



WESTERN
PACIFIC
REGIONAL
FISHERY
MANAGEMENT
COUNCIL

Summary of the with Big Island Shortline and Small Boat Fishmen

Saturday, August 23, 2025

1:00 p.m. – 2:45 p.m. (HST)

West Hawaii Civic Center

Kona, Hawaii

1. Purpose

In March 2025, the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council (Council) hosted a fishing community meeting in Kona during which an issue was raised regarding gear conflict between pelagic troll, handline and shortline fishers. The Community requested that the Council provide further information regarding the federal management of the longline and shortline fisheries and convene future meetings to discuss the issue.

2. Participants

Participating in the meeting were representatives from the local pelagic small boat and offshore shortline fisheries. Council staff included the Executive Director, Program Officer, Protected Species Coordinator, Pelagic and International Fisheries Scientist and Fishery Analyst. Agency representatives included staff from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center, NMFS Pacific Islands Regional Office, Hawaii Division of Aquatic Resources, and Hawaii Division of Conservation and Enforcement.

3. Roundtable Discussion and Outcomes

Council staff facilitated discussion among participants centered around a series of questions.

A. What is the issue/conflict? Who is involved?

Regarding shortline fishery, gear and operations:

- Shortline gear is defined in State regulation as less than 1 nautical mile. Longline is defined in federal regulations as greater than 1 nautical mile.
- Setting of multiple shortlines on a single trip is not prohibited by regulations.
- Shortline fishery is not a “Federally” managed fishery and shortline gear can legally be deployed within Federal longline prohibited areas.
- Shortline fishery primarily operates beyond 3 nautical miles from shore overlapping areas used by the small boat handline and troll fishery.
- A limited number of individuals in Kona derive their livelihood from shortlining off the Kona coast. Other shortline fishermen operate further offshore on the Cross Seamount.
- "Ika shibi" and "palu ahi" fishermen reported catching smaller fish due to shortlining.

- While the issue centers around the fisheries operating in the same area targeting large pelagic species, there has been limited direct gear interactions between the shortline and handline/troll gear.
- Participants expressed clear understanding that it is a violation to tamper with other fishermen's gear on the water.

Issues/Concerns Raised:

- Shortlines are/have been deployed off the Kona coast that are longer than the legal 1 nautical mile limit.
- Shortlines can be linked together to exceed the 1-mile limit.
- Its difficult for enforcement to monitor and enforce on-water deployment.
- Multiple 1-mile shortlines are being deployed on a single trip.
- Deploying more than 4 – 1 mile shortlines on a single trip is not practical (not manageable). Shortliners are using live bait.
- 1 nautical mile length is an extensive area, especially fronting heavily used Kona coastlines.
- Emphasis was made on the future sustainability of the resource and fishing community. Concern that more people will enter shortline fishery as fish get harder to catch.
- Repeated, anonymous complaints about shortline operators off of Kona coast to the DLNR hotline from the same group of individuals.
- Inadequate enforcement of the 1-nautical-mile shortline length rule on the water. Checking at the dock is not feasible.
- Setting multiple shortlines in one area is akin to longlining.

B. What can be done to address the issue/conflict?

A wide range of suggestions and ideas were raised to potentially address the issue/concerns raised by participants, including:

- Options for federal and/or state management were discussed along with suggestions for community compromise to avoid further regulations.
- Prohibit shortlining within 10 nautical miles of shore – prevent deployment on the 1000 fathom ledge. Spatial/area closures to separate different fishing gear types.
- Limit the number of 1-nautical-mile sets per vessel to a one single set per trip/boat
- Cap the number of 1-nautical-mile sets (two to four) per trip/boat and regulate bait types
- Redefine shortline to be longer than 1 mile.
- If redefining "shortline" to less than 1 mile, avoid interference with the definition of a "kaka line"
- Create a permit specifically for shortline gear which could also lead to future limited-entry program, similar to longline fisheries.
- Register and mark shortline gear with DAR/DOCARE to support monitoring, tracking of gear and enforcement.
- Limit each fishing spool to hold only one 1-mile segment.
- Make explicit that shortlines need to be monitored and cannot be left unattended.

B. Are regulations needed to address the issue/conflict? by whom?

- Potential solutions included better definitions of "sets" and "gear" to clarify regulations.
- Federal management, if pursued, will result in increased regulations and requirements and will bring in USCG and NOAA OLE.
- The State can define shortline gear to include a maximum number of sets per vessel (to be developed through further community discussion; change state regulations).
- Stressed importance of community engagement through the Advisory Panel, advocated for a "gentleman's agreement" to avoid federal mandates similar to those in longline fisheries.
- State should review and increase the penalties for violation of shortline regulations.
- DOCARE Enforcement officers can utilize GPS data from the start and end points of the line to measure length.
- Use VMS or other monitoring systems for spatially managed areas.

4. Potential Outcomes and Next Steps

Staff to summarize meeting discussion and outcomes and distribute to participants for review and comment. Explore possible actions for moving forward. Report will be presented to the Council and advisory bodies.