WESTERN PACIFIC REGIONAL FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

DRAFT Report of the Archipelagic Fishery Ecosystem Plan Team Meeting

May 5-6, 2025
8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. (Hawaii)
Council Office
Honolulu, Hawaii

1. Welcome and APT Introductions

Marlowe Sabater, Archipelagic Fishery Ecosystem Plan Team (Plan Team) Chair, opened the meeting, reviewed meeting protocols, and invited Plan Team members to introduce themselves. Plan Team members in attendance included Jason Helyer, Bryan Ishida, Jenny Suter, David O'Brien, Minling Pan, Domingo Ochavillo, Danika Kleiber, Eric Cruz, Jude Lizama, Tye Kindinger, Eva Schemmel, Marc Nadon, Brad Gough, and Kisei Tanaka.

2. Approval of Draft APT Agenda

Approved by consensus.

3. Report on Previous APT Recommendations

Thomas Remington, Council contractor, provided status updates on the APT recommendations from its intersessional meeting held in January 2025. Many of the presentations at this Plan Team meeting are directly related to recommendations and work items stemming from the Plan Team meetings in May 2024 and January 2025 and associated working group progress.

4. 2024 Archipelagic Annual Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) Reports

A. Fishery Performance

i. Archipelagic Fishery Performance Modules

a. American Samoa

Domingo Ochavillo, American Samoa Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources (DMWR), presented the 2024 American Samoa archipelagic fishery performance module. Creel survey interview fluctuations were largely influenced by broader fishery trends. Key events, such as the 2009 tsunami and fuel subsidies in 2011 and 2017, resulted in an increase in interviews, while COVID-19 restrictions in 2021 led to fewer interviews. The bottomfish fishery has slowly been recovering in recent years. There has been a general decline in the number of commercial bottomfish vendors over the past 20 years, although the number increased in 2024. Bottomfish Management Unit Species (BMUS) sales increased between 2023 and 2025, with a notable rise in 2025. Since 2022, the number of active fishers has increased, partly due to new boats purchased using COVID relief funds. In contrast, shore-based fisheries have experienced a slower recovery. Recent interviews indicate that most fishers now sell fish roadside to obtain better prices rather than selling to vendors. Catch-per-unit-effort (CPUE) for BMUS has declined over the past 20 years, a trend consistent across both BMUS and mixed bottomfishing-trolling

categories. CPUE for bottomfish has declined more slowly than for mixed bottomfishing-trolling. Since 2022, there has been an increase in fishing effort and the number of unique bottomfishing vessels. The number of fishers has remained relatively stable, with most being from Western Samoa. The bottomfish fishery remains small, consisting of around seven *alia* boats, four targeting BMUS and the remainder engaged in spearfishing; however, some spearfishers also participate in bottomfish fishing. With respect to bycatch, fishers retain all catch and do not discard any fish.

Plan Team discussion on this fishery performance module update included the following:

- No American Samoa BMUS approached their species-specific ACLs in the first year of this individual management having been implemented.
- Confusion remains regarding the presentation of zeroes in the data summaries.
    - A zero could indicate no catch, no available data, or unknown.
- The super *alia* program has not become operational yet, but they have ordered fishing gear and applied for appropriate permits.
- Data collection on sport fishing in American Samoa is addressed through DMWR's Fish Aggregating Device (FAD) Program, but evaluation of this data stream has not progressed.
    - Remington noted that the Plan Team should offer direction with respect to FAD Program data. There was discussion at the January 2025 meeting about these data and if they could supplement creel survey data on trolling.
- Marc Nadon, NOAA Fisheries' Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center (PIFSC) Stock Assessment Program (SAP), asked if DMWR has any plans to capture roadside sales. Ochavillo expressed a desire to coordinate with PIFSC to incorporate this consideration into their survey protocols.
- Brad Gough, PIFSC Western Pacific Fisheries Information Network (WPacFIN) inquired if there are any updates on the impact of sales of bycatch fish from the American Samoa longline and purse seine fisheries impacting bottomfish sales in formal markets.
    - Ochavillo responded that bycatch from longliners is cheaper despite bottomfish prices remaining stagnant over the past decade, and clarified that the term "non-target" catch should be used over "bycatch."
    - Minling Pan, PIFSC Social-Ecological and Economic Systems (SEES) Program, noted an ongoing project to track the flow of fish through communities in American Samoa, and suggested that this may be an avenue by which the impact of longline non-target catch on bottomfish sales could be explored.
- Remington inquired about the recent recovery of the bottomfish fishery, and Ochavillo clarified that the main reason for the uptick is that fishers who received COVID relief funds procured new fishing vessels, which led to an increase in effort.

b. Guam

Brent Tibbatts, Guam Department of Aquatic and Wildlife Resources (DAWR), presented the 2024 Guam archipelagic fishery performance module. The bottomfish fishery in Guam, particularly deepwater species, continues to be a central focus of the creel survey program. Most of the participating vessels are small boats. Over the past year and a half, there has been an increase in demand and commercial activity for bottomfish, much of which occurs on offshore banks. This growth may be partially attributed to an increased military presence in the region. Deepwater species, such as onaga, remain key targets due to market demand. However, shark

depredation remains a persistent issue, with approximately 30% of bottomfish trips impacted. Losses to sharks within the fishery are estimated at 10–15%. Manahak catch in 2024 was poor, but 2025 has seen a strong rebound, with thousands of pounds caught and another run anticipated in May; this marks a recovery after a couple of lean years. In 2024, 71% of fishers were shore-based, while 9–10% used *talaya* (cast nets), and talaya fishing is expected to increase in 2025. Bottomfish landings have increased since 2024. There were 51 broadcast notices to mariners due to military activity, including designation W-517. Small arms ranges and restricted zones, such as the Surface Danger Zone (SDZ), have impacted nearshore fishing access. Military training activities, including marine relocations, are expected to continue affecting fishing grounds over the next few years. In 2024 alone, fishers were restricted from southern military training banks for up to 55 days due to W-517 activities. Additionally, two cyclone warning events further restricted fishing activity. In 2023, bottomfish landings were significantly impacted by Typhoon Mawar, whereas weather conditions in 2024 were more stable despite the two cyclone warnings.

For monitoring efforts, six inshore surveys were scheduled monthly in 2024, but several were missed due to staff illness and weather disruptions. Participation surveys were scheduled twice monthly. Contracting delays prevented aerial surveys from being conducted, and boat-based surveys were similarly impacted by staffing issues. Opportunistic interviews are carried out but not included in survey expansion estimates, but none were conducted in 2024.Only one vendor reported bottomfish sales in 2024, and data could not be disclosed due to confidentiality concerns. A group of commercial fishers working collaboratively to market their catch has shown promise for future data sharing Over the last three years, the number of commercial invoice vendors was too low to generate reportable data.. A commercial group of fishers is expected to provide catch data, which will be included in the 2025 annual SAFE report. Total estimated landings in 2024 totaled approximately 61,000 pounds, a substantial increase likely driven by a group of fishers targeting deepwater species, including BMUS. Although vessel numbers increased in 2023, there has been a long-term decline in the fleet over the past 20 years. Development of the territorial FMP is ongoing and expected to be shared with the community in June. One meeting will specifically engage the Micronesian fishing community, with three additional meetings planned for the broader local community. Topics to be discussed include fishing licenses for sellers and buyers, as well as mandatory reporting requirements.

Plan Team discussion on this fishery performance module update included the following:

- Eva Schemmel, PIFSC Life History Program, asked if the increase in commercial fishers is attributable to more fishery members participating or a new group of fishers entering the fishery. Tibbatts replied that more fishers already involved in the fishery are taking trips more frequently due to more steady sales from the fish they catch.
- Danika Kleiber, PIFSC SEES Program, inquired about the proportion of fishers impacted by weather and military advisories, and Tibbatts indicated he would follow up.
    - Sabater asked if there are overlapping warning days. Tibbatts confirmed, noting that information from the military is less informative but includes specific days and areas. There were 271 days last year with a closure associated SDZ near a local firing range.
- Sabater asked if there have been ongoing efforts to increase commercial reports from fish vendors. Tibbatts responded that outreach is not being conducted, but a mandatory reporting regulation is being developed and import sales are tracked. Fisher meetings on the regulation are scheduled for June, and the timeline may be five or six months after

that. Territorial FMP will be presented for legislative approval in late 2025 or early 2026.

- The Plan Team noted that commercial data cannot be disclosed despite the Guam Fishermen's Cooperative Association (GFCA) signing a data waiver because there is an additional vendor reporting (i.e., for a total of two). Jenny Suter, Western Pacific Fisheries Information Network (WPacFIN) asked if the other vendor would be receptive to signing a waiver, and Tibbatts said DAWR would reapproach the individual. WPacFIN should develop a summary using only GFCA data.

c. CNMI

Jude Lizama, CNMI Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW), presented the 2024 CNMI archipelagic fishery performance module. In 2024, 225 invoices were collected from all buyers. Toward the end of the year, there was a decline in invoice submissions due to some vendors withholding reports or running out of forms and others facing various administrative challenges. However, an increase in reporting is expected in the coming year. The market currently favors sellers, with 25 active sellers reported throughout the year. Fishing activity was relatively consistent from May through June, coinciding with calmer water conditions and more frequent fishing trips, and buyer participation remained stable year-round. Between 2024 and 2025, there was a decrease of approximately 1,750 sales, attributed to worsening economic conditions in the Northern Mariana Islands, with expectations that the situation may deteriorate further. Bottomfish prices tended to increase toward the end of the year when adverse weather reduced fishing effort. Prices also rose when supply in the market declined. However, overall market demand for bottomfish is currently shrinking, as several restaurants and hotels have closed or reduced operations. Due to administrative and logistical challenges, data collection was affected in 2024. The data presented do not represent true zeros; rather, they reflect gaps where data were not collected. While interviews were conducted and recorded fishing trips, the number of interviews fell short of expectations. A total of 13 bottomfish trips and one spearfishing trip were observed; fewer than 150 trips were documented in 2024, based on 75 interviews. There are currently only three dedicated bottomfish fishers in Saipan. Changes in total catch weight were primarily driven by a small number of trips with low catch volumes. Bycatch composition from bottomfishing was limited. Only two trips recorded bycatch of BMUS species, primarily consisting of shallow-water emperors.

Plan Team discussion on this fishery performance module update included the following:

- Tibbatts asked what the timeline is for vendors to submit commercial receipts, and Lizama responded that they have two weeks by regulation. However, DFW does not have the means to operate based on those regulations.
- Schemmel asked about misidentifications of species in surveys and commercial receipts. Lizama said that unknown species are lumped together such that multiple species comprise a single species code.
- David O'Brien, PIRO Sustainable Fisheries Division (SFD), requested an update on vendor licensing requirements. Lizama stated that DFW is beginning to enforce the regulation but finding difficulties in funding staff to fulfill this effort.

d. Hawaii

Bryan Ishida, Hawaii Division of Aquatic Resources (HDAR), presented the 2024 Hawaii archipelagic fishery performance module. In 2024, the Deep 7 bottomfish complex showed continued declines relative to both 10-year and 20-year catch averages. The primary species targeted were opakapaka and onaga, with other species showing year-to-year variability. Some less commonly targeted species showed slight increases. Effort and overall catch in the fishery have been decreasing since 2017, with more pronounced declines dating back to the mid-1980s. Contributing factors include an aging fleet, shifting consumer preferences, increasing shark depredation, high operational costs, competition from imports, and reduced demand from restaurants. The downward trend continued in 2024, with lower catch levels than in 2023. The fishery is dominated by electric and hydraulic deep-sea handline gear. In 2024, opakapaka accounted for 50% of the total catch, aligning with a 20-year trend showing opakapaka at 49%. Notably, lehi made up 8% of the catch in 2024, doubling its 20-year average. Bycatch of Deep 7 species is limited; most fish brought to the surface are retained for personal use or discarded if undersized. Non-Deep 7 species caught using deep-sea handling methods are also rarely released, with many kept for personal consumption.

Uku landings and fishing effort declined in 2024, attributed to fleet and market changes. Unlike other species, uku does not have a seasonal demand. Restaurant interest in uku has waned, contributing to the steep decline in landings compared to 2023. The uku fishery is also dominated by deep-sea handline methods, but use of alternative gears and gear modifications is increasing. Hawaii maintains a one-pound minimum size limit for uku sales. Participation, licensing, and fishing days for uku have continued to decline, with fewer new entrants into the fishery. Reporting by number of fish caught is considered less reliable than by pounds landed. For ta‘ape (blueline snapper), since its introduction in the 1950s–60s, there has been increased targeting driven by gear development and rising demand. SCUBA spearfishing has played a major role in harvesting this species. Economic hardship may also be contributing to increased fishing effort, as people turn to subsistence or small-scale fishing due to job losses. Kona crab, once a robust fishery, has significantly declined. Past restrictions on harvesting female crabs led many fishers to exit the fishery due to poor economic returns. These restrictions were lifted in recent years; female crabs may now be harvested if they are not carrying eggs, though undersized limits remain. There was no notable increase in fishing effort in 2024, but activity may rise in 2025. Bycatch with Kona crab nets remains underreported.

Plan Team discussion on this fishery performance module update included the following:

- Sabater asked if more fishers are reporting catches in the Kona crab fishery. Ishida stated that there are more people reporting catch, and while weather is a factor, there is more excitement by those fishing for Kona crab. However, there is not persistent dedication to the fishery as in the past.
- Sabater asked how many of HDAR’s 10 priority ECS have State rules. Ishida noted that only two have no associated State regulations.
- Remington observed that catch in the Deep 7 fishery is the lowest since 1971. Ishida speculated on many driving factors in the fishery, both short and long term. It is no longer a high-liner dominated fishery, as there are currently very few that fish the stock complex for their living due to inconsistency. Factors include vessel size, nighttime fishing, anchor fishing, and dedicated individuals all decreasing with respect to participation. Culturally, people are not entering the fishery as older generations retire. Hotels and restaurants are not as dependent on this fishery as in the past. Depredation and rising fuel cost are factors as well.

- O’Brien asked about non-commercial fishery performance for Hawaii insular fisheries as well as the non-resident fishing license. Ishida noted that the licensing effort is above initial projections on revenue at the three-month mark. HDAR is working to improve compliance. For non commercial fishery performance, the decision was made to focus on getting better data for bottomfish, which is to be discussed later at this Plan Team meeting.
- Deepwater shrimp data from 2024 are non-disclosed due to fewer than three fishers reporting. There have been no years for zero catch. Ishida noted that regulations have had immediate impacts on the fishery and drive catch time series.

At this point in the meeting, Remington summarized ACLs against fishery performance for 2024. The only noted overage was for Guam bottomfish against the rebuilding ACL. Sabater asked if PIRO plans to take action given this development, noting that there is a proposed rule to increase the rebuilding ACL. O’Brien stated that the final rule will not be prepared for some time. The Council will need to interface with PIRO. Sabater also noted the challenges in completing creel surveys in the CNMI, and Lizama suggested that further investigation and efforts are warranted. Remington stated he would work with Lizama to caveat the CNMI data in the 2024 annual SAFE reports. There was concern about the nature of the data being fed into future stock assessments for CNMI bottomfish.

B. Ecosystem and Climate Considerations

i. Protected Species

Council staff presented updates to the archipelagic protected species modules. In 2024, there were no new Oceanic Whitetip Shark (OWT) captures reported within the bottomfish categories across any of the island areas. Each module continues to track ongoing activities related to Critical Habitat designations and pending proposals that may impact fisheries in the future. OWTs are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and are subject to a "no take" prohibition unless specifically exempted by NMFS. Such an exemption was issued by PIFSC in the previous year. Regarding other ESA-related updates, a proposed rule remains under review to list six species of giant clams as endangered and four species as threatened; this proposal is still in the rulemaking phase. There are no significant updates on coral or coral habitat issues. Much of the ESA-related rulemaking remains delayed in regulatory review. However, the Coral Critical Habitat designation is subject to a court-ordered deadline of July 15, and there is a possibility this timeline will be met due to the legal obligation. Each module also outlines ongoing research, data collection, and assessment needs.

Plan Team discussion on this module update included the following:

- Ishida noted that, regarding OWTs, the State of Hawaii and the Council provided comments on the proposed rule. Council staff noted that comments would be responded to within the rulemaking process, and we do not know when this will be provided. The State made comments regarding interactions and the prohibition for release, as fishers can follow best practices for handling and release. Incentives may need to be provided for appropriate release. However, the main concern involves intentionally harming OWTs.
- Regarding the recent proposed rule to change the definition of “harm” under the ESA this would be specific to impacts on habitat. There is a proposed removal of that section of the ESA because, under this administration, they are reverting to a strict interpretation of the statute. Media reports show concern that this change to the ESA and ESA consultations could impact critical habitat designations.

- Sabater asked if the presented research topics have been revisited alongside the Council's five-year research priorities. Council staff replied that these needs have not been explicitly linked to research priorities. The subsection has been updated as a direct output with respect to what managers need to think about this year and how to make this section more useful. Sabater suggested that progress be reflected in this section of the report, including the development of research priorities.

ii. Life History and Length-Derived Variables

Schemmel presented updates to the 2024 life history modules. Over the past six months, Schemmel collaborated with the PIFSC communications team to make all life history publications from the last two years publicly accessible via the program's GitHub page. Fisher engagement and the integration of local knowledge remain central to the program's efforts. Since January, there have been 15 fisher engagement events held in Hawaii. During a visit to Hawaii, the Marine Resource Education Program (MREP) toured the life history labs, and a fishery knowledge session was also conducted with PIFSC Fisheries Research and Monitoring Division (FRMD). The life history team continues to work with fishers and fish markets to collect data and biological samples. One tool in use is the FishMat, developed by The Nature Conservancy and a local community group. Although currently web-based and not yet completely accessible to fishers, FishMats are used to capture length composition data, aiming to gather comprehensive size data for all BMUS catch. They are currently deployed in Hawaii, CNMI, and Guam, with American Samoa next in line. A partnership with HDAR oversees two CIMAR staff supporting these efforts.

Schemmel shared a list of recent publications and noted an ongoing study with the University of Central Florida focused on species identification. To date, 100 samples have been completed, all with accurate species matches, but more sampling is needed. Current projects and upcoming work include: The PIFSC life history program is preparing for the Mariana Islands bottomfish survey and assembling research plans, for which three fishers and one CNMI DFW staff have been invited to participate alongside with one fisher from Guam; in Hawaii, reproductive studies for *Etelis coruscans* have been completed, with ongoing work focused on lehi, opakapaka, onaga, and hapu‘upu‘u biosampling; in American Samoa, biosampling support discussions are ongoing to potentially utilize FishMats, though travel restrictions present challenges; and in Guam, programs have been completed and are ongoing, with biosampling reports submitted. Significant progress has been made in collecting BMUS data across the Mariana Islands, though juvenile samples remain lacking due to their absence in the fishery. A raffle contest will be launched within the next two weeks to incentivize fisher participation in sample collection. The PIFSC Life History Program plans to replicate Guam's strategy in the CNMI moving forward.

Plan Team discussion on this module update included the following:

- Sabater asked if the genetics in the Mariana Archipelago are inclusive of both Guam and the CNMI, and Schemmel confirmed, noting that a publication will be released in the coming year looking at genetic structure, connectivity, and larval dispersal across the islands.
    - Sabater inquired if this information could feed into a potential archipelago-wide assessment and management approach. Schemmel noted that life history must be taken into account regardless of the scale.
- Suter asked if new length-weight relationships should be updated in the WPacFIN database, and Schemmel confirmed.

iii. Biomass Estimates for Coral Reef Ecosystem Components

Tye Kindinger, PIFSC Ecosystem Sciences Division (ESD), presented an update to the 2024 coral reef ecosystem parameters module. Data were collected through the National Coral Reef Monitoring Program (NCRMP) using surveys conducted down to 30 meters in depth. Methods included stationary point counts within 15-meter diameter plots and the use of photoquadrats. As of the present meeting, coral data across the Hawaiian Archipelago are not available. However, fish biomass estimates for 2024 have been completed for all of the MHI. Surveys along the Mariana Archipelago were recently completed, and information from those surveys will be available soon.

Plan Team discussion on this module update included the following:

- Schemmel noted large increases in surgeonfish, and Kindinger stated she could look into the data to determine which species are responsible. It is likely that schools of the species were encountered during surveys.

C. Administrative Reports

i. Federal Permit and Logbook Data

O'Brien presented an update to the 2024 federal permit and logbook data and administrative and regulatory actions modules. There are federal permits for American Samoa for special coral reef ecosystem species, Western Pacific (WP) precious coral species, and WP crustacean species (lobster and deepwater shrimp), but there have been no new permits in issued since 2014. In Hawaii, there are permits for non-commercial bottomfish, special coral reef ecosystem, precious coral, and crustacean species. There were five permits issued in 2024, but zero for WP lobster and deepwater shrimps. In the CNMI, there were 25 bottomfish permits as of 2017, coinciding with the last issued shrimp permit; lobster had its last permit issued in 2018. In 2024, Guam had no permits for lobster or deepwater shrimp. The last large vessel bottomfish permit was issued in 2018, the same as lobster. The last shrimp permit issued was in 2016. There were no active permits for PRIA bottomfish or crustaceans in 2024. For administrative and regulatory actions that NMFS took in 2024, O'Brien highlighted the standardized bycatch reporting methodology rule, final rules for ACLs and AMs, marine conservation plan approvals, and discontinuing the bottomfish rebuilding plan in Guam.

Plan Team discussion on this module update included the following:

- Sabater noted that the module provides information on the number of permits and the number of permits that had associated reporting, but not the number of reports.
    - There should be a logbook associated with each permit, but there is a lack of follow up and sporadic enforcement limiting available data.
- O'Brein identified an issue wit the module where the module presents zero permits reporting catch, which may be in violation of confidentiality rules.
- The Plan Team discussed the utility of the module given the paucity of data, and it was noted the Council is considering the application of these permits more broadly through their regulatory review project.

ii. Regulatory Actions

This agenda item was covered during item 4.C.i directly above.

iii. Discussions

Plan Team discussion on this agenda item occurred immediately following the presentation.

D. Open Discussion: Archipelagic SAFE Report Matters

Remington led open discussion among Plan Team members regarding several outstanding efforts related to data and annual SAFE report improvement efforts.

i. Impacts of Weather and Military Activity on Fishery Performance

Remington led the Plan Team in discussion on whether there is continued desire to pursue analysis of indicators associated with weather and military impacts on fishing activity. Sabater noted that Guam already tracks area closures due to military activity (e.g., W-517 over the past 14 years) and suggested this data stream be retained. Closures associated with the new firing range are being implemented this year. Remington added that tracking these data could allow the Plan Team to develop more robust narratives associated with catch and effort time series. Sabater suggested the Plan Team wait and consider the presentation from the Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC) on their fishery performance. Guam DAWR's report on fisheries closures due to military activity is not linked with fisheries performance at this stage. Information from the military is becoming more and more vague. To get specifics, one has to go into the notices themselves to extract the information. Sabater suggested considering the amount of work to compile this information, but Tibbatts noted that it is something Guam DAWR would generate for the fishing community's awareness regardless.

ii. American Samoa FAD Program Data

Remington led the Plan Team in discussion on the American Samoa FAD Program that captures fishery performance information on sports fishing. The main gear type used is trolling, and there is the potential for mixed bottomfish-trolling trips. The Plan Team did not come to any consensus after discussion on this topic at its intersessional meeting in January 2025. Ochavillo noted that DMWR has been collecting these data, and the fishers covered are not those captured in the creel surveys. Typically, bottomfish fishing is not represented in these data. Low trolling participation has been driving variability in the resulting creel survey data for that fishery. In 2024, there were only 20 trolling trips, and there are less than 10 currently. There is concern that creel surveys are not appropriately capturing the full extent of the troll fishery. Remington reminded the Plan Team that, in January, Robert Ahrens of PIFSC FRMD also said the FAD Program does not overlap with creel surveys. If they are capturing MUS, then those data should be represented, but there needs to be further evaluation as to what subset of the FAD Program sports fish trips are not captured by the creel survey program. Ochavillo suggested that Ahrens develop a summary of the overlap, though this is more pertinent discussion for the Pelagic Plan Team. Sabater agreed, and the Plan Team agreed by consensus that these data need not be represented in the annual SAFE reports.

iii. Other Items

There were no other items raised for Plan Team discussion.

5. APT Review: Working Group Progress and Action Item Progress

A. Territorial Non-Commercial Modules

Nadon provided an update on progress developing a non-commercial fishery performance module for archipelagic fisheries in American Samoa, Guam, and the CNMI. Scripts were developed to address species identification issues and provide a detailed species breakdown for

each taxonomic group across three regions and three datasets, using interview data. In American Samoa, although all fishers report selling their BMUS catch, these sales are not reflected in the dealer reports—indicating a significant gap in commercial data capture. Another key data gap is the absence of roadside sales information, which further limits the accuracy of commercial fishery estimates. In Guam, commercial BMUS fishery data consistently show low catch levels, while non-commercial data remain high. Compared to American Samoa and CNMI, Guam's BMUS fishery is predominantly non-commercial. Next steps for the scripts include integrating additional R scripts into the official WPacFIN catch output system. There is also a need to decide whether to fully transition to an "intent-to-sell" framework or to present both the dealer and intent-to-sell data streams for comparison and clarity.

Plan Team discussion on this module development included the following:

- Tibbatts suggested presenting all three data streams in the future to see differences and determine if efforts are needed to improve data collection.
    - There were concerns on how readers would interpret the varying data streams, but Plan Team members generally agreed with the approach.
    - Nadon requested better suggestions for the data stream headers.
- Suter asked if there would be implications in the American Samoa fishing community if commercial receipts are not sufficiently capturing data. Sabater responded that the jurisdictional agencies will need to develop a write-up on how data should be interpreted, recognizing that perspectives differ among the three island areas. Guam, in particular, is quite distinct from American Samoa and the CNMI, and the narrative for each will reflect those differences. The goal is to represent how each jurisdiction views its non-commercial and commercial fisheries. He referenced Kirsten Leong's paper, which highlights the complexity in defining these sectors, inhibiting interpretation.
- Kleiber suggested referring to the data streams based on catch disposition instead of commercial and non-commercial. Sabater also distinguished between bycatch and non-target catch.
- The Plan Team approved inclusion of the modules in the annual SAFE reports by consensus.

B. Hawaii Non-Commercial Modules

Ishida provided an update on progress developing a non-commercial fishery performance module for archipelagic fisheries in Hawaii. He requested patience to allow for the development of improved data products. The bottomfish vessel registry survey approach has significantly shifted the characterization of the fishery from previously being up to 50% non-commercial to now being approximately 10–20%. Many individuals are selling fish but do not identify themselves as commercial fishers. HDAR and NOAA have been engaging directly with fishers to present these changes and ideas, and a second meeting has already been scheduled. For uku, a mail survey is being conducted, targeting only vessels registered in the State of Hawaii. This means the survey does not capture shore-based fishers, divers, or kayakers. Approximately 2,000 mail surveys are sent out each month. The goal is to better understand how many people are fishing for uku. Current estimates range from 180,000 to 250,000 pounds, and it is hoped this survey will help refine those numbers. Results are expected next year. Neither HMRFS nor MRIP currently include invertebrates. The recent rule change regarding Kona crab, which now allows the harvest of female crabs, has generated excitement among fishers. However, commercial catches remain low, and underreporting is suspected. A substantial amount of crab

may be caught but not reported, as reporting is not mandatory. This makes it difficult to evaluate how accurately the data reflect actual catch levels.

Plan Team discussion on this module development included the following:

- Sabater noted multiple efforts feeding into progress on determining non-commercial fishery performance in Hawaii. There is a bottomfish working group that is contributing to future stock assessments, with its next meeting on May 23. The top priority is the Deep 7 bottomfish, with uku next in line.
    - The new uku-focused mail survey will plan to send 2,000 surveys per month based on a vessel registry of about 11,000 (i.e., ~20%).
    - There was a suggestion to consider USCG-documented vessels. Any vessel that operates outside the US EEZ is required to be USCG registered.
- By consensus, the Plan Team agreed to pause progress on the development and inclusion of a Hawaii archipelagic non-commercial module in the annual SAFE reports.

6. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

7. Ecosystem Component Species (ECS) Discussion

A. Conservation and management of ECS: cases from other regions D. Lambert

Sabater provided a history of ECS in the Pacific Islands, noting that in 2019, many species across all jurisdictions were reclassified as ECS. Monitoring of these species will continue in accordance with National Standard 1 (NS1).

Debra Lambert, NOAA Office of Science and Technology (OST), presented on ECS and the regulatory framework governing what is allowed for these stocks. She explained the process for stocks in need of conservation and management, including reclassifying a stock, adding or removing ECS, and the role of the councils in these decisions. This process involves considering the ten factors outlined in 50 CFR 600.305(c)(5) in NS1 when determining which stocks require federal conservation and management, as well as the procedures for adding or removing stocks from an FMP. Lambert emphasized that, to determine whether stocks require federal conservation and management, the first two questions that should be answered are (1) if the stock is overfished, subject to overfishing, or likely to become so, and (2) if the stock is caught predominantly in federal waters. If the answer to both is "yes," then the stock requires federal management. Lambert also provided examples illustrating how stocks have been reclassified to ECS, as well as examples of adding and removing stocks from management plans, from other regions.

Plan Team discussion on this topic included the following:

- Minling Pan, PIFSC SEES Program, noted that stock status is typically not known for ECS. Lambert replied that the best scientific information available should be used.
- Sabater asked if rationale for each of the 10 factors under NS1 is necessary, and Lambert stated that a review of all 10 factors would provide an idea on relevancy.
- Jason Helyer, HDAR, asked if there are reporting requirements for the ECS provided in Lambert's examples, and if so, if the requirements only apply to federal waters. Lambert noted that each region has different reporting requirements, but typically, catches in both state and federal waters must be reported.
    - Helyer emphasized struggles in the Pacific Islands related to artisanal fisheries without reporting requirements.

- Sabater noted his interested in ECS added to the FEPs for their roles as forage fish (e.g., frigate mackerel, chub mackerel, etc.).There have been diet studies on mahimahi that can be reviewed for additional species that may fall into this category. Lambert noted that the MAFMC's final rule lays out their rationale for addressing forage fish.
- Sabater observed that Lambert did not provide examples of MUS that were reclassified as ECS before again being classified as MUS. Lambert shared that the utility of the ECS designation is evolving over time.

B. GCPI Perspective

O'Brien provided a summary of his recent meetings with NOAA General Counsel Pacific Islands (GCPI), including a small working group meeting on April 16, 2025, and a follow-up meeting with GCPI on April 28, 2025. In the past, GCPI noted that rationales were not consistently provided for all decisions, and they emphasized the importance of strong justifications when moving species on or off an FMP. They also highlighted existing regulations that offer detailed guidance on how to develop these documents. A particular focus was placed on the 2016 final rule and some of the related comments and questions discussed in the small working group. One key issue raised was regarding forage species; in some areas, the regional council recommended management measures approximating limits based on species interactions. However, GCPI stated that such measures are not allowable because forage species do not require conservation and management. Instead, attention should be given to species classified as ECS and MUS. GCPI also pointed out the various ways ECS are managed, including data collection and monitoring. They cautioned that if catch limits were established for ECS, the public might question the rationale behind them. Importantly, GCPI expressed willingness to collaborate with the Plan Team moving forward to address any questions or concerns.

Plan Team discussion on this topic included the following:

- Sabater emphasized the need to revisit the 10 NS1 criteria related to species under the ECS category. He noted that there is some level of monitoring for these species using any available methods. Out of the ten priority ECS in Hawaii, eight are managed by state agencies and are predominantly caught in state waters. However, while some of these species have formal stock assessments, others do not.

C. Developing a management framework for ECS

This agenda item was taken up alongside item 7.D, directly below.

D. Direction for ECS Working Group

Remington presented on progress made by the Plan Team's ECS working group. The working group met last month to discuss criteria for ECS management. While the foundational criteria are already well established, the meeting focused on refining these criteria and guiding next steps. Key talking points included the need for clearly defined criteria and (the limitations of) using Kona crab as a case study to explore application challenges and inconsistencies. It was noted that current FEP objectives lack the specificity necessary for effective ECS management. Participants also highlighted existing data gaps that hinder comprehensive evaluation and management, as well as political and institutional considerations that may affect implementation. The discussion revealed divergent objectives between sectors, further complicating the development of a unified framework. The group emphasized the importance of clarifying ecosystem objectives, compiling relevant data, and conducting thorough analysis. Remington

concluded the presentation with a call for feedback and direction to help the working group move forward in developing a functional and transparent ECS management framework.
Plan Team discussion on this topic included the following:

- Sabater asked about the purpose and need for additional management measures for ECS, referencing other Councils addressing bycatch and forage species. Ishida suggested NOAA or others work with state frameworks and questioned the rationale for reclassifying ECS to MUS when species are caught exclusively in state waters.
    - Sabater explained that moving ECS to MUS would require a Council amendment process based on the 10 NS1 criteria. He emphasized benefits of retaining species as ECS, including support for prioritization and continued monitoring.
- Schemmel noted that biosampling for ECS is ongoing and suggested prioritization support and funding from NOAA to help meet jurisdictional needs.
- Pan observed declining trends in economic performance of ECS in the annual SAFE reports. She proposed using long-term trends and catch triggers (e.g., economic or area-based) to inform management.
    - Sabater affirmed that the SAFE reports track species declines and highlighted the need to determine who responds to such trends. He proposed exploring diet studies to assess links between ECS and MUS species.
- Ishida questioned the utility of identifying forage fish if federal authority doesn't extend into state waters. Sabater confirmed that federal authority is limited in such cases.
    - Remington clarified the goal is not necessarily to regulate State waters but to monitor ECS and understand linkages between state and federally managed fisheries.
    - Schemmel supported focusing on species like opelu as forage fish but noted resource constraints. These could be alleviated through collaboration opportunities (e.g., UH and NOAA).
- Council staff highlighted unique regional characteristics (e.g., lack of continental shelf) resulting in key differences of the Pacific Islands to other regions. He stated that ECS-to-MUS transitions should be approached differently and not assumed to be reversible.
- Sabater concluded discussion by committing to work with Council staff and Remington on Council recommendations and to explore possible next steps within state and territorial frameworks.

8. Nature of the Marine Recreational Information Program Surveys

Katherine Papacostas, MRIP, presented on the nature of MRIP surveys in Hawaii. The evolution of non-commercial data collection in Hawai‘i has involved the implementation of both in-person and mail-based surveys to gather more accurate and representative information on recreational and subsistence fishing activities. In Hawai‘i, non-commercial data collection is conducted by HDAR through the Hawaii Marine Recreational Fishing Survey (HMRFS), which performs on-site interviews at boat ramps, piers, and other coastal access points. These efforts are supplemented by a mail survey administered by a contracted organization. The mail-based Fishing Effort Survey (FES) operates year-round across all Hawaiian Islands, targeting participants through a rotating mailing list that is refreshed prior to each bi-monthly distribution. The survey design strategically allocates more interviews to high-activity fishing sites in order to capture meaningful data. The response rate for this survey is approximately 30%. To estimate total catch, the program uses a basic formula: *Catch Rate* × *Effort* = *Total Catch*. Precision in

these estimates is monitored through Percent Standard Error (PSE) thresholds. The precision standard requires that the PSE for estimated effort remains at or below 30%. If the estimate PSE exceeds 30%, the data are considered less reliable, and if the PSE exceeds 50%, MRIP does not support the use of the estimates. This structured approach reflects ongoing efforts to improve the robustness of non-commercial fisheries data in support of sustainable resource management.

Plan Team discussion on this topic included the following:

- Nadon asked how MRIP estimates fit in Hawaii, noting the blurred line between commercial and non-commercial fishing due to easy access to low-cost CMLs. Managers are unsure how much of the CML catch is captured by MRIP and how much goes unreported.
    - Papacostas described a re-envisioning initiative focused on improving recreational and non-commercial catch and effort estimates, enhancing biological data collection, and integrating app-based data. This effort could be launched in early 2026 depending on resources and partnerships.
    - Nadon asked if other mainland regions have similar situations with easily accessible CMLs and overlapping data.
    - Papacostas mentioned vessel trip reporting logbooks, but was uncertain about their use in Hawaii.
- O'Brien asked about national practices, particularly mail survey use. Papacostas explained general MRIP/FES methodology using license data with mailing addresses, but this varies across regions (e.g., Atlantic vs. Gulf). Gulf states with offshore licenses have MRIP-certified programs.
- O'Brien inquired about Hawaii's uncertainty estimates compared to other states. Papacostas clarified that Hawaii has more funding for FES sampling. Effort estimate precision is comparable to other states with no evidence of differential bias in Hawaii. MRIP is conducting ongoing large-scale studies aimed at minimizing uncertainties.
    - Helyer noted MRIP estimates may meet precision standards but lack real-world utility, pointing out that Council SSC members have voiced concerns.
    - Papacostas replied that precision is currently the only quantifiable measure used.
    - Helyer stated that NOAA's socioeconomic team is underutilized by MRIP and asked about plans to better incorporate local non-commercial fishery data collection.
    - Papacostas said MRIP has no resistance to local collaboration and emphasized the need to strengthen regional partnerships; this would fall under the aforementioned re-envisioning effort.
- Carvalho mentioned he and T. Todd Jones, PIFSC FRMD lead, were interviewed six months ago by MRIP, but he was unsure if that effort had concluded. Sabater said he would follow up to convert ideas into actionable items.
- Nadon asked how to move forward with deeper MRIP collaboration. Papacostas proposed two approaches: (1) Expand regional MRIP implementation team, and (2) host in-person re-envisioning workshops with stakeholder breakout groups.
    - Sabater noted that Keith Kamikawa is leading Hawaii's re-envisioning effort and proposed broadening participation. He also suggested forming a Plan Team working group with one member from each jurisdiction to generate recommendations for MRIP regional plan updates.

    - Pan highlighted the importance of including a socio-economic expert in the re-envisioning effort, referencing survey findings on reporting behavior in Hawaii.
    - Hongguang Ma, PIFSC, confirmed regional interviews occurred but also that a workshop originally planned for May had been postponed. Helyer replied that the postponement is a good opportunity to expand interviews to include UH, state agencies, Mary Donovan (HIMARC), and other data users.
    - Papacostas confirmed interviews are done, and a framework report based on interviews and listening sessions would be released in the next month.
- Suter asked about the creel survey targeting kayak fishery data by Poseidon Fisheries Research. Sabater clarified it was part of a citizen science proposal.
    - Cassie Pardee, PFR, said their proposal was not funded despite receiving high marks, so they are exploring other funding paths. Hawaii's kayak fishery remains a data gap.

9. Council Actions

A. MHI Uku 2026-2029 ACL Specification

Zach Yamada, Council staff, presented the alternatives to specify annual catch limits (ACLs) and accountability measures (AMs) for the MHI uku fishery for fishing years 2026 to 2029. In December 2024, the SSC received a presentation on the 2024 uku stock assessment update that found the fishery was not overfished nor experiencing overfishing. The SSC endorsed the stock assessment update as BSIA and recommended the Council direct staff to develop options to specify ABCs and ACLs. Council staff provided an overview of the options for Council consideration. Under Alternative 1, the Council would not specify ACLs for fishing years 2026 to 2029. This alternative serves as a NEPA baseline, although it does not comply with National Standard 1 of the MSA and the Hawaii FEP. Under Alternative 2, the Council may specify ACL at 41 percent risk of overfishing (P*) and ACT at P* 36 percent based on the 2020 benchmark assessment utilizing the 2020 P* and SEEM analysis correlated with 295,419 lb and 291,010 lb, respectively. This alternative would include both in-season and post-season AMs. This alternative would not comply with National Standard 2 under the MSA, which states that management should be based on BSIA. Under Alternative 3, the Council may specify ACL based on the 2024 assessment at P* at 41 percent and ACT at P* 36 percent based on P* and SEEM analysis correlated with 406,532 lb and 401,020 lb, respectively. This alternative would include both in-season and post-season AMs. Under Alternative 4, the Council may specify ACLs based on the 2024 stock assessment update and the findings of the 2020 P* and SEEM working groups at an ACL at 36 percent P* correlated with 401,020 lb. The Council took initial action and selected Alternative 4 as its preliminary preferred alternative Under Alternatives 5 and 6, the Council may specify an ACL and/or ACT lower than the ACLs and ACTs outlined in alternatives 3 and 4, respectively.

Plan Team discussion on this proposed action included the following:

- The Plan Team previously specified Alternative 4 as its recommendation to the Council, which was also the Council's preliminary preferred alternative. Final action will be taken at the June Council meeting.
- Ishida noted some uncertainty in recent years associated with imports.
- Monitoring of the uku fishery would continue via HDAR's FRS and HMRFS regardless of the alternative chosen.

B. CNMI Bottomfish WPSAR Update

Council staff led the Plan Team in discussion on the CNMI BMUS stock assessment update and the results of the Western Pacific Stock Assessment Review (WPSAR), which was held on April 2–3, 2025. The 2025 update used the same framework and modeling approach as the 2019 benchmark assessment, which was the most recent comprehensive assessment prior to this update. Notable improvements in the 2025 update included the integration of additional survey data, expanded datasets, and enhanced model diagnostics. These updates resulted in a reduction in uncertainty in the terminal year stock status compared to the 2019 benchmark. The WPSAR panel reviewed the assessment based on terms of reference modeled after the 2024 Guam bottomfish update assessment. The review panel concluded that the 2025 CNMI BMUS update assessment was scientifically sound and complete, with only minor and non-consequential deviations from the 2019 benchmark. A list of recommendations was provided by the panel to guide future improvements. Both the final stock assessment report and the WPSAR summary are currently in editorial review. The Council's SSC is expected to review the assessment and WPSAR findings at its June 2025 meeting.

Plan Team discussion on this topic included the following:

- Lizama noted that CNMI DFW are aware of this effort and are on board.
- Schemmel added that there is a need for further collaboration on support of the biosampling program and aligning field data collection efforts.

9. Improving Data Collection for the Next Benchmark Assessments

Felipe Carvalho, PIFSC SAP, and Sabater led open discussion on improving data collection in support of future benchmark assessments. In American Samoa, preparations are underway for a stock assessment update scheduled in the next few years. Guam is preparing for a benchmark assessment following a data review that took place after the June 2024 meeting. For the CNMI, an update assessment was reviewed and is moving forward, though a benchmark assessment remains a longer-term goal. Creel survey data is central to these assessments, but significant gaps continue to hinder progress. These data gaps must be addressed, as it is becoming increasingly difficult to rely on current datasets for robust stock assessments. The Plan Team has emphasized the urgency of resolving the data quality issues.

Carvalho noted that stock assessment tracking across all jurisdictions has evolved. In American Samoa, the shift from an aggregated production model to a single-species assessment represented a major advancement. The recent presentation by Council staff was an updated version of the 2019 assessment, but Carvalho stressed that such an assessment would not be repeated under current conditions due to serious concerns with the creel survey data. Referencing a graph from the presentation showing the number of bottomfish interviews used to calculate CPUE, Carvalho pointed out that 2023 served as the terminal year in the current update, and 2024 interviews are missing. Several past years also had very low interview counts, and sampling has been inconsistent across months. In 2024, only 8–10 MUS interviews were conducted, which is far too few for reliable assessment. Carvalho recommended that the Plan Team explore this issue further, emphasizing that without improvements, a CNMI BMUS assessment will not be possible. There is still time to address this and begin implementing improvements.

Sabater added that the goal is not to get into technical details at this stage but emphasized that Plan Team members are aware of gaps in implementation of survey protocols. According to

a report by Robert Ahrens, PIFSC FRMD, adherence to these protocols reduces bias, reinforcing the need for consistent and complete data collection.

Additional discussion on this topic included the following:

- Sabater noted that the issue is a combination of the creel survey interviews as well as actual implementation of the surveys. In the CNMI, for more than half of the year, DFW was unable to do surveys due to various factors. Administrative and funding considerations remain a challenge, but PIFSC ensures that funds are available in a timely manner.
- Nadon stated that management of the island fisheries is occurring with data that are relatively difficult to obtain, and CNMI may need to opt for a different approach. He suggested transitioning from catch rates to rate-based monitoring with length data.
    - The Council took final action at its previous meeting in March 2025 on a Tier 6 ABC control rule where rate based approaches can provide an alternative way to monitor fisheries, including in the CNMI.
    - FishMats are being pilot-tested with some fishers as an additional method to collect length data, as biosampling does not produce a wealth of data. Some Plan Team members wondered if FishMats could be incorporated into survey protocol.
    - The CNMI has been moving toward mandatory licensing and reporting as well.
- Sabater suggested the Council's FDCRC to explore rate-based approaches associated with the new Tier 6 ABC control rule.
- Carvalho agreed that prioritizing collection of length data is important going forward, but he also expressed a need for a broader perspective in envisioning how to improve the CNMI stock assessment. The Plan Team could recommend identification of barriers for data collection with the creel surveys and detailed explanation why the surveys conducted have declined in recent years; this should be done alongside looking at alternatives to data collection.
    - Some Plan Team members brainstormed voluntary reporting programs, especially with respect to capturing effort levels.

At this point in the meeting, Mia Iwane, PIFSC SEES Program, offered additional information on a previous question regarding PIFSC's Fish Flow project in American Samoa and whether the effort is addressing leakage from the longline fishery flooding the market with cheaper incidentally harvested pelagic species, affecting the local small boat bottomfish fisheries' ability to market their catch via formal channels. Iwane explained that, for bottomfish fishers, it often does not make financial sense to sell their catch to vendors or markets because the prices offered are not favorable. Instead, many prefer to sell their fish roadside, where demand remains strong. This may suggest that market supply is also limited. She proposed revisiting the interview guide to gather more detailed data from the U.S. longline fleet and small boat fishery, including information on target species, decision-making factors, and participants' perspectives on fishing for subsistence or local sales rather than commercial markets. Additionally, she recommended conducting opportunistic interviews with members of the purse seine fleet to gather insights into their catch and how the volume is distributed among different recipients. There was also interest in speaking with roadside vendors, and Iwane noted the potential to informally include a few questions for them as part of broader outreach.

Additional discussion on this topic included the following:

- Sabater noted that during interviews conducted in American Samoa a couple of years ago, several bottomfish fishers reported that they were not receiving good prices from

the formal market and instead chose to sell their catch roadside. Smaller-sized bottomfish, which are suitable for pan or deep frying, were particularly popular and could be sold for around $80 per string.
    - Sean Felise, American Samoa DMWR, stated that small *alia* boat operators are increasingly marginalized as pelagic species flood local markets, pushing them aside. To break even, many of these fishers have turned to selling their catch roadside, which has proven to be more effective. While restaurants used to be in the market for larger bottomfish, consumer demand for these fish has declined. As a result, fishers are now timing their efforts around cultural holidays, which serve as key opportunities to catch and sell more bottomfish. Additionally, spearfishers are actively participating in the same market space, and today, many of the small boats are operated by spearfishers rather than traditional bottomfish fishers.
- Nadon noted that an examination of historical data, particularly from 2008 or 2007 and further back into the 1990s, revealed that BMUS species were reflected in dealer reports during those years. He suggested that this historical inclusion of BMUS in dealer records indicates that the species were indeed being tracked at the time. Nadon also mentioned that there may be a need to investigate the price per pound reported, as this could shed further light on the trends and accuracy of past dealer reporting.
- Sabater asked when the American Samoa purse seine bycatch began entering the local markets. Council staff noted that the Advisory Panel (AP) has been discussing this issue over the past two years, specifically regarding the leakage of non-albacore fish (i.e., bycatch from the purse seine fishery) that is not used for canned tuna. Monitoring of this leakage has improved, allowing for better visibility into what is entering the local market and suggesting that the extent of unmonitored leakage has decreased.
- Felise explained that this concern was raised a couple of years ago by worried fishers and was brought to the attention of Director Taotasi. He noted that much of the leakage comes from purse seiners unloading their catch, often using *alia* vessels during the night or early morning hours when security or port police are less active. Additionally, some staff involved in this process were addressed. In many cases, bycatch would be given to a security guard, while the rest of the bycatch would be offloaded unofficially.

10. Public Comment

There were no public comments provided.

11. Discussion and Archipelagic Plan Team Recommendations

The Archipelagic Plan Team made the following recommendations:

- *Regarding data collection for the fishery modules of the territorial Annual SAFE reports and the next territorial benchmark assessments*, the Archipelagic Plan Team
    - Recommends the Council, in coordination with PIFSC through the Fisheries Data Collection and Research Committee, work with the jurisdictional fisheries management agencies in identifying and removing the barriers that prevents efficient and effective collection of fisheries data resulting in a decline in survey interviews and reporting of the fishery constituents affecting representativeness of data reported in the Annual SAFE Reports and future benchmark assessments
    - Recommends the Council to work with the CNMI DLNR, in collaboration with PIFSC, to implement the Mandatory License and Reporting Regulation. Further

the APT recommends the Council encourage Guam Department of Agriculture to develop their mandatory license and reporting regulation
    - Recommends the Council to work with PIFSC and jurisdictional fisheries management agencies in exploring the feasibility of collecting more length information to develop a rate-based monitoring in support of the Tier-6 ABC Control Rule amendment that the Council took final action on at it's 202nd meeting.
- *Regarding Marine Recreational Information Program*, the Archipelagic Plan Team recommends the Council, in coordination with PIFSC and PIRO, convene the MRIP Pacific Island Regional Implementation Team with participation from the following APT members Marc Nadon, Rob Ahrens, Minling Pan, Jason Helyer, Bryan Ishida, Danika Kleiber, and Jenny Suter to develop regional priorities to augment the priorities identified in the MRIP Reenvisioning and the updated Pacific Islands Regional Implementation Plan.
- *Regarding the 2024 evaluation of catches relative to their respective Annual Catch Limits*, the Archipelagic Plan Team verified the catches were below their respective ACLs except for the Guam BMUS where the three-year average catch is 31,426 lbs. The APT notes that the Council and PIRO are working on the new ACL specification rulemaking package with the Council taking Final Action in December 2024 at its 201st meeting with a new ACL at 34,500 lbs. The APT recommends the Council apply the new ACL as the basis for the catch evaluation.
- *Regarding the main Hawaiian island uku Annual Catch Limits*, the Archipelagic Plan Team reiterates its previous recommendation to choose alternative 4 that specifies ACL at 401,020 lb (36%) with post-season AM only.

The Archipelagic Plan Team agreed to the following work items:

- DAWR and WPacFIN to follow up with the active vendors to sign a data waiver to allow reporting the commercial landing information in the SAFE report
- WPacFIN to implement new length-weight relationships provided by PIFSC LHP for the purposes of informing creel survey expansions.
- Continue to evaluate the utility of tracking the impacts of military activities on fisheries as part of the Annual SAFE Report revamp
- The Ecosystem Component Working Group will review forage species for the federal MUS and continue discussions to improve monitoring and support of life history studies for priority species and create a meaningful framework that allows effective management of ECS within what is permissible under National Standard 1. The Working Group will also explore refining the Council's Ecosystem Objectives in all its FEP.
- The APT reached the following consensus:
    - To close the American Samoa FAD data work item noting the data collected by this program is focused on the small club-based fishery and have little overlap with the general BMUS boat based fisheries
    - To continue with the Territorial Non-Commercial Module defined by total creel catch minus dealer reported catch for this year's annual report and to utilize total catch, intent-to-sell, and dealer-reported catch disposition recognizing that each describes a different aspect of the fishery for next year's report.

- To pause the development of the Hawaii Non-Commercial Module as progress on current processes to better define Hawaii's non-commercial fishery sectors continues.