



*A U.S. longline fishing vessel, the F/V Kawaiola, based out of Hawai'i in transit to fishing grounds beyond 50 nm from islands within U.S. jurisdiction in the Pacific. Photo: Caleb McMahan.*

## Balancing Ocean Access and Conservation: What the Presidential Proclamation Really Means for the Western Pacific



*Still image from video of President Trump signing the proclamation titled Unleashing American Commercial Fishing in the Pacific, April 17, 2025. (l-r) American Samoa Congresswoman Uifa'atali Amata, Secretary of Commerce Howard Lutnick, Council Executive Director Seuta'atia Kitty Simonds and Council Vice Chair Taotasi Archie Soliai with President Trump. Source: Video by Margo Martin, White House Special Assistant, (@margomartin47 on X)*

**American Samoa delegates provided a song of thanks** while President Donald Trump signed a Proclamation in the Oval Office April 17, 2025, saying, "it is an honor" and that "we are giving you back your lives." The proclamation removed commercial fishing prohibitions in waters from 50 to 200 nautical miles (nm) in the U.S. exclusive economic zone (EEZ) around Johnston Atoll, Jarvis and Wake Islands. These waters were previously closed to commercial fishing through the designation of the Pacific Islands Heritage Marine National Monument (PIHMNM).

The proclamation has raised questions and concerns about the future of the PIHMNM, particularly regarding commercial fishing, endangered species protection and ecosystem impacts. Despite some public

confusion, the Presidential Proclamation does not change the boundaries of the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI) or the core conservation zones within the PIHMNM. Fishing continues to be prohibited from 0 to 50 nm around Wake, Jarvis, Howland and Baker Islands, Palmyra and Johnston Atolls, and Kingman Reef—where coral reefs, seabird nesting areas and turtle habitats are found.

What has changed is the reopening of waters in the U.S. EEZ between 50 and 200 nm around Wake, Johnston and Jarvis Islands to U.S.-permitted commercial vessels, primarily the Hawai'i longline and American Samoa purse seine fleets.

These areas are thousands of meters deep—often deeper than 3,800 m (12,467 feet)—



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## STORY ICON KEY

### REGIONAL INTEREST



### CONSERVATION



### FISHERMEN



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### GOVERNMENT



Federal



Hawai'i



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fisheries management in the  
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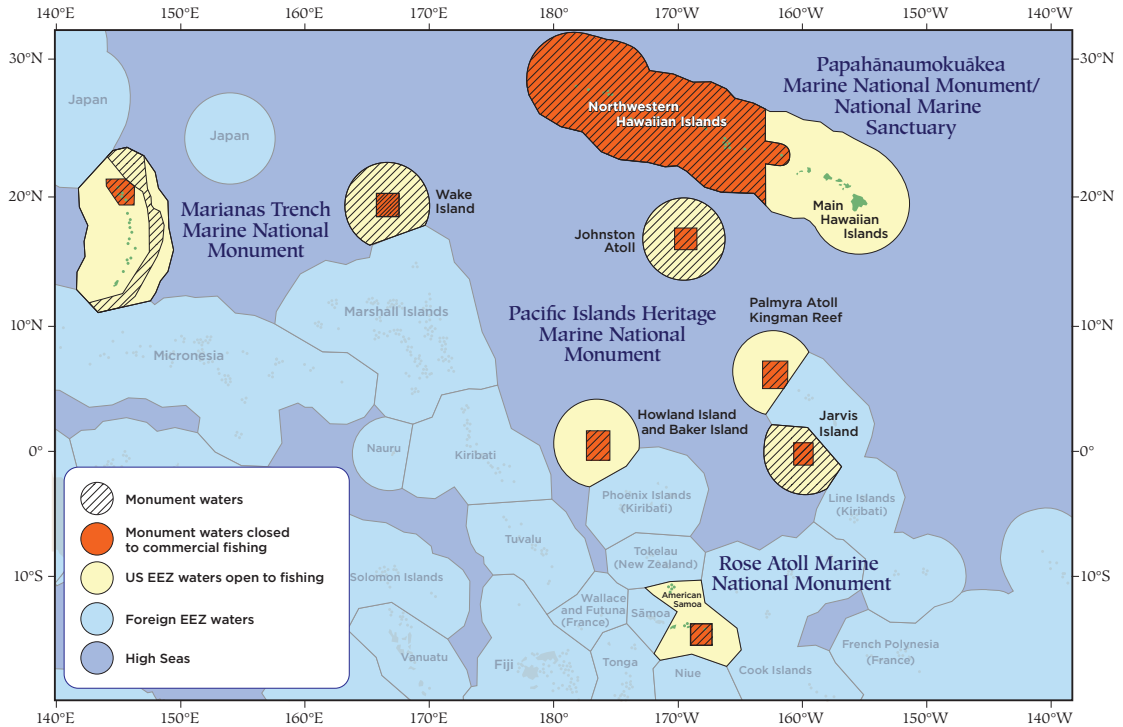


# Presidential Proclamation

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



## United States Exclusive Economic Zones of the US Western Pacific Region



and far from coral reef ecosystems. Longline fishing targets highly migratory species like tuna at midwater depths (40-350 m), well above the seabed and below the reach of most protected species.

The emphasis on reviewing existing marine national monuments with an eye toward opening them to commercial fishing—where consistent with the preservation of historic and scientific objects—demonstrates a pragmatic approach. It acknowledges the economic realities faced by communities like American Samoa, while maintaining a commitment to genuine conservation goals. This is not about abandoning environmental stewardship; it's about adopting strategies that are scientifically sound, economically viable and respectful of the needs and traditional rights of Pacific Islanders.

The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council has led the way in conservation for decades including:

- 1983: First no-take marine protected areas (MPAs) established under the Precious Coral Fishery Management Plan
- 1986: Bottomfish Fishery Management Plan prohibited destructive fishing gear and

**Despite some public confusion, the Presidential Proclamation does not change the boundaries of the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI) or the core conservation zones within the PIHMNM.**

techniques such as trawl nets and bottom-set gillnets

- 1991: 50-nm Protected Species Zone around the NWHI to protect Hawaiian monk seals
- 2001: Coral Reef Ecosystem Plan established no-take MPAs at Kingman Reef, Jarvis, Howland and Baker Islands
- 2002: Large Vessel Prohibited Area created to support traditional fishing in American Samoa

All these measures remain in effect and continue to protect species and habitats across the region. The Council's efforts have also reduced interactions with seabirds and turtles by up to 90%. Hawai'i and American Samoa longline vessels must carry tools and receive

training to safely release any incidentally caught protected species, and use mitigation measures like tori lines, circle hooks and deep-set gear.

Independent scientists and international assessments confirm that target tuna stocks are not overfished, and that existing fishery regulations are effective in conserving biodiversity and minimizing bycatch. Recent peer-reviewed studies show that large, static MPAs in open-ocean environments do not provide significant conservation benefits compared to dynamic, science-based fisheries management. The reopened areas are unlikely to impact highly migratory species like bigeye tuna or leatherback turtles, whose presence in these waters is rare and transient.

This policy change supports American Samoa's economy—home to the last remaining tuna cannery in the United States and a community heavily dependent on the fishing industry. It also opens a more accessible portion of the EEZ to Hawai'i's longline fleet, helping reduce fuel costs and increase safety.

Opening 50- to 200-nm zones around three remote islands for U.S.-permitted fishing vessels does not compromise the strong environmental protections that have been in place for decades. Coral reefs, endangered species and sensitive habitats remain protected. This balanced approach allows for continued conservation while supporting sustainable U.S. fisheries in the Pacific. 🐟

## FAQs: What You Need to Know About the April 17 Proclamation

### **Q: What did the proclamation do?**

A: It reopened the 50–200 nm zones around Wake, Johnston, and Jarvis Islands for U.S. commercial fishing vessels. Nearshore waters (0–50 nm) remain closed.

### **Q: Have the monument boundaries changed?**

A: No. The Pacific Islands Heritage Marine National Monument

boundaries are the same. The proclamation only affects fishing access in deeper offshore areas.

### **Q: Are sensitive habitats like coral reefs still protected?**

A: Yes. The closed 0–50 nm zones safeguard nearshore habitats, coral reefs and species like turtles and seabirds.

### **Q: Is this a threat to marine conservation?**

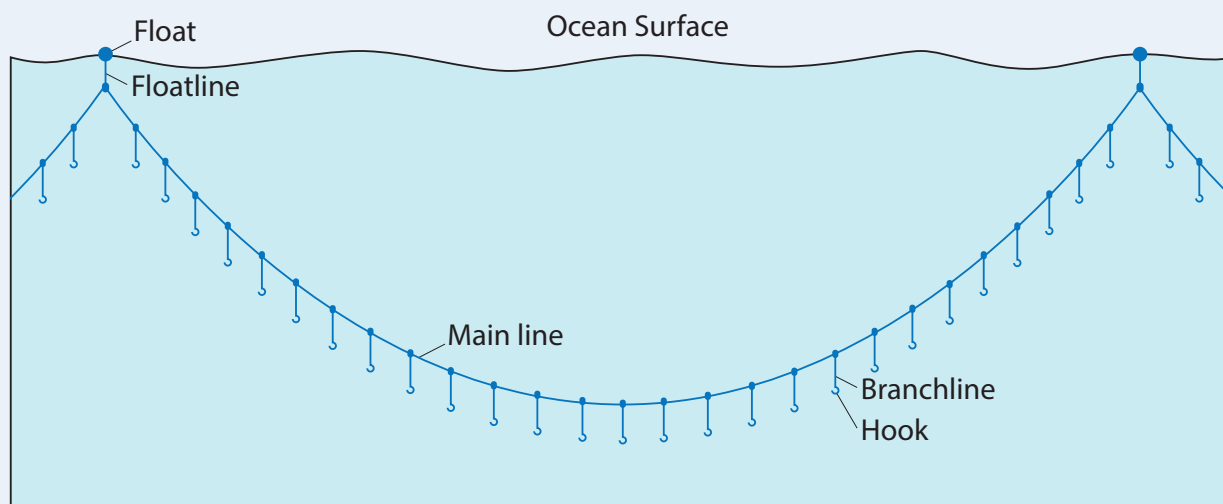
A: According to multiple peer-reviewed studies, offshore closures provide limited added benefit for migratory species like tuna. Science-based, dynamic management is more effective.

### **Q: What types of fishing are allowed now?**

A: Primarily longline and purse seine fishing for tuna, which uses surface gear and avoids contact with seafloor habitats. Destructive gear types remain prohibited.

### **Q: Who benefits from this change?**

A: U.S.-flagged fishing fleets—especially those from Hawai'i and American Samoa—gain access to U.S. waters they were previously barred from, improving domestic food security and sustainability.



Generalized depiction of the Hawai'i deep-set longline fishery. During the day, bigeye tuna feed, and are caught, in deeper waters. 840 m between floats / Hooks: Depth of 40–350 m, 27 hooks between floats. Source: National Marine Fisheries Service.





American Samoa's tuna industry consists of one cannery and the locally based fishing boats that supply it. The Samoa Tuna Processors facility, seen in the foreground, is operated by StarKist Samoa (located next to STP). American Samoa has the best natural deep-water port in the South Pacific and the largest tuna cannery in the western and central Pacific. Photo: Cape Fisheries.

# American Samoa Responds to New Executive Orders on Fisheries: A Path to Economic Stability and Conservation

*By Nate Ilaoa, American Samoa vice chair of the Council's Advisory Panel and cultural practitioner*

**In American Samoa, the recent fisheries-related Executive Orders (EOs)** issued by President Trump have sparked intense discussion, especially regarding the future of our tuna fishing and canning industries. These directives are being hailed by many as a step toward a balanced and pragmatic approach to fisheries management—one that acknowledges the economic realities of our community while maintaining the nation's commitment to marine conservation.

For years, well-intentioned but sometimes misguided conservation efforts have threatened the livelihoods of American Samoans. These policies often failed to align with the best available science concerning highly migratory fish stocks. The new EOs, however, present an opportunity to correct this course, offering not only economic revitalization but also sustainable management practices that can support both conservation and economic growth.

American Samoa's economy is deeply intertwined with the tuna fishing and canning industries. Over 80% of private sector jobs and more than 99% of exports depend on this vital industry. The establishment and expansion of marine national monuments, intended for conservation, have sparked fierce opposition from local communities. Many fear that

the designation of new sanctuaries would lead to the loss of essential fishing grounds, endangering local canneries and the thousands of jobs that depend on them.

Our governor, delegate to Congress, the majority of local legislators, and a wide segment of our community have all voiced opposition to further expansion of marine national monuments and the creation of new national marine sanctuaries. Despite these objections, the federal government proceeded with the expansion, leaving many in American Samoa feeling excluded from the decision-making processes that directly affect our economic future.

The new EOs are seen by many as a response to these concerns. They recognize that appropriately managed commercial fishing can coexist with the preservation of historic and scientific objects within the marine monuments. Importantly, the orders acknowledge that highly migratory species like tuna do not remain within the boundaries of these vast ocean sanctuaries. Areas that would be opened to fishing are typically located thousands of feet underwater, where commercial fishing methods do not harm the sea floor or nearshore resources.



Scientific studies, including the recent research by Hampton et al. (2023), show that large-scale marine protected areas (MPAs) often have limited conservation benefits for migratory species like tuna. These species are highly mobile, and the conservation of their stocks depends more on international management measures, such as those imposed by the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), rather than on large, static marine reserves. According to experts like Ray Hilborn, a Professor at the University of Washington's School of Aquatic and Fishery Sciences, even if abundance is higher inside an MPA, it doesn't necessarily benefit the fishery or increase overall abundance.

This research points to the need for effective, science-based management that considers the realities of migratory species and the global nature of the fisheries industry. U.S. vessels, like those that deliver tuna to the StarKist Samoa cannery, already operate under strict regulations and oversight, including GPS tracking and onboard observers. This level of monitoring contrasts sharply with the lack of regulation faced by fleets from countries like China, whose fishing operations are suspected of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing practices in the Pacific.

As Vince Haleck, a local longline fishing vessel owner, stated, expanding marine sanctuaries is "meaningless without proper policing of American Samoa's own waters to prevent unregulated fishing by China-flagged vessels."

The EOs also address the need to reduce unnecessary regulatory burdens on American fishermen. For the U.S. fleet to remain competitive and ensure a consistent supply of fish to our canneries, it is crucial that we maintain access to our fishing grounds. Loss of these grounds due to expanded "no-take" zones would jeopardize the local economy and the livelihoods of tens of thousands of Samoans. A petition signed by more than 1,200 StarKist

employees urged reconsideration of the expansion, highlighting the importance of safeguarding the fishing industry and promoting sustainable fishing practices.

The focus of the new orders on reviewing existing marine national monuments, with the goal of reopening them to commercial fishing where it is consistent with the preservation of historic and scientific objects, represents a balanced, forward-thinking approach. It recognizes the economic importance of tuna fishing to American Samoa while remaining committed to the preservation of marine biodiversity.

This is not about abandoning environmental stewardship; it's about implementing strategies that are scientifically sound, economically viable and respectful of the needs and

rights of Pacific Islanders. By recognizing the migratory nature of tuna, acknowledging the limited conservation benefits of vast static MPAs for these species, and understanding the critical economic role the tuna industry plays in our region, President Trump's EOs offer a pathway to both economic prosperity and sustainable fisheries management.

Finally, it's worth noting that the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, which governs U.S. marine fisheries, establishes two National Standards: the prevention of overfishing and the achievement of the optimum yield from each fishery. The tuna stocks served by American Samoa's fishing industry are neither overfished nor experiencing overfishing, according to all available scientific data. However, under the last administration, the federal government proposed closing more than 750,000 square miles of ocean to U.S. fishermen—a proposal that was met with overwhelming opposition from our local communities.

While over 99% of U.S. marine national monuments are in the Pacific Islands Region, similar restrictions are not applied to fisheries in Maine or Alaska, sparking questions about why our region alone should bear the brunt of such drastic measures. Thankfully, the

recent EOs have provided relief from this looming threat, ensuring that American Samoa's fishing industry can continue to thrive without unnecessary disruption. For this, we should all be grateful—regardless of our opinions of the man who signed them. 🐟

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# 202nd Council Meeting Highlights

March 25-27, 2025



The Western Pacific Council meets at the Hilton Hawaiian Village in March 2025.

## Council Urges Increased Federal Funding

**In a critical call to action**, the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council urged the U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC) to address severe funding shortfalls threatening the future of fisheries management and vital capacity-building programs across the Pacific Islands. With fishery resources and local economies at risk, the Council requested immediate increases in funding allocations from the DOC, NOAA and the Office of Management and Budget. These increases are necessary to safeguard the region's marine environment and fishing communities.

Council members expressed grave concerns over budget reductions, particularly the Council's scholarship program supporting university students from American Samoa, Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). "Funding is critical to developing young professionals who return to our islands to strengthen fisheries management," said Council member Archie Soliai. "Without support, the future of our fisheries is at stake."

Since its launch in 2015, the Council's U.S. Pacific Territories Fishery Capacity-

Building Scholarship Program has helped students from American Samoa, Guam and the CNMI who commit to working in their local fishery agency for each year of support they receive. Funding has come from the Council, National Marine Fisheries Service and Western Pacific Sustainable Fisheries Funds.

Rep. Trude Ledoux-Sunia, from the American Samoa *Fono* (legislature), thanked the Council for its hard work in fighting for the fisheries and economic stability of the territory. However, she expressed disappointment in the loss of funding, emphasizing the negative impact on developing the next generation of fisheries scientists and managers.

## Council Responds to Recent Executive Orders

The Council reviewed recent executive orders issued by the Trump Administration that could significantly impact Pacific fisheries:

- **EO 14192 – Unleashing Prosperity through Deregulation**, which requires federal agencies to eliminate at least 10 existing regulations for each new one.
- **EO 14169 – Reevaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid**, which directs agencies to ensure

foreign aid aligns with U.S. security and prosperity goals.

Council members discussed the regulatory burden these orders aim to reduce, particularly as they affect local management efforts. Council member Chelsa Muña, director of the Guam Department of Agriculture, criticized the



Council member Chelsa Muña

restrictions, citing the proposed listing of giant clams as an example. "It is ludicrous to list giant clams while we are actively working on solutions, and even more frustrating that we would need a federal permit just to outplant them in our own waters," she said.

The Council plans to raise Endangered Species Act (ESA) concerns with the administration, including:

- Proposed critical habitat designations for corals and green sea turtles





American Samoa representatives attend the 2022nd Council meeting in Honolulu March 25-27, 2025. (l-r) Council Vice Chair Taotasi Archie Soliai, NOAA Office of Law Enforcement Asst. Director Martina Sagapolu, Council Chair Taulapapa Will Sword, Fono Rep. Trude Ledoux-Sunia, Executive Director Seuta'atia Kitty Simonds, Fono Rep. Va'asa Simanu, Council staff Felix Penalosa and Council Advisory Panel Vice Chair Nate Ilaoa.

- The proposed giant clam listing
- ESA-related measures such as the oceanic whitetip shark take prohibition, despite projections of population increases
- The need to recognize indigenous cultural harvest of green sea turtles

Council members supported efforts to rescind or revise unnecessary regulations in line with the Administration's broader deregulation agenda.

Regarding foreign aid, Council members were concerned that withholding assistance to Pacific Island nations could jeopardize international fishing arrangements—particularly those under the South Pacific Tuna Treaty. The United States has pledged \$60 million annually under the treaty, which enables U.S. tuna purse seiners to purchase fishing days in the national waters of these countries. “We are worried that withholding assistance could jeopardize fishing arrangements and ultimately the viability of the U.S. fishery that supports American Samoa’s economy,” said Soliai. The Council will work with federal agencies to assess the potential impacts of EO 14169 on existing international fishing treaties and arrangements.

## American Samoa Bottomfish Management Revised

The Council recommended revising

the list of managed American Samoa bottomfish species from 13 to six deepwater snappers to focus on species with sufficient data for stock assessments and annual catch limits (ACLs). The remaining seven species will be reclassified as ecosystem component, to be monitored but not actively managed under ACLs.

Council-Recommended American Samoa Bottomfish for Management		
Scientific Name	Common Name(s)	Local Name(s)
<i>Aphareus rutilans</i>	Red snapper, silvermouth, lehi	<i>Palu-gutusaliva</i>
<i>Etelis boweni</i>	Red snapper, giant ehu	—
<i>Etelis carbunculus</i>	Red snapper, ehu	<i>Palu-malau</i>
<i>Etelis coruscans</i>	Red snapper, onaga	<i>Palu-loa</i>
<i>Pristipomoides flavipinnis</i>	Yelloweye snapper	<i>Palu-sina</i>
<i>Pristipomoides zonatus</i>	Flower snapper, gindai	<i>Palu-ula, palu-sega</i>

MHI Deepwater Shrimp and Precious Corals Current Catch Limits	
Council-Managed Species	Harvest Limits (lbs)
Deepwater shrimp	250,773
'Au'au Channel - black coral	5,512
Makapu'u bed - pink coral / bamboo coral	2,205 / 551
180 Fathom Bank - pink coral / bamboo coral	489 / 123
Brooks Bank - pink coral / bamboo coral	979 / 245
Ka'ena Point bed - pink coral / bamboo coral	148 / 37
Keahole bed - pink coral / bamboo coral	148 / 37
Precious coral in MHI exploratory area	2,205

## Action Item Outcomes

- **Striped Marlin:** U.S. catch limit of 393.4 metric tons for 2025–2027, with a 381.5 metric ton retention limit for Hawai'i longline vessels. Limits for 2026 and 2027 may be adjusted based on Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission decisions.
- **Uku (gray jobfish/blue-green snapper):** Annual catch limit of 401,020 pounds in the Main Hawaiian Islands (MHI) from 2026–2029, with a 36% risk of overfishing. As an accountability measure (AM), the Council recommended implementing a post-season adjustment, reducing the following year's quota if the three-year average catch exceeds the limit.
- **MHI Deepwater Shrimp and Precious Corals:** Current catch limits maintained through 2028 due to low harvest levels. The 2022-2023 average catch for deepwater shrimp was 19,287 pounds. The associated post-season AM is similar to the one for *uku*. 🐟





# Eyes on the Ocean: Electronic Monitoring Reels in a New Era

*The F/V Green Mountain has an electronic monitoring camera (circled in red) positioned toward the stern to record activity during hauling operations. The Hawai'i longline fleet has participated in pilot EM studies since 2014. Photo: Eric Kingma, Hawaii Longline Association.*

**In a significant step toward sustainable fisheries management**, the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council is advancing the implementation of electronic monitoring (EM) systems in the Hawai'i and American Samoa pelagic longline fisheries. At its 202nd meeting in March 2025, the Council emphasized the urgent need to transition from traditional human observer programs to technology-driven monitoring due to rising costs and decreasing coverage. The Council will decide whether to authorize EM for monitoring protected species interactions at its June meeting, along with how it should be funded going forward.

EM systems use onboard cameras and sensors to record fishing activities, capturing critical data such as catch, bycatch and interactions with protected species. Championed by the Council as early as 2002, EM capabilities closely align with federal mandates under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, the Endangered Species Act and the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has committed \$4 million to cover initial setup costs for the EM program, separate from an estimated \$2.4 million in annual operating costs. This represents significant savings compared to the \$7 million per year required for the traditional observer program. Part of EM's ongoing costs includes an estimated \$10,000 per vessel every three years to replace equipment—affecting around 160 vessels active in the two longline fleets. At the March meeting, NMFS noted that cost-sharing options may include requiring vessel owners to shoulder this replacement cost.

American Samoa Vice Chair Archie Soliai questioned NMFS's willingness to fund EM beyond the initial three years. Soliai and Council Executive Director Kitty Simonds reaffirmed

the Council's longstanding position that federally mandated monitoring must be federally funded, especially considering that these regulations directly involve protected species monitoring. "If the federal government requires monitoring under federal laws, it needs to pay for it, regardless of whether the Council initiates its implementation," Simonds emphasized.

Representatives from both fisheries expressed strong support for EM, highlighting economic pressures and the advantages EM provides over traditional methods. Nate Ilaoa, Advisory Panel vice chair for American Samoa, underscored the critical economic stakes, warning that without support, the fishery faces "total economic collapse." Similarly, Gil Kualii, Advisory Panel vice chair for Hawai'i, called EM the "gold standard" of

monitoring, citing its cost-effectiveness over traditional observers.

At the June 2025 meeting, the Council will evaluate various EM implementation scenarios to minimize regulatory and financial strain on the fisheries. A draft Environmental Assessment and Fishery Ecosystem

Plan amendment outline potential alternatives ranging from mandatory to voluntary adoption. The Council will also discuss how EM should be financially sustained beyond the 2025-2027 phase-in period.

The Council and NMFS plan to roll out EM systems across Hawai'i's fleet starting in late 2025, initially targeting voluntary participation, progressing to full implementation by 2028. American Samoa's fleet will join by 2027, highlighting the region-wide move towards advanced monitoring.

As this pivotal transition unfolds, the Council remains committed to working closely with NMFS, industry experts and fisheries stakeholders to ensure an effective, economically viable shift to EM, securing the future of sustainable fisheries management in the Western Pacific. 🐟

**The National Marine Fisheries Service has committed \$4 million to cover initial setup costs for the EM program, separate from an estimated \$2.4 million in annual operating costs. This represents significant savings compared to the \$7 million per year required for the traditional observer program.**



# Pacific Island Voices



## Communities Speak on Fisheries Challenges and the Future

From February through April 2025, the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council and the Pacific Islands Fisheries Group (PIFG) held a series of community engagement meetings across the main Hawaiian Islands, Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). Funded by the Inflation Reduction Act, these gatherings gave voice to local fishers facing mounting environmental and regulatory challenges, while offering insights into the future of island fisheries management.

Across the Western Pacific, a resounding message emerged: while island fishers are resilient, they feel increasingly unsupported in preserving their livelihoods, culture and way of life. “Having a voice is one thing, but making real change is another,” was a recurring theme at several meetings.

Fishers shared stark experiences of how climate change and shifting ocean conditions are altering traditional fishing practices. In Kona and Hilo, warmer waters, stronger currents and the presence of invasive species such as *ta’ape* (blue-lined snapper) and *toau* (blacktail snapper) are disrupting the ecosystem. “We’re seeing warmer water temperatures now; it used to be cooler, around 78°F, but now it’s different,” said one fisher in Hilo.

These shifts are evident regionwide. In Guam, fishers reported that trips that once took two hours now take an entire day due to altered fish distributions. CNMI participants spoke of unpredictable *tí’ao* (juvenile goatfish) seasons, while Hawai’i fishers noticed albacore tuna appearing out of season.

Access remains a challenge as well. From limited entry to traditional fishing spots due to marine protected areas and military zones to increasing harbor congestion caused by tourism-related boats, many fishers feel pushed out. “Fishing is dying out as a trade,” said one Kaua’i fisherman, citing rising costs, stagnant fish prices and a

market that punishes supply abundance.

Shark depredation has become a serious concern, especially in Kona. “One Kona fisherman reported losing all six *‘ahi* he caught in a day to sharks,” noted Alex Min of PIFG. Fishers recounted how sharks are growing more adept at targeting hooked fish, with some even learning to bite through fishing lines. Many worry that growing shark populations, combined with insufficient management, will threaten their ability to continue fishing.

**“Having a voice is one thing, but making real change is another,” was a recurring theme at several meetings.**

Despite these struggles, the meetings showcased the strong cultural connection Pacific Islanders have with fishing. “We all belong to something, someplace and someone and the belonging is required to be who you are,” one long-time fisherman emphasized. This connection drives a shared hope to pass on the tradition to future generations, even amid mounting uncertainties.

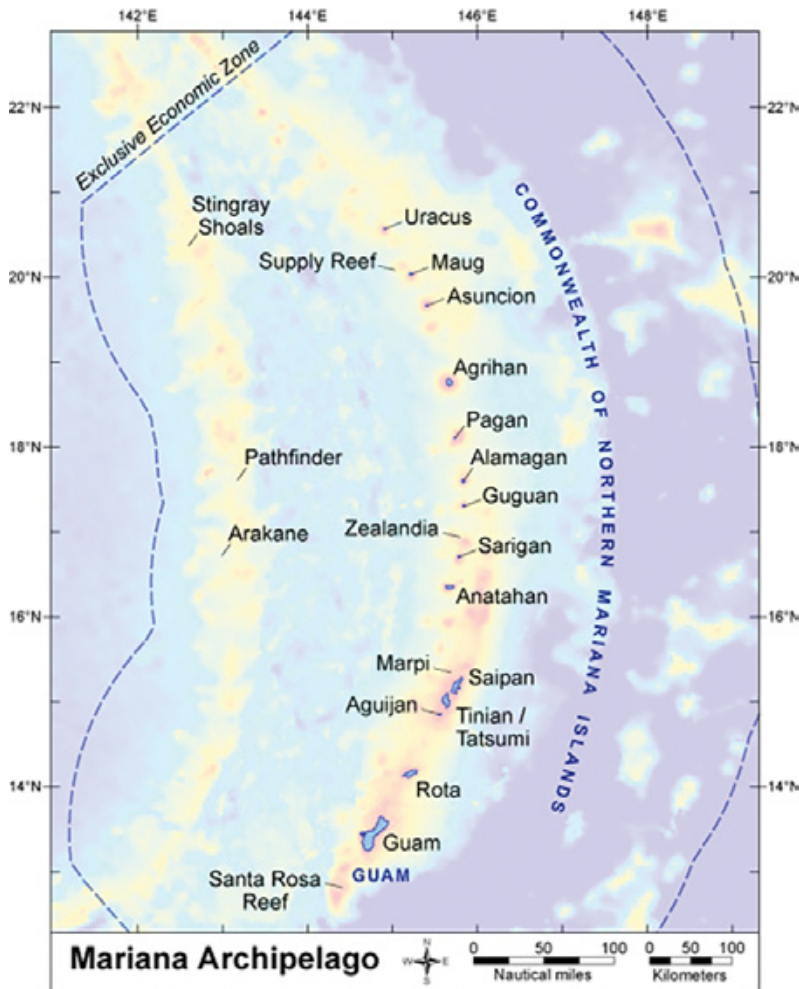
The Council decision-making process is “bottom up” and recognizes the importance of ongoing community dialogue and ensuring fishers’ voices shape policy decisions. Future engagement meetings are scheduled for the end of June as the team travels to American Samoa, followed by a second round of meetings planned for Hawai’i starting in August, CNMI/Guam in October and American Samoa in November.

To stay informed or contribute perspectives, contact Council staff Zach Yamada at [zach.yamada@wpcouncil.org](mailto:zach.yamada@wpcouncil.org) or reach out to PIFG at [Pacificfisheries@gmail.com](mailto:Pacificfisheries@gmail.com). For more details on the Council’s work and upcoming meetings, visit [www.wpcouncil.org](http://www.wpcouncil.org). 🐟





# Spotlight on the CNMI: Communities Call for Better Catch Data



As part of the recent community engagement meetings funded by the Inflation Reduction Act, Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council and Pacific Islands Fisheries Group staff traveled to Tinian, Rota and the Northern Islands to hear firsthand from local fishers and community leaders. While the issues raised echoed concerns heard across the region, one central theme stood out: the urgent need for better fish catch data collection.

Fishers from these islands expressed frustration over the lack of accurate representation in official statistics. Unlike Saipan, which benefits from regular creel surveys and commercial sales data collection, Tinian and Rota remain largely uncaptured. Fish caught in these islands are often transported to Saipan or Guam, where they are recorded without acknowledgment of their true origin.

“We’re catching fish, but it’s like we don’t exist in the data,” said one Tinian fisher. “That affects everything—from conservation to funding to how decisions are made about our resources.”

Vincent “Ben” Muña, a respected fisherman and community leader, emphasized the value of a pilot creel survey he helped run in collaboration with the CNMI Division of Fish and Wildlife. The survey offered valuable insight into local fishing trends and community needs. He and other participants stressed that expanding localized surveys is critical to understanding what’s happening on the water—and who is doing the fishing.

Tinian Mayor Edwin Aldan and Rota Mayor Aubrey Hocog echoed this sentiment during the meetings. They called for data systems that reflect the distinct contributions of their islands. “Our waters are being fished by many—not just local residents—but the benefits of that activity aren’t being captured here,” said Hocog. “We need recognition to be part of the decision-making.”

Underreporting and inconsistent enforcement of mandatory reporting rules have left these islands underrepresented in the regional picture. Without accurate, place-based data, fishery management decisions risk overlooking the unique realities and needs of the CNMI’s smaller communities. This underrepresentation not only distorts the science but also puts these islands at a disadvantage when it comes to securing resources and funding for fisheries development and sustainability.

Meeting attendees proposed several improvements: establish regular creel surveys on Tinian and Rota, train local data collectors and ensure that sales records identify the true island of origin. Better communication and outreach to fishers about why accurate reporting matters were also identified as priorities.

As the Council continues its series of engagement meetings, the message from the CNMI is clear: inclusion starts with being counted. Ensuring that all islands are represented in the data is not just a scientific necessity—it’s a matter of equity, culture and the future of island fisheries. 🐟

*Fishermen in Tinian express their concerns at a community meeting led by the Council and the Pacific Islands Fisheries Group about their catch data being accurately represented in CNMI DFW creel surveys and resulting management decisions.*







# Shifting Tides in Guam's Fishing Economy

*Long-time staff member Jae Park says Big Hook now reaches a broader market through online ordering and an expanded fishing gear selections.*

**Guam's fishing scene is undergoing a transformation** as seasoned fishermen gradually pass the torch to a younger generation of anglers. The introduction of new boats, boaters and fishing enthusiasts is reshaping the local fishing infrastructure, presenting both opportunities and challenges.

Long-standing establishments like Big Hook, which has proudly served the community since 1992, continue to thrive by evolving with the times. According to senior staff member Jae Park, Big Hook now reaches a broader market through online ordering and an expanded selection of fishing gear brands and products for every budget and fishing style. This diversity ensures that whether you're casting from shore or heading offshore, there's something for everyone. A loyal and varied customer base—ranging from military personnel and residents to tourists and visitors from the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI)—helps maintain steady business year-round, even during slower seasons.

A recent but short-lived addition to the tackle scene was the family-run James' Tackle, which initially gained support from the fishing community, particularly for its unique offerings imported from Japan. Veteran fishermen, reminded of the old Dejima Tackle shop, appreciated the familiar style and specialized products. However, fishing is an expensive hobby, and many anglers take pride in crafting their own rigs. James' Tackle's emphasis on pre-rigged tackle—while convenient—came at a higher price, which not all fishermen were willing to pay.

Compounding this was the growing trend of online shopping. Younger anglers increasingly turned to the internet for variety and competitive prices delivered straight to their door. These shifting preferences, along with broader economic pressures, eventually led James' Tackle to close after only a few years in operation.

Further competition came with the 2024 opening of Blue Pacific Fishing Club Fishing Tackle in Upper Tumon. This new shop entered the market with a competitive edge—offering Chinese-made tackle at prices Guam hadn't seen before. While the selection was initially limited, the affordability and close resemblance to name-brand products such as lure heads, skirts, reels, and hooks appealed to budget-conscious anglers. With plans to expand their inventory, Blue Pacific aims to carve out a lasting role in Guam's and the region's fishing economy.

Prominent lure makers and sellers such as Troy Imamura, Mike Davis, John Jocson, and Carlos "Hitman" Herrera continue to operate successfully, selling their items through social media platforms.

At the same time, Guam's broader marine and fishery infrastructure faces growing uncertainty. The Guam Fishermen's Cooperative Association remains in limbo, with construction on its facility completely stalled—casting further doubt on the future of local support systems. Fishers, including spearfishers and trollers, have adapted by selling directly at roadsides, restaurants and stores. Some enterprising individuals, preferring to stay anonymous, have begun acting as brokers—buying fish directly from fishers and selling to hotels, restaurants, and flea markets—easing the burden on the fishermen.

The Coral Reef Marine Center recently lost its long-time general manager Tim Perez and is now working to meet boaters' needs with the remaining staff, possibly heading in a new direction. Since leaving the marine center, Perez has started a marine industry consulting firm and is actively pursuing new business opportunities.

Micronesian Marine, with skilled boat mechanic Paul Garcia, is expanding its inventory of boat and small engine gear, supplies and parts. Garcia has become the island's "go-to" person for marine engine service and repairs.

The growing military presence in Guam has also led to a noticeable increase in charter fishing activity, particularly from Agat and Agaña Marinas. Service members, their families, and contractors now make up most of the bookings. Captains like Audrey Toves, owner of One Love GUDVibes Charters and a member of the Council's Guam Advisory Panel, report strong demand, with the potential to run trips seven days a week.

In addition to the local catch, imported fish continues to play a significant—though largely undocumented—role in Guam's fishery market. Shipments from the Philippines, FSM and Palau help supply reef and pelagic fish to meet consumer demand, especially during rough seas when local fishing is limited or halted.

As Guam's fishing community adapts to changing generations, economic pressures and shifting consumer habits, the resilience and innovation of its businesses and fishers will be key to sustaining the island's rich fishing culture and economy. 🐟





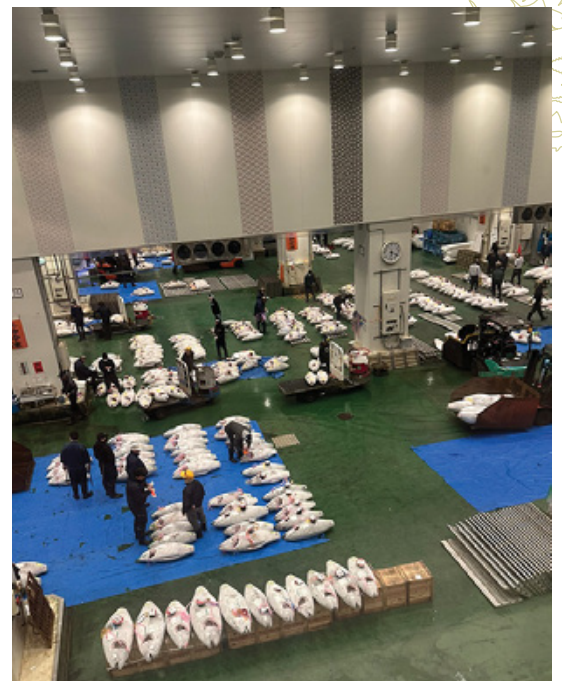


## The Connection Between Fish and Food: A Fisherman's Perspective on Toyosu and Tsukiji Markets

By: Captain Amanda Padilla, member of the Council's Hawai'i Advisory Panel

**As a commercial fisherman and licensed captain on Maui,** I've always felt a deep connection to the ocean and the life it sustains. Our work is vital to the food web, and that sense of responsibility drives the way we fish, care for the fish and share our catch. My recent visit to Japan, particularly the Toyosu Fish Auction and the Tsukiji Fish Market, reinforced this connection and opened my eyes to how the world's most famous seafood markets not only shape the food we eat but also educate future generations about the true value of our food.

The historic Tsukiji Fish Market began operations in 1935 and became one of the world's largest and most renowned wholesale seafood markets. It wasn't just the size or scale of the market that made it iconic, but the hustle and bustle of its daily auctions, where buyers would bid on everything from the finest







tuna to rare shellfish, making Tsukiji a must-visit spot for food enthusiasts. Today, the Tsukiji Outer Market is a lively destination offering a mix of retail shops, restaurants and culinary experiences. The streets are lined with fresh seafood vendors, sushi and ramen shops, kitchenware and so much more. It's a historic place rich in tradition and its legacy continues to thrive.

Toyosu, Tokyo's new fish market, stands as a modern testament to Japan's rich maritime culture. It replaced the historic Tsukiji Fish Market in 2018. Toyosu is a state-of-the-art facility designed with technological advancements, enhanced hygiene standards and greater space for operations. The market features temperature-controlled facilities to maintain the freshness of seafood. It is equipped with refrigerated containers, water filtration systems and cutting-edge auction technology, which allows for more efficient transactions. With all these advancements, the essence of the fish auction remains a fast paced, high stakes event where buyers bid on high quality seafood, and in particular, the much celebrated tuna auctions. As a fisherman who's seen the supply chain from the ocean to the table, standing in the heart of the Toyosu auction floor was nothing short of awe-inspiring.

The auction isn't just about prices and transactions—it's a precise mastery of time, trust and tradition. Upon entering the floor, a cold inhale of fresh

ocean life fills the air. The sound of the bell ringing announces the start of the auction, and the lively voice of the **せり人** *seribito* (auctioneer), brings energy to the floor. Watching the **せり人** *seribito* speed through bids, I couldn't help but feel a profound reverence for the entire system that allows us, as fishermen, to contribute to the cycle of food production. From the ocean, to the auction, to the dinner plate, every step in the process is essential. And as much as this is a business, it is also a celebration of what the sea gives us.

Toyosu Market is open 5 a.m. to 5 p.m. There is a mix of 39 restaurants with a variety of culinary delights such as sushi, tempura, eel, soba noodles, Chinese,

**The auction isn't just about prices and transactions—it's a precise mastery of time, trust and tradition.**

Western food, curry and more. The wholesale market on the fourth floor has more than 70 shops selling everything from fresh seafood and produce to specialty knives, kitchenware, clothing and our favorite—fishing gear.



Both Tsukiji and Toyosu markets demonstrate the intricate relationships between the ocean's ecosystems, the fishermen and women who harvest seafood, the distributors who get it to the auction block, and the chefs who carefully prepare it for consumption.

The tuna auction is a representation of the respect and reverence for fish and seafood in Japanese culture, where prices can skyrocket overnight for a prized fresh bluefin tuna. Markets like

Tsukiji and Toyosu reveal the effort that goes into providing fresh, quality fish. They remind us of the importance of making thoughtful, informed choices about the food we eat, encouraging awareness of sustainability and eating locally.

As the future unfolds, the continued evolution of these markets offers a model for how modern technology and



traditional values coincide to ensure the sustainability and quality of the food that defines Japan's culinary culture and influences the world.

In Hawai'i, we're fortunate to have a local fishing community that continues to thrive, providing fresh and sustainable seafood to those who value the connection between their food and the source. Let's continue to eat locally and support our fishermen.

For more information visit: [www.tsukiji.or.jp/english](http://www.tsukiji.or.jp/english), [www.toyosu-market.or.jp](http://www.toyosu-market.or.jp).







## Improving Fisheries Literacy in American Samoa Classrooms

**A new initiative is launching in American Samoa**, designed to equip teachers with the tools to bring fisheries and marine science into the classroom. The Fisheries Training for Educators initiative aims to increase student understanding of responsible fishing practices and its importance to the environment, economy and culture of the region.

This effort was initiated by the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council's American Samoa Advisory Panel (AP), which identified a need for more fishery education in school curricula. The project is funded by the Western Pacific Sustainable Fishery Fund and aligns well with the territory's Marine Conservation Plan (MCP), which emphasizes education as a key to effective fisheries stewardship. This project is a critical step toward fostering environmental awareness and equipping the next generation with the knowledge to support healthy ocean ecosystems.

The project aims to train 120 intermediate and high school science teachers through workshops that provide a balance of classroom lessons with hands-on activities. It will also weave fisheries and marine science topics into school curricula and create educational videos, a component that the AP had long envisioned and is now being realized through this project by combining efforts with the Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources (DMWR). These videos will cover topics such as different fishing boats, gears, and rules, as well as how fishing ties into American Samoa's unique culture and

economy. They will be used in classrooms and shared online so more people can access the content, including platforms like YouTube for broader visibility. The project also includes the development of lesson plans, surveys to gather feedback from teachers and students, and mechanisms to assess how well the content is integrated into school curricula.

The project kicked off in January 2025 and the steering committee, consisting of members from the American Samoa DMWR, Department of Education, AP and Council staff, is gathering resources for a teacher workshop planned during July-August 2025. Anticipated outcomes include educational materials and videos ready for schools to use.

This effort ties into the American Samoa MCP by boosting education and encouraging teamwork across the region for better fisheries management. The project includes continuous monitoring by the steering committee and participant surveys to assess its effectiveness and guide improvements.

The Fisheries Training for Educators project is an important move toward improved ocean literacy and long-term resource conservation. By giving teachers the tools and knowledge they need, organizers hope to spark interest in students to protect their ocean home for generations to come. 🐟

*Above: DMWR staff teach Leone High School students about fish biology and life history at an outdoor event in January 2025. Photo: DMWR.*



# Council Family Updates

## At the 202nd Council meeting, the Council:

Appointed **Celeste Hanley** to replace Scott Bloom as the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Pacific Islands Regional Office representative on the Education Committee

Appointed **Alexander Min** to the Non-Commercial Fishery Advisory Committee

Appointed the following people as alternates to the Advisory Panels (AP):

- **Audrey Toves** to the Guam AP
- **Dre Lizama** and **Lorna Ogumoro-Oginoef** to the CNMI AP
- **W. Kaleo Crivello** to the Hawai'i AP

## Conferences in the Pacific

The 20th anniversary International Pacific Marine Educators Network (IPMEN, <https://ipmen.net>) conference was held April 14-16, 2025, in Kaohsiung, Taiwan, concluding at National Sun Yat-sen University with the global release of the "Takao Declaration." Attended by more than 100 experts and scholars from more than 10 countries, the IPMEN conferees discussed ocean literacy, marine sustainability and the integration of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) with modern marine science. The "Takao Declaration" sets a global vision for the fusion of marine education and TEK.

- Council Executive Director **Kitty Simonds** gave one of the keynote speeches remotely titled "Cocktails, Coup and Covid: The Inception, Creation and Growth of IPMEN."
- Council Program Manager **Mark Mitsuyasu** gave an in-person presentation on "Incorporating community observations and traditional fishery knowledge on changing climate into fishery science and management."
- Former Council Communications Director **Sylvia Spalding** gave a keynote speech titled, "Three

Indigenous Elders on Community, Change and Knowledge" and chaired a session on highlighting Asia-Pacific examples of the links between local ocean community knowledge and ocean literacy with a focus on climate change and extreme weather.

The Pacific Islands Chapter of the American Fisheries Society held its

inaugural annual meeting in Honolulu April 30-May 2, 2025, including the following presentations:

- **David Sakoda**, Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources, Council member designee – Sustainable Financing Initiatives Funding Marine Stewardship and Fisheries Management in Hawai'i
- **Erik Franklin**, SSC member, Univer-

## In Memoriam: Peter S. Fithian



The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council joins the community in mourning the passing of Peter Fithian at the age of 96—a visionary leader, passionate advocate for fisheries and a foundational figure in recreational fishing in Hawai'i and beyond.

Peter was more than a tournament organizer—he was a force of nature with a clear vision for

the future of ocean stewardship and sportfishing. As the founder of the Hawaiian International Billfish Tournament (HIBT) in 1959, he transformed the event into an internationally respected institution that celebrated not only competitive fishing, but also camaraderie, conservation and cultural exchange. Under his leadership, HIBT became a legacy, drawing participants from around the globe and helping to build bridges between the fishing community and policy makers.

Peter also played a pivotal role in the early days of the Council, serving as one of its original members from 1976 to 1979. Representing the interests of recreational anglers, he was an early and vocal proponent of managing Western Pacific tunas and billfishes. His contributions helped shape the Pacific Billfish and Oceanic Sharks Preliminary Fishery Management Plan (1978)—one of the Council's earliest initiatives, focused on regulating foreign fishing activities in U.S. federal waters.

From 1977 to 1985, Peter's influence was especially felt as the Council held numerous meetings in Kona, often aligned with HIBT week. These gatherings, typically hosted at the King Kamehameha and Royal Kona hotels, featured invaluable evening dialogues with international fishers. These exchanges, facilitated by Peter's connections and insight, were instrumental in shaping fisheries management policies throughout the region.

While his accomplishments were many, Peter will be remembered most for his character. His guidance left an indelible mark on friends, colleagues and the broader fishing community.

As Roy Morioka, former Council chair and longtime friend, reflected:

*"Peter was a visionary and a thoughtful, caring gentleman that many of us embraced as a mentor. His brusque New England demeanor may have been viewed as abrasive, but he was always a gentleman—a generation ahead in his thinking and actions, with a heart for Kona, pelagic fishery management and science, and the fishing community. I learned much from Peter, who helped shape me as a person, and I shall miss him dearly. GOD SPEED and Aloha Pumehana!"*

Peter Fithian's legacy lives on—not only through the institutions he helped build, but in the lives he touched and the future he helped shape. He will be deeply missed.

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sity of Hawai‘i at Mānoa – Limitations of Local Fishery Landings for Nutritional Food Security

- **Jason Helyer**, SSC member, Hawai‘i Division of Fish and Wildlife – Working towards improved estimates of total Deep 7 catch in the Main Hawaiian Islands
- **Mark Fitchett**, Council Pelagic Fisheries Ecosystem Scientist – Domestic Implementation of Large Closed Area Counters International Conservation and Management Paradigm of Highly Migratory Species

## New Publication

Scientific and Statistical Committee members **Alister Hunt**, Finology, and **Ray Hilborn**, University of Washington, published a peer-reviewed paper challenging the widely praised Seychelles blue finance deals, finding they did not reduce national debt or secure major new environmental protections. The study also warns other small island states that such transactions may increase debt while limiting sovereign control of marine resources. This paper stemmed from a presentation Hunt gave at the annual American Fisheries Society meeting held in Honolulu in September 2024.

Hunt A, Hilborn R. 2025. Seychelles’ blue finance: A blueprint for marine conservation? *Marine Policy*, 154, 106717. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2025.106717>

## MREP Western Pacific Workshop Launches with Strong Community Impact

The inaugural Marine Resource Education Program (MREP) Western Pacific Fishery Science & Management Workshop, held in Honolulu April 4-10, 2025, brought together fishers,

community leaders, scientists and managers from across Hawai‘i, Guam, the CNMI and American Samoa. Participants engaged in hands-on activities and discussions, deepening their understanding of fisheries science and the Council process.

MREP, founded by fishermen in Maine in 2001, is a nationally recognized training program designed to empower fishermen to have a voice in the fisheries they depend on. The program, facilitated by the Gulf of Maine Research Institute (GMRI), offers a neutral platform outside the regulatory process. It gives fishermen the opportunity to learn the nuts and bolts of marine fisheries science and management, and to demystify acronyms and vocabulary. Participants gain tools and insights for effective engagement in their regional fishery management council and connect with key regional fishery science and management experts.

Feedback from the Western Pacific workshop was overwhelmingly positive. One participant shared, “MREP helped me understand all potential perspectives and issues that could affect our local issues.” Another noted, “Before MREP, I had the passion, but no direction... now I feel more prepared for the future.” Networking was a key highlight, with attendees citing the value of “talking story” and building lasting relationships. “Being in a room full of passionate fishermen gave me utmost respect on why I love this industry,” a participant wrote.

The program also sparked greater engagement. “I was skeptical... now it’s nice to know fisheries management is a ‘bottom-up’ approach,” one remarked, while another emphasized, “When fishermen are part of the solution, you have a better outcome.”

The workshop’s success sets the stage for future annual sessions, continuing to empower local voices in fisheries management. The next workshop will be planned for fall 2025 or spring 2026. Find valuable fishery science and management presentations and

handouts and apply online at <https://mrep.gmri.org/alumni/westernpacific>.

## MREP PARTICIPANTS

**Adam San Gil**  
Commercial Fisherman

**Andrew Kang**  
Guam Dept. of Agriculture

**Brendt Chang**  
F/V *Dana*

**Bryan Ishida**  
Hawai‘i Dept. of Land & Natural Resources

**Davis Nakashima**  
Fisherman

**Dominick San Gil**  
Fisherman

**Edgar Feliciano**  
Feli Fisheries Inc.

**Fa’aliga Matagi**  
Fisherman

**Ivan Ventura**  
Vessel Aukai

**James Roberto**  
Tasi to Table

**Jonathan Niiyama**  
Fisherman

**Kapono Gaughen**  
Shaka Fishing

**Richard Masse**  
Hawai‘i Cooperative Fishery Research Unit

**Ronald Laguna II**  
Guam Fishing Expeditions

**Sierra Ondo**  
Dept. of Land & Natural Resources

**Spencer VanDerKamp**  
Reeler mobile app

**Steve Kaiser**  
F/V *Pono*

**Taalo Lauofo**  
Fisherman

**Vera Peck**  
Pago Pago Game Fishing Association and Fatoata

## MODERATORS

**Audrey Toves\***  
OneLove GudVibes Charters





Top: MREP workshop participants and presenters April 7, 2025, at the NOAA Inouye Regional Center on Ford Island, Honolulu. Below: (l-r) Ron Lagunaña II, Layne Nakagawa, Vera Peck and Spencer VanDerKamp learning about stock assessments using M&Ms. Photos: GMRI.

**Cecilio Raiukiulipiy\***  
Marianas Water Works

**Layne Nakagawa\***  
Kamikaze Fish Company

**Nate Ilaoa\***  
Flying Fox Gastropub

#### **COUNCIL FAMILY AFFILIATES** **COUNCIL STAFF PRESENTERS**

Amy Vandehey\*, Asuka Ishizaki,  
Mark Mitsuyasu, Mark Fitchett, Zach  
Yamada\*

#### **NOAA PRESENTERS**

Charles Littnan, Chelsey Young, David  
O'Brien, Eva Schemmel, James Barlow,

Kisei Tanaka, Lynn Rassel, Marlowe  
Sabater\*, Sarah Malloy, T. Todd Jones

#### **OTHER PRESENTERS**

Charles Ka'ai'ai, John Kaneko, HSC;  
Clay Tam, PIFG; David Sakoda, State  
of HI; Gene Pan, James Borja, AP  
members; Michael Dueñas, GU DAWR;  
Michael Tenorio, CNMI DFW

#### **GUEST VISITORS**

Ed Watamura, HFACT; Jarad  
Makaiau\*, Martina Sagapolu, NOAA;  
Ray Tulafono, AS DMWR

*\*MREP Western Pacific Exploratory Committee Member*

## Western Pacific Leaders Bring Regional Insights to CMOD Workshop

**Representatives from the Western Pacific region** attended the Council Member Ongoing Development (CMOD) workshop held April 30-May 1, 2025, in Vancouver, WA. CMOD is a professional development initiative of the Council Coordination Committee designed to support U.S. regional fishery management council members by facilitating cross-regional exchange and enhancing their knowledge of key issues and procedural skills.

The 2025 CMOD workshop focused on understanding climate-related vulnerabilities, risks and uncertainties in fisheries management, as well as effective strategies for communicating complex topics. Funded through the councils in partnership with the National Marine Fisheries Service, the training included members, advisors and staff from all eight regions.

The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council was represented by members **Frank Perez** (Guam) and **Gene Weaver** (CNMI), and Advisory Panel vice chairs **Nate Ilaoa** (American Samoa) and **Gil Kualii'i** (Hawai'i). Participants played a key role in sharing regional perspectives and examples throughout the event.

On the first day, Ilaoa—a restaurant owner from American Samoa—presented on the SEEM\* process during a session focused on frameworks for considering and addressing climate-related uncertainty and risk. Developed in the Western Pacific region, the SEEM\* framework supports council decision-making by incorporating social, economic, ecological and management uncertainties beyond just scientific estimates.

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CMOD Western Pacific representatives, Nate Ilaoa, American Samoa, (left) and Gil Kualii, Hawai'i, sharing regional perspectives and concerns.

The second day featured Kualii, a commercial fisherman from the Island of Hawai'i, on a panel titled "Pathways for incorporating on-the-water observations and experience." He discussed how changing conditions are prompting interest in improving public communication and integrating local and traditional knowledge and industry insights into the council process.

The workshop fostered valuable cross-regional learning, enabling participants to explore shared challenges and develop approaches for managing fisheries amid climate impacts. Western Pacific representatives returned home better equipped to apply what they learned and share regional examples that can help strengthen fisheries management in a changing environment.

To learn more, visit [www.fisherycouncils.org/cmmod-workshops/2025](http://www.fisherycouncils.org/cmmod-workshops/2025).

## Participant Reflections:

*"Attending the CMOD workshop provided valuable cross-regional insights and gave us a new perspective on how councils across the country are tackling fisheries management challenges under climate change and uncertainty. I found it particularly valuable to discuss how we can better integrate scientific data, traditional knowledge and real-world observations from our fishermen. This collaborative learning strengthens our ability to navigate the changing ocean conditions impacting our Pacific Island region."*

– Nate Ilaoa

*"For me, it was confirmation that we (regional councils) are all experiencing*

*and dealing with the effect of climate change firsthand, through tidal sea rise, water temperature variance and deviant stock migration. Some examples include the collapse of the Bering Sea snow crab due to ecological shifts, an unprecedented increase in sablefish (butterfish) population along the Pacific coast due to changing current patterns and black sea bass migrating from the South to North Atlantic region due to drastic changes in water temperatures and currents.*

*In addition, we all agree that there is an unprecedented need for improved science across all regions, and the ability for managers to proactively adjust to the ever-changing ecosystem challenges simply by modifying both Western management governance and protocols. The status quo is not working!"* – Gil Kualii

*"The training really opened my eyes to how climate change affects every part of the*

*ecosystem—and how that impacts our fish stocks. It's clear that sticking to "business as usual" won't work anymore. We need flexible, adaptive strategies, and it was great to see how the Magnuson-Stevens Act actually gives us the tools to manage fisheries in a way that can respond to these changes."*

*– Frank Perez*

*"One of the most valuable takeaways for me was Sarah Sunu's presentation on effective communication. She really emphasized the importance of knowing your audience, understanding the situation and being clear about your goals and the benefits. It reminded me how important it is to choose the right words—especially when talking with fishermen and fisherwomen, who have a unique perspective. You can't speak to them the same way you would in a formal community meeting—you've got to speak their language."* – Gene Weaver 🐟



CMOD workshop participants and family enjoy dinner at a local eatery in Vancouver. (l-r) Garrett Weaver, Gene Weaver, Gil Kualii, Nate Ilaoa, Frank Perez, Justin Weaver and Geoff Smith, New England Fishery Management Council member. Photo: Gene Weaver.



# Congressional Corner



**The 119th Congress has certainly been busy** with a range of issues, though fisheries have not been high on the list of priorities. While the House and Senate continue working through budget matters, protected species remain a key concern for this Congress. In particular, the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) have been under review, with potential amendments being considered.

The House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife, and Fisheries held a hearing titled “Evaluating the Implementation of the Marine Mammal Protection Act and the Endangered Species Act.” The purpose was to examine how these laws are being carried out and to address concerns about possible regulatory overreach. On March 25, 2025, the Subcommittee held a follow-up hearing to consider several bills, including H.R. 1987, the ESA Amendments Act of 2025. This legislation proposes reforms aimed at improving species recovery, empowering state-led conservation efforts, and increasing accountability and efficiency within regulatory agencies. Because the ESA and MMPA play a major role in managing fisheries in the Western Pacific, any changes could have significant effects on the region.

These laws, in addition to the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA), may require the Council to implement fishery management measures. While the MSA gives the Council authority to develop fishing

regulations, the ESA and MMPA can impose limits on species interactions, mandate additional protections, or even outright prohibit “take.” The results of the recent hearings may lead to legislative changes that could impact fisheries both in the region and nationwide.

The House of Representatives also passed the South Pacific Tuna Treaty Act, H.R. 531, a bipartisan bill introduced by Rep. Uifa‘atali Amata Radewagen (R-AS) and co-sponsored by Rep. Ed Case (D-HI). The act would amend the South Pacific Tuna Treaty of 1988 to ratify amendments adopted by the treaty in 2016, providing U.S. fishermen access to various island nations’ exclusive economic zones and designating the number of high seas fishing days. The next step is Senate approval, a key move in the longstanding effort to shift from a memorandum of understanding to statute.



The two representatives also introduced another bipartisan measure, the Pacific Partnership Act, aimed at strengthening the U.S. strategic partnerships and supporting sustainable economic development. With a companion bill in the Senate and bipartisan support, this bill could move forward sooner rather than later.

To stay informed about legislation that could affect fishing in the Western Pacific, visit [www.wpcouncil.org/legislative-congressional](http://www.wpcouncil.org/legislative-congressional). 🐟

## Crispy Tuna Patties



Source: <https://whiskitrealgud.com>

### Ingredients

1 5 oz and 1 12 oz can of tuna in water, drained well  
¼ cup + 2 tbsp panko  
½ cup Parmesan  
½ cup chopped red onions  
3 tsp minced garlic  
2 tsp dried parsley  
¼ tsp onion powder  
¼ tsp dried dill  
⅛ tsp crushed red pepper  
½ tsp celery seeds  
2 tsp pepper  
1 ¼ tsp salt  
3 tbsp mayonnaise  
2 tsp lemon zest  
3 tsp lemon juice  
3 eggs lightly beaten

### For the patties

¼-½ cup panko  
6 tsp vegetable oil

### Instructions

1. Add all of the ingredients into a bowl and mix to combine.
2. Use a ¼ measuring cup to scoop the mixture. Shape into patties.
3. Add ¼ cup of panko to a shallow dish and lightly coat both sides of the patties. Add more panko if needed.
4. Add 3 tbsp of oil in a large skillet over medium high heat. Add more if needed. Add about 4-5 patties to the skillet. With the spatula, flatten cakes to about ⅛ inch thick. Cook 3-4 minutes on both sides or until golden brown, flipping carefully.\* Drain on paper towels. Repeat with the second batch.
5. Allow to cool for a few minutes before serving.

*\*Patties are delicate, it may help to use two spatulas when flipping.*



## 2025 Council Calendar

Check the Council website for in-person and remote public participation options for meetings hosted by the Council.

### JUNE

- 2-5**  
Capitol Hill Ocean Week\*
- 2-6**  
Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission 16th Meeting of the Science Advisory Committee, La Jolla, CA\*
- 2**  
Fishing Industry Advisory Committee meeting
- 4-6**  
156th Scientific & Statistical Committee meeting
- 6**  
Fishery Data Collection & Research Committee meeting
- 6**  
Executive & Budget Standing Committee (SC) meeting
- 9**  
Pelagic & International SC meeting
- 9**  
Military Expansion SC meeting

### 9-11

203rd Council meeting, Honolulu

### SEPTEMBER

#### 2

American Samoa Advisory Panel (AP) meeting (tent)

#### 3

Mariana Archipelago-CNMI AP meeting, ChST (tent)

#### 3

Non-Commercial Fisheries Advisory Committee meeting (tent)

#### 5

Hawai'i AP meeting (tent)

#### 6

Mariana Archipelago-Guam AP meeting, ChST (tent)

### 9-11

157th Scientific & Statistical Committee meeting (tent)

### 15-18

204th Council meeting, Honolulu (tent)

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

## Upcoming Events

**The 156th Scientific & Statistical Committee (SSC) meeting** will be held June 4-6, 2025, at the Council office, 1164 Bishop St., Ste. 1400, Honolulu, HI. The meeting will be in a hybrid format, with in-person participation available for SSC members and the public, or remote participation via Webex: <https://tinyurl.com/156SSCMtg>.

**Major agenda items include:** Electronic monitoring (EM) implementation in Hawai'i (HI) and American Samoa (AS) longline fisheries (action item); 2024 Annual Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) Reports and recommendations; SSC Special Projects Working Group reports; and Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) bottomfish stock assessment update.

**The 203rd meeting of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council** will be held June 9-11, 2025, at the Ala Moana Hotel, Hibiscus Ballroom, 410 Atkinson Dr., Honolulu, HI. The meeting will be in a hybrid format, with in-person participation available for Council members and the public, or remote participation via Webex: <https://tinyurl.com/203CouncilMtg>.

**Major agenda items include:** HI and AS longline fisheries crew training requirement (final action); EM implementation in HI and AS longline fisheries (final action); Main Hawaiian Islands uku 2026-2029 annual catch limit specification (final action); Executive Orders and Presidential Proclamations discussion; and 2024 Annual SAFE Reports review and discussion.

For more information on the virtual meeting connections, and complete agendas and meeting documents, go to [www.wpcouncil.org/meetings-calendars](http://www.wpcouncil.org/meetings-calendars).

### Summary of Action Items at the June 2025 Council Meeting

The Council will consider and may take action on the issues summarized below. A more detailed summary can be found at: <https://tinyurl.com/203CouncilMtgActions>.

#### 1. Implementation of Electronic Monitoring (EM) in Hawai'i and American Samoa Longline Fisheries –

#### Final Action

The Council will consider final action on a proposal to authorize EM systems as a recognized data collection and monitoring tool under the Pelagic Fishery Ecosystem Plan. With human observer coverage declining and federal funding secured through 2027, the Council is weighing EM implementation alternatives:

- **Alternative 1:** No action/status quo.
- **Alternative 2:** Mandatory EM with phased rollout (2025–2027) and sub-alternatives for vessel selection.
- **Alternative 3:** Optional EM program for participating vessels. Funding options under consideration include full federal support, public-private cost sharing, or full industry funding beyond 2027.

#### 2. Hawai'i and American Samoa Longline Fisheries Crew Training Requirement – Final Action

To comply with Endangered Species Act mandates and reduce protected species mortality, the Council is considering final action on a regulatory amendment to expand protected species training requirements to include crew members, in addition to vessel owners and operators. Alternatives include:

- Mandatory crew certification and a trained crew member on deck at all times, with sub-alternatives for certification renewal: annually, every two years or no expiration.
- No action/status quo.

#### 3. ACL Specifications for MHI Uku Fishery (2026-2029) – Final Action

The Council will consider final action on annual catch limits (ACLs) and accountability measures (AMs) for the main Hawaiian Islands (MHI) uku fishery, based on a 2024 stock assessment update indicating that the stock is neither overfished nor experiencing overfishing.

Among the alternatives under consideration is the Council's preliminary preferred approach, which would:

- Set the ACL at 401,020 pounds, based on a 36% risk of overfishing.
- Implement post-season AMs only, in light of limitations with current in-season catch monitoring methods.

### From Hanapa'a to How Much? What It Takes to Fish and Sell in Hawai'i



**June 9, 2025 (M), 6 to 9 p.m.**

Ala Moana Hotel – Hibiscus Ballroom  
410 Atkinson Dr., Honolulu

Do YOU have what it takes to be successful in the commercial fishing industry? Learn about challenges Fishers and Marketers face. Check out the Forum for Informational Tables, Presentations, Participation Recognitions, and More!

This event is part of the 203rd Western Pacific Fishery Management Council meeting, June 9-11 at the Ala Moana Hotel – Hibiscus Ballroom.

Questions?  
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