

**Alphina Liusamoa** was hired as a wildlife biologist. Her principal responsibility will be to lead wildlife research and conservation projects on marine turtles and other species. Duties will include survey protocol design, field work, wildlife capture and tagging, logistical planning, data analysis, and grant writing and reporting.

**Fuamai Tago** was hired in the DMWR Coral Reef Advisory Group as a coral reef ecologist with fish emphasis. Her main responsibility will be to handle all aspects of fish monitoring, including methods, collecting and analyzing data, and report writing. 🐟



# Hawai'i Fisherman Clayward Tam Chosen as Pacific Representative on NOAA Advisory Committee



The NOAA Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee (MAFAC) advises the Secretary of Commerce on all living marine resource matters that are the responsibility of the Department of Commerce. Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo recently appointed seven new members for a three-year term, including Council Advisory Panel Chair Clayward Tam,

lifelong fisherman from Hawai'i and director of cooperative fisheries research for the non-profit Pacific Islands Fisheries Group. Tam is a passionate advocate for sustainable fisheries and works closely with local agencies on cooperative fisheries research projects and supports fishing community education and outreach.

The first full in-person MAFAC meeting in two years was held May 10-12, 2022, in San Juan, Puerto Rico. The primary meeting goals were to introduce the seven new appointees to MAFAC, learn about NOAA's priorities from Assistant Administrator for Fisheries Janet Coit, and review and finalize a report from MAFAC's Recreational Electronic Reporting Task Force.

In three days of meetings, members heard presentations and discussions on aquaculture development; the NOAA

Climate, Fisheries and Ecosystems Initiative; habitat conservation initiatives; and a report on the recent National Saltwater Recreational Summit. MAFAC committee members were tasked with providing feedback on NOAA strategies, specifically on workforce development and coastal communities.

A large portion of the meeting focused on discussing the National Seafood Strategy goals:

1. **Wild-capture fisheries** - optimize sustainable production of U.S. wild-capture seafood.
2. **Aquaculture** - increase domestic aquaculture production and establish the United States as a global leader in sustainable aquaculture.
3. **International trade** - promote fair, reciprocal and sustainable seafood trade.
4. **Seafood promotion, infrastructure, and workforce development** - strengthen the entire seafood sector through collaborative marketing, infrastructure modernization and workforce development.

Tam notes that he will be working with representatives/committee members from across the nation representing various industries and fishing sectors, and that he looks forward to the challenge of representing the Western Pacific Region and its diverse and unique fisheries. 🐟



## In Memoriam: High Talking Chief Va'amua Henry Sesepasara



On April 11, 2022, the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council lost one of its longest-serving members. HTC Va'amua Henry Sesepasara was born March 13, 1947. He attended American Samoa High School before leaving home to obtain a bachelor degree in biology from Harris Truman University in Missouri (and later a master degree in education from San Diego State University). Upon returning home, Va'amua taught at Samoana High School before joining the Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources (DMWR). In 1976, he took the helm as the department's director and worked hard to support fisheries development. He joined the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council in 1978 as the DMWR representative and served 1978-1984, 1989-1992 and 2017-2020.

Va'amua also served as American Samoa's coastal zone manager and executive director of the Developmental Disability Council. Eventually he took the mantle of legislator, becoming the Fono's representative to his Pago Pago District 9 from 2008 to 2014. As a Fono member, Va'amua continued to advocate for fishermen's rights and support the Council's work. He was active in his church, the Assembly of God of Pago Pago, working closely with the youth and coordinating many church functions. He was an avid fisherman and sportsman, serving as the Charter President of the Pago Pago Alia Fishing Association. In addition to his love for fishing, Va'amua was Captain of the Aeto Fautasi (longboat) Team, one of the winningest captains of all time. He is survived by his wife, Margaret, their 5 children and 18 grandchildren. 🐟



# Recipe: Pressed Spicy 'Ahi Sushi Squares

MAKES 8-10 SERVINGS

## INGREDIENTS

4 tbsp mayonnaise  
2 tsp sriracha chili sauce  
1 tsp hot sesame oil  
½ tsp togarashi seasoning  
1 lb 'ahi, diced  
1 tbsp tobiko (*brightly colored flying fish roe*)  
5 cups rice (*short- or medium-grain "Japanese style" rice*)  
1½ cups vinegar  
¾ cups sugar  
1½ tsp salt  
Black sesame seeds, wasabi sprouts, roasted nori strips, hana ebi (shrimp powder), or additional tobiko for garnish

## DIRECTIONS

1. In a large bowl, mix together mayonnaise, sriracha, sesame oil and togarashi until smooth. Fold in 'ahi and tobiko. Mix until blended. Cover and refrigerate.
2. Cook 5 cups of rice. Let rest 5 to 10 minutes after completely cooked.
3. In a small bowl, combine vinegar, sugar, and salt. Stir until sugar dissolves.
4. Place hot cooked rice in a roomy wooden bowl. Pour vinegar mixture on top. Using a rice paddle and a vertical chopping motion, lift and mix rice to coat every grain with the seasoning liquid. Do not stir in a circular motion; fold lightly, lifting and turning, until all liquids are absorbed.
5. Lightly oil a 9x13-inch pan and pat half of the seasoned rice into the pan. Evenly spread the spicy 'ahi on top. Cover with remaining sushi rice and press gently. Cover tightly with plastic wrap and chill until needed.
6. Cut into small squares and garnish with black sesame seeds, wasabi sprouts, roasted nori strips, hana ebi, or additional tobiko.



Recipe and Photo Courtesy  
Kapi'olani Community College  
Culinary Arts Department



# 2022 Council Calendar

*Unless noted as hybrid, the meetings will be held by web conference only. Some meetings will be in a hybrid format, with in-person and remote participation options available for members, and public attendance limited to web conference.*

## JUNE

- 6**  
Fishing Industry Advisory Committee meeting
- 7**  
American Samoa Archipelago Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP) Advisory Panel (AP) meeting
- 7-9**  
Capitol Hill Ocean Week 2022, Washington, DC\*
- 8**  
Non-Commercial Fishing Advisory Committee meeting
- 9**  
Mariana Archipelago FEP-Guam AP meeting (ChST)
- 10**  
Mariana Archipelago FEP-Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands AP meeting (ChST)
- 10**  
Hawai'i Archipelago FEP AP meeting
- 13**  
Pelagic and International Standing Committee meeting (hybrid)
- 14-16**  
144th Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) meeting (hybrid)

## 15-16

Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) Intersessional Work on Labour Standards for Crews on Fishing Vessels\*

## 16

Fishery Data Collection and Research Committee meeting (hybrid)

## 17

Hawai'i Regional Ecosystem Advisory Committee

## 20

Executive and Budget Standing Committee meeting (hybrid)

## 21-23

191st Council meeting (hybrid)

## 27-July 1

United Nations Ocean Conference, Lisbon, Portugal\*

## JULY

## 10-13

National Marine Educators Association Conference, Hempstead, NY\*

## 13-18

International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species Plenary meeting, Kona, HI\*

## AUGUST

## 4-5

Scientific Advisory Subcommittee and General Advisory Committee meeting\*

## 10-18

WCPFC Science Committee meeting\*

## 15-26

Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC): Annual Meeting of the IATTC and Agreement on the International Dolphin Conservation Program, La Jolla, CA\*

## 15-17

National Scientific Coordination Subcommittee meeting, Sitka, AK\*

## 19-23

WCPFC Science-Management Dialogue\*

## 21-25

American Fisheries Society meeting, Spokane, WA\*

## SEPTEMBER

## 5-9

35th Session of the United Nations Committee on Fisheries, Rome, Italy\*

## 6-9

4th NOAA Workshop on Leveraging Artificial Intelligence in Environmental Sciences\*

## 12-16

2022 NOAA Environmental Data Management Workshop\*

## 13-15

145th SSC meeting

## 20-22

192nd Council meeting

## 21-28

WCPFC 18th Regular Session of the Technical and Compliance Committee, Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia\*

*\*Meetings not hosted by the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council.*

# Upcoming Events



facebook.com/wpcouncil



@wpcouncil



youtube.com/wpcouncil



@wp\_council

*The SSC and Council meetings will be held in a hybrid format, with in-person and remote participation options available for members, and public attendance limited to web conference (Webex).*

**The 144th Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) meeting** will be held June 14-16, 2022. Direct link to the meeting: <https://tinyurl.com/144SSCMtg>.

**Major agenda items include:**

Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA) National Standard 2-related issues; CNMI bottomfish data analysis; Equity and environmental justice (EEJ) updates; 2021 annual Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) reports; Draft bottomfish biological opinion review; False killer whale interaction and depredation analysis; May 2022 Council Coordination Committee (CCC) meeting outcomes; and Preparations for international fishery management meetings.

**The 191st meeting of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council** will convene June 21-23, 2022. Direct link to the meeting: <https://tinyurl.com/191CouncilMtg>.

**Major agenda items include:**

2023 Territory bigeye specifications (action item); Proposed Northwestern Hawaiian Islands fishing regulations (action item); False killer whale interaction and depredation analysis; Endangered Species Act consultations update; Draft bottomfish biological opinion review; May 2022 CCC meeting outcomes; MSA National Standard 2-related issues; 2021 SAFE reports; and EEJ updates.

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## Summary of Action Items at the June 2022 Council Meeting

The Council will consider and may take action on the issues summarized as follows.

### Proposed Fishing Regulations for the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (Initial Action)

In 2000, the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI) Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve was designated by President Clinton through Executive Orders (EO) 13178 and 13196. Included in these EOs is a provision for the Secretary of Commerce to initiate the process to designate the reserve as a national marine sanctuary (NMS). This process began in 2000 and was subsequently halted in 2006 when President Bush, through the Antiquities Act, designated the NWHI (0-50 nautical miles) as a marine national monument.

In 2016, President Obama expanded the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument from 0-50 to 0-200 nm, and directed the Secretary of Commerce to consider initiating a process under the National Marine Sanctuaries Act to designate the monument as a NMS to supplement and complement existing authorities. In 2020, as part of the \$1.4 trillion omnibus spending bill, Senator Schatz added a provision that directed NOAA to commence the process to designate the monument as a NMS.

As part of the NMS designation process, section 304(a)(5) requires the appropriate fishery management council be given the opportunity to prepare draft regulations for fishing within the U.S. exclusive economic zone. NOAA has identified that proposed fishing management actions are necessary, and provided the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council with a package of materials intended to help the Council make a determination of what would best fulfill the NMS goals and objectives. At its March 2022 meeting, the Council agreed to develop fishing regulations for the proposed NWHI NMS and directed staff to respond to the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) 304(a)(5) package request with preliminarily preferred options for permitting

and reporting requirements for commercial (outside current monument boundaries), non-commercial, Native Hawaiian practices and research fishing in the sanctuary boundaries. These recommendations were provided to the ONMS for its consideration.

The Council further directed staff to develop an amendment to the Hawai'i Archipelago Fishery Ecosystem Plan to analyze these fishing alternatives to be developed in parallel to the NMS fishing regulations. In order for the recommended fishing sanctuary regulations to be implemented, the Council will need to develop complementary Magnuson-Stevens Act regulations for fisheries in the NWHI. The Council will consider initial action on a regulatory amendment looking at various alternatives for commercial and non-commercial fishing.

### 2023 U.S. Territorial Bigeye Tuna Catch/Effort Limit and Allocation Specifications (Final Action)

In 2019, the Council's specifications limited each U.S. Participating Territory's bigeye longline catch to 2,000 metric tons (mt) and its allocation limit with U.S.-flagged vessels to up to 1,000 mt. However, only two agreements were made with U.S.-flagged vessels and the fishery closed before the end of the fishing season on Dec. 28, 2019, during a period in which availability of fresh tuna has cultural significance. For fishing years 2020, 2021 and 2022, the Council took action at its March 2020, June 2020 and June 2021 meetings to specify territorial bigeye longline catch limits up to 2,000 mt for each territory and allocation transfer limits up to 1,500 mt per territory, with total allocations from all U.S. Participating Territories not to exceed 3,000 mt. Under the 2020 and 2021 specifications, U.S.-flagged vessels operated through the entire fishing year. The final rule for the 2022 specification was issued in December 2021. The Council will consider taking final action on the specification of the 2023 U.S. territorial bigeye longline limits for American Samoa, Guam and the CNMI. 🐟