



196th Meeting of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council

September 18-20, 2023

Regional Communications & Outreach Report

This report summarizes regional communications and outreach efforts conducted by the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council from approximately June 2023 through the end of August 2023.

Publications

Pacific Islands Fishery News

The summer issue of the Council's quarterly newsletter was distributed in September 2023 primarily through the Constant Contact email list with ~3,400 subscribers. Less than 100 hard copies will be direct mailed. A few hundred hard copies are being distributed through local agencies, fishermen and other community members throughout the regions. This issue highlights discussions at the June Council meeting in American Samoa on the proposed national marine sanctuary in the Pacific Remote Islands, public hearings on proposed green sea turtle critical habitat in the Western Pacific Region, highlights from the 2022 Annual Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) reports, and enhancing coastal safety with wave buoys in American Samoa, among others (www.wpcouncil.org/wp-council-newsletters).

Western Pacific Region Status of the Fisheries 2022

The Council's *Western Pacific Region Status of the Fisheries 2022* report was released in late August. The publication highlights some of the changes in the U.S. Pacific Island fisheries from 2020 to 2022. Fishery statistics can be affected by numerous variables, including environmental changes and socioeconomic variables. In recent years, the impacts and subsequent recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic also affected fisheries in multiple ways. Some of these effects are described, in addition to recent stock statuses and management measures.

Find the *Status of the Fisheries* and full reports at www.wpcouncil.org/annual-reports. To access the data used to generate the reports, go to www.wpcouncildata.org.

US Pacific Territories Fishery Capacity-Building Scholarship Update

The 2023-24 scholarship recipients were chosen: Christine Tominiko (American Samoa) who is pursuing a master of science (BS) degree in Tropical Conservation Biology and Environmental Science at the University of Hawai'i (UH) at Hilo; and Motusaga Vaeoso (American Samoa) who is pursuing a MS degree in biology at the University of Guam (UOG).

The scholarships are offered to college students with close connections to American Samoa, Guam and the CNMI who are pursuing degrees that will bolster the Territories' capacity to manage their fishery ecosystems. Students who accept a scholarship agree to work with their

local fishery management agency upon graduation for an equivalent amount of time that they receive the scholarship.

Scholarship recipient Jude Lizama (CNMI) graduated from UOG in May with a BS in biology and will start as a Fisheries Data Analyst at the CNMI Division of Fish & Wildlife in November 2023.

Media

In this reporting time period (June 1, 2023 - August 31, 2023), the Council published four press releases; two on the Scientific and Statistical Committee meeting, two on the 195th Council meeting.

The Council received a media request from *Honolulu Civil Beat* regarding its response to EO 13985 related to advancing racial equality in the federal government, and another request from *Civil Beat* regarding Congressman Ed Case's letter on the repayment of federal funds, resulting in this article:

www.civilbeat.org/2023/08/congressmen-are-still-waiting-for-answers-on-wespacs-misspent-federal-money

Correspondingly, from June 1, 2023 to August 31, 2023, there were 38 instances when news outlets either picked up Council press releases or mentioned the Council.

Social Media

Data from June 1, 2023 to August 31, 2023:

- The Council Facebook account has ~1,100 page likes (+100*), and Council staff scheduled 48 posts that reached 13,700 people (+97%),** with 24,443 impressions (+81%)***. The number of post engagements was 543 (+25%), along with 408 page clicks (+60%) and 5 new fans.
[Note: the Council paid for an ad through Facebook to boost the scholarship announcement, which increased the paid reach and impressions substantially.]
- The Council Instagram account has 159 followers (+12); 35 posts reached 10,100 people (+589%), with ~6,400 impressions (+693%).
- The Council Twitter account has 544 followers (+3) and Council staff uploaded 22 tweets.
- The Council LinkedIn account has 161 followers (+12), with 36 posts and 1,300 impressions (+10%).

**Numbers in parenthesis denote the changes since the previous 3-month time frame.*

***Reach refers to the number of unique accounts that saw any posts or stories at least once.*

****Impressions track the number of times content is shown to users on the platform. In other words, an impression is counted when someone scrolls down his/her feed and passes your post.*

Fishers Forum in American Samoa

As part of its 195th meeting held in Tutuila, American Samoa, the Council hosted a public Fishers Forum June 27, 2023. The Forum focused on different effects of climate change on the territory. The Rex Lee Auditorium was bustling with nearly 80 attendees interacting with 12 exhibitors from various government agencies and organizations sharing information and initiatives in progress related to the theme. For example, the American Samoa Department of



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Commerce gave a status update its Super Alia Project, which focuses on providing training and education to the local fishermen on sustainable fishing practices and business management. In addition, the Council had a hands-on demonstration on ocean acidification due to increased carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, and its disruption to food webs.

Council Vice Chair for American Samoa Taulapapa Will Sword opened and emceed the event, setting the stage for an evening filled with informative presentations and discussions. National Marine Fisheries Service Assistant Administrator Janet Coit described steps the agency is taking to address challenges to coastal communities. The Council presented on climate change impacts on tuna fisheries near American Samoa, showing predictions based on various greenhouse gas emission scenarios and physiological impacts on tuna growth and development due to ocean acidification. University of Hawai'i PhD student Carla Baizeau introduced a sea-level rise viewer¹ via web conference, providing participants with a visual representation of the potential consequences of rising sea levels on the local coastline.

Community outreach for this event included a banner, flier distribution, and radio and social media advertisements. Many of the participants were reached by word of mouth from our local sponsors and supporting departments and agencies. Local newspapers covered the event and it was also posted on the Council's website. Items generously donated by sponsors, along with items from the Council to acknowledge participation, were raffled off to attendees.

¹<https://pi-casc.soest.hawaii.edu/research/research-projects/slr-viewer-american-samoa>

Regional Initiatives – Hawai'i

Council staff supported the Po'aiapuni Ola Mau Fishing Tournament held June 15-17, 2023, at the Maunalua Bay Beach Park. Poseidon Fisheries Research and Napu'uomalei organized this free tournament primarily to support fish life history research by taking biological samples from the fish caught. Prizes also went to fishers who collected the most data for their released catch, most invasive species caught, and fish caught with barbless hooks, among others. More than 40 shorecasters and boat fishers participated, ranging from keiki to adults. Fishers earned their free entry by participating in a Maunalua Bay beach cleanup June 3, 2023.

Outreach materials at the Council's table included information about the Hawai'i Advisory Panel, recipes for federally managed species and the Council's quarterly newsletters.

Regional Initiatives – Guam

Council staff supported the Guam Division of Aquatic and Wildlife Resources Kids Fishing Derby at Ypao Beach Park Aug. 5, 2023. 44 young anglers reeled in i'e (juvenile jacks), needlefish and more. In addition, the event had a bycatch category of non-target species that helped teach the young participants about conservation and responsible fishing practices. All non-target fish caught were released.

The Council's outreach table displayed educational handouts and an interactive science activity which highlighted one of the impacts of climate change on fish through ocean acidification. The Council also provided recognition items for the event place holders.