

**National Marine Fisheries Service
Pacific Islands Regional Office**

**REPORT TO THE 203rd
WESTERN PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL MEETING**

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Pacific Islands Regional Office (PIRO) is responsible for assisting the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) in the development of fishery management plans and amendments, initiating Federal fishing regulations, issuing Federal fishing permits, and monitoring fisheries. Other major responsibilities include the conservation and recovery of protected species, conservation and restoration of marine habitats, including the Pacific marine national monuments, and coordination with international organizations to implement fishery agreements and treaties. The following information is provided to update the Council on NMFS activities since the 202nd Council meeting.

SPOTLIGHT**Proclamation - *Unleashing American Commercial Fishing in the Pacific***

On April 17, 2025, President Trump issued the [Presidential Proclamation 10918](#), which amended Proclamation 9173 of September 25, 2014, to remove the commercial fishing prohibition in the areas 50-200 nautical miles from shore in the Pacific Islands Heritage Marine National Monument and the Monument Expansion. Proclamation 10918 became effective upon issuance on April 17, 2025, so Federal regulations implementing Proclamation 9173's commercial fishing prohibition are no longer in effect between 50-200 nautical miles around Wake Island, Johnston Atoll, and Jarvis Island.

Within one week of the Proclamation's issuance, NMFS informed permit holders on April 25, 2025 that commercial fishing is no longer prohibited in these areas. Specifically, commercial fishing may be conducted seaward of 50 nautical miles around Wake Island, Johnston Atoll, and Jarvis Island to the full extent of the 200-nautical mile U.S. exclusive economic zone, to the extent authorized under applicable Federal regulations implementing the Fishery Ecosystem Plan for Western Pelagic Fisheries ([50 CFR 665 Subpart F](#)), the Fishery Ecosystem Plan for the Pacific Remote Island Areas ([50 CFR 665 Subpart E](#)), and International Fishing Regulations set forth in [50 CFR Part 300](#). NMFS is working to expeditiously initiate rulemaking to bring fishing regulations into compliance with the amended terms of Proclamation 9173.

PIRO ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES

Since the March 2025 Council meeting, PIRO's workforce has been substantially affected by staffing departures. As NMFS works to focus our efforts on restoring American seafood competitiveness, we are working to streamline, innovate, and apply our available resources where they can make the greatest impact. During this time, some services will be impacted; however, our commitment to America's fishermen, seafood, and economic resilience remains strong.

Below are new points of contact for PIRO portfolio areas:

- Essential fish habitat consultations, please contact Dawn Golden, Assistant Regional Administrator for Protected Resources (Dawn.Golden@noaa.gov);
- PIRO's coral program and state and territorial fisheries liaisons, please contact Jarad Makaiau, Assistant Regional Administrator for Sustainable Fisheries (Jarad.Makaiau@noaa.gov); and
- Marine National Monuments, please contact Stephanie Bennett, Directorate Division Chief (Stephanie.Bennett@noaa.gov).

RULEMAKING

No rulemaking updates to report since the last Council Meeting.

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Habitat Conservation

In the last three months, NMFS has completed 22 individual essential fish habitat (EFH) consultations, as well as 12 EFH consultations reviewed using multiple programmatic consultations. The individual consultations included, but are not limited to: the Secretariat of the Pacific Community conducting tuna tagging focused on bigeye tuna in the equatorial central Pacific, Wake Atoll Mapping Cruise, Ke'ehi Small Boat Harbor floating dock replacement, modernization of telecommunications cables, Majano anemone eradication at Ford Island, Pololū Trail Restoration, 2025 Midway Atoll Henderson Airfield Seawall Repairs, Office of National Marine Sanctuaries Charter Cruises, Oscar Elton Sette 2025 Cruise, Kanahā Pond Wildlife Sanctuary Restoration, Lahaina Harbor Repairs, Managaha Island Wastewater Treatment Plant National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System re-issuance, Maui Hana Highway Rockfall Protection/Slope Stabilization, LIMU Ark Project at Ānuenue Fisheries facility, Kaua'i Sea Farms' Fishpond Market Value Project, Traffic Signal Modernization Projects at various locations around Maui and O'ahu.

International Fisheries

On April 25, 2025, PIRO and West Coast Region co-hosted a webinar to gather stakeholder input on management of North Pacific albacore in the eastern and western Pacific. This effort will inform the July 14-15, 2025, WCPFC Northern Committee meeting in Toyama City, Japan. At that meeting, the Northern Committee will discuss modifying aspects of the North Pacific albacore harvest strategy, and this webinar offered an opportunity for stakeholders to provide input on translating fishing intensity into management metrics, extraordinary circumstances, and e-logbook initiatives.

On May 28, 2025, PIRO hosted the mid-year meeting of the Permanent Advisory Committee (PAC) to advise the U.S. Commissioners to the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC). This public meeting was virtual and supported PAC Members in providing advice to the U.S. Commissioners ahead of WCPFC22 (December 2025). This was the last meeting for the current appointed PAC members, whose two year term expires in August 2025. NMFS has received nominations for the next PAC and expects to notify new members in August 2025.

Protected Resources

On November 30, 2023, NMFS published a [new proposed rule to designate critical habitat](#) for five Western Pacific coral species listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in American Sāmoa, Guam, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), the Pacific Remote Island Area (PRIA), and Lalo in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. In January 2024, NMFS conducted a series of public hearings and outreach engagements across the Pacific Islands Territories, including American Samoa, Guam, and CNMI to discuss the new proposal and solicit public comment. A settlement agreement previously required delivery of the final rule to the Federal Register office no later than December 1, 2024; however, the White House's Council on Environmental Quality requested, and was granted, an extension for submission of the final coral critical habitat rule. The new deadline is July 15, 2025.

On July 25, 2024, NMFS published a 12-month finding and proposed rule in response to a 2016 petition to list 10 species of giant clams as threatened or endangered under the ESA throughout their respective ranges ([89 FR 60498](#)). NMFS is proposing to list six species due to their extinction risk (five endangered, one threatened) and an additional four species due to their similarity of appearance hindering enforcement of illegal import/export, which is allowed under ESA section 4(e) in special cases. NMFS held a series of in-person public forums and hearings throughout the Pacific Island territories, including American Sāmoa, CNMI, and Guam. In response to several requests, the public comment period was extended by 120 days and closed on February 19, 2024. NMFS is currently in the process of reviewing the 29,643 comments received in association with this proposed rule.

On October 2, 2024, NMFS received petitions to list 41 Indo-Pacific reef coral species under the ESA, all in the *Acropora* genus, from the Honolulu-based conservation group The Coral Conservancy. NMFS is currently reviewing the petitions and determining whether they present substantial information that indicates the petitioned actions may be warranted. For this process, NMFS is only allowed to consider the information presented within the petition and in NMFS's own files. This decision is due, to the maximum extent practicable, within 90 days of receipt of the petition. NMFS is now working on the 90 day finding.

Sustainable Fisheries

Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness

On April 17, 2025, President Trump issued the [Executive Order 14276](#), which directs the Secretary of Commerce, and the U.S. Trade Representative in coordination with other executive departments to take specific actions to address unfair trade practices, eliminate unsafe imports, level the unfair playing field that has benefited foreign fishing companies, promote ethical sourcing, reduce regulatory burdens, and ensure the integrity of the seafood supply chain. NOAA leadership is now developing an implementation plan to obtain public input, including recommendations from the regional fishery management council, which was presented at the May 2025 Council Coordination Committee.

Supporting Innovation in Pacific Islands Fisheries

NMFS staff continue to participate in national grant programs that foster continuous improvements in the efficient management and sustainability of economically robust U.S. fisheries:

- Bycatch Reduction Engineering Program (BREP): In 2025, BREP will provide \$2.3 million in funding to support applied management projects and activities to reduce bycatch. BREP provides critical funds for investigating problems and developing solutions designed to minimize bycatch of fish and protected species and reduce bycatch mortality. There are four high-priority areas for the Fiscal Year 2025 including researching new technology; encouraging technology adoption; reducing post-release mortality; and conducting international research. The group met virtually May 5-7, 2025 to conduct the annual panel review for determining which 2025 proposals will be recommended for funding. Awards are expected to be announced later this fall. More information on BREP, previously funded projects, and the annual funding opportunity can be found on the BREP [website](#).
- Fisheries Information System (FIS): The FIS program has funded multiple projects annually in the Pacific Islands, focused on priorities such as increasing efficiency by advancing electronic monitoring through cloud technologies, and upgrading electronic reporting and data systems. Funding priorities are identified by the FIS Program Management Team, whose members represent a broad cross-section of state, regional, and Federal partners from regional offices, science centers, and Fisheries Information Networks from all over the country. The FIS Program Management Team conducts a two-stage merit review of applications to identify high-impact projects. Selected projects are funded in partnership with the NMFS National Observer Program's Electronic Technologies program and the National Catch Share Program.

Protected Species Workshops

NMFS continues to provide required annual Protected Species Workshop (PSW) training to the longline fleet. NMFS offers an online PSW recertification training that may be taken two out of every three years, and a live PSW certification course weekly. The live course is offered in-person only on the first Friday of each month, and otherwise runs as a hybrid course. The program trained a total of 328 individuals during 2024. So far during 2025, NMFS has held 17 live workshops (5 in-person only and 12 hybrid) and had 31 individuals participate in the online PSW recertification training. These combined efforts have led to 138 total certifications this year.

NMFS has also initiated a new Protected Species Crew Training Program. Training longline crew in protected species safe handling and release is a mandatory requirement from the 2023 ESA biological opinion for the Hawai'i longline fisheries, which states that NMFS offer a crew training program and require at least two individuals (operator included) trained in protected species handling and release by NMFS per vessel. One of these individuals must be on deck during fishing operations at all times. The first crew training session was held on April 19, 2024, with interpreters providing Tagalog, Indonesian, and Vietnamese translation for the participants. Monthly training opportunities have been provided since April of 2024 (with the exception of

October 2024 and February 2025), training a total of 671 (unique) crew members representing 129 (unique) vessels, and a grand total of 740 crew members from across 173 vessels including repeat attendance by crew and vessels. See data below.

Crew Training Program			
Date	Workshops/Day	Total Vessels	Total participants
04/19/2024	3	8	26
05/10/2024	2	18	81
06/21/2024	2	21	96
07/12/2024	2	19	78
08/23/2024	2	18	85
09/27/2024	2	23	91
11/08/2024	2	16	69
12/13/2024	2	13	53
01/24/2025	2	17	63
03/07/2025	2	14	53
04/18/2025	2	6	27
04/25/2025	2	10	28
05/2025	3	2	7
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>175</u>	<u>747</u>

The Hawai'i Longline Association (HLA) has partnered with NMFS to contribute to the success of these events, including providing funds for foreign language interpretation, t-shirts, and refreshments for participants. In addition, NOAA Office of Law Enforcement, Hawai'i Department of Transportation Harbor Agents and Harbor Police, Department of Homeland Security, and Council staff all provided extensive support for this effort.

Lastly, NMFS has focused on increased use and distribution of a new "6-step" process for protected species handling and release. This resource simplifies the detailed information covered in our previously available materials and focuses on a repeatable pattern designed for fast, efficient, and effective response. The simplification of this process has allowed for increased understanding and reduction in potentially time consuming or error-prone decision points throughout the handling and release process. Handouts and instructions have been delivered as additional outreach to fishers along with the long-form guidelines and matching animated [video](#) available online. Scripts for the video are available as a resource in Tagalog, Ilocano, Samoan, Indonesian and Vietnamese. Translated captions through YouTube's automated system and translated versions of the handling and release guidelines available online as downloadable PDFs in [Tagalog](#), [Indonesian](#), and [Vietnamese](#) have also been made available for increased accessibility.

The document links can be found on the PIRO PSW [webpage](#) and the NOAA [digital resource library webpage](#).

Aquaculture

ANMFS continues to work with the Council to finalize the suite of documents needed for preparing a draft omnibus Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP) amendment and regulations for aquaculture permitting. Since February, we have received a Not Likely to Adversely Affect (NLAA) memo from US Fish and Wildlife Service, and a completed EFH consultation from PIRO Habitat Conservation Division. The biological opinion from PIRO Protected Resources Division is expected to finalize on June 18, 2025.

Permits

NMFS continues to update information on fish catch limits, available on the [website](#).

All Pacific Islands region fishing permit applications and payments are processed electronically. Applications are submitted online through the National Permit System (NPS) or through Kiteworks secure file transfer. Fee payments are processed in NPS or through the Department of Treasury's [pay.gov](#) secure online payment system. PIRO's permit website includes [instructions](#) for fishing permit applications and for 2025 Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) certificates. Applicants may contact NMFS for individual assistance at piro-permits@noaa.gov or (808) 725-5190. Applicants may also visit the [website](#) for current fishing permit status.

PIRO renewed all 149 active Hawaii longline permits prior to the March 3rd deadline for 2025 renewals. All renewal applications were submitted and processed through the NPS and PIRO internal databases.

In 2025 through 2026, NMFS is migrating all Pacific Islands Region permit applications and processing to the online NPS system to improve public access, efficiencies and tracking. In addition to NPS system enhancements, NMFS may offer outreach events and educational materials to introduce the system to permit holders in all the islands, depending on funding.

Permits as of March 3, 2025:

Permit	Number
Pelagic	
Hawaii longline (limited entry)	149 active, 15 inactive/no-vessel (164 of 164)
American Samoa longline (limited entry)	20 current, 40 available (60 of 60)
Western Pacific general longline	-
Receiving vessel	5
Pelagic squid jig	2
Experimental fishing permit	-
Hawaii	
Main Hawaiian Islands non-commercial bottomfish	-
Special coral reef ecosystem	-

Permit	Number
Precious coral	1
Crustaceans	4 (1 lobster, 3 shrimp)
American Sāmoa	
Special coral reef ecosystem	-
Precious coral	-
Crustaceans	-
Mariana Islands	
Guam large vessel bottomfish	-
Northern Mariana Islands bottomfish	4
Special coral reef ecosystem	-
Precious coral	-
Crustaceans	-
Pacific Remote Island Areas	
Pelagic Troll & Handline	1
Bottomfish	-
Special coral reef ecosystem	-
Precious Coral	-
Crustaceans	-
Marine National Monument	
Recreational Fishing	-
Recreational Charter	-