

# **Recreational and Noncommercial Fisheries Issues in the Western Pacific Region, developed for the 2014 Recreational Saltwater Fishing Summit through a series of constituent meetings and discussions.**

## **Western Pacific Region Wide Issues:**

1. "Institutional Orientation" (Priority from 1<sup>st</sup> National Recreational Fishing Summit!). Our recreational/noncommercial fishermen feel strongly that the Magnuson Stevens Act and the NOAA institutional culture that results from the MSA focus on larger scale commercial fisheries under the presumption that they are the most economically significant fisheries. The Magnuson Stevens Act and NOAA fisheries need to more clearly recognize the areas of major difference and the areas of important similarity between Recreational (Noncommercial) and Commercial fisheries. They also need to more fully recognize the economic and social value of noncommercial fishing. The MSA and NOAA fisheries remain "Institutionally Oriented" to and focused on the commercial sector. The sectors deserve equal treatment and understanding, but should not be pitted against each other. Sector allocation is not desired by Western Pacific fishermen!
2. NOAA needs to demonstrate a deeper understanding of and accommodation for the artisanal and small scale fisheries in the Western Pacific Region, especially the cultural value of sharing fish, and its role in promoting cultural continuity, solidarity, and food security. "Fish is Culture"!
3. We need a formal recognition of "subsistence fishing" in the fishing definitions in the Magnuson Stevens Act. The Western Pacific Region has true subsistence fishermen and perhaps Alaska and the Caribbean do too. The intent and genius of Magnuson is to accommodate regional differences. Real subsistence fishermen do exist.
4. We need to recognize that the label and concept of "noncommercial fishing" fits our region better than the label "recreational fishing". Our fisheries encompass a wide range of effort triggers, motives for fishing and outcomes of fish sharing and post harvest catch distribution. Partial cost reimbursement through "customary exchange" should be allowed under a "non commercial" fishing definition. "We don't play with our food"!
5. Need to recognize that top down imposition of sanctuary and MPA marine protected area expansions pushed by outsiders, nongovernmental organizations and parts of NOAA are viewed as un-necessarily restricting fishing opportunities, generate resentment, and without education and enforcement may be ignored. This is especially the case for larger scale pelagic fishery closures.

6. Need to recognize that "Catch Shares", transferrable quotas and other potential allocation schemes between or even within "commercial" and "recreational " sectors do not fit well in our region. "Catch Shares" are not well understood, and are likely to be strongly resisted. We widely "share our catches". We don't like to "catch our shares" in a regulated way, especially one that may restrict fishing access to our communities and even our relatives and visitors from away.

7. Annual Catch Limits ACL and targets ACT specifications under MSA National Standard 1 guidelines for coral reef species, even at the family level, when very little is known about most of the species, are extremely difficult, and make NOAA science and the SSC Scientific and Statistical Committee efforts to advise Councils appear to be somewhat arbitrary.

8. Lost fishing opportunities equal a loss of food and a loss of culture. Federal, state, territorial, and private ownership actions all contribute to lost fishing opportunities. Increased military activities may restrict fishing areas and opportunities. Protected species and habitat issues including catch depredation contribute to lost fishing opportunities.

9. Conflicts between indigenous and immigrant groups create social tension, perceived catch competition and contribute to lost fishing opportunities.

10. Communication between NOAA and constituents continues to need to be improved. Travel restrictions severely limit effective outreach given the distances involved and cultural expectations for face to face communication in the Western Pacific region. Different parts of NOAA need to talk to each to prevent un-necessary working at cross purposes. This is especially the case between NOS and NMFS, between SF sustainable fisheries and OPR protected resources, and between the Science Center, the Regional Office and the Council.

11. Need to allow fishermen more input into the ESA and MMPA processes. These processes are distant, and not always based on "best science". The discretionary use of anecdotal evidence under the MMPA can lead to the misuse of information in ways that appear to be more advocacy than science. Witness the proposed 2012 LOF for spotted dolphins and the Hawaii small boat fleets, where the fishing operations of a tiny portion of the fleet were proposed to be extrapolated to the whole fleet without any clear understanding of fishing activities and operations.

## **Archipelago specific Issues**

### **American Samoa**

1. Need to recognize the cultural value of the ceremonial use and customary distribution of fish at important cultural events and the role of access to fish and fishing opportunities in perpetuating Fa'a Samoa, "the Samoan Way".

2. Need support and encouragement for developing a charter industry.
3. Need to recognize that many chiefs and fishermen were unhappy with the top down imposition of the Marine National Monument. They were not consulted. The non commercial fishing regulations may be over restrictive, and are likely to prevent almost all allowed fishing unless some flexibility within NOAA is possible.
4. Need to recognize that expansion of the sanctuary has also created much resentment among chiefs and fishermen, especially the restrictions around Aunu'u, a small island off Tutuila.

## **Marianas: Guam and CNMI**

1. Need to recognize the strong cultural needs for access to fish and fishing opportunities to support cultural continuity through ceremonial events such as village fiestas, baptisms, funerals, etc.
2. Need to recognize that the top down imposition of the Marine National Monument created resentment among village mayors and some legislators, and that the fishing regulations may severely restrict almost all allowed fishing in the "Islands Unit" unless there is some flexibility within NOAA.
3. Need to recognize the extent of de facto Marine Protected Areas in combination with imposed MPA as severely restricting fishing opportunities, especially on Guam. This includes Department of Homeland Security restrictions related to military build-up. . Note the Guam NIOSH study relating to fishermen's safety as the large number of MPA forced effort to be concentrated and directed to the windward and more dangerous side of Guam.
4. Need to recognize the impact of coastal tourism, coastal and hotel development and other activities including erosion and sedimentation as having an impact on nursery areas and productivity. Jetskis and other recreational boats restrict fishing opportunities and represent safety and habitat issues especially in shallow bays.
5. Need to recognize the difficulty of getting boat and shoreline catch and effort data through the military facilities on Guam. The Military Buildup may have negative impacts on local fishing opportunities.
6. Continuing conflict between Federated States of Micronesia migrants and local fishermen on Guam revolves around competition and perceived taking of too many juvenile fish. This remains unresolved.

# Hawaii

1. Need continued support for MRIP (Marine Recreational Information Program) upgrading, especially a locally conducted boat-based survey of recreational and noncommercial catch and effort data. A test survey is in progress. Very few observers in Hawaii believe that MRIP will ever produce credible catch and effort estimations.
2. Need flexibility in exemption from the national saltwater angling registry, especially since there is a lack of knowledge, enforcement and compliance. Mainland family and other visitors are often invited aboard on short notice. Encouragement for Hawaii to develop a Marine recreational license is needed. Some shifting to Commercial Marine Licenses by very part timers may confound the catch per unit of effort trends needed for understanding stock conditions.