



# NOAA FISHERIES

## Pacific Islands Region



Fisheries in the Pacific Islands Region—a vast expanse of nearly 1.5 million square miles of federal waters—includes highly productive coral reef, demersal, and open ocean ecosystems surrounding the three Pacific archipelagos of Hawaii, Mariana Islands, and American Samoa, and seven widely spaced remote islands and atolls. Recreational and non-commercial fisheries in the region are major economic contributors to coastal communities and have important social and cultural significance through the perpetuation of subsistence and traditional fishing practices. Regular harvest of marine resources for non-profit distribution within fishing communities (customary exchange) and sale of portions of catch to defray expenses are common practices. The region also has both well-established and growing for-hire recreational fishing opportunities available through deep-sea charter boats, guided reef fishing, and eco-tourism. The Pacific Islands Regional Office and Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center recognize the fundamental role that recreational and non-commercial fishing serves in the culture and livelihoods of Pacific Islanders. Working alongside fishermen, the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council, and other partners, we strive to maintain sustainable fish populations and to protect the region's fishing traditions.

In May 2017, government and private sector representatives with diverse fishery backgrounds from American Samoa, the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, and Hawaii participated in a roundtable meeting in Honolulu to discuss the progress of the 2016-2017 National Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Policy, Pacific Islands Regional Implementation Plan, and other current issues and accomplishments. In March 2018, various recreational fishing stakeholders from across the nation attended the National Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Summit in Arlington, Virginia, to continue conversations on improving opportunity and stability in recreational and non-commercial fisheries. The discussions and outcomes of the 2017 and 2018 meetings have been incorporated in the 2019–2020 Pacific Islands Regional Engagement Plan to meet the objectives of visibility, understanding, and collaboration. NOAA Fisheries, with our regional partners, will pursue the following strategies and actions over the next two years to fulfill these three objectives.

**Establish a visible agency presence among the recreational and non-commercial fishing communities**

Stakeholder input from the May 2017 Pacific Islands Regional Roundtable identified several important steps that NOAA Fisheries could take to improve its relationship with recreational and non-commercial fishermen. The strategy and actions below address stakeholder interests consistent with current agency regional and national priorities.

Strategy	Action
Actively engage the recreational and non-commercial fishing communities on the ground and on-line.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publish, maintain, update a calendar on the Pacific Islands Regional Office recreational fisheries homepage of recreational and non-commercial fisheries related activities and events for all island areas.</li> <li>• Participate in fishing tournaments and recreational and non-commercial fisheries activities to increase awareness of the various NOAA services provided to monitor and support the various regional fisheries and fishing communities.</li> <li>• Produce and distribute informational products (tackle box decals, etc.) promoting guidelines for protected species bycatch reduction, handling, release and reporting.</li> <li>• Continue to promote use of barbless circle hooks to fishing clubs, at tournaments and on the docks.</li> <li>• Produce, post, and maintain an online listing of recreational and non-commercial fishing infrastructure and shoreline access in each of the island areas to provide useful general site information; and allow for public input on the condition of the infrastructure.</li> </ul>

### Develop mutual understanding of priorities, concerns, and challenges

Fishermen in the Pacific Islands Region have expressed concern that their participation and input are not adequately included in the design and implementation of research and management actions. They also recognized the significant progress by NOAA Fisheries in recent years to seek and incorporate the knowledge and experience of local fishermen in these activities. The following strategy and actions represent the Region’s commitment to better include fishermen and key stakeholders.

Strategy	Action
<p>Seek and create opportunities for consistent open dialogue with the recreational and non-commercial fishing communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Host Recreational and Non-Commercial Fisheries Roundtables across the region to continue building a stronger partnership between fishermen and NOAA Fisheries by listening to the concerns and interests of fishermen in the region and other stakeholders, and collaboratively exploring solutions through open dialogue.</li> <li>• Continue Scientist and Fishermen Exchange (SAFE) meetings throughout the year to provide a comfortable and safe environment where genuine exchange of information improves collaboration and communication, builds positive relationships, encourages understanding, and fosters respect and trust among managers, scientists, and fishermen.</li> <li>• Convene Fishing Around Seals and Turtles (FAST) steering committee to review and revise outreach messaging and guidelines, and other engagement and bycatch reduction strategies such as the use of barbless circle hooks.</li> <li>• Provide technical assistance to organizations interested in conducting Fishing Tournament Expenditure Surveys to gain a better understanding of the economic importance of these events to their respective participants and supporting communities.</li> <li>• Conduct a study that describes and characterizes fishing activities in the region that are not clearly recreational under Magnuson-Stevens Act definitions (such as customary exchange, where the purpose is not sport or pleasure), and provide policy/management insights about these non-commercial activities that are central to local fishing communities.</li> </ul>



## Enhance collaboration with the recreational and non-commercial fishing communities

To fulfill the agency’s commitment to maintain healthy marine and coastal ecosystems, the Pacific Islands Regional Office and Science Center will seek to enhance collaboration and engagement with fishermen, the general public, and state and territory agencies to identify opportunities and resources to achieve long-term fisheries management goals.

Strategy	Action
Identify and pursue opportunities jointly addressing challenges facing recreational and non-commercial fisheries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct a workshop comprised of Federal, State and Territory partners to develop and implement an MRIP-certified survey design in Hawaii; and to plan a review of territorial surveys by MRIP.</li> <li>• Collaborate with NOAA Marine Debris Program to promote responsible disposal of fishing line and trash, identify best practices to prevent the loss of gear, and increase participation in the removal of debris from the shoreline and in the ocean including installation and maintenance of appropriate trash receptacles.</li> <li>• Collaborate with Office of National Marine Sanctuaries Blue Star program to promote responsible and sustainable diving and fishing practices, and helping to keep the ecosystems healthy for generations to come by introducing and supporting implementation of similar practices across the region.</li> <li>• Support regional-, federal- and state-sponsored fish tagging and catch-and-release programs by hosting a regional tagging program information link on the Sustainable Fisheries Division Recreational Fisheries website.</li> <li>• Continue to promote and encourage non-commercial and commercial fishermen involvement in Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center cooperative research opportunities such as bottomfish fishery-independent surveys.</li> </ul>

The 2019–2020 Engagement Plan serves as the framework for NOAA Fisheries to continue its work with the culturally diverse and geographically widespread fishing communities of the region. The 2-year plan is subject to amendment and revision with critical input from government partners, non-governmental groups, and the broader Pacific Islands recreational and non-commercial fishing community. We look forward to working more closely with recreational fishermen across the region to sustain our marine resources for the benefit of generations to come.

### Contact

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