Sociological Baseline of Hawaii’s Longline Industry

Stewart Allen and Amy Gough

INTRODUCTION

The Magnuson Stevens Act and the National Environmental Policy Act require evaluations of the impacts on fishing participants and communities when fishery regulations, federal projects and environmental regulations are proposed. In Hawaii, management of the ethnically diverse and transitory longline industry has resulted in little understanding of socio-cultural impacts. The Magnuson Stevens Act mandates, for example, a study of predominantly midday workers to describe the types of impacts that could be experienced by industry participants. This lack of baseline information prompted HAPF to fund an ongoing project to compile a socio-cultural profile of the industry to aid decision makers in their policy decisions.

The longline industry in Hawaii is dynamic, with vessels and personnel entering and leaving the fishery from other regions. We are conducting interviews with longline captains, owners, crew, family members, and local fishing supply businesses. Interviews provide information about their background, how they came to be involved in the fishery, the nature of their job, what they like most and least about their work, perceptions of the industry, and their community. The interviews' knowledge regarding fishing regulations and management and their ability to explain it is explored. Information is also collected on interviewees' social networks, particularly regarding social and community ties.

METHODS

We utilize semi-structured interviews with longline industry participants; there is no questionnaire, just a set of topics to cover at some point during the interview. Interviews are conducted in small groups or individually at diverse times and locations, including on board vessels, in respondents’ homes, at supply businesses, or within the pier or surrounding area.

Respondents include Hawaii longline vessels owners, captains, crew, and support businesses. We use quota sampling based on the respondent’s role within Hawaii’s longline industry, pier location, and ethnicity. The sample size is adaptive based on information gained and time available.

CHARACTERISTICS OF HAWAII’S LONGLINE FLEET

Many interviews remain to be conducted and full analysis has not even begun, so results are preliminary. As of March, 2004 we have interviewed 183 individuals involved with Hawaii’s longline industry, reflecting about 60% of Hawaii-based longline vessels. These 183 participants include 58 vessel owners and captains, representing approximately 60% of Hawaii’s longline owners and captains, along with 125 crew, representing slightly more than 30% of Hawaii-based crew.

Composition of Sample To Date

- Approval from the University’s Committee on Human Studies obtained for the research.
- Qualitative (text) and quantitative data bases utilizing SPSS have been developed.
- Paper accepted for presentation at 4th World Fisheries Congress.
- Interviews with over 180 longline industry participants.

DYNAMICS AMONG HAWAII’S LONGLINE VESSEL OWNERS

Within the three ethnic divisions of captain/owners there are distinct differences in interaction. There are strong divisions within the Vietnamese fleet, by approximately 26 individuals. All vessels dock at Pier 17, space permitting. The Vietnamese owners and captains rely on a great deal of solidarity within their network. There are two Vietnamese supply store owners, and the Vietnamese purchase from these individuals based on availability of products.

Vietnamese communicate about fishing when at sea, and business and pleasure while in port. An informal Vietnamese Longline Association does exist, although it was more active in the past. Most information is passed on verbally, through community leaders. There are a few divisions among Vietnamese vessel owners, and overall they exhibit a considerable degree of unity.

The Hawaii Longline Association (HLA) is the dominant source of information for the fleet. Supplies are purchased almost entirely at a Caucasian supplier located close to the docks. HLA does provide written publications and translations of important events surrounding the longline industry. Members within subgroups do socialize, however there is virtually no overlap between subgroups.

HAWAII’S LONGLINE CREW

The majority of longline crew members, about 75%, are Filipino. Filipino crew commit to a one-year contract, working and living on the vessel while their families remain in the Philippines. With the help of one of their own management, crew members are recruited and brought to Hawaii utilizing transit visas. These visa restrict personnel from remaining in the U.S. After about a year on the vessel, the crew member is returned to his “home” pier, making them desirable workers as they tend to the vessel in port.

The majority of crew have worked in a number of commercial fisheries outside the Philippines, and strongly prefer to remain in Hawaii. Half of the Filipino crew have formal training and education in a marine field, but with the intent to work on a cargo vessel, which the majority would strongly prefer to longline. The Filipino crew are subject to immigration regulations and enforcement that sporadically deny entry into the U.S. often leaving them worried about their future in Hawaii.

Within the pier area, specific rules for the crew’s behavior during and after work are determined by the vessel owner. What the crew call “Vietnamese Style,” “Korean Style,” or “Local Style” imply different methods of operation, with local style most often preferred.

There are approximately 35-40 Korean vessel owners, representing about 30 boat owning families. Almost all Korean vessels dock at Kealakekua Bay. Among the Korean longliners, there are strong family ties and personal networks. When at sea, Korean vessel owners communicate but to a limited extent. Most crew discuss the lack of solidarity among longline vessel owners. There are two Korean supply store owners.

A formal Korean Longline Association (KLA) exists, catering to approximately 50 percent of the Korean fishermen. The KLA provides written publications and translations of important events surrounding the longline industry. Members within subgroups do socialize, however there is virtually no overlap between subgroups.

OBJECTIVES

- Compile a comprehensive social and cultural profile of the Hawaii longline industry.

- Provide social and cultural information to decision-makers on regulatory impacts and implementation strategies for the Hawaii longline fishery.

- NOAA Fisheries needs to be aware of the effect of its policies on crew availability. Among Korean, Vietnamese, and Caucasian boats, finding reliable crew is a dominant concern. Korean vessels further report considerable problems in finding captains, as many captains are growing older. Finding local crew is reportedly not easy, and most vessels opt to supplement Filipino crew with Micronesian laborers. Local or Micronesian crew are paid a percentage of the earnings rather than a set salary, and vessel owners often explain they are unable to cover trip expenses when utilizing local crew.

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