



WESTERN  
PACIFIC  
REGIONAL  
FISHERY  
MANAGEMENT  
COUNCIL

## **Social Science Planning Committee**

May 31, 2023

1 – 5 p.m.

Web Conference

### **Report**

#### **1. Welcome and Introductions**

Craig Severance, SSPC chair, welcomed members to the meeting. Members in attendance were Craig Severance, Adam Ayers, Debra Cabrera, Justin Hospital, Kirsten Leong, and Michelle McGregor. Council staff present were Asuka Ishizaki, Mark Fitchett, Zach Yamada, Josh DeMello, Felix Reyes, and Kitty Simonds. Others in attendance were Thomas Remington (Council contractor/Lynker), and Pua Borges (PIRO).

#### **2. Approval of Agenda**

The agenda was approved.

#### **3. Annual SAFE Reports**

##### **A. Socioeconomic Modules 2022 Report Updates**

Hospital provided an overview of the socioeconomic module updates for the 2022 report. For this year's report, a new section on Equity and Environmental Justice (EEJ) was developed, and the socioeconomic data have been added to the online portal. Leong highlighted the components of the new EEJ section, which summarizes the national EEJ framework and definitions, as well as the descriptions of the 2022 EEJ meetings conducted throughout the region. Hospital also highlighted the 2022 PIFSC socioeconomic publications linked to Council 5-year priorities. Likely updates for the 2023 reporting year will include updated economic contribution estimates for Hawaii, addition of economic contribution estimates for American Samoa, as well as additional updates to EEJ and people who fish sections.

The SSPC discussed further improvements to the socioeconomic modules. For the EEJ section, the SSPC discussed tracking who is bearing the burden of fishery management or regulations, especially with respect to those that are controversial (e.g., critical habitat designations) or may have disproportionate burdens on certain communities. The SSPC also discussed the community engagement metrics as an example of information that could be incorporated into the SAFE report, and noted that including key summary points from the metrics could be a useful way to have comparisons across fisheries. The community engagement metrics could also provide a way to incorporate longer time series in the SAFE report, a point of discussion that has come up at Plan Team meetings.

**SSPC recommends that the EEJ section of the SAFE report in future years focus on impacts of regulations, especially with respect to disproportionate burden and distributional justice issues associated with the higher impact on some fishers than others or favoring one sector more than another sector.**

## **B. Fisher Observations**

SSPC continued to assist with fisher observation meetings in 2023 to document observations from 2022. Ayers provided a summary of the information gathered at the three meetings (American Samoa, joint Guam & CNMI, and Hawaii). Feedback received from the meetings was compiled using SEEM (social, economic, ecological, and management) themes, then by MUS.

The SSPC discussed approaches for broadening engagement, including gathering information through photographs (photo elicitation), ongoing effort to ask for observations at the informal monthly Advisory Panel meetings, and providing feedback to the fishing community about the process through popular outlets. The SSPC also discussed the Archipelagic Plan Team recommendation to gather more demographic information, and acknowledged the merit of having a way to have some systematic comparison, but noted that the fishers observation effort is inherently a small availability sample, and that there is a need to balance the interest of gathering information systematically and the benefit of the informal ‘talk story’ approach.

Hospital and Ayers indicated that they are committed to having PIFSC staff attend AP meetings to record fishers observations at each meeting, and indicated they can discuss PIFSC staff assistance with synthesizing the monthly meetings notes.

### **Regarding the Fishers Observations, the SSPC:**

- **Endorses the SEEM format for summarizing the Fishers Observation information**
- **Recommends making effort to broaden engagement;**
- **Recommends PIFSC staff provide support for AP’s monthly data collection efforts, and SSPC encourages focused effort on the fishers observations at the monthly AP meetings**
- **Recommends providing feedback on the Fishers Observation in a popular outlet to inform the fishing community about the process, highlighting it as a way to bring local knowledge into the fishery management and decision making processes**
- **Recommends synthesis of monthly and annual observations to be incorporated into the SAFE report**

## **4. Socioeconomic Considerations for Council Actions and Issues**

### **A. Territory Bottomfish Management Unit Species Revision**

Remington presented an overview of the Council action to amend the Fishery Ecosystem Plans (FEP) to revise the Bottomfish Management Unit Species (BMUS) list in American Samoa, Guam and CNMI. At the upcoming 195th meeting in June, the Council will consider initial action on the amendment for American Samoa. SSPC reviewed the fishing communities component report, which will form the basis of the socioeconomic impacts analysis for the amendment.

SSPC members noted that the proposed revisions to the BMUS groupings, based on a cluster analysis, are reasonable and an improvement to the original groupings. The SSPC noted that the fishing communities component report could include information from the forthcoming report

from the recent American Samoa small-boat socioeconomic survey, but that the information from the report would not change the outcomes of the impact analysis. An SSPC member suggested looking for recent information on the cultural valuation of specific species on the revised BMUS list, and other members suggested some information may be available in the forthcoming small-boat socioeconomic survey report, and that in the future cultural valuation could be checked through the Fishers Observation effort using a specific discussion prompt for that purpose.

**The SSPC endorses the fishing communities component report for the Territory Bottomfish Management Unit Species Revision amendment, as it provides an adequate representation of the existing information. The report captures the potential impacts appropriately in terms of other information.**

#### **B. Multi-year Territorial Bigeye Tuna Catch and Allocation Specifications**

Council staff presented an overview of the Council action to implement modifications to the Pelagic FEP Amendment 7 management framework, which would allow multi-year specifications of catch and/or effort and allocation limits for U.S Participating Territories. The SSPC was asked to provide input on the socioeconomic considerations for the multi-year approach and the pros and cons of single versus multiple fishing agreements.

**The SSPC endorses the proposed multiyear catch and allocation specifications with the caveat that these be developed to be in line with the new stock assessment and any new CMM.** The SSPC notes that giving more predictability and continuity to the process benefits all, and reduces the possibility of significant adverse impacts from fishing, market, and cultural disruptions. The SSPC suggests that careful consideration be given to the potential for competition for allocations by multiple entities within known sectors of the Hawai‘i based Longline fleet in the context of WCPFC rules. Benefits from potential fishery infrastructure and demonstration projects under territorial and commonwealth MCP can contribute to resilient seafood systems.

**SSPC supports a single unified agreement as it would prevent unnecessary inter-fleet competition and potential inequitable allocation issues, maximize community participation, and consideration for safety at sea (NS10).**

#### **C. Review of the American Samoa Large Vessel Prohibited Area Impacts**

Council staff provided an overview of the review of the American Samoa fishery performance as it relates to the Large Vessel Prohibited Area (LVPA). SSPC was asked to provide input on: (1) causality of the decline of the local alia fleet that the LVPA was designed to protect, (2) causality of fishery performance of the troll, sportfishing, alia, and monohull longline fisheries that may be external to local stock abundance, and (3) compare/contrast social and economic benefits to the American Samoa community of the three non-longline and longline pelagic fisheries.

The SSPC suggests that the reasons for the difficulty in assessing the LVPA and decline in the Alia fleet are not well understood, and may include multiple cultural and economic factors. These may include safety issues, cost of fishing (increasing fuel, ice and bait prices), crew comfort and availability, the motivations of captains and crew to continue to engage in sharing

and customary patterns of post-harvest distribution of the unsold portion of the catch, the extent of a continued role if any of village level alia and small trolling vessels being managed by Tautai serving their Matai, and higher chiefs, and whether a variety of culturally patterned obligations such as Fesoasoani and Fa'a taualofa still exist.

**SSPC recommends a brief focused effort conducting a few focus groups followed by local interviewers, supervised by a trained social scientist, but utilizing Samoan personnel and translation if needed, to investigate the issues that may relate to the assessment of the social and economic impacts of the LVPA and other factors influencing the American Samoa pelagic fisheries.**

#### **D. Proposed Designation of a National Marine Sanctuary for the Pacific Remote Islands**

Council staff provided an overview of the proposed National Marine Sanctuary designation for the Pacific Remote Islands, and information considered in the Council's draft letter in response to the Notice of Intent (NOI). The SSPC was asked to provide input on any social science information related to the potential impacts of the designation.

An SSPC member noted that much of the scientific information cited in the nomination packet has been countered by the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee, and that the additional closures beyond what is already closed are unlikely to have any conservation benefit.

The SSPC noted the lack of support from the jurisdictions that will bear the brunt of the impacts.

**The SSPC suggests that for the NEPA-like social and economic impact analyses, that that sector of the U.S. purse seine fleet and possibly the Hawaii Longline fleet that has historically fished in the PRIA EEZ around Howland and Baker and Palmyra and Kingman reef be considered a “community of practice” (Severance 2021)<sup>1</sup> and be given prominence as an “affected community” along with the whole larger fishing community of American Samoa.**

#### **5. National Standard 4 (Allocation), 8 (Fishing Communities) and 9 (Bycatch) Guidance Review**

Council staff provided an overview of the advance notice of proposed rulemaking (ANRP) for potential future adjustments to implementing guidelines for MSA National Standards 4 (allocation), 8 (communities), and 9 (bycatch). NMFS issued the ANRP because several ongoing fishing management challenges, including changes in environmental conditions, shifting distributions of fish stocks, and EEJ considerations that affect fishing communities that are currently or have been historically dependent on the resource, suggest a need to revisit the guidelines to ensure they remain appropriate for current U.S. fisheries management. Among the

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<sup>1</sup> Severance, C. 2021. Social Impact Assessment for Blue Water Area Based Management Tools, Imagining Fair and Effective Social and Economic Impact Assessments for a Blue Water Space where Nobody Lives-Ranking Affected User Groups , communities, and constituencies. *In* M. Fitchett, et.al. Roadmap to Effective Area-Based Management of Blue Water Fisheries, Including Workshop Proceedings Honolulu, Western Pacific Fishery Management Council.

input solicited are potential modifications to the definition of “fishing community.” The public comment period for the ANRP runs through September 12, 2023.

The SSPC noted that the existing NS8 guidance focuses on economic impacts to communities, and this review may provide an opportunity to broaden consideration of impacts, including cultural impacts. The term and concept of “community” as used in the social sciences is “fuzzy” and flexible but rarely well defined and operationalized in context. Scale and time frame need consideration in all definitions of “communities”. While most conceptualizations of “community” view community as being place-based there is now broader use of the concepts of “communities of practice”, “communities of interest”, and “virtual communities”, among others. Communities of practice may focus on shared activities, or even values far from different places of residence. The concept is currently being used in some international agency guidance on social and economic impact analysis.

**The SSPC recommends the following members for a Council established working group: Severance, Cabrera, Hospital, Leong**

**The SSPC further recommends that the Council encourage developing more precise definitions that explicitly include a broader range of communities in the N.S 4, 8, and 9 guidelines review.**

## **6. Review of Research Priorities**

Council staff provided an overview of the draft revision to the Council’s Pelagic Fisheries Research Plan. SSPC members were asked to provide additional input to staff by June 12, 2023, specifically on knowledge gaps for priority 1 (impact of pelagic fisheries on sustaining community resiliency).

SSPC supported the emphasis on the management objectives and alignment with the FEPs, and the focus of community resiliency as the first priority. The SSPC also discussed the benefit of folding in the community resiliency into the pelagic research plan instead of having it as a separate program area in the 5-year research priorities.

## **7. Project Updates**

SSPC members provided several relevant projects.

- Leong reported on two projects:
  - The IEA Pacific Islands team has offered GIS support to the Council’s FishMaps project, working with Council Advisory Panels to identify traditionally important fishing areas for inclusion in spatial management discussions.
  - The IEA Human Dimensions Working Group is moving forward with a national fish flow project led by CIMAR staff Jonathan Fisk. Initial work is establishing a baseline of surveys and forms that track disposition of catch and post-harvest distribution to assess potential for consistency in national data collection. This work would help improve our understanding of non-market benefits from fishing and the degree to which they are equitably distributed.
- Ayers reported on two projects:

- Over 50 surveys with vessel owners have been completed to date as part of the Hawaii longline cost-earnings survey fieldwork, and additional outreach is ongoing to gather more input and responses.
- The uku ecosystem and socioeconomic ‘report card’ project aims to summarize key information about the fishery (quota usage, commercial sales, revenue, trips, and other key ecosystem and socioeconomic relationships). The goal is to provide information about uku in an ecosystem context (e.g., how does uku relate and compare to pelagic management unit species, deep 7 bottomfish, ecosystem components species,; what do fisher observations say about uku last year; how do ecosystem variables affect participation and effort; and what is the importance of uku in terms of locally caught seafood and number of meals it provides to the Hawaii fishing community?)
- Severance reported on a draft conference paper on American Samoan fisheries with Bob Franco and JoAnna Poblete that is nearing submission.

## **8. Public Comment**

No public comment.

## **9. Discussion and Recommendations**

The SSPC made the following recommendations:

- 1) Regarding the 2022 Annual SAFE Report socioeconomic modules, the SSPC recommends that the EEJ section of the SAFE report in future years focus on impacts of regulations, especially with respect to disproportionate burden and distributional justice issues associated with the higher impact on some fishers than others or favoring one sector more than another sector.
- 2) Regarding the Fishers Observations, the SSPC:
  - Endorses the SEEM format for summarizing the Fishers Observation information
  - Recommends making effort to broaden engagement;
  - Recommends PIFSC staff provide support for AP’s monthly data collection efforts, and SSPC encourages focused effort on the fishers observations at the monthly AP meetings
  - Recommends providing feedback on the Fishers Observation in a popular outlet to inform the fishing community about the process, highlighting it as a way to bring local knowledge into the fishery management and decision making processes
  - Recommends synthesis of monthly and annual observations to be incorporated into the SAFE report
- 3) Regarding the Territory Bottomfish Management Unit Species Revision, the SSPC endorses the fishing communities component report for the Territory Bottomfish Management Unit Species Revision amendment, as it provides an adequate representation of the existing information. The report captures the potential impacts appropriately in terms of other information.

- 4) Regarding the Multi-year Territorial Bigeye Tuna Catch and Allocation Specifications, the SSPC:
  - Endorses the proposed multiyear catch and allocation specifications with the caveat that these be developed to be in line with the new stock assessment and any new CMM.
  - Supports a single unified agreement as it would prevent unnecessary inter-fleet competition and potential inequitable allocation issues, maximize community participation, and consideration for safety at sea (NS10).
- 5) Regarding the Review of the American Samoa Large Vessel Prohibited Area Impacts, the SSPC recommends a brief focused effort conducting a few focus groups followed by local interviewers, supervised by a trained social scientist, but utilizing Samoan personnel and translation if needed, to investigate the issues that may relate to the assessment of the social and economic impacts of the LVPA and other factors influencing the American Samoa pelagic fisheries.
- 6) Regarding the Proposed Designation of a National Marine Sanctuary for the Pacific Remote Islands, the SSPC suggests that for the NEPA-like social and economic impact analyses, that that sector of the U.S. purse seine fleet and possibly the Hawaii Longline fleet that has historically fished in the PRIA EEZ around Howland and Baker and Palmyra and Kingman reef be considered a “community of practice” and be given prominence as an “affected community” along with the whole larger fishing community of American Samoa.
- 7) Regarding the National Standard 4, 8 and 9 Guidance Review, the SSPC:
  - Recommends the following members for a Council established working group: Severance, Cabrera, Hospital, Leong
  - Recommends that the Council encourage developing more precise definitions that explicitly include a broader range of communities in the N.S 4, 8, and 9 guidelines review.

## **10. Other Business**

There was no other business.