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The Horizon

FOR THE FUTURE OF FISHING

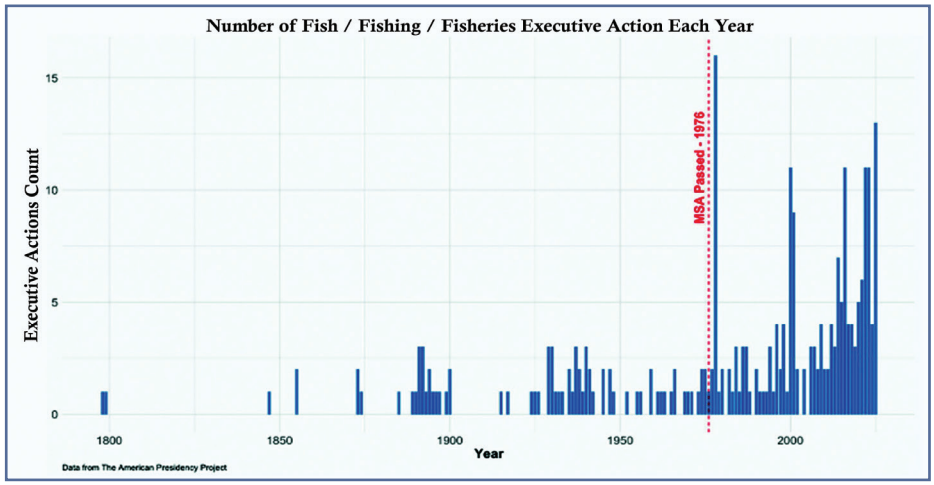
Looking Back to Look Forward on Fishing Executive Actions

By Zane Ruzicka

Atlantic Coast Programs Coordinator

In 1973, Congress passed the Magnuson Stevens Fisheries Conservation and Management Act (MSA), and *Wild Oceans* met the moment with a voice for conserving and protecting marine fish, fishing and our oceans for future generations. Fifty years later, NOAA Fisheries continues to report progress towards this goal, with a decrease in number of stocks on the overfishing and overfished lists despite challenges, including a changing ocean. However, the status of some stocks such as Atlantic Cod remains frustratingly stagnant and the fluctuations of forage species such as sardine and mackerel trigger greater ecosystem level concerns. Continued improvements are hampered by lacking legislative initiatives and long, complex management processes as Regional Fishery Management Councils address new issues with thinning resources.

To evade these barriers and act quickly, the Trump Administration has used Executive Actions (EAs) to enact change specifically at the Council level, which includes Executive Orders (EOs), Memorandums, and Proclamations. Since January, the President has signed eleven fisheries related EAs. The most consequential to marine fisheries include those in the table below:



EXECUTIVE ACTIONS (EAS)—INCLUDING ORDERS, MEMORANDUMS, AND PROCLAMATIONS—HAVE LONG GUIDED US POLICY, OFFERING A HISTORICAL LENS ON FISHERIES MANAGEMENT FROM PRE-MSA TO TODAY'S COUNCIL-FOCUSED ACTIONS.

Executive Action	Purpose
Proclamation 10918	Rolls back the commercial fishing ban in the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument (PRIMNM), arguing that migratory pelagic fish are not meaningfully protected by the ban.
EO 14192	In an effort to reduce regulatory costs and increase innovation, establishes that for each new regulation issued at least ten prior regulations must be eliminated.
EO 14276	Argues that fishermen are overburdened by regulation and losing in trade. Directs the Secretary of Commerce and Regional Fishery Management Councils to reduce regulatory burdens, expand exempted fishing permits (EFPs), reopen national monuments, and develop a seafood trade strategy which targets unfair trade, IUU fishing, circle hooks, and forced labor in supply chains.

In tracking this flurry of EAs, it became evident that a historical perspective could be useful. Sifting through past EAs, we found 267 relevant. We decided to compare the eras of EAs, dividing them into Pre-MSA and Post-MSA, based on usage trends and

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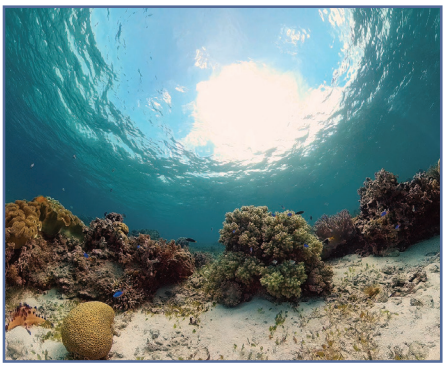
modern management development. In addition, we compared the current administration to other Post-MSA administrations. Across these eras, three themes enlighten *Wild Oceans*' work as we respond to these directives.

Establishment of National Monuments



Pre-MSA, 33 of 80 EAs established area-based regulations, many targeting spawning area preservation. The first of these was by Benjamin Harrison through Proclamation 343. Post-MSA, EAs establishing nature preserves have more than doubled. Kicking off the era, on December 1, 1978, Jimmy Carter established or enlarged 15 national monuments that mention fish. Of the five marine national monuments, George W. Bush established all four located in the Pacific and Barack Obama established the sole Atlantic monument.

In the modern era, only Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush, and Donald Trump have not established a national monument tied to fisheries. However, President Trump has signed EAs on monuments—attempting to reopen, rather than establish or expand. In 2020 he reopened the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Monument, followed by reopening PRIMNM in 2025. Yet extensive research in 2018 and 2024 shows marine protected areas and monuments provide major ecological, economic, and community benefits.

Rise of the Conservation Movement

The Marine Conservation Movement began in the 70s and is not truly a part of Pre-MSA EAs. However, EAs from John Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, and Richard Nixon could be considered early conservationism. These focused on creating recreational advisory councils and clean water action. Modern EA fishing conservation is characterized by attention to coral reefs and food webs, recreational opportunity creation, destructive fishing practice regulation, and climate action. Many of these EA's are consistent with *Wild Oceans*' mission. For example, the Clinton Administration's EO 13186 connected birds and fish, representing an early understanding of ecosystem-based fishery management. Today, osprey are an indicator species and charismatic champion for the menhaden forage base. Additionally, a Bush Administration memorandum called for ending "destructive fishing practices" which destroy long-term productivity of fish stocks for short-term gain. *Wild Oceans*' work on longline and midwater trawl gear fit this charge.

The current administration's EO 14313 mirrors that of the Johnson Administration's, which also created a committee on preserving natural beauty. Johnson's committee is credited with creation of eleven national recreation areas. It remains to be seen if the current Commission will similarly safeguard natural resources.

Directives to Regional Fishery Management Councils

Modern EAs rarely reference Councils. We identified an EA evoking the Councils only three times–once in 2000 when Bill Clinton consulted the Western Pacific Council on coral reef protection and twice from Trump Administrations in 2020 and 2025. Therefore, the current administration's solicitation for expansive Council recommendations in EO 14276 is unique.

For months, *Wild Oceans*' staff have been tracking recommendations Councils will submit in response to the EAs. Many have signaled their recommendations will become their priorities. Understanding how Council resources will be deployed guides us on where we can best intervene to ensure scientifically rigorous policies are enacted to conserve fish. While final recommendations are not yet decided, some proposals are troubling.

From the Mid-Atlantic, two proposed recommendations give us pause. Specifically, 1) considering an alternative rebuilding approach for Atlantic mackerel which would increase yields by reducing the probability of rebuilding the stock from 61% by 2032 to 50% and 2) reopening the Northeast Canyons & Seamounts Monument to commercial fishing. Atlantic mackerel are already at historic lows for biomass and reopening the only Atlantic monument could harm large pelagics that rely on canyon feeding grounds.

In New England, the Atlantic Herring Planning and Development Team discussed recommending deregulating the already overfished Atlantic herring. Examples include removing herring industry-funded monitoring, midwater trawl requirements to carry observers in groundfish closed areas, and river herring and shad monitoring/avoidance areas. These were enacted as middle-ground regulations negotiated over years in a public forum. Tossing them out *en masse* is disingenuous to the process and kicks the stock while it is already down.

The Western Pacific Council voted to urge the President to lift the prohibition on fishing in Papahānaumokuākea National Marine Sanctuary. The U.S. longline fleet has reported high catch rates of striped marlin in this area.

Finally, we have seen an overall slimming in regulations, Councils are willing to take up, especially ecosystem work.

For *Wild Oceans*, effective management is defined not by the number of regulations but by the quality of provisions that allow response to changing ocean conditions, stock dynamics, and putting the resource first. EAs can be valuable for initiating near-term action to achieve this by bringing attention to issues. For example, EO 14276 has reestablished the push for the universal use of circle hooks—a battle *Wild Oceans* is very familiar with.

But EAs should not bypass Councils' iterative processes or accelerate deregulation at the expense of overfished stocks. While we do not always agree with them, Councils and NOAA provide decades of expertise, infrastructure, and a transparent process that remains the backbone of US fisheries management. Calls to speed up timelines and reduce burdens are valid, but mass regulation elimination without standard public input risks undermining this framework and creating inequities. We urge providing Councils with resources to reduce burdens while maintaining their core work of protecting resources for future generations.

Looking back at EAs, executive level requests for Council recommendations are rare. Recognizing this moves us to capture the opportunity to inform top decision makers about the importance of Councils and their role in protecting our natural resources. *Wild Oceans* will continue tracking Council recommendations and engaging on EAs as they evolve as a novel management tool.

Ocean View

Making a Difference Through Science

By Rob Kramer, President

In the last edition of the *Horizon*, we provided a comprehensive update on the research we have supported as part of the *Kona Project*. When we began this initiative nearly four years ago we had one overarching goal in mind – conduct new science and use the products derived from this science to achieve better protections for billfish in the Pacific.

Since that time, we have begun closing key gaps in billfish science in order to apply that knowledge to reducing billfish mortality at critical points in their life cycle. Starting with identifying larval billfish habitat, the Kona Project has expanded to support a broader suite of science-based conservation priorities pertaining to billfish. The research to date has included modeling larval dispersal for identifying potential spawning grounds, analyzing thousands of previously collected yet undocumented larval samples, and conducting a comprehensive billfish research review to better understand early life stages of *istiophorid* species.

Our newest work supports bycatch prevention through a collaborative study with Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (WHOI) that examines how and where striped marlin, blue marlin, and short-bill spearfish are most at risk of incidental capture by longline fleets. Once again focusing on and characterizing habitat utilization, like our larval billfish work, this effort too will provide critical information on specific environmental preferences of billfish, increasing our ability to predict their probable location and movements over space and time. More information on our new research effort can be found on page 4.

Another original goal of the *Kona Project* was producing a comprehensive web-based platform for information on Pacific marlin stock status, our domestic management efforts, conservation measures and threats, current research and research needs. Over the past several months we have been updating our website to fulfill this goal. More information on this progress can be seen on the back cover article of this newsletter or visiting the new pages on our website in the Our Work/ Large Marine Fish/Billfish section. Through this new platform we provide access to and encourage the use of the incredible wealth of data now available from our larval billfish analysis "A 20-year time series to understand larval habitat and seasonality of four billfish species in West Hawaii". The complete dataset generated from this research can be found in the new Billfish section on our website.

By investing in cutting-edge science—from computer simulations to new habitat models—we aim to equip fishery managers with the tools they need to protect billfish at every life stage. The *Kona Project* will continue to evolve as new research questions emerge, always grounded in our mission to conserve these iconic ocean predators through science-driven action. For in the end, good management decisions are ultimately based on good science.

For the Future of Fishing

Wild Oceans is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to keeping the oceans wild to preserve fishing opportunities for the future.

Our Goals:

- Preventing overfishing and restoring depleted fish populations to healthy levels
- Promoting sustainable use policies that balance commercial, recreational and ecological values
- Modifying or eliminating wasteful fishing practices
- Improving our understanding of fish and their role in the marine environment
- Preserving fish habitat and water quality

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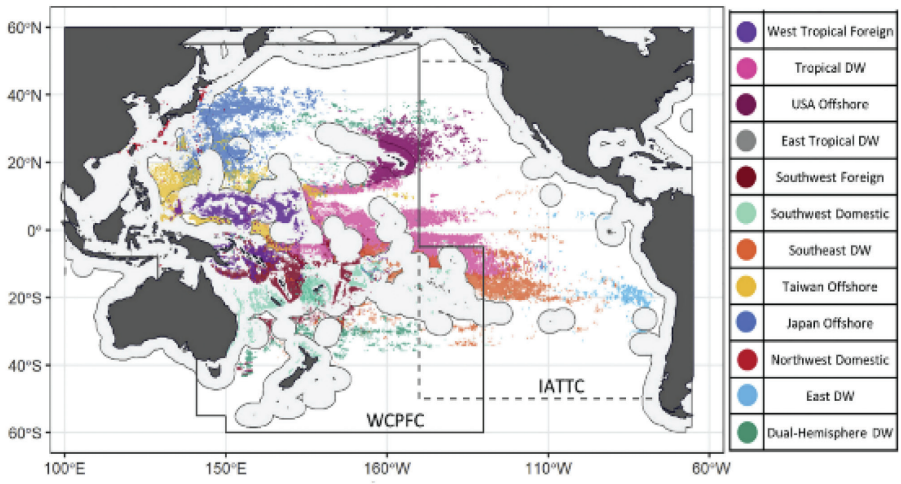
Wild Oceans Partners with Prestigious Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution on New Billfish Bycatch Study in the North Pacific

By Rob Kramer, President

We are excited to share our newest work to support bycatch prevention through a collaborative study with Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (WHOI) that examines how and where striped marlin, blue marlin, and shortbill spearfish are most at risk of incidental capture by longline fleets. As with our other Kona Project research, by investing in cutting-edge science—from computer simulations to habitat characterization—we aim to equip fishery managers with the tools they need to better protect billfish at every life stage.



STRIPED MARLIN, BLUE MARLIN AND SHORTBILL SPEARFISH IN THE NORTH PACIFIC ARE THREATENED BY LONGLINE FISHERIES. WE AIM TO IDENTIFY "HOTSPOTS" OF BILLFISH BYCATCH, WITH THE GOAL OF INFORMING EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT.

Background

The poor, unknown, and declining stock status of striped marlin, shortbill spearfish, and blue marlin, respectively, in the North Pacific highlight the need for management intervention strategies to reverse or prevent their decline. Striped marlin in the Western and Central North Pacific have been overfished and experiencing overfishing for over a decade, with longline fisheries accounting for more than 91% of landings since the mid-1990s. Shortbill spearfish in the North Pacific have never been the subject of a stock assessment and catch reporting of this species is not mandated for most countries. However, the Hawaiian longline fishery has documented the harvest of hundreds of thousands of shortbill spearfish since the early 1990s and foreign fleets elsewhere in the Pacific are documented as harvesting more than 10,000 additional spearfish per year.

Striped marlin and shortbill spearfish exhibit many ecological and distributional similarities, suggesting that shortbill spearfish in the North Pacific may be subject to an unsustainable degree of bycatch akin to that currently experienced by striped marlin. While the single Pacific-wide stock of blue marlin is currently assessed as not overfished and not experiencing overfishing, numerous past studies of decades-long catch and effort data from the Central North Pacific suggest that relative abundance of blue and striped marlin and shortbill spearfish have all been significantly decreasing. The continued vulnerability of all three species in the North Pacific highlights that more refined knowledge on the occurrence and drivers of bycatch "hotspots" is critical to inform effective conservation of these iconic billfishes.

Project Goals

Working with Drs. Martini Arostegui and Camerin Braun at WHOI, the two-year research project will examine the dynamic bycatch susceptibility of striped marlin, shortbill spearfish, and blue marlin, including how that risk varies spatially, among seasons, and among years to the longline fleets of the North Pacific that operate in functionally distinct ways.

The specific goals of this project are to:

- Build management-inspired predictive models of billfish and longline fleet distribution
- Identify bycatch risk "hotspots" for billfish where they experience the greatest susceptibility
- Reveal the human and oceanographic factors driving billfish overlap with longline activity

Broader Impacts

The US Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council has a formal current research priority on how marine protected areas (MPAs) in the high seas will impact longline interactions with bycatch species. The proposed work can be used in assessing the efficacy of such potential MPAs and help inform management. In addition, results from this study will be directly communicated with stock assessment scientists at the NOAA Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center and Secretariat of the Pacific Community, as well as authorities of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission and the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission, which are responsible for managing billfish bycatch.

Closing key knowledge gaps in billfish science and applying that knowledge to reduce billfish mortality at critical points in their life cycle is our priority. *Wild Oceans* has been working to protect billfish for over 50 years and our work will continue to evolve as new research opportunities emerge.

Bluefin Talks Progress

The US refuses an illogical, unsustainable compromise

By Theresa Labriola, Pacific Program Director

IN JULY, THE JWG FAILED TO AGREE ON A BLUEFIN HARVEST STRATEGY, BUT THE US UPHELD CONSERVATION BY REJECTING WEAKER PROPOSALS, SUPPORTING A 40% TARGET, AND REINFORCING GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES.

In July, the 10th Session of the Joint Working Group on the Management of Pacific Bluefin Tuna (JWG) concluded its meeting without agreeing on a Pacific bluefin tuna long-term harvest strategy - a plan that shifts management from short-term and reactive decision-making to longer-term objectives, such as growing and maintaining bluefin spawning stock biomass. At first glance, this ending might seem like a failure to act. However, the US avoided a destructive compromise and demonstrated its willingness and ability to prioritize conservation that benefits commercial fishermen, recreational fishermen, future generations, and the open ocean ecosystem we share.

Scientists Present Options

The JWG reviewed the results of a scientific assessment process known as a management strategy evaluation (MSE) that lies at the heart of the long-term harvest strategy. The MSE evaluated the performance of candidate management procedures relative to the set of objectives agreed upon by the JWG: safety, status, stability, and yield. *Wild Oceans* focused on prioritizing *safety* of the stock, meaning there should be a less than 20% probability of the stock falling below a limit reference point (LRP), as well as status of the stock, maintaining fishing mortality at or below a target reference point (F_{TARGET}) with at least 50% probability.

Wild Oceans' Rationale

Wild Oceans has consistently supported a restorative F_{TARGET} of 40%, meaning a fishing target that would leave 40% of the spawning stock biomass per recruit compared to the unfished state. This lower level of fishing mortality affords a larger buffer against changing ocean conditions and ensures the stock does not fall to the unsustainable levels witnessed fifteen years ago. Higher population levels improve nearshore fishing opportunities, and commercial fishermen can more easily fulfill quota with valuable, larger fish while spending less time and fewer resources on the water. As recreational opportunities expand, so does the economic impact on coastal communities and our collective desire to conserve the ocean bounty. For *Wild Oceans*, it means returning the sea to a more sustainable balance of predator, prey and hunter.

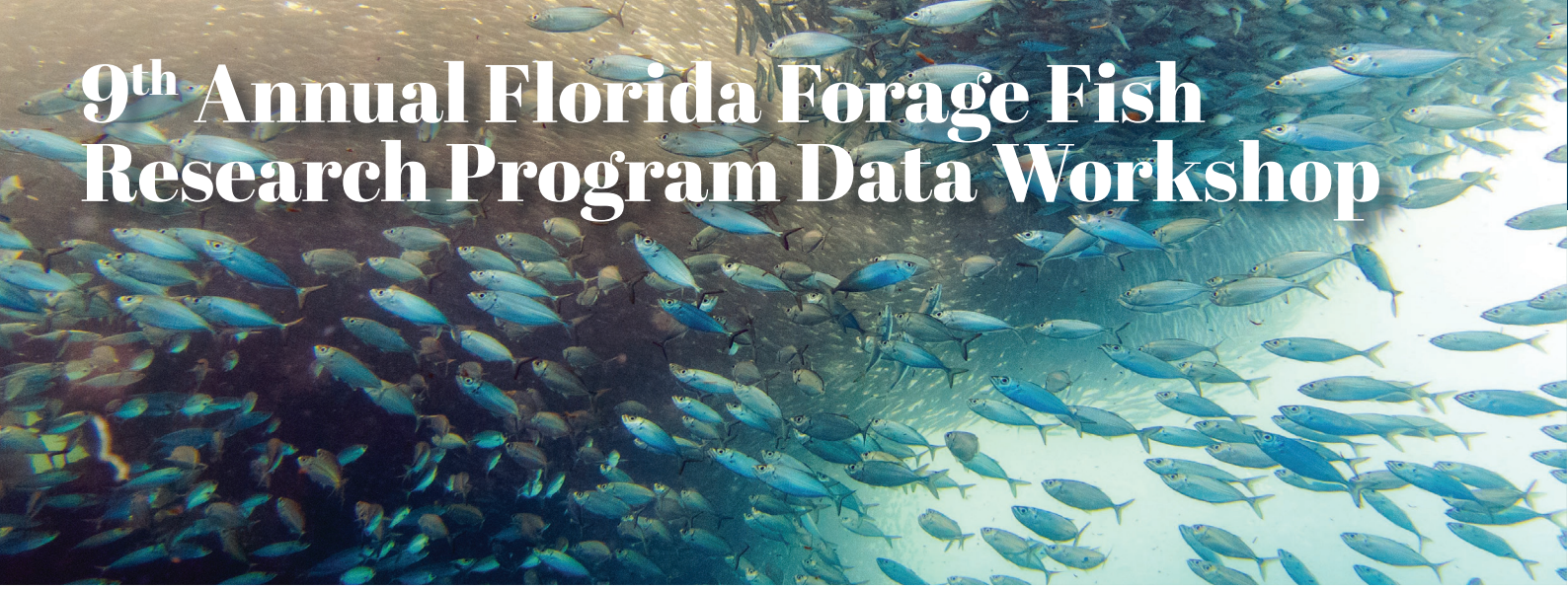
US Delegation's Response to Japan

The United States Delegation understood *Wild Oceans*' desire to protect bluefin from human overexploitation and prevent the stock from backsliding. When Japan proposed an F_{TARGET} of 20% without any further backstops, the United States responded with support for a minimum F_{TARGET} of 40%. The US emphasized that the JWG should not jeopardize the hard-won rebuilding success of the last decade that have brought bigger schools of bigger bluefin tuna to California waters. This honest disagreement led the US to refuse an illogical compromise. As negotiations progressed, the JWG agreed to continue discussions focusing on an F_{TARGET} of 25% to 30%.

Global Implications of Bluefin Management

While bluefin tuna may spawn in coastal waters of Japan and Korea, the impacts of degradation, damage and loss extend beyond national boundaries. Fisheries resources that were once seen as national and subject to permanent sovereignty, are now increasingly recognized as matters of common global, regional, transboundary and national concern. Science demonstrates the interdependencies, challenging us to provide more coherent and effective cooperative agreements for sustainable management. While we were disappointed with the delay in adopting a long-term harvest strategy at the JWG, the US represented its stakeholders, including *Wild Oceans*, by refusing to yield to a lower standard of care than is needed to ensure the long-term sustainability of Pacific bluefin tuna.

9th Annual Florida Forage Fish Research Program Data Workshop



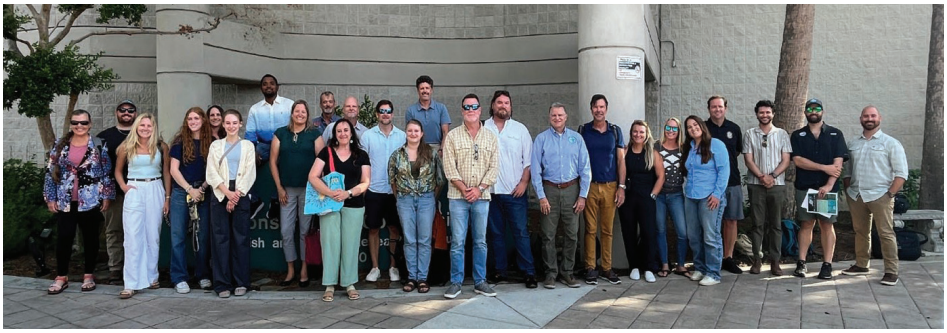
On May 29, the Forage Fish Coalition hosted the 9th Annual Forage Fish Data Workshop at the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Fish and Wildlife Research Institute (FWRI) in St. Petersburg, FL. In addition to *Wild Oceans*, the Coalition is made up of the International Game Fish Association, Pew Charitable Trust, Fish Florida, Florida Wildlife Federation, Angler Action Foundation, American Sportfishing Association, and the Tampa Bay Estuary Program. This year's workshop was the largest yet in terms of attendance (25), number of data partners (7), and universities (6) represented. Several past recipients of the Forage Fish Research Program (FFRP) Fellowship were also in attendance as well as new students interested in obtaining a fellowship. The 2025 Workshop included presentations on the history of the FFRP Fellowship program, FWRI's research priorities and data availability, priority projects, and research collaborations via the program's data partners, including the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Aquatic Preserve Program, Southwest Florida Water Management District, and the Tampa Bay Estuary Program.

The FFRP Fellowship program has been a major success over the years, with 15 fellowships funded, $240,000 raised to support the fellowships, and 10 peer-reviewed publications to date, with more on the way. Fellows have gone on to work in academia and at numerous federal and state agencies, including the U.S. Geological Survey, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and FWRI. Dakota Lewis, the only fellow to receive the Fellowship twice while studying at two different schools, is quoted as saying,

"The Forage Fish Research Fellowship has given me the freedom to be scientifically creative during my Ph.D. Ultimately, I have been able to leverage the support of the Forage Fish Research Program to expand the scope of my dissertation research across a broader geographic region and explore cutting-edge machine learning methodologies."

Dakota Lewis

On June 14, the Coalition and its data partners gathered again to review 6 fellowship proposals submitted for 2025/2026. Although several outstanding applications were received, the two winning fellows, Alex Walus and Meredith Pratt, were chosen from the University of Florida and the University of Central Florida, respectively. Both are Ph.D. candidates and will be examining tropicalization shifts in fish communities along Florida's coasts.



ON MAY 29, THE FORAGE FISH COALITION HELD ITS 9TH ANNUAL DATA WORKSHOP AT FWRI, THE LARGEST YET WITH 25 ATTENDEES, SEVEN DATA PARTNERS, SIX UNIVERSITIES, AND PRESENTATIONS ON FELLOWSHIPS, RESEARCH PRIORITIES, AND COLLABORATIONS WITH DEP'S AQUATIC PRESERVE PROGRAM AND THE TAMPA BAY ESTUARY PROGRAM.

"THE FORAGE FISH RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP HAS GIVEN ME THE FREEDOM TO BE SCIENTIFICALLY CREATIVE DURING MY PH.D. ULTIMATELY, I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO LEVERAGE THE SUPPORT OF THE FORAGE FISH RESEARCH PROGRAM TO EXPAND THE SCOPE OF MY DISSERTATION RESEARCH ACROSS A BROADER GEOGRAPHIC REGION AND EXPLORE CUTTING-EDGE MACHINE LEARNING METHODOLOGIES."

-DAKOTA LEWIS

Alex Walus

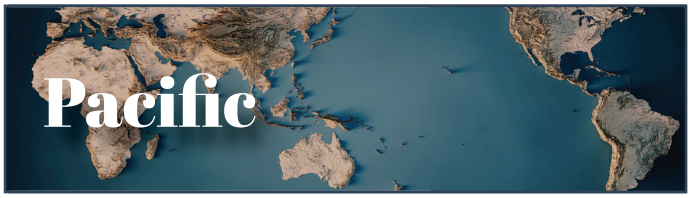
Alex's project will help improve our understanding of how forage fish movements towards the poles (tropicalization) due to changes in sea surface temperatures reshapes coastal food webs along Florida's Gulf Coast. Her research will utilize a space-for-time, trait-based approach to synthesize long-term fish and environmental data to evaluate how tropicalization of forage fish communities are reshaping coastal food webs across the Eastern Gulf. This research will help pinpoint when, where, and why forage fish tropicalization is occurring, and how these shifts may alter food web structure to influence the management of Gulf fisheries.

Meredith Pratt

Meredith's project aims to evaluate long-term changes in fish community structure across more than 400 km of Florida's east coast by integrating multidecadal datasets from FWRI's Fisheries Independent Monitoring program with empirical data collected at the Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve. Again, focusing on tropicalization, her project will highlight short- and long-term warming trends that drive changes in species foraging, spawning, competition, and habitat. While long-term warming trends drive many of these changes, relatively short-term climactic events – particularly El Niño-Southern Oscillations (ENSO) – cause abrupt shifts in temperature, salinity, and precipitation with unknown effects on estuarine fish communities.

Each recipient will receive a $20,000 fellowship thanks to funding obtained from *Fish Florida*. The Florida Forage Fish Coalition partners are extremely grateful for the financial support of *Fish Florida*.

Turning the Tide
News | Activities



On April 28-30, Theresa participated in the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) Circle Hook Workshop. The IATTC has adopted gear modifications to reduce the catch of sea turtles, but has not yet agreed on a definition of "large" circle hook. The three-day meeting provided presentations in order to define large circle hook size to satisfy requirements of RES C-19-04 (a resolution to mitigate impacts on sea turtles). In addition to turtles, Theresa weighed in on recommendations to help reduce bycatch of marlin and sharks.

As a member of the Permanent Advisory Committee (PAC) to the US Delegation to the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), Theresa attended a PAC meeting on May 28 to provide guidance to the US Delegation on ongoing management strategies for Pacific bluefin and striped marlin. She also continues to lead a coalition of sport fishing organizations to support the development of a long-term harvest strategy for Pacific bluefin tuna, organizing strategy meetings with ASA, IGFA and Monterey Bay Aquarium. With Theresa's guidance, this coalition spearheaded a letter to the U.S. Delegation in advance of the IATTC/WCPFC Joint Working Group and WCPFC Northern Committee Meeting.

Theresa attended the Pacific Fishery Management Council meeting in June. The Council focused on two items of regional and national significance. First, the Council is developing performance metrics for Exempted Fishing Permits (EFPs) in highly migratory species fisheries (HMS). *Wild Oceans* first introduced this concept nearly 10 years ago. We proposed setting criteria or guardrails for EFPs before they start fishing and then using this criteria to rate their performance. Our main concerns are catch of non-target species. We discussed with Council members the benefits of using EFPs, but also asked them to consider the unintended consequences that EFPs can have on the ecosystem and other fishermen.

The 10th Session of the Joint IATTC and WCPFC-NC Working Group Meeting on the Management of Pacific Bluefin Tuna (JWG-10) was held on July 9-12. The parties gathered to negotiate a long-term harvest control rule. Theresa participated as a member of the U.S. Delegation. The U.S. supported an increase in the spawning stock to 40% of historic levels and noted that any quota increases should allow for long-term increases to the biomass over time. We shared the U.S.'s concerns that the stock could fall below the second rebuilding target over time, especially if the target reference point is set too low. In the end, the parties agreed to continue discussions and analysis focusing on a target reference point between 20-30 percent historic spawning stock levels

Theresa attended the WCPFC Northern Committee meeting on July 15-16 as a member of the U.S. Delegation. Members stressed the importance of continued bilateral discussions and intercessional JWG meetings to further develop a long-term harvest control rule for bluefin. The NC received updated projections for striped marlin which show the stock will continue to decline under the 2,400 mt catch limit adopted by WCPFC last year.

Theresa is a member of the General Advisory Committee (GAC) to the U.S. section of the IATTC and represented *Wild Oceans* at the annual meeting of the GAC and the Scientific Advisory Committee on July 30-31. Key topics included bluefin tuna, requiring the use of large circle hooks by longline vessels targeting tropical tunas, and extending a silky shark conservation measures to limit the catch in tuna fisheries.

The Pacific Council Fishery Innovation Workgroup met on August 19-20. Theresa participated in their discussion of performance goals and metrics for EFPs on HMS. She asked the Workgroup to consider setting conservative goals for reducing and avoiding bycatch of non-target species. The goals should go beyond what is required by law and match the ethics and values of sustainable west coast fisheries.

On June 24, Roger and Zane attended Atlantic Herring and Management Flexibility Action Sections of the New England Fishery Management Council meetings. Although the NEFMC previously approved continued work on Amendment 10, the Council "paused" it to develop the Management Flexibility action to help address budget cuts and executive orders demanding reduced federal regulations.

From May-August, Zane, Theresa, Rob, and Roger virtually attended Council meetings at the New England, Mid Atlantic, South Atlantic, Gulf, Western Pacific, and Pacific Fishery Management Councils. *Wild Oceans'* staff paid close attention to Council discussions of new Executive Orders given the requirement for Councils to submit a list of deregulation priorities. We are submitting public comments on many proposals (*See cover article*).

From May 28–30, Zane attended the Lenfest Ocean Program's Building Resilient Fisheries and Fishing conference in Washington, DC. Leaders from top ocean NGOs and scientists discussed fishery management under the new administration, emphasizing science communication, community trust, citizen science, and managing uncertainty.

From June 2-3 Zane virtually attended the NOAA ICCAT Advisory Panel meeting, tracking billfish conversations. There was a strong emphasis on ensuring accurate mortality reporting and addressing scientific assessments gaps. Research recommendations spotlighted bycatch avoidance and the 7th International Billfish Symposium's efforts to coordinate global information on billfish life history.

Roger and Zane attended the ASMFC Atlantic Menhaden Management Board (May 7), Atlantic Menhaden Stock Assessment Subcommittee (May 19, June 18) and Ecological Reference Point (ERP) Work Group meetings (June 17, July 9). Based on new analysis from Drs. Ault and Luo, these groups agreed to lower the natural mortality estimate (M) from 1.17 to 0.92, though evidence suggests it should be ≤0.52. Continuing to track this, Roger and Zane attended the SEDAR 102 ASMFC Atlantic Menhaden and ERP on August 12. Final decisions on model inputs for menhaden will occur at the October ASMFC meeting.

From August 5–7, Roger, Zane, and Rob attended the ASMFC Summer Meeting, where River Herring AP Chair and former *Wild Oceans* Executive Director Pam Lyons Gromen highlighted the lack of recovery despite fishery closures. The AP recommended evaluating commercial management strategies, prioritizing genetic sampling of bycatch, and advancing measures like Atlantic Herring Amendment 10 to reduce bycatch.

On May 29, Rob attended the 9th Annual Forage Fish Data Workshop that was held in St. Petersburg, FL as a member of the Florida Forage Fish Coalition (*See article on page* 6). Then on June 14, Rob participated in another meeting of the Florida Forage Fish Coalition and its data partners to review 6 fellowship proposals submitted for 2025/2026. The two winning fellows chosen are from UF and UCF, and will be examining tropicalization shifts in fish communities along both coasts of Florida including the Indian River Lagoon and St John's River, as well as the Big Bend region of the Gulf Coast. Each recipient will receive a $20,000 fellowship.

On June 4, Rob sat in on the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council meeting to monitor the findings from the annual update on unmanaged commercial landings. The goal of this report is to monitor for signs of developing unmanaged commercial fisheries in the Mid-Atlantic to determine if further evaluation is needed and consider potential management responses. With warming waters and shifting stocks, new commercial fisheries are developing along the Atlantic coast.

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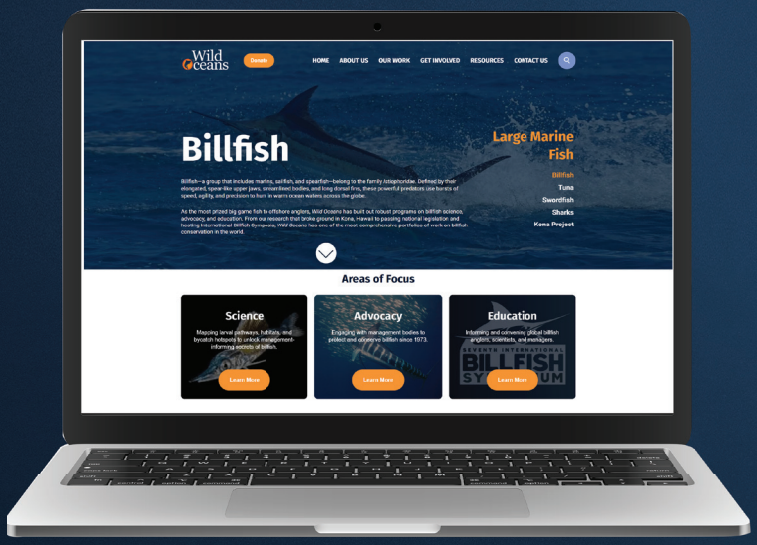
The Ocean gives us all life. Help us give back. Any and every donation to our organization grants us the chance to continue effecting real change for the future of the ocean and our world.

CHECK OUT THE NEW LARGE MARINE FISH WEBPAGE!



Since *Wild Oceans* has continued to expand our science, advocacy, and education programming, our website needed some updates to reflect the length and depth of work we conduct. Stay up to date on our large marine fish conservation efforts by checking out our refreshed webpage:

- **Species-specific webpages housing our science, advocacy, and education work on billfish, tuna, swordfish, and sharks**
- **One-of-a-kind Stock Status Tables, allowing quick and easy access to the health of the highly migratory species we engage on**
- **Updated *Kona Project* webpage which reflects the expansiveness of our funded research as well as clearer navigation to interim and final reports**
- **International Billfish Symposia pages for the 2nd and 7th Symposia, including newly digitized 2nd International Billfish Symposium Proceedings (coming soon!)**

Thank you to Wild Oceans Board Member Bill Boyce for providing many of the incredible photos that enhance our website.