



202nd Meeting of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council
March 25-27, 2025

Education and Outreach Report

This report summarizes regional education and outreach efforts by the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council from mid-December 2024 through the end of February 2025.

Publications

Pacific Islands Fishery News

The winter 2025 issue of the Council's quarterly newsletter (www.wpcouncil.org/wp-council-newsletters) was distributed in early March 2025 primarily through the Constant Contact email list with ~3,600 subscribers. Less than 100 hard copies are directly mailed. A few hundred hard copies of each are distributed through local agencies, fishermen and other community members throughout the island areas, including at the community consultation meetings in the CNMI and Guam held in late February-early March 2025. A few topics are listed below.

Winter 2025

- Potential opportunities the Council has to align with the new White House administration's stated goals, such as expanding economic opportunities in fisheries, addressing national marine sanctuaries and marine monuments, strengthening international agreements and enforcement, and enhancing fisheries data collection
- Integrating traditional fishermen's knowledge into annual fishery reports
- Importance of fishing community, federal and state partnerships to improve the Hawai'i uku catch estimate
- Fishery capacity-building efforts in the CNMI through Tasi to Table workshops for high school students and an all-women's bottomfish workshop led by Lino Tenorio

Public Involvement and Outreach for Sustainable Fisheries in the Western Pacific Region

The Council released the latest installment in its *Pacific Islands Fishery Monographs* series in December 2024—*Public Involvement and Outreach for Sustainable Fisheries in the Western Pacific Region*. Co-authored by former Communications Director Sylvia Spalding and current Education and Outreach Coordinator Amy Vandehey, this monograph provides an overview of the Council's implementation of its *Public Involvement and Outreach Plan* over the past quarter-century, with representative examples. It examines the political, technological and environmental factors that shaped outreach efforts, summarizes findings from surveys and focus groups assessing their effectiveness, and offers insights for future engagement. Find it online at: www.wpcouncil.org/educational-resources/educationlibrary.

Islands Business

The Council submitted an "advertorial" to this monthly magazine for the December issue titled, "Fish Are Food: Embracing Sustainable Fishing in Pacific Island Fisheries." The article covered

the importance of fish in the Pacific Islands as food, to culture, to the economy and overall stability of the Western Pacific region.

Lawai‘a

The Council submitted an article in December to this quarterly magazine on the Council’s 2025 Hawaiian lunar calendar. The article emphasized the value of fisher observations in adding context and traditional ecological knowledge to fisheries-dependent data in the Council’s Annual Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) Reports.

Media

In this reporting time period, the Council published five press releases; two on the December Scientific and Statistical Committee meeting, two on the 201st Council meeting, and one on the community consultation meetings in the Mariana Islands (www.wpcouncil.org/press-releases). Releases were picked up by *Saving Seafood*, *Samoa News*, *Guam Daily Post*, *Atuna*, *Marianas Variety*, *Islands Business* and *Atuna*.

In December, reporter Walter Ulloa from the Guam Daily Post contacted the Council regarding Guam’s bottomfish rebuilding plan. He published an article Dec. 19, 2024, titled, “Community support sought for managing sustainable fisheries.”

(www.postguam.com/news/local/community-support-sought-for-managing-sustainable-fisheries/article_c97555be-bdd0-11ef-8a0c-33312d193878.html)

Region-Wide Outreach

The Council has updated and relaunched its **Speakers Bureau program** on its website. It offers a valuable resource to educators and community groups, connecting them with experts who can share their knowledge on the ecological and cultural importance of Pacific nearshore and offshore ecosystems. Our diverse group of Council-affiliated speakers includes commercial and recreational fishermen, fisheries scientists and managers, indigenous practitioners, and others involved in state/territorial and federal fisheries.

Originally launched in Hawai‘i, the Speakers Bureau is expanding to encompass American Samoa, Guam and the CNMI. Many of the expert presenters are available for virtual sessions, allowing them to connect with and engage audiences beyond their home islands, extending the reach of this resource across the Pacific.

For more information on the Speakers Bureau or to schedule a talk, visit www.wpcouncil.org/educational-resources/speakers-bureau (or <https://tinyurl.com/CouncilSpeakersBureau>).

January 2025 - The Pacific Islands Fisheries Group (PIFG) and the Council hosted three meetings for fishers in Hawai‘i, American Samoa and the Mariana Islands to capture their 2024 on-the-water observations. The goal was to incorporate empirical and traditional knowledge from active fishermen into the Council’s Annual SAFE Reports. Observations included changes to the physical environment (e.g., weather, sea conditions, water temperature), markets, fishery stocks

(e.g., species abundance, sizes, predation), unusual events and species cycles (i.e., juvenile recruitment).

Common observations across all areas included a high catch of small marlin, increased shark depredation, shifting spawning seasons and higher water temperatures. Fishers noted that the expected runs of different species occurred outside their usual seasons, emphasizing environmental changes.

Late February-early March 2025: The Council and PIFG organized three community meetings in the CNMI (Saipan, Tinian and Rota) and two meetings in Guam (Malesso' and Dededo) to participate in discussions aimed at strengthening fishery management and community involvement. These meetings brought together federal fishery managers, industry leaders, researchers and local fishers to share insights and tackle challenges related to sustainable fishing.

Key topics of discussion:

- The role of community input in future fishery management decisions
- Open discussions on local community impacts and challenges
- Updates on federal fishing regulations, policies and support programs

The Council and PIFG publicized the meetings through newspaper ads, a press release, the Council email list and social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram), and WhatsApp fishermen groups.

Regional Initiatives – Guam

Jan. 9, 2025: Council staff organized a Speakers Bureau event at Jose Rios Middle School together with the Guam Department of Education's Sylvia Calvo. More than 150 eighth-grade students, teachers, aides and Vice Principal John Castro attended presentations by Audrey Toves, a Non-Commercial Fisheries Advisory Committee member and the region's only female boat captain, along with her son Izzik Cabrera; Department of Aquatic and Wildlife Resources (DAWR) Biologist Brent Tibbatts; and Council staff. Each attendee received the Council's 2025 lunar calendar for the Mariana Islands.

Toves captivated students by showcasing the fishing gear she uses on her charter trips and explained how she uses lunar cycles, tide charts and ocean currents to determine the best fishing times. Tibbatts outlined the academic requirements for careers at DAWR and highlighted the University of Guam's Marine Lab as a strong pathway for aspiring marine scientists. He also described how fishermen use environmental cues to determine the proper gear to catch seasonal fish like *ti'ao* (juvenile goatfish), *i'e* (juvenile jack) and *mañahak* (juvenile rabbitfish), as well as the best times for wahoo, tuna and mahimahi runs.

Jan. 18, 2025: The University of Guam Center for Island Sustainability and Sea Grant organized its inaugural Fish Fest at the Chamorro Village, bringing together scientists, local fishers and community members in a celebration of Guam's marine heritage and sustainable fishing practices. Council scholarship recipient Leilani Sablan Naden, project lead for *Guihan for Guahan*, helped to organize the half-day event which had ~20 booths and ~100 participants.

Council staff supported the effort with outreach materials including lunar calendars, Fishermen Code of Conduct post cards, Council process booklets and a Spin the Wheel game.

Regional Initiative – CNMI

Jan. 14, 2025: Council staff supported the Marianas Fishing Community Engagement Meeting organized by NMFS PIFSC at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Saipan with an outreach table sharing newsletters, educational handouts and lunar calendars with tide charts.