



Report of the Hawaii Archipelago FEP Advisory Panel Meeting

Friday, February 24, 2023

9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. (HST)

1. Welcome and Introductions

Gil Kualii, Hawaii Advisory Panel (AP) vice Chair, opened the meeting at 9:05 a.m. AP members present included Clay Tam (AP Chair), Gil Kualii (Vice-Chair), Nathan Abe, Abraham Apilado, Amanda Padilla, Khang Dang, Carrie Johnston, Nathan Tsao and Len Nakano. Cherie Van Kuren was absent.

Others in attendance included Zach Yamada, Asuka Ishizaki, Matt Seeley, Mark Mitsuyasu, Amy Vandehey, Mark Fitchett, Joshua DeMello, Kitty Simonds (Council staff), Savannah Lewis, Jason Mehlinger (PIRO SFD), Mark Ladao (Star Advertiser), Luke Szymanski (A.I.S., Inc), Bryan Ishida (HI DAR), Craig Severance (SSC member), Thomas Remington (Lynker), Justin Hospital, Minling Pan and Kirsten Leong (PIFSC).

2. Report of the 2019-2022 Hawaii Advisory Panel (AP) Plan

Zach Yamada, Council staff, provided a report of the 2019-2022 AP Action Plan which included the status updates on recommendation by the AP.

3. Feedback from the Fleet

A. First Quarter Hawaii Fishermen Observations

Kualii provided an overview of the Fishermen Observations, which is intended to highlight what fishermen are seeing on the water and hearing from the communities on a quarterly basis.

Clay Tam, AP Chair, provided an overview of the Fishermen Observation initiative. This fishermen led initiative was to provide on-the-water observations and give context to fishery-dependent data found in the annual SAFE report. Following the first fisher observation summit in 2020, the Council's AP began reporting and gathering information from fishers on what they observed during that period of time. There have been cases where certain fish will experience large recruitments on a certain timeframe and this initiative allows scientist in the future to have that record to further analyze. They believe that fishers need to be a part of the solution to addressing data gaps in fishery data.

AP members from Kona, Hawaii reported that for the first quarter of 2023, fish prices were high and continue to be strong with lent coming around. The bigeye tuna and marlin catch has been strong for the first quarter. An AP member reported that the thermocline runs a little deeper and they have been experiencing more aggressive ahi bites. Regarding Kona crab, the catch has been steady with an observed decrease in predators and clear waters. At this point in the season they have not observed any berried females or tagged crabs. They have been observing a north to south current rather than their usual south to north current. An AP member from Hilo, Hawaii reported that there was an increased catch of yellowfin tuna.

An AP member from Maui reported that the uku and opelu fishing has been good, but they experienced a slow opakapaka catch. Weather has been normal as it has allowed them to go fishing and supply their vendors.

An AP member from Kauai reported that the ahi bite has been strong and carried over from the end of 2022. Fishers are catching ahi in the 100 pound bin and they observed large piles of nehu, which he has not seen since he was a kid. The opelu bite has been steady, but they have been catching larger weke ula closer to shore with increased rain. There has been a lot of fresh water, but there has not been as much focus on kona crab and bottomfish. In the last few weeks, he observed a lot of small squid and the aku have been eating a lot of it.

AP members on O'ahu reported that the fish prices for ahi have been good. For the Hawaii longline fleet, there has been an increased effort for swordfish as the prices are about half of what it was in 2022. The boat fishing for swordfish have been waiting seven to ten day before unloading their catch. The weather was less than ideal with high wind days that have caused fishers to decrease their fishing days. The bottomfish fishers observed larger opakapakas as compared to 2022. Similar to Kauai, they observed large plumes of nehu and found sea surface temperature at an average in the upper 70s.

B. Hawaii AP Fisheries Issues and Priorities

The AP provided potential fishing issues in Hawaii that been reported by the fishing community.

The AP said that shoreline continues to be an issue throughout the State with the development of the Holomua Initiative and private investors buying waterfront properties.

Members from Hawaii island and Kauai, reported there was a need for better harbor infrastructure. In Hilo, there is a need to dredge the sand in the harbor for vessels to have safe passage during low tides. In Kona, Hawaii, members said the harbor needs to fit the community and create more space for boaters to park their boats. Members said that Kona is a world class fishing spot and there is need for a charter desk. On Kauai, harbor space continues to be an issue and vessel owners have to wait from seven to eight years before they can get a slip. Once they get a slip, they are pressured to use the space and have to accommodate the first years cost.

The AP said there is a need to promote local seafood and change the perception of the Hawaii longline fleet. An AP member said the Hawaii longline's stance is to always preserve their opportunity and ability to fish sustainably. The AP said it was important for fishers from the small boat fleet and the longline fleet to stick together because fishing is hard and the fish continues to evolve.

4. Council Fishery Issues and Activities

A. Options for Establishing Main Hawaiian Island (MHI) Kona Crab Status Determination Criteria

Thomas Remington, Council Contractor provided a presentation on options for establishing MHI Kona Crab fishery. This is a technical action that will define whether the stock is overfished or experiencing overfishing. Under the current management regime, the Hawaii

Archipelagic Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP) currently has no SDC for Kona Crab and not in compliance with the MSA. Remington reported that the APT endorsed Option 2 and said that it would not impact the stock and would put them back if they decide to go with a different SDC.

The AP member agreed there is a need for more research on the kona crab fishery to understand its shifting habitat and socioeconomic value to the community. The kona crab fishery has a small niche market since it has a short shelf life. They find that fishers will only catch kona crab for special occasions and parties.

An AP member said that kona crab habitat continues to shift and are found in small areas and pockets where there is clearer waters. With the current regulations, there is a need to allow the take of females, consider setting a size limit for males and extend the closed season to allow kona crab to complete their spawning season.

An AP member said there is limited commercial fishing data and a need to incorporate better noncommercial data. National Standard 3 requires management to consider a stock across its entire range, and the last kona crab stock assessment did not include catch data from Necker.

An AP member said that option 2 is the safest option and consider further research to inform the next stock assessment.

HI AP supports option 2 (use SDC from the previous assessment), provided that additional research on the following will be conducted to inform the next stock assessments:

- ***Extent of non-commercial catch***
- ***Full range of the stock, noting a significant amount of catch used to come from Necker***
- ***Sex ratio, including the impact of no-female-take regulations on sex ratio***

B. Options for Gold Coral Management

Zach Yamada presented options for Gold Coral Management in the Western Pacific Region. He provided an overview and background of the gold coral fishery. The gold coral fishery is currently dormant, although research on gold coral remain somewhat active. Based on research that indicated gold coral growth is much slower than expected, the Council recommended a five year moratorium in 2008, 2013 and 2018 to provide scientists time to reassess the current gold coral estimates. Council staff provided an overview of the options which included: 1) no action; 2) extend the moratorium; or 3) prohibit the take of gold coral.

An AP member asked if the fishery was still active. Council staff said over the years there has been less than three permits issues per year and the fishery is currently dormant. An AP member said that if this fishery were to die, then it would be hard to get it back and it would be ideal to extend the moratorium to learn more about the fishery and request PIFSC calculate MSY for gold coral.

HI AP supports option 2 to extend the moratorium and work towards calculating MSY to establish an ACL for the gold coral fishery.

C. Options for a Multi-Year Bigeye Tuna Catch and Allocation Limits

Mark Fitchett, Council staff, presented options for setting a framework for a multi-year bigeye tuna catch and allocation limits applicable for American Samoa, Guam, and CNMI to U.S. flagged Hawaii longline vessels. Under Amendment 7 to the Pelagic FEP, the Council specified annual fishing agreements to support the territorial marine conservation plan and fishery development projects. This action could remove the requirement for annual catch limits and amend the Pacific Pelagic FEP to specify multi-year allocation limits from US Participating Territories to US longline vessels.

An AP member asked if the Hawaii longline's quota accounts for a small percentage in the Pacific, and if so there should be a push for an increased quota. Council staff said that the US has the lowest catch limit, although there has been improved age and growth information showing that there were more adults spawning.

An AP member asked if the US delegation could ask for more quota from China and Japan. Council staff said there is a need to improve their international discussions to allow these types of agreements.

An AP member asked if there was an option to increase the total allocation to 6,000 metric tons (mt) for one year and ideally incentivize more fishers into the industry. Council staff said that this could be discussed by the Action Team and analyzed at a later date. This suggestion could be using in a phased-in approach as an option.

An AP said if the stock assessments are positive, fishing has been stable over the five years, and the fleets catch is below the overfishing limit, why have this catch allocation limit on a thriving fishery. There is a need to help the Hawaii longline fleet since they catch the most fish in Hawaii. Another member said that Honolulu is the seventh largest importer of tuna and they can only fishery with the limited amount of permits. He said that 80% of the fish caught by the longline fleet stays local and 20% is imported to the mainland. Although the ratios could differ from year to year, big box stores like Costco continue to import fish from the Marshall islands. Council staff said under the WCPFC, these catch limits are politically driven.

An AP member said that there has been changes in the management of the bigeye tuna catch as a result of FADs. From a big picture perspective, China has raised their quotas as the US quota has remained the same. He asked where the equity and environmental justice in these international conversations especially since there is no representation from the US territories. He said with those reasons in mind, he would support a multi-year territorial catch and effort allocation framework and allow an allocation limit of up to 2,000 mt.

The Hawaii AP recommends the Council proceed with the multi-year territorial catch and effort allocation framework removing the requirement for annual catch limits for the US Participating Territories, and proceed with previously analyzed longline bigeye tuna allocation options with a preliminary preferred alternative of up to 2,000 mt allocation limits for fishing years 2024 to 2026.

5. Hawaii Fishery Issues and Activities

A. Status of the Deep-Set Longline Draft Biological Opinion

Asuka Ishizaki, Council staff, presented a review of the Biological Opinion and will provide a status report of the Deep-Set Longline Draft Biological Opinion on March 16, 2023.

No discussion.

B. Review of Potential Measures for the False Killer Whale Take Reduction Plan Modification

Asuka Ishizaki provided a review of the potential measures for the false killer whale take reduction plan (FKWTRP) modification. The process to develop these plan was initiated in 2011 and implemented in 2012 under the marine mammal protection act (MMPA).

An AP member asked how much false killer whales have died from post-release. Council staff said that 90% of interactions are living and clarified that a hook in the mouth is considered serious injury. Another member said it would be advantageous for scientist to get out and profile the fishery. He said it would be interesting to understand what the total economic loss to fishery is.

HI AP recommends the Council request PIFSC conduct an economic analysis to better understand the economic impacts from the false killer whale.

C. Update on Plans for MHI Small-boat Fishery Engagement

Joshua Demello, Council staff, provided an update on plans for MHI small-boat fishery engagement. The Council will hire a contractor to engage the fishing communities alongside the that State of Hawaii and the Pacific Island Fishery Science Center. The AP can provide further guidance on scoping issues.

An AP member said the Council could discuss the proposed closed areas for the State of Hawaii and ensure there is not misinformation going around.

D. Pacific Remote Island Area Marine Conservation Plan Review

Matthew Seeley, Council staff, provided a review of the PRIA marine conservation plan. Currently you lack non-commercial data and he fished the NWHI and the stocks are one stock. There should be no reason why bottomfish research should not occur in the NWHI to understand what is happening and how it should be assessed. Rather have a complex study rather than a single species assessment. If they decide to go down the road of single species assessment then they should consider this.

E. Council Pelagic Fisheries Research Priorities

Mark Fitchett provided a presentation on the Council Pelagic Fisheries Research Priorities. Under section 302(h) in the MSA, each Council shall develop, in conjunction with the scientific and statistical committee, multi-year research priorities for fisheries, fishery interactions, habitats, and other areas of research that are necessary for management purposes. The Council has started to plan for the Pelagic Research Plan before March 2023.

Kitty Simonds, Executive Director, asked if there was list of old priorities that the AP could consider to decide what to carry over from the old plan. Regarding sharks, that is a big one where there was research and found that different sharks act differently but it has not answer the question of lowering depredation.

An AP member said there is a vast pool of fishers who are willing to participate in a shark deterrence project as their boats are losing fish everyday. Council staff said they were able to get funding for one study in the Marianas, although this project focused on identifying the species.

An AP member said there is a need to come up with a plan for shark deterrence and go and do that project. There is interest from companies and scientist who may be interested in doing the work and analysis. Another AP member said there was a recent bill that placed a moratorium on targeting sharks. She said that this is like fishing without seatbelts. She said there have been projects where people has success putting Shark Banz on their monofilament lines.

The HI AP recommends the Council request PIFSC study how many sharks can be removed from the population while achieving MSY.

The HI AP requests staff provide a status report on the existing Pelagic Fisheries Research Priorities.

6. Introduction to the 2023 Hawaii Longline Cost Earning Survey

Minling Pan, economist from PIFSC, provided an introduction to the 2023 Hawaii Longline Cost Earning Survey. As required under the MSA and other applicable laws, they are required to conduct an economic analysis on fisheries in the Western Pacific. They will be collecting cost-earnings information from the Hawaii longline owners and captains to update their economic report from 2012. This study allows them to track industry trends and long-term sustainability of Hawaii longline fishery.

An AP member asked if there were any lessons learned from the 2012 survey and if there is new data they will be looking at. Minling said they will be asking for more data on cost for foreign labor. That AP member said that the cost for foreign labor varies from vessel to vessel ranging from \$12,000 to \$18,000 per crew member. From 2012, there have been a number of vessels that dry docked their vessels for maintenance repair and this would be good information to account for. Minling said they have a subcategory for dry dock and cost for maintenance to understand how often and what are the cost associated.

7. Setting the Direction for the Hawaii AP

Clay Tam, AP Chair, provided an overview of the AP training workshop and the expectations for the 2023-2026 AP term. This includes developing the plan and providing updates at its formal and informal meeting. Tam encouraged the members to observe the other AP and advisory body meetings in the case there could be a joint meeting during their tenure.

An AP member asked if there were updates on the monchong tagging project. Council said there were no updates due to the lack of funding, but the tags have been inquired and rechargeable.

The AP said the training workshop provided a great overview and it would be beneficial for the AP to meet in the different island areas to provide a better presence to the community.

8. Public Comment

There were no request for public comment.

9. Discussion and Recommendations

Regarding options for establishing MHI Kona Crab SDC, the Hawaii AP supports option 2 (use SDC from the previous assessment), provided that additional research on the following will be conducted to inform the next stock assessments:

- *Extent of non-commercial catch*
- *Full range of the stock, noting a significant amount of catch used to come from Necker*
- *Sex ratio, including the impact of no-female-take regulations on sex ratio*

Regarding options for gold coral management, the Hawaii AP supports option 2 to extend the moratorium and work towards calculating MSY to establish an ACL for the gold coral fishery.

Regarding the options for multi-year bigeye tuna catch and allocation limits, the Hawaii AP recommends the Council proceed with the multi-year territorial catch and effort allocation framework removing the requirement for annual catch limits for the US Participating Territories, and proceed with previously analyzed longline bigeye tuna allocation options with a preliminary preferred alternative of up to 2,000 mt allocation limits for fishing years 2024 to 2026.

Regarding Hawaii Fishery Issues, the Hawaii AP:

- *Recommends the Council request PIFSC conduct an economic analysis to better understand the economic impacts from the false killer whale.*
- *Recommends the Council request PIFSC to study how many sharks can be removed from the population while achieving MSY.*
- *Requests staff provide a status report on the existing Pelagic Fisheries Research Priorities.*

10. Other Business

Council staff provided an overview of the National Seafood Strategy and the National EEJ Strategic Plan