



## Meeting Report

### Fishing Industry Advisory Committee

Monday, November 24, 2025

2 p.m. – 5 p.m. (HST)

#### 1. Welcome and Introductions

Michael Goto, Fishing Industry Advisory Committee (FIAC) opened the meeting at 2:03 p.m. FIAC members in attendance included Sean Martin, Eric Kingma, John Gourley, Josh Schade, Stuart Chikami, and Tony Guerrero.

Others in attendance included Mark Fitchett, Joshua DeMello, Asuka Ishizaki, Zachary Yamada, Felix Penalosa (Council Staff). Members of the public included Grace Reville (Blue Nature Alliance) and Harley Broyles (Earthjustice)

#### 2. Status Report on Previous FIAC Recommendations

Council staff provided updates on previous recommendations from the September FIAC meeting:

- ***Regarding Hawaii Non-Longline Fisheries, the FIAC:***  
*Recommends the Council encourage continuance of stakeholder engagement meetings on other Hawaiian Islands to explore management options for the Hawaii Shortline fishery.*

The Council will hold a meeting with Hawaii shortline fishers on December 12, 2025 and will hold this meeting at the Council office

- *Recommends the Council request the State of Hawaii to provide alternative and reliable offloading points for commercial vessels in Honokohau Harbor in Kona.*

Meghan Statts, Division of Boating and Ocean Recreation, indicated on October 7 the State has created a designated commercial fishing offloading slip at Honokohau at the fuel dock and informed the commercial fishers as well.

- ***Regarding Shark Depredation and Research, the FIAC:***  
*Recommends development of shark depredation mitigation strategies and deterrents be included as a priority for Cooperative Research Programs.*

The Council is planning a shark depredation mitigation workshop in January 2026. More details to follow.

- ***Regarding MMPA Import Provisions Comparability Findings, the FIAC:***  
*Recommends that the Council request NMFS evaluate the amount of tuna imports affected by the MMPA Import Provisions Comparability Findings Report*

On November 14, 2025 the Council Executive Director sent a letter to Alexa Cole, who oversees the MMPA Import Provisions recommending some refinements to the Comparability Findings, a mechanism for stakeholder input, and a request to work with PIFSC to quantify the impacts of tuna imports affected by the Findings. Letter shared with the FIAC.

### **3. Roundtable update on Fishing/Market Issues/Impacts**

American Samoa:

The purse seine vessels based out of American Samoa have all been fishing in the Western Pacific. There is a FAD closure ongoing, so there was some transitioning from the Eastern Pacific due to FAD closure in August. Purse seine fishing has been rather mediocre this last part of the year with patterns back to the normal whereas last year there was a better catch. Fishing further west has been bad. American Samoa longline catch has been relatively good this year at end of season, with some slow down right now. A couple vessels trying to get back out fishing in the next few months with ongoing discussions with StarKist to get vessels back out fishing.

A FIAC member asked how the market has been. Chikami said the purse seine skipjack market out of Bangkok has been the indicator, with some cautious in purchasing due to tariff uncertainty. Prices have been depressed, so there was a move to the eastern Pacific because if pricing differential where canneries in the eastern Pacific off Latin America have offered more than Bangkok prices. Bangkok prices are about \$1600/ton for skipjack and the American Samoa fleet loses \$150/ton for a convenience fee off Bangkok price.

CNMI:

Fishermen in the CNMI are dealing with lots of storms and fishing reports have been the same, with lots of small craft warnings. Local markets and hotels and restaurants are still the focus. There was also a recent RFI by Department of Interior on the potential for deep-sea mining around the trench. There is a lot of uncertainty on that issue. A lot of people are taking a wait and see stance, while environmental groups taking a stronger stance.

Tourism in the CNMI is still down, with a recent local news article on how hotel percentage of room occupancy has been at a lowest percentage. Coastal infrastructure has been poor with the Delta dock being condemned for the last 6 years. There is movement to get permits to extend a 150 ft. Charlie dock, extending the face of the dock to accept cruise ships and provide infrastructure for a roll on/off passenger ferry. Dredging is needed at the entrance of the channel and south sea dock. Having adequate marinas for private vessels is not ideal at the moment with marina access being blocked by sand buildup. CNMI is trying to find funds to dredge, also taking a look at larger coastal erosion problems. The marina is currently considered a 'hazard area.'

Guam: No Updates

Hawaii:

Outlook on the Hawaii market has not been great and there is concern over the future, particularly going onto the first quarter of next year. Similar to CNMI, there is concern over the tourism industry

decline.

Bigeye tuna going into the local market are seeing variability in bigeye tuna sizes, while there has been a lot of smaller fish in the market. Lack of tourism may been an issue, but industry is looking into remedies. There are lots of factors on why the market is weak. A few shallow set trips have not been the best with these vessel planning to transition back to deep set in early 2026. The Honolulu auction is evolving to utilize virtual options and digital access. This enables access to more buyers that could optimize prices.

A FIAC member noted some fishermen are going direct to consumer market, with most fish being 'mid size' 40 to 70 lbs, but not the larger 'marker' fish. Aku and shibi yellowfin catch was steady in September and October.

#### **4. Options for removing Federal Fishing Prohibitions in the Marianas Trench, Rose Atoll, and Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument**

Council staff presented options for restoring commercial fishing to the monument areas of the Pacific. He noted that due to Executive Order (EO) 14276 that required the Secretary of Commerce to review commercial fishing prohibitions in the marine national monument, the Council is anticipating developing an action to remove existing commercial fishing prohibitions if the administration takes action to do so. He provided a background of existing regulations and noted that the Council will review options that included no action, removing the existing commercial fishing prohibitions, and removing the existing prohibitions plus additional enhanced management.

A FIAC member asked whether some of the areas that were designated National Marine Sanctuaries were going to be a problem. Council staff said the sanctuary will complicate the issue but will be dependent upon the Administration's directives.

Another member said that if fishing is to be allowed, additional measures are not needed as many issues and concerns that people may have had already been developed over years of management. Another member asked if lobster fishing would be included. Council staff said most likely unless the direction from the administration said otherwise. Another FIAC member asked when the last bottomfish fishing occurred there and if the Onagas were just getting big and dying of old age. He said there are folks that fished up there that want to get back up there and he was curious and would like to try and fish there as well.

#### **5. Recommendations on Commercial Fishing in the Pacific Islands Heritage Marine National Monument**

Council staff presented a similar action in front of the Council regarding restoring commercial fishing for the areas 50-200 nm around Wake and Jarvis Islands and Johnston Atoll. He said that the Presidential Proclamation issued in April provides the opportunity to restore commercial fishing to these areas. The options include no action, restoring commercial fishing, and adding enhanced management measures. Council staff reviewed existing regulations for the area and potential enhanced management measures that the Council may consider for these fisheries.

One FIAC member noted that enhanced management should be looked at within the environment and amount of vessels fishing in the area. If all of the Hawaii longline fleet is planning to fish there then maybe enhanced management should be considered. If no one is going to be fishing there, then enhanced management should not be an issue.

A FIAC member said that no additional measures are needed as there are already comprehensive regulations that apply to all fisheries. Anything outside of 50 nm is going to be trolling or longline fishing and we know that from decades of management of the longline fishery, there is a good understanding of target and incidental take of protected species. No other fishery has attained the amount of information that the U.S. has on its longline fishery. When the area was opened in April, 20 trips were taken to the area and the reports from the fleet is that the tunas were not there and were not providing reproduction or spill over. The U.S. fleet is the global leader in protected species and is doing things that no other crews on the planet do and will be moving towards 100% onboard video monitoring as well. He said the Council should allow for the fishers to get back in there and fish. Another member supported that statement and said that he was in support of the longline fishery getting back in there as it has been closed long enough and would also like to see bottomfish as well.

## **6. Recent Legislation**

Council staff provided updates on recent congressional actions. The Young Fishermen's Development Act is up for reauthorization through 2031. Save Our Seafood Act would add an exemption to the cap for foreign workers as fish processors. The FISH Act combats IUU fishing. The Illegal Red Snapper and Tuna Enforcement Act passed by Senate directs NOAA to develop field test kits to identify the origin of tuna and red snapper to track illegal or misidentified fish imported into the U.S. The SHARKED Act passed the House and would require the Department of Commerce to establish a task force on shark depredation to develop management strategies to address shark depredation.

A FIAC member expressed concerns that local and territorial legislation may or may not conflict with federal legislation regarding shark harvest. NOAA said CNMI was okay with its local laws to allow harvest, but since that time there is was stingray protection law that NOAA has not evaluated. The FIAC requested some review over the current laws to date to see if there were any new conflicts with federal law. There is interest for the harvest of sharks for local restaurants that could be a delicacy.

A FIAC member noted that in Hawaii, federal regulations made the shark be brought in with fins attached, but could still be in conflict with state law. The State of Hawaii said for shark fins to be disposed at landing or first receiving.

## **7. Status of the DSSL ESA Section 7 Reconsultation**

Council staff provided a brief update on the status of ESA reconsultation for the Hawaii deep-set longline fishery. On September 19, 2025, PIRO Protected Resources Division (PRD) reinitiated consultation on the authorization of the Hawaii deep-set longline fishery at the request of PIRO Sustainable Fisheries Division (SFD). The reinitiation triggers were an exceedance of the incidental take statement in the 2023 biological opinion for oceanic whitetip sharks and leatherback sea turtles during the first and second quarter of 2025, respectively. Council staff are continuing to coordinate

with NMFS through this process pursuant to a NMFS Policy Directive.

FIAC members asked whether the Policy Directive allows for coordination between Council and NMFS prior to initiating consultation. Council staff clarified that the Policy Directive, since its first iteration in 2015, have encouraged early coordination including the period leading up to initiation, although the level of involvement from Council staff has varied with each consultation. For the current consultation, Council staff had an opportunity to review and provide input on the draft initiation documents, and will continue to coordinate to ensure there are no surprises coming out of the consultation.

## **8. Update on Electronic Monitoring Implementation**

Council staff reported on progress of implementation of EM in Hawaii and American Samoa longline fisheries and engagement with industry, including the first EM forum to go over vessel monitoring plans (VMPs) and timelines for implementation held in November 2025. NMFS has developed agreements with around 20 existing HLA vessels with EM systems on a voluntary basis to transition those EM systems for the purpose of fishery monitoring to augment observer data for the estimation of protected species interactions and bycatch in the Hawaii longline fishery. The Federal government shutdown has led to significant delays in a request for proposal (RFP) for EM vendors and for various EM-associated projects. Delays are expected in the EM phase-in for the Hawaii-based pelagic longline fleet, probably delayed until the middle of 2026 through 2027. An EM/VMP forum was to be held to engage the pelagic fishing industry and discuss the development of vessel-specific VMPs on November 25, 2025, the day after the FIAC meeting. Council staff expanded on what would be in those VMPs, including specific details on agency and industry responsibilities, provision and maintenance of EM infrastructure, and protocols in the event of EM equipment malfunction. Council staff, PIFSC, PIRO, and Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC)

A FIAC member noted that a VMP forum was to be held the next day and there will be learning curve for fishermen with the new requirements. Getting expectations clear and having continued communication is key for the new program.

A FIAC member asked about having remote data access and transmission, like StarLink and if vessels can login somewhere to access data. Council staff noted StarLink would add convenience of not having to deal with hard drives on EM systems and could allow more near-real time data acquisition. But it may be cost prohibitive. It may be preferred for vessels in American Samoa where they have longer trip lengths. The FIAC member also commented that having data access remotely to access historical information would be valuable. He noted there are severe problems for fishers in Hawaii to log in to the State of Hawaii Commercial Marine License database to access their own data.

A FIAC member noted there will be different questions and concerns in American Samoa.

## **9. Upcoming WCPFC Meeting and Industry Issues**

Council staff presented on upcoming WCPFC meeting issues, including South Pacific albacore, bigeye tuna, electronic monitoring, seabirds, U.S. territorial recognition within the WCPFC, and transshipment. The meeting was to take place December 30 to December 5, 2025 in Manila.

No discussion.

## **10. Update on IRA Projects**

Council staff presented on the following IRA project updates:

### **A. Scenario Planning**

Council staff provided a summary report of their meetings in American Samoa for Scenario Planning for the local longline fishery. Meetings were held with the Starkist cannery, Tautai Samoa Longline Association, fish buyers, suppliers, and local government officials. Prevailing issues include low pricing for albacore, the target species for the fleet, from the Starkist cannery. Uncertainty in pricing structure is an issue for the fleet, which has seen increasing costs and decreasing revenues, despite recent improvements in catch rates. Labor shortage has stymied the ability for longline fisheries to plan for fishing trips and get operations going. Dockside and shoreside infrastructure to maintain fishing vessels has also been a limiting factor for both longline fisheries and purse seine fisheries that offload in American Samoa. Some possible improvements to the viability of the fishery could be made through special labeling of American Samoa-caught albacore, discerning from foreign sources which could add a premium value to the product. Cooperative research to improve fishery performance could be conducted to improve fishing operations for the fleet when fishing outside of a moon phase where albacore may be deeper and out of reach of fishing gear. International measures, tariff schedules, and trade agreements could be modified to improve the viability of U.S.-caught albacore in the U.S. seafood market.

A FIAC member asked how Chinese and Taiwanese fisheries subsidize their fleets. Council staff noted a 2019 report to the World Trade Organization (WTO) confirmed that a level of subsidies for their global fisheries was in the order of billions. Much of these were labor, fuel, fleet capacity and shipbuilding. WTO made progress towards banning ‘harmful’ subsidies that enhance capacity, but the fleets had already grown large and there is very little to regulate the subsidies. It is unclear if subsidies were paid directly from their governments to industry. A FIAC member noted that China uses subsidies in the form of turning in catch for canning tuna and vessels can get subsidies like soft loans that are repayable for forgivable over a certain time.

A FIAC member asked why crew is leaving American Samoa longline fishery and where. Staff noted that some vessels have crew leave for Alaska, continental U.S., and Hawaii for better wage stability or for access to other parts of the U.S.

### **B. Regulatory Review**

This project aims to review existing federal and local fishery regulations to determine the flexibility and potential gaps for addressing fishery issues caused by climate change. Council staff reported that the contractor has been working on reviewing FEPs, existing regulations, and territorial regulations and are expecting to provide an initial analysis document next week. The contractor will report to the Council on its progress and its initial findings. Staff are continuing to work with the contractor to meet with communities in each of the island areas in the new year to discuss the findings and receive input. The contractor will also be working with the territorial agencies to look at regulations and potential future changes. Based on these conversations, the contractor will develop a white paper for

potential amendments to the Council's FEPs.

No discussion

### **C. Protected Species**

Council staff provided an update on the IRA Protected Species Project. The Council will convene two workshops to explore potential scenarios in which climate change impacts protected species interactions in fisheries. The first workshop was originally scheduled for October 2025, but was postponed due to the government shutdown. The workshop has been rescheduled to early February 2026, and will focus on improving understanding of how ecosystem drivers interact with protected species population trends/distributions within the context of the Hawaii longline fishery and explore alternative strategies for future management, with a focus on implications for protected species that are on a recovering trajectory.

No discussion.

### **D. Community Consultation**

Council staff reported that the contractor has completed over 30 meetings in two rounds across the Western Pacific (on islands including Manu'a, Tinian, Rota, Lanai, Molokai) with hundreds of participants in total. These engagement meetings with the community have provided issues in the fisheries and changes in fishing that might be attributed to a changing climate. The results of these meetings are being collected and will be reported back to the Council in December at its 205th meeting. Council staff is working with the contractor to address potential issues such as shortline fishing, shark depredation, and local management through direct workshops and projects in 2026.

The Council worked with the contractor to develop the Pacific Islands Commercial Vocational Training Program, held Sept. 10–17, 2025. This pilot project looked at training fishermen to support food security and local economies. Trainees received a foundation in boat safety, seamanship and navigation; Fishing gear and boat operation and maintenance; Business basics, marketing and seafood systems; Fisheries management, conservation and best practices.

Five trainees from the Pacific Islands region were recognized and presented with certificates on September 17 at the Council's 204th meeting at the Ala Moana Hotel. Through the fall, the contractor followed up with each graduate on the water in their home islands. Their early results showed promise. In the Marianas, trainees improved catch quality by applying proper handling and icing techniques learned from Magic Sportfishing. In American Samoa, a participant began collecting gear to start a small community shortline project to bring more local fish to local families.

No discussion

## **11. Other Issues**

No other issues were discussed.

## **12. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

### **13. Discussion and Recommendations**

#### ***Regarding Commercial Fishing in the Marine National Monuments, the FIAC***

1. Recommends the Council restore commercial fishing opportunities and remove the existing commercial fishing prohibitions. The FIAC agreed that additional management is not needed at this time as the existing fishery fleets are the global leaders in conservation and protected species mitigation.

#### ***Regarding Shark Regulations in CNMI, the FIAC***

2. Recommends the Council request NOAA update an evaluation of whether CNMI territorial law conflicts with federal law regarding the harvest of sharks for commercial purposes.