PIRO,

We have been working together for several years to implement PIRO's Strategic Plan 2016–2020, and we have now come to the end of that cycle with many accomplishments. In 2019, we began our next strategic planning initiative to develop a joint regional—PIRO and PIFSC—geographic strategic plan. We completed this plan earlier this year and it describes our three strategic goals for 2020–2023, as well as our key strategies for implementing each of these goals. When we created our prior Strategic Plan, we were able to hand out printed copies to every PIRO employee. This year, given our mandatory telework situation, we provided you access to the Pacific Islands Geographic Strategic Plan 2020–2023 electronically. We hope that you can still take the plan “off the shelf” every once in a while to refresh the focus on our strategic goals and priorities in your work.

Similar to last year, this Annual Guidance Memorandum describes the priorities for implementing our strategic goals over the next two years. Under each goal, you will find a select list of highlighted accomplishments, followed by our priorities for 2021–2022. We’ve prefaced these priorities with a short narrative statement that highlights a key area of PIRO’s work, a key collaboration with PIFSC, and a key external collaboration focus. The priorities listed are not all inclusive—much of our work continues or builds upon past efforts—and instead provides focal points.

We recognize that much of our work in 2020 was affected by the pandemic. We nonetheless accomplished much and we hope to soon have a safe and orderly return to the workplace. Regardless of when and how that occurs, everything that we work on and accomplish, including the priorities described here, contribute to PIRO, in partnership with PIFSC, attaining our strategic goals for the region.

I hope you will join me in continuing to improve our workforce, foster sustainable fisheries while protecting at-risk marine resources, and use technology and our partnerships to their fullest potential. You should be proud of the important science, service, and stewardship that this office has provided to NOAA and the Nation.

Michael D. Tosatto
Strategic Goal 1
Amplify the economic value of commercial and recreational fisheries while ensuring their sustainability

KEY STRATEGIES
1.1 Manage stocks for optimum sustainable yield
1.2 Increase U.S. marine aquaculture production
1.3 Adequately assess all prioritized stocks and maintain information for currently assessed stocks
1.4 Modernize fishery information collection, management, and dissemination systems, and enhance cooperative data collection and sharing
1.5 Strengthen international institutions and partnerships
1.6 Increase consumer confidence in the quality and safety of U.S. seafood while promoting sustainable fisheries development
1.7 Assess and predict the impacts of environmental changes and activities on fisheries and ecosystems

What We Accomplished
We made significant advances in amplifying the economic value of commercial and recreational fisheries while ensuring their sustainability. In 2019–2020, we:

- Successfully worked with other members of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) to strengthen and extend for two years WCPFC’s compliance monitoring scheme, which is crucial for ensuring a level playing field for U.S. fisheries in the western and central Pacific Ocean
- Worked with international partners to develop the accreditation process for and launch the observer program for the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (SPRFMO)
- Led the adoption of a rebuilding plan for the North Pacific striped marlin in the WCPFC
- Mitigated the adverse impacts of the pandemic on the purse seine fishery by negotiating appropriate waivers from international requirements related to observers and transshipment, and facilitating the repatriation of foreign observers
- Implemented Amendment 10 to the Pelagic Fishery Ecosystem Plan, which improved sea turtle mitigation measures in the Hawai‘i shallow-set longline fishery, allowing the fishery to operate year-round and in compliance with a recent NMFS biological opinion
- Hosted our first annual Sustainable Recreational and Non-Commercial Fishing Program grant competition funding citizen science and outreach projects to enhance access, research, and sustainability in recreational fisheries
2021 – 2022 Priorities

PIRO will focus on developing streamlined and responsible aquaculture management, including identifying and implementing Aquaculture Opportunity Areas. Working with PIFSC, we will improve the regional fisheries data enterprise and use the best information available for ecosystem-based fisheries management. We will coordinate with international partners to adopt effective conservation and management measures in regional fisheries management organizations that level the playing field for U.S. fisheries, and we will become the partner of choice to the small island developing states in the region. Throughout 2021–2022, we will:

- Engage in the regional fisheries management organizations to develop and adopt measures to end overfishing and rebuild overfished highly migratory and straddling fish stocks, including Pacific bluefin tuna and North Pacific striped marlin
- Strengthen management of South Pacific albacore by the WCPFC to improve performance of the American Samoa longline fishery and safeguard fishing opportunities for the albacore troll fishery
- Improve WCPFC management of tropical tuna stocks, with the aims of ensuring adequate high seas fishing opportunities for the purse seine fleet and a fair allocation of the bigeye tuna resource for the longline fishery, while maintaining a low risk of overfishing
- In SPRFMO, lead the development and adoption of a high seas boarding and inspection scheme
- In the WCPFC, lead a review of the effectiveness of its at-sea transshipment monitoring scheme and strengthen it as needed to combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing and seafood fraud
- Work with PIFSC, the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council (WPFMC), and territorial partners to address overfishing and overfished stock status for American Samoa bottomfish and overfishing status of Marianas bottomfish, and maintain and enhance relationships with local fishermen and encourage the use of electronic reporting
- Responsibly manage offshore aquaculture by completing the programmatic environmental impact statement to include impact analyses of management alternatives and streamline associated permitting processes
- Collaborate with PIFSC to implement electronic platform for longline fisheries logbook and observer data collection and address the Electronic Technologies Implementation Plan
- Partner with the resource agencies of the American Samoa and Guam governments to support development of territorial sustainable coral reef fisheries management plans
Strategic Goal 2

Conserve and recover protected species while supporting responsible fishing and resource development

KEY STRATEGIES

2.1 Stabilize highest priority protected species

2.2 Review and streamline permitting and authorization processes for fisheries, energy development and national defense, while maximizing conservation outcomes

2.3 Minimize bycatch and entanglement of protected species while supporting fisheries

2.4 Preserve special places and conserve ocean trust resources in the midst of changing climate conditions

What We Accomplished

We made significant advances in conserving and recovering protected species while supporting responsible fishing and resource development. In 2019–2020, we:

- Published a Draft Recovery Plan for the endangered main Hawaiian Islands insular false killer whale that describes actions necessary to recover the species
- Drafted and proposed a rule to designate coral critical habitat
- Published a “not warranted” finding and a status review for *Pocillopora meandrina* (cauliflower coral)
- Completed programmatic Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) consultation with PIFSC on annual field research, U.S. Navy on its Wave Energy Test Site (WETS) Program, and Office of Coastal Management on traditional fishpond management
- Completed a multi-year national interagency agreement effort confirming NMFS authority to consult and directly receive funding under the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (FWCA) from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
- Worked with international partners in the WCPFC to strengthen the protection of sea turtles in fisheries for highly migratory species (HMS), successfully extending the mitigation measures to all shallow-set longline fisheries
- Completed a Pacific Marine National Monument Priorities Plan, which outlines the goals and strategies for implementation over the next five years and aligns with NOAA, NMFS, and PIRO strategic plans

New Fiscal Year Priorities

PIRO will focus on working with partners and stakeholders to improve collaboration to recover protected species, mitigate bycatch, streamline consultations, and develop and implement management plans. In 2021–2022, we will work with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to implement management plans for PIR marine national monuments. Working with PIFSC and the State of Hawai‘i, we will effectively implement recovery plans and regulations enacted for Hawaiian monk seals, insular false killer whales, and spinner dolphins. We will coordinate with the Department of Defense/Navy as a cooperating agency.
for the Pearl Harbor dry dock improvement project to enhance the action-oriented approach for facilitating environmental compliance with federal natural resource regulations. Throughout 2021–2022, we will:

- Complete Endangered Species Act (ESA) Section 7 consultations for all PIR-managed fisheries and work collaboratively to implement associated measures
- Continue efforts to increase science-policy coordination among PIFSC and PIRO, in particular implementing streamlined processes for science support of ESA and EFH consultations
- Initiate or complete recovery plans and associated status reviews for Hawaiian monk seals, main Hawaiian Islands insular false killer whales, and threatened Indo-Pacific coral species
- Finalize an approach rule for Hawaiian spinner dolphins to enhance their protection under the MMPA
- Continue coordinating marine mammal and sea turtle strandings while maintaining staff safety and compliance with risk reduction policies and practices
- Publish the draft Marianas Trench Marine National Monument Management Plan in cooperation with USFWS
- Gain common regional understanding of ecosystem-based fisheries management efforts and priorities across PIFSC and PIRO through increased partnering and prioritize incorporation of EBFM strategies into existing and planned regional efforts
- Expand EFH programmatic consultations
- Coordinate with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to establish regional memorandum of agreement (MOA) for Unified Federal Response and develop a template for local hazard mitigation and public assistance for coral reef recovery and restoration
- Invest in an improved partnership with USACE Honolulu through joint staff training and cross training efforts, and facilitate NMFS PIRO–USACE Honolulu District MOA for FWCA coordination and fund transfer to complete regional consultation
- Work with NOAA and other agency stakeholders to better understand climate impacts to protected species and the ecosystems that they depend on at French Frigate Shoals, and develop appropriate response and mitigation for ecosystem-based management
- In the WCPFC, lead the development and adoption of safe-handling guidelines for marine mammals in HMS fisheries and, if appropriate, pursue binding mitigation measures to reduce the adverse impacts of HMS fisheries on marine mammals, particularly in longline fisheries
Strategic Goal 3

**Improve organizational excellence and regulatory efficiency**

**KEY STRATEGIES**

3.1 Match a diverse workforce to mission needs

3.2 Recapitalize infrastructure and facilities

3.3 Institutionalize prioritization and performance management practices

3.4 Review agency regulations and remove or modify rules that unnecessarily burden businesses and economic growth

3.5 Institutionalize the use of innovative technologies

3.6 Promote strategic coordination and collaboration across the Pacific Islands Region

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**What We Accomplished**

We made significant advances in improving organizational excellence and regulatory efficiency. In 2019–2020, we:

- Revised the Mid-level Leadership Program based on the successes of the first year and offered the class to six deserving staff in fall 2019
- Increased coordination with PIFSC at all appropriate levels, including leadership meetings, issue-specific work groups, science-to-management for corals and reef conservation, coordination on data analysis and interpretation, and outreach events
- Accomplished the migration of theLongline Observer Database System from PIFSC to PIRO, and made substantial progress on electronic observer data collection in the longline fisheries
- Completed the full integration of the PIRO website into the redesigned “mobile first” NOAA Fisheries website
- Successfully completed the full rollout of Windows 10 to all PIRO users, and upgraded half of the servers to MS Windows Server 2016
- Relieved regulatory restrictions on fishermen, including eliminating the trip retention limits for swordfish in the American Samoa longline fishery, reopening the Southern Exclusion Zone around the main Hawaiian Islands to longline fishing, and revising management of the area of jurisdictional overlap between the WCPFC and the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission

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**New Fiscal Year Priorities**

PIRO will focus on maintaining a skilled and diverse workforce and streamlining administrative policies and processes to improve mission effectiveness, with a particular focus on transitioning to a mobile-ready workforce and implementing data modernization. Working with PIFSC, we will identify and implement opportunities to make operations, management, and information technology processes more effective and efficient, including sharing resources for common functions where appropriate. We will coordinate with other federal partners and the WPFMC to appropriately streamline regulations. Throughout 2021–2022, we will:
• With PIFSC, implement actions to increase integration of the PIRO and PIFSC OMI enterprises, to leverage skill sets across the two organizations, improve continuity of operations by cross-training, and provide growth opportunities for OMI staff
• Target recruiting efforts to increase diversity of PIRO’s workforce, including by increasing the number of applicants from local educational institutions, taking advantage of University of Hawai‘i Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math disciplines; hiring interns from Hollings Prep and Hollings Scholar programs; and using Direct Hiring Authorities as often as possible
• Continue to enhance opportunities for staff development, including offering internal detail opportunities to help staff develop new skill sets, and holding the next iteration of the PIRO Leadership Class to help junior staff develop their leadership skills
• Review existing administrative policies and processes to provide updates, modifications and improvements, including using the revised Council on Environmental Quality National Environmental Policy Act regulations to develop more concise and timely NEPA analyses, and working with the State and Territories to identify regulations that may unduly limit economic growth in fisheries
• Continue IT and data modernization efforts, including upgrading servers to MS Windows Server 2016 and upgrading all Windows 10 systems to Windows 10 v1909; migrating PIRO to the NMFS Enterprise Active Directory System; and completing an inventory of data collection activities and data management practices and protocols in PIRO to identify best practices for data management