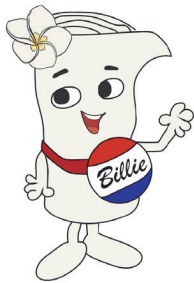


Congressional Corner



To keep up to date on the latest legislation affecting fishing in your region and the nation, visit www.congress.gov.

The 118th Congress kicked off in January 2023 with many bills making their way through that could affect the way fisheries are managed across the nation. There are many bills that look to amend the

Endangered Species Act to include additional provisions such as for anadromous species (migrate between fresh and marine ecosystems), economic impacts and improved precision in listings. Other bills focus on marine debris, offshore energy and ocean acidification. Currently, there have been no Magnuson-Stevens Act reauthorization bills introduced, but this is just the start of this Congress.

Instead, the Council's attention is on the impacts of previously passed legislation that have fishery implications. The National Defense Authorization Act, which became public law late last year, included provisions that reauthorize the Coral Reef Conservation Act as well as establish regional ocean partnerships. In the reauthorization of the Coral Reef Conservation Act, the fishery management councils with coral reef jurisdictions were given seats on the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force as non-voting members. This is a request that the councils made in years past and will help to provide a fishery perspective on the Task Force. Other acts that were passed last session, including the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act, provide funds that could give relief to territorial agencies addressing issues at harbors and marinas.

In March 2023, President Biden released his FY2024 budget that allocates funding for fisheries through the Department of Commerce and funding to the territories through the Department of the Interior. The proposed budget increases NOAA's funding directed toward national marine sanctuaries and building a climate-ready nation. However, funding for impacts from the Compact of Free Association with Micronesian states has been eliminated. This funding is used to reimburse the costs associated with providing services to persons from these areas. As the negotiations for a continued agreement continue, this is likely to be identified as an issue. 🐟

To follow along with the legislation in the other island areas, visit:

American Samoa - www.americansamoa.gov/fono

CNMI - <https://cnmileg.net>

Guam - <https://guamlegislature.com/index/bills>

Hawai'i - www.capitol.hawaii.gov



Council Family Updates

At the 194th Council meeting, the Council supported the following advisory body changes:

- * Appointed **Sean Hanser** and **Irene Kelly** to the Archipelagic Plan Team
- * Appointed **Jason Philibotte** and **Melissa Snover** to the Pelagic Plan Team.
- * Appointed **Kelsey McClellan**, **Christina Tudela** and **Sylvia Calvo** to the Education Committee.



Felix Penalosa joined the Council staff in March 2023 as its American Samoa island coordinator. Penalosa brings his experience as a former grant analyst for the American Samoa Department of Treasury. His primary duties are maintaining operations of the AS Council satellite office and providing logistical support and coordination for Council staff. Penalosa holds an associate of science degree in accounting from the AS Community College.

Molly Lutcavage and **Clayward Tam**, Pacific Islands Fisheries Group, recently completed a Kaua'i Small Boat Fishery Diversification Project sponsored by the National Marine Fisheries Service. The objective of the project was to identify and evaluate a range of possible approaches to diversify or increase market share and business opportunities for the Kaua'i small boat fleet, which mainly consisting of part-time anglers, and faced new distribution challenges during the pandemic. The authors used web-based workshops and expert panels to gather community insights and successful diversification strategies, resulting in the creation of www.AhiHubKauai.org and www.FishToday.org as resources for future diversification efforts and to support Kaua'i's local food and culinary resources. To see the full report, visit: www.wpcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/KauaiDiversificationFinalReport.pdf. 🐟

