



## **Final Report of the Hawaii Archipelago Advisory Panel Meeting**

Friday, September 6, 2024

9 a.m. – 1 p.m. (HST)

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

Gil Kualii, Hawaii and PRIA Advisory Panel (AP) Vice Chair, opened the meeting at 9:03 a.m. AP members in attendance included Clay Tam, Amanda Padilla, Abraham Apilado, Len Nakano, Nathan Abe, Khang Dang, Len Nakano, and Carrie Johnston. AP members Eddie Ebisui and Nathan Tsao were excused.

Others in attendance included Zach Yamada, Joshua DeMello, Asuka Ishizaki, Devin Otto (Council Staff), Emily Hildreth (BOEM), David O'Brien, Pua Borges (PIRO), Adam Ayers, and Kirsten Leong (PIFSC).

### **2. Review of the Last AP Recommendation and Meeting**

Zach Yamada, Council staff, reviewed the last Joint Advisory Committee meeting, held on June 7, 2024.

### **3. Feedback from the Fleet**

#### **A. Fisher Observation**

#### **B. Fisheries Issues**

AP members provided their fisher observations and fisheries issues from July to September 2024.

For Kauai, trolling has been slow with a large amount of pilot whales. Depredation continues to be an issue. One shortline fisher off Kekaha only pulled lips and eyeballs. For the shortline fishery, tuna catch has been above average. Regarding water temperature, it has been consistent with no traumatic changes. There were no interactions with oceanic white tip (OWT) sharks, but mostly blue sharks observed depredation. There has been a bloom of ehu. He caught a kawakawa with a bunch of redfish. Opelu has been phenomenal. Ono has been good with a 40lb, and marlin has been considerable. Mahimahi has not started to bite. Fisher participation has been down for the year. Oama has been good, and there has been a lot on the East side and Anini. Moi has been good. There has been a lot of investment in the catch and release. There is an upcoming bottomfish fisher catching, on average, a couple of hundred pounds per trip.

Fishing for longline has been spotty compared to the last four to five years. During the summer months, lower-quality tuna get low prices, which drives for better quality with higher prices. There was an unusual 50/50 split in catch for yellowfin and bigeye tuna. For the last two weeks, BET has been going back to normal. For protected species, fishers were complaining when they were getting whaled and had to take a couple of days to move and continue fishing.

For Oahu, recreational fishing has been down. Offshore monitoring has been constant. Unusual weather patterns. Low tourism and high gas prices. Fish are being found in unusual places. Fishing has been low compared to other years. An AP member reported that otaru were still around, and the oamas finally showed up. The small marlin was still around, with a lot of fish caught in the blind. The Ahi season was late, with catch fairly deep and fewer trollers catching ahi.

For Maui, fishers reported that bottomfish were biting, although many boats were at Maalaea.

For Hawaii Island, depredation continues to be an issue for the bottomfish and pelagic fishers. Aku were in more prominent at 15-20 lbs when the current was north, but when the current switched, they disappeared. The marlin and ahi were still around, with smaller sizes, although there was a reported grander marlin caught in Kona. Regarding uku, they are still spawning, which was unusually late compared to the expected summer spawning period. The catch has been low for the small boat fishers, although the shortliners are still catching ahi. In Hilo, only a few large tunas are coming up, ranging in the low hundreds. Fishers reported catching tomo on the outside with different water temp fish. Regarding the Wailoa boat harbor, dredging continues with the Wailoa boat harbor, and capital improvement projects for restrooms and infrastructure improvements are expected to be finished by the end of the year.

Regarding the proposed rule hearing for the OWT public meeting in Kona, the meeting was sad, with a lot of issues about how this would kill the fishing in Kona. The sharks have been bad, with no catch from the buoy. Fishing is hard, and the proposed rule has issues since it seems like it is focused on the islanders and serious about finding the corporate side of this.

#### **4. Council Fisheries Issues**

##### **A. Options for Specifying MHI Deep 7 ACL for 2024-2027**

**Zach Yamada**

Zach Yamada, Council staff, provided an overview of options to specify ACLs and AM for the MHI Deep 7 fishery for fishing years 2024 to 2027. The options presented were: 1) No action; 2) Status quo, specify ACL of 492,000 lbs based on the 2021 assessment; 3) specify ACLs based on the results of the 2024 P\* and SEEM analysis and benchmark assessment at 39% risk of overfishing at 493,000 lbs for fishing years 2024 to 2027; or 4) Specify ACLs lower than the results of the 2024 P\* and SEEM and assessment. Options for accountability measures include implementing in-season monitoring using the Hawaii Division of Aquatic Resources commercial marine license report; implementing a single-year post-season overage adjustment; and or specifying the ACL to the acceptable biological catch and specifying an annual catch target equal to the P\* and SEEM analysis.

The Vice-chair reminded the AP that Option 3, at 493,000 lb with in-season monitoring and post-season overage adjustment, was the preferred option recommended by the AP at its June meeting.

An AP member said that when it comes to bottomfish, the reason why the fishery does not get past 200,000 lbs is due to the inability to sell their fish without flooding the market. If a fisherman on Kauai came back with 400 lbs of onaga, he would flood himself out. If he cannot sell his fish, then what would be the motive for being a full-time commercial fisher? Need something to protect the fisherman. The cost of fishing continues to rise, and the number of

fishers continues to decline. There are a number of rules and regulations about fishing, with science showing that the fishery is healthy, but the only thing going down is the fisherman. There is a need to protect the guys because the fishers fishing my age or older are older and out the door. There are not a lot of new up-and-coming fishers in Kauai, and the number of people who buy fish is also lower than before.

Another AP member said that fishing is trendy. If they are biting, people will go fishing. There are blooms of fish, but if the price is not right, then the motives for commercial fishing decline. He said that he cannot see hitting the ACL because the fishery has big factors. If fishermen could get their fish to the auction block, they would make money because there are many days that there is no bottomfish on the block.

The AP Chair said the model was good but raised concerns about surplus production when the fishery is operating well below limits. He highlighted that even going over by one pound could result in large deductions. A significant amount of catch has been lost due to people leaving the fishery, and although fish prices have been high this summer, shipping costs and barriers to trade and selling present challenges. Once the market becomes saturated, prices can drop rapidly, leading to a decline in revenue. The Chair emphasized that while production may increase, sustaining prices is difficult, primarily due to the impact of imports on local fish availability. He also mentioned that the Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center (PIFSC) is discontinuing the MOUSS, which raises concerns about how this will impact stock assessments, as it previously provided independent fishery support. The Chair noted weaknesses in the creel survey that have put Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands (BF) in an overfished condition, stating that their markets are small and sensitive, similar to Hawaii's.

Additionally, he observed a decrease in nighttime fishermen targeting paka in Oahu and highlighted the issue of conducting landing surveys that do not account for nighttime fishing. Transparency is a key issue, with a need for action beyond just words. He pointed out that a recent letter from the Director lacked input from the people conducting the surveys, raising concerns about the future of the community in terms of stock assessments and the direction post-2027.

The Chair questioned where the uku stock assessment is heading and expressed that the community cannot rely on just one species to support the fishery. The fishery involves specialists targeting multiple species as part of their livelihoods, mainly focusing on three snapper species: uku, paka, and onaga. While other stocks are available, they are not receiving adequate attention. An AP member said a big part of bottomfishing was understanding the market. If you cannot make money, why do commercial fishing? If BFISH discontinues the camera survey, then what will be the next priority for accommodating the fisheries in the Western Pacific?

Another AP member said that fishermen are essential to the ecosystem since they are gardeners of the sea. Regarding nighttime fishing, there is a big difference between night and daytime fishing. As soon as the sun goes down, if you are not on the pakas, then they are bycatch like opelu, kawela, and dachi.

An AP member said that numbers are static points in time, and the AP needs to tell them that there are factors that they do not see. For example, if there is no market, why spend time and energy fishing? They say that catch rates go down and assume it is the fish stock. Bluefin was supposed to be down, but now it is bouncing back. People operate with broad strokes, and the message needs to get out that we need to fight for our rights and privileges and manage

responsibly. Fish prices can be reasonable for fish until a certain point, and then they fall off a cliff. From the mid-2010s, 85% of fish stayed local. Hawaii's population is not growing. If tourism is weak or spending is down, then their economy will feel it. The gamble to make a profit from fishing is too big, so fishers will not go fishing. Price goes up, and everyone goes fishing. The onus is on the fishers to market their fish and go fishing. Bruce Johnston grew Fresh Island Fish by taking unique Hawaii fish and selling it to the mainland and big markets. Hawaii does not have that kind of spending because the market and supply and demand ebb and flow all over the place. He said we should defend our right to produce our fish since there is a need to have promotion of the product we have and sell outside of Hawaii to bring more money to our shores. Buying local is good, but producing local and selling outside of Hawaii helps too. The fishing trend line keeps going down and down until they might lose it all, leaving Hawaii with only maybe Kona coffee. Hawaii has fishing, one of the few things that are managed responsibly. There is a need to promote Hawaii fisheries to increase the size of the pie. As an option, it would be nice to be able to send all of those fish somewhere, but it takes money and time to set up the pipelines. They also need consistent products. We need to really ask ourselves if we are responsibly managing the stocks or not;

Another AP member said that Hawaii had the NWHI to supply consistent bottomfish for the market. Consistency is everything because it decides if it is a menu fish or a special. If it is on the menu, then the fishers need to supply the market. If there is no local fish, then they have to resort to imports. Fishing is a tricky business, and he has not seen a broker lose money yet.

The AP Chair said the Pacific Island Fisheries Group (PIFG) project, funded by an SK grant, aimed to introduce local fish into school classrooms. However, schools face difficulties promoting the use of local fish in culinary programs due to cost constraints. Without hands-on experience with fish during their education, students may not work with it for years after graduation. The project delivers fish to colleges for students to work with, aiming to encourage future chefs to use and promote local fish. He emphasized the need to market locally; for example, he does not consume seafood at the same level as Hawaii, which leads the nation in seafood consumption. He also noted the importance of leadership in promoting seafood, as consumption in many parts of the U.S. focuses on processed products like fish sticks.

The AP Chair expressed disappointment over the cancellation of a small boat repair facility project at Hawaii Community College (HCC) in favor of a voyaging society initiative. He felt that such a facility could have supported the fishing industry and fishermen. He also highlighted the lack of state funding and support for the industry, suggesting that technology used for aquarium fish farming could be repurposed into a hatchery to support local fisheries. Given Hawaii's geographic limitations for farming, he urged people to engage with legislators to improve industry support.

An AP member said NOAA is part of the Department of Commerce (DOC) but needs more support from the Department of Agriculture to understand how DOC can support fisheries like farmers. There is not the same interest and expertise in enhancing fisheries.

Another AP member said there was an example of marketing Hawaii venison where Maui Nui Venison had a mission to preserve the land and control populations. Their story started about 10 years ago, and they hunt, process, and distribute over 500,000 lb of venison annually. To put it into perspective, they sell jerky for up to \$90 per pound, \$50 per venison chop, and \$30 for ground veal. Their feel-good element is to buy their protein at a high cost, and we will take some proceeds to feed those in need. Amazingly, this grassroots movement could specialize its brand,

storytelling, and ad marketing. The fishery has a similar concept to translate to this product, but there is a need to find someone to market and tell the story of our fishery.

An AP member praised the marketing efforts behind Copper River salmon, noting how it turned a seasonal fishery into a goldmine and suggesting that targeting markets could benefit other fisheries. They pointed out that many agricultural industries, like beef and corn, receive subsidies and low-interest loans, while the fishing industry lacks similar support. Despite raising this issue with MAFAC, the member feels the national strategy is not providing adequate assistance to the fishing community. They also highlighted the unfair burden of high fuel prices and the broader lack of understanding of the challenges fishermen face.

Council staff provided an overview of the Council's exploration of COOL and vitamin tuna. The focus has been on tuna, but there has been a desire for bottomfish.

*Regarding Hawaii fisheries issues, the Hawaii AP recommends the Council explore market barriers of bottomfish to maximize fishing opportunities for the MHI Deep 7 fisheries.*

*Regarding Hawaii bottomfish research, the Hawaii AP recommends the Council request NMFS PIFSC provide the Council and its Advisory Groups further details on the shift to place greater emphasis on the BFISH research fishing operations and pause the use of the MOUSS. The AP further requests PIFSC to clarify for the Council its plans for the Territorial bottomfish surveys and if shifts in priority will also be applied in those regions. Finally, PIFSC should explain how this change will impact future stock assessments.*

## **B. Options for Hawaii and American Samoa Longline Fisheries Crew Training Requirement**

Asuka Ishizaki provided a report on Options for Hawaii and American Samoa Longline Fisheries Crew Training Requirements. The Council, at its 199th meeting, directed the formation of an Action Team to initiate the development of a regulatory requirement for Hawaii and American Samoa longline crew training consistent with the Hawaii and American Samoa longline fisheries Biological Opinion (BiOp) Reasonable and Prudent Measures (RPMs) term and condition (T&C) and develop an options paper for the Council's consideration at the September 2024 meeting. At its 200th meeting, the Council will consider the following range of options: Option 1: Status Quo/No Action – No regulatory implementation of crew training; Option 2: Implement a crew training requirement consistent with BiOp RPM T&C; Option 3: Expand scope of the action to include related regulatory updates; Option 3A: Update the owner/operator protected species workshop requirement to allow overlap with crew training requirement; Option 3B: Revise required list of tools for protected species handling and release; Option 3C: Review and update protected species handling requirements.

An AP member asked if this crew training requirement was needed for the small boat fleet. There are concerns about protecting their fisheries.

Council staff said this training is focused on the longline fishery. Regarding whether the small boat fishery would benefit from the training, the small boat fishery could explore non-regulatory ways to conduct this training. It would be a good recommendation for the AP to present to the Council.

Another AP member said that anything that engages more listening and tailoring to outreach would be a good option. For clarification, she asked what was the difference between options 2 and 3. Regarding video training, the tool needs to be tailored to the audience to implement it adequately. She asked

Council staff said there is a move for better connectivity. The video that would be produced under option 3c exists, and there is an effort for translated videos. For clarification, option 3c would review the current regulations. Regarding the current crew training, the trainer was an education specialist for a long time. The crew training workshop is part of the regulations, and the review under option 3 would ensure the best practices are updated and provide consistency.

An AP member agreed with the statement that the topic competing with the best practices is safety at sea. Safety at sea should be considered at the same level for reducing interactions. Education and outreach should come first. The member asked if there may be a counterbalancing measure for these RPMs.

***Regarding the Hawaii and American Samoa Longline Fisheries Crew Training Requirement, the Hawaii AP recommends option 3, to expand the scope of action to review and update protected species handling requirements, taking crew safety in account.***

***The Hawaii AP further recommends the Council work with NMFS and the State of Hawaii to explore opportunities for providing protected species handling and release best practices training to small-boat fisheries as a proactive measure to protect the fishery from potential protected species regulations.***

### **C. Report on Hawaii Shortline Fishery**

At its June meeting, the Council took up the Fishing Industry Advisory Committee's recommendation to work with Hawaii DAR and PIFSC to explore the feasibility of distinguishing nearshore versus offshore shortline gear use. A Council contractor developed a report in response to the Council action and provide a description on shortline fishing in Hawaii.

An AP member of the report explored the difference in the fish caught in the longline compared to the shortline fishery. There is a notable difference in quality, and the buyers give preference to the shortline catch and this may place an economic issue for the small boat fishery. Fishers reported that the tunas are deeper this year, which may explain why the shortline and longline fishers continue to catch tunas compared to the small boat fishers. In the time series for the small boat fishery, one factor that was not considered was the use of green stick. The shortline fishery was singled out due to potential impacts on protected species, but there is a need to better define the fishery.

Council staff said the report did not consider economics but could be explored for the next steps.

An AP member said that the shortline catch does not see the same burn marks in the small boat fishery catch since they are catching the fish deeper and are being brought to the boat faster. At the auction block, the shortline fishers mark their fish by cutting fins and tying a ribbon which

makes a difference when the seamount fishers catch, which gives them higher quality and priced fish.

## **5. Updates on Offshore Energy in Hawaii**

Emily Hildreth, Bureau of Energy Management (BOEM), provided an overview of BOEM updates on potential energy offshore energy development in Hawaii. BOEM is a federal agency within the US Department of Interior responsible for managing the development of US Outer Continental Shelf energy, mineral, and geological resources. In 2015, BOEM received three unsolicited lease requests and held a series of four task force meetings between 2012 and 2016. On April 24, 2024, Secretary Haaland (DOI) announced the new 5-year offshore wind leasing schedule that included future lease sales for the waters offshore US territories, including Hawaii, to deploy 15 GW of floating offshore wind by 2035. On August 22, 2024, BOEM hosted a Hawaii Intergovernmental Task Force Meeting in Honolulu to discuss the State of Hawaii's green energy goal and potential next steps for offshore wind development, including studies on fisheries and voyaging.

An AP member noted that offshore energy projects tend to be top-down, with end users having little influence over decisions.

Another AP member asked which floating wind turbine option would be most viable with minimal space impact and how it could environmentally impact sanctuaries.

Hildreth said that simulations show the semi-tethered design may be feasible for deep waters, with fewer turbines needed in areas like Guam and Hawaii. The visual impact depends on the distance from the shore. Regarding environmental impacts, floating tech has not caused significant harm to birds or marine life, though geophysical surveys and maintenance must be monitored.

An AP member expressed concern that large government projects often overstate benefits and understate burdens, questioning the real impact on ports like Honolulu.

Hildreth mentioned that offshore energy has redeveloped underutilized ports on the East Coast, but it's unclear if benefits would apply to Oahu.

Another AP member asked about the area and buffer zones for windmills and risks with buried cables, and EH responded that project specifics determine these factors.

Hildreth said there was a recent wind turbine blade failure but said BSEE is investigating.

An AP member asked about the response to extreme weather.

Hildreth explained that turbines are engineered for site-specific conditions and can be remotely controlled.

The Vice-Chair expressed concerns about aesthetic impacts, bird interactions, and electromagnetic fields from cables.

Hildreth acknowledged the challenges but said mitigation efforts are in place.

The AP Chair raised concerns about energy costs, environmental impacts, and decommissioning, citing previous issues with large projects in Hawaii.

Hildreth reassured that financial assurance is required for decommissioning, ensuring responsibility for removal even if companies go bankrupt. For additional information, BOEM provided the following links.

[https://www.boem.gov/sites/default/files/documents/regions/pacific-ocs-region/environmental-science/BOEM\\_2024-039.pdf](https://www.boem.gov/sites/default/files/documents/regions/pacific-ocs-region/environmental-science/BOEM_2024-039.pdf)

<https://www.boem.gov/sites/default/files/documents/regions/pacific-ocs-region/environmental-science/BOEM-2021-070.pdf>

<https://www.nrel.gov/docs/fy21osti/80580.pdf>

<https://www.boem.gov/sites/default/files/environmental-stewardship/Environmental-Studies/Pacific-Region/Studies/2015-042.pdf> we also have a series of EMF studies posted in that [portal](#)

<https://www.boem.gov/environment/environmental-studies/renewable-energy-research>

<https://repository.library.noaa.gov/view/noaa/61594>

<https://www.boem.gov/environment/environmental-studies/environmental-studies-information>

## **6. Report on 2023 Fisher Observation Meeting**

Adam Ayers provided a final report on the 2023 Fisher Observation meeting, which involved local fishers sharing their on-the-water observations to add to scientific data for better fishery management in the U.S. Pacific Islands. Led by Hawai'i fishermen Clay Tam and Roy Morioka, the goal was to incorporate local knowledge into the data used in stock assessments and ecosystem reports. Since 2021, fishers from American Samoa, Guam, Hawai'i, and the Northern Mariana Islands have been sharing updates quarterly, and these observations are included in official fishery reports. The meeting included local fishers, Council staff, and NOAA social scientists, who used a structured interview process to collect insights from the fishing community.

## **7. Funding on Coastal Climate Resiliency Projects**

In July 2024, NOAA proposed \$575 million to increase coastal climate resilience which included a \$68.5 million to the UH Sea Grant College Program to conduct Aina Restoration through Community Governance to Advance Climate Resilience in the Hawaiian Islands through the moku system. Transformative funding initiatives have brought a combined \$88.5 million to enhance climate resilience across the Hawaiian Islands. The University of Hawai'i Sea Grant, Kua'āina Ulu 'Auamo (KUA) and the State of Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural



Resources (DLNR) have received \$68.5 million to revitalize the traditional moku system and bolster community resilience. Additionally, President Biden’s “Investing in America” agenda has allocated \$20 million through the Kapapahuliau Climate Resilience Program to support 17 Native Hawaiian Organizations in restoring native ecosystems and integrating indigenous knowledge and practices. These efforts aim to protect coastal communities from the adverse effects of extreme weather and climate change.

## **8. Other Business**

There was no other business discussed.

## **9. Public Comment**

There were no request for public comment.

## **10. Discussion and Recommendations**

### ***Regarding the MHI Deep 7 Bottomfish Fisheries, the Hawaii AP:***

1. Recommends the Council take final action on alternative 3, to specify ACLs based on the P\* and SEEM analysis at 39% risk of overfishing at 493,000 lb for fishing years 2024 to 2027. As accountability measures, the AP recommends the Council continue to use in-season monitoring through commercial reporting and a post-season single year overage adjustment

### ***Regarding Promotion of Hawaii Fisheries, the Hawaii AP:***

2. Recommends the Council explore market barriers for Hawaii bottomfish and include bottomfish in its effort to strengthen competitiveness of domestic fisheries, in order to maximize market opportunities for the MHI Deep 7 fisheries.

### ***Regarding Hawaii bottomfish research, the Hawaii AP***

3. Recommends the Council request NMFS PIFSC provide the Council and its Advisory Groups further details on the shift to place greater emphasis on the BFISH research fishing operations and pause the use of the MOUSS.
4. Recommends the Council request NMFS PIFSC to clarify for the Council its plans for the Territorial bottomfish surveys and if shifts in priority will also be applied in those regions. Finally, PIFSC should explain how this change will impact future stock assessments.

### ***Regarding the Hawaii and American Samoa Longline Fisheries Crew Training Requirement, the Hawaii AP:***

5. Recommends the Council select option 3, to expand the scope of action to review and update protected species handling requirements, taking crew safety in account.
6. Recommends the Council work with NMFS and the State of Hawaii to explore opportunities for providing protected species handling and release best practices training

to small-boat fisheries as a proactive measure to protect the fishery from potential protected species regulations.