



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Pacific Islands Refuges and Monuments Office
300 Ala Moana Blvd Room 5-231
PO Box 50167
Honolulu, Hawaii 96850

Mr. William Sword
Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council
1164 Bishop Street, Suite 1400
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Mr. Sword:

The Pacific Islands Refuges and Monuments Office (PIRAMO), and on behalf of the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration, Ecological Services, and Migratory Bird Programs, would like to report to you and the rest of the Council the following activities related to USFWS managed lands and waters in the Western and Central Pacific Region from June 16, 2024 to September 15, 2024.

Pacific Remote Islands MNM:

- After Essential Fish Habitat and Threatened and Endangered Species Consultations with the National Marine Fisheries Service; the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issued a Special Use Permit for The Fisheries Agency, Government of Japan Research, to conduct research on the spatial and vertical distribution of skipjack, bigeye and yellowfin larvae and juvenile and their relations to the oceanographic features in subtropical and tropical waters in the Pacific Ocean. Research is in coordination with The Pacific Community (SPC) and will take place approximately 4 September - 29 October 2024, using the vessel Kaiyo-Maru in the Howland Island and Baker Island Units of the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument.

Cruise schedule:

Leg1: 2024/9/4 (TOKYO) – 10/1 (Pohnpei, FSM)

Leg2: 2024/10/4 (Pohnpei, FSM) – 10/21 (Saipan)

Leg3: 2024/10/24 (Saipan) – 10/29 (TOKYO)

Migratory Birds and Habitat Program:

- Changes to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act permitting regulations for incidental take are currently being considered by USFWS and there could be potential changes to the way USFWS regulates take of Migratory Birds in commercial fisheries. It is not yet certain how commercial fisheries will be regulated, but the authorization will likely be proposed as required for some types of commercial fisheries in federal waters, focusing on those with the highest risk of Migratory Bird incidental take. NOAA's Seabird program has advised the Service that the demersal longline fishery, pelagic longline fishery, drift

gillnet fishery, set gillnet fishery, or trawl gear fishery pose higher risk of incidental take of Migratory Birds.

The USFWS will likely defer to federal regulation already on the books. At this point this would apply to three fisheries that have been identified:

- (A) The West Coast groundfish fishery in compliance with seabird bycatch-avoidance regulations at 50 CFR 660.21.
- (B) The Western Pacific pelagic longline fishery in compliance with seabird bycatch-avoidance regulations at 50 CFR 665.815.
- (C) The Alaska demersal longline fishery in compliance with seabird bycatch-avoidance regulations at 50 CFR 679.24(e).

Public comment will be sought on both the rule and EIS, possibly as early as December 2024.

Sincerely,

Brian Peck
USFWS WesPac Council Representative
Superintendent/Manager
Rose Atoll Marine National Monument
and National Wildlife Refuge