Hawaii and American Samoa Longline Scenario Planning Project Overview

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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 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 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 future conditions and events.

Scenario planning involves the use of a handful of "scenarios" that describe a range of plausible futures. These scenarios serve as the basis for discussion to better understand current challenges and consider the implications of potential futures. Traditional planning exercises assume that current and past conditions are indicative of future conditions. One of the hallmarks of scenario planning is recognizing the influence of change and uncertainty, and exploring multiple plausible futures that look different from the past.

While scenario planning incorporates available scientific information, the scenario planning process is not a scientific or technical exercise. Rather, scenario planning is a participatory thought exercise that brings together different perspectives and ideas to identify actionable strategies for addressing current and future challenges and adapting to change for a range of plausible futures.

Why is the Council undertaking this project?

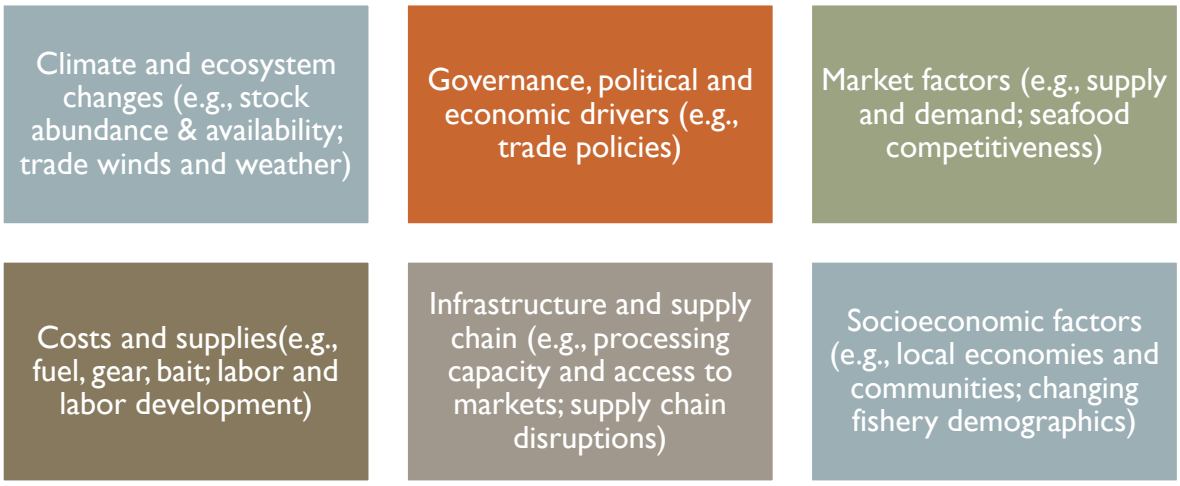
Longline fisheries play in important role in Hawaii and American Samoa economies and fishing communities. The viability of these fisheries is influenced by a number of variables and factors, such as changes in market forces, ecosystem conditions, socioeconomic factors (see figure 1). The goal of this 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 viability of longline fisheries into the future.

"Failure to plan is a plan to fail." Benjamin Franklin

This project is designed to achieve the following objectives.

1. Engage 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 may 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 a changing and uncertain future.
4. Consider tools and strategies that the Council and its management partners can use to support robust longline fisheries and adapt to a range of potential 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?

The Council and the longline fishing industry will be better prepared with a deeper understanding of the challenges facing Hawaii and American Samoa longline fisheries, how future conditions might create additional challenges, and which strategies may be most effective under a range of potential future conditions. 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 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 support the vision and priorities for longline fisheries, 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 meet stakeholders where they are, utilizing 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 for the Council and the fishing industry. A final project report will then be developed and presented to the Council and the Hawaii and American Samoa longline fishing communities.

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