



Who ARE We in the Western Pacific Region?

Diversity and representation matter. Cultural diversity leads to better decisions because different views, perspectives, and ideas are brought forth for consideration. At the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, we believe that our diversity should reflect the communities we serve. While our backgrounds and cultural experiences may vary widely, that can only benefit us as we all work together toward a common goal of sustainable fisheries management.

According to census data from the Western Pacific Region through 2020, 37% of the 1.7 million residents identify as Asian, 22% as White, 18% as Pacific Islander and 23% as mixed. Census data collection is variable and limited for the U.S. outlying areas which affects our region. On April 5, 2022, several members of Congress wrote the U.S. comptroller general about these data gaps, and requested more context on the related impacts and input on potential administrative and legislative ways to solve the problem.

Taking a closer look at the Council Family, which includes Council members, advisory committee members and staff scattered across the Pacific, the breakdown varies a bit from the region as a whole. Out of 140 people, 39% are estimated to be of European descent, followed by Asian (21%), Micronesian (21%) and Polynesian (16%). The remaining 3% are split between African American, Brazilian, Filipino and Inuit Eskimo ethnicities.

With the vast majority of the region's population (1.4 million), the Hawai'i breakdown is fairly similar to the overall numbers. But when taking a closer look at ethnicities in smaller regions, different patterns start to emerge. Of the 55,000 people in American

Samoa, 89% are Samoan, and all other reported ethnicities make up 4% or less.

Despite their geographical closeness, the distribution of ethnic groups in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) and Guam are not the same. CNMI has one third the population of Guam (169,000), and 50% identify as Asian and 24% as Chamorro. In Guam, the largest group is Chamorros (37%), followed by Asians (31%). Both report having around 10% of residents with two or more ethnicities.

The Council's diversity broadly reflects the community and can be attributed to our longstanding indigenous leadership, who has recognized that training the next generation is key. The Council has served as a training ground and pipeline for many cohorts. Young indigenous and non-indigenous interns and staff members have taken what they learned to other fisheries-related jobs in the region. Examples include NOAA's Pacific Islands Regional Office (PIRO) and Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center (PIFSC), the Universities of Hawai'i and Guam, environmental contractor Lynker Technologies, non-governmental organizations, and state, territory and commonwealth fishery management agencies. Council staff alumni have a deep understanding of the Magnuson-Steven Act, the fishery management process, and the roles and responsibilities of the Council, PIRO, PIFSC and other stakeholders.

The Council will continue to feed the pipeline from students to professionals, and combat the general lack of diversity in fisheries management so that richer discussions can be had at the decision-making table. 🐟