

Hawaii and American Samoa Longline Scenario Planning Project Overview

Draft – September 1, 2025

The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council (Council) is initiating a planning project for the Hawaii and American Samoa pelagic longline fisheries. This project will utilize a tool called scenario planning to better understand current and potential future challenges to these fisheries and consider steps that the Council and industry can take to make the region's longline fisheries more resilient. This project is being led by Mark Fitchett, the Council's Pelagic Fisheries Ecosystem Scientist (mark.fitchett@wpcouncil.org) and Kim Gordon with Resource Logic Consulting (kim@resourcelogicconsulting.com).

What is scenario planning?

Scenario planning is a form of strategic planning that helps individuals and organizations plan for the future by considering a range of factors and uncertainties such as potential changes in regulations, markets and ecosystem conditions. Scenario planning also draws on aspects of business planning and disaster planning, helping to make informed decisions in the face of uncertainty and incomplete information, and prepare for conditions and events that might occur in the future.

The scenario planning process involves the use of a handful of “scenarios” or hypothetical, yet plausible, futures. These scenarios serve as the basis for discussion to consider the implications of a future that looks different from the past and allows us to contemplate what actions can be taken to be more adaptable and resilient to change. While scenario planning incorporates available scientific information, the scenario planning process is not a scientific or technical exercise. Rather, scenario planning is intended to be a participatory thought exercise bringing together different perspectives and ideas to have tangible conversations about the future and identify actionable strategies for adapting to change.

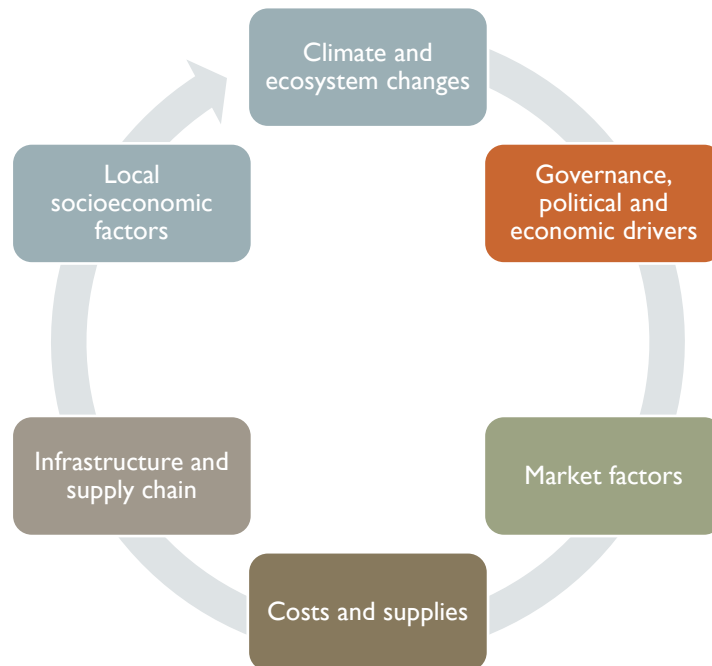
Why is the Council undertaking this project?

Longline fisheries play an important role in local and regional economies and communities, and the performance and viability of these fisheries are influenced by a number of variables and factors, such as changes in market forces, ecosystem conditions, socioeconomic factors (see figure 1). The goal of this project is to better understand the context of current challenges in the Hawaii and American Samoa longline fisheries, explore how future conditions might impact these fisheries, and consider how to improve the resiliency of longline fisheries into the future. Specifically, this project is designed to achieve the following objectives.

1. Engage in collaborative dialogue with the Hawaii and American Samoa fishing industries and communities to better understand current and anticipated challenges and articulate a long-term vision for viable and resilient longline fisheries.

2. Utilize a structured process to explore potential future scenarios and examine how resource sustainability, fishery performance, and management and governance strategies will be affected.
3. Support the Hawaii and American Samoa longline fishing industries and communities in considering how to respond to current challenges and potential vulnerabilities and adapt to changing conditions.
4. Consider tools and strategies that the Council and its management partners can use to support productive longline fisheries and adapt to future conditions in order to continue meeting fishery management objectives.

Figure 1. Example Factors and Drivers Influencing Longline Fisheries



How will this project help the Council and longline fishery stakeholders?

This project will provide the Council and the longline fishing industry with a better understanding of the challenges facing these fisheries, and how future conditions might create additional challenges for the Hawaii and American Samoa longline fisheries. The scenario planning process also provides a platform for revisiting fishery goals and objectives and articulating a shared vision and priorities for the two fisheries. Armed with this information, the longline fishing industry will be better equipped to a) make decisions that promote the long-term viability and resilience of their businesses and communities and b) consider adaption strategies that make the respective longline fisheries more resilient. Similarly, the Council and its management partners will be better equipped to a) contemplate management measures and strategies that promote sustainable fisheries management and resilient fisheries under

conditions of change, and b) identify options and next steps, including science and monitoring needs to track change and identify early warning signs.

What will the project look like?

Drawing on lessons learned from scenario planning projects undertaken by other regional fishery management councils and natural resource management sectors; the project team has developed a stepwise approach for this project (see figure 2). After initial planning and information gathering steps (steps 1&2), the project team will work with the Project Steering Committee and industry advisors to develop a set of scenarios (steps 3&4). The project team will then engage the Hawaii and American Samoa longline fishing industries and communities in discussions to better understand current challenges and consider the potential implications of the future scenarios (step 5). During this step, the project team will utilize a range of engagement methods, such as workshops, focus groups and one-on-one conversations, based on the availability and engagement preferences of different fishery constituents.

The project team will then digest and organize the insights and ideas gathered through stakeholder engagement and develop a summary document for each fishery (step 7). An additional round of targeted engagement will then be conducted to flesh out ideas and develop recommendations (step 8). This will include conversations with fishery participants, advisors and Council and NMFS staff, to consider specific strategies and next steps that the Council and the fishing industry can take to address challenges and become more resilient to change. A final project report will then be developed and presented to the Council and the Hawaii and American Samoa longline fishing industries.

Figure 2. Hawaii and American Samoa Longline Scenario Planning Project Approach

Step 1	Orient & Plan	(July – October 2025)
Step 2	Information Gathering	(July – October 2025)
Step 3	Create Scenarios	(October – November 2025)
Step 4	Test Drive Scenarios	(December 2025)
Step 5	Stakeholder Engagement	(December 2025 – April 2026)
Step 6	Digest and Organize	(April – June 2026)
Step 7	Develop Findings & Recommendations	(May – June 2026)
Step 8	Document and Present	(July – December 2026)