

## **Summary of the April 2016 Train-the-Trainer Workshop for Pelagic Longline Captains of the Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of the Marshall Islands and Cook Islands**

**Luen Thai Fishing Venture, Anova Foods USA, The Nature Conservancy**

**April 2016**

On 14 April 2016 consultant Mike A. McCoy of Gillett, Preston and Associates conducted a workshop in Zhoushan, China to train staff of Luen Thai Fishing Venture (LTFV) who train fishing base managers to instruct captains of pelagic longline tuna vessels that are based out of the Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of the Marshall Islands and Cook Islands. In addition to the LTFV trainers, three longline vessel captains and their crew attended the workshop. The captain training is an activity of Fishery Improvement Projects of the three fisheries, as well as a condition of certification of the Marine Stewardship Council-certified Cook Islands longline fishery for albacore tuna. This train-the-trainer workshop was made possible through the support of LTFV, Anova Foods USA, Norpac Fisheries Export, and The Nature Conservancy, who are participants of Fishery Improvement Projects in these fisheries.

The workshop objectives were as follows:

- Improve post-release survival rates of catch released by longline vessel operators through their use of best practice methods for handling and release;
- Increase the understanding of logbook catch recording and reporting procedures;
- Improve the accuracy of species identification recorded in logbooks;
- Sensitize longline vessel captains to environmental and sustainability concerns and best practices; and
- Augment the ability of longline captains and crews to use specialized equipment designed to increase the probability of post-release survival of turtles, seabirds, marine mammals and sharks.

The training covered:

- The importance of avoiding and minimizing the catch and mortality of endangered, threatened and protected species, including sea turtles, whales and dolphins, sharks and rays, and seabirds;
- Handling and release equipment to be kept onboard, and guidance on prescribed handling and release methods for sea turtles, whales and dolphins, sharks and rays, and seabirds;
- Overview of government longline rules;
- LTFV company policy banning the use of gear to target sharks, and banning the retention of sharks;
- Guidance for proper use of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community/Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency logbook form for pelagic longline fishers;
- Introduction to the Secretariat of the Pacific Community species identification guide for longline fishers;



Mike McCoy (left) demonstrating the consequences of leatherback sea turtle ingestion of plastic bags, longline captain train-the-trainer workshop in Zhoushan.



Mike McCoy (left) demonstrating to LTFV manager of the captain training program Li Pan (right) the method for using a long-handled line cutter.

Mr. McCoy provided two Powerpoint presentations, containing both Chinese and English text. The first presentation consisted of a general overview of the longline situation with respect to protected species in the three jurisdictions, a review of Luen Thai's company policies, catch reporting requirements, and reasons why fishing vessel personnel should be concerned with protected species. The second Powerpoint provided background on the biology of protected species, explained prescribed handling and release protocols, and introduced the equipment to be utilized. Both of the Powerpoint presentations were made in Chinese by Mr. Li Pan of Luen Thai's Shenzhen office.

During the second presentation, Mr. McCoy provided hands-on instruction in using de-hookers and line cutters during fishing operations. Several branchlines of the type used in actual fishing operations were made available for the training. It is important that actual fishing gear of the type and size used on the vessel be used in any training.

The Luen Thai trainers were advised to wait until the conclusion of training workshops to distribute the various handouts to the captains and crew. This is to avoid their concentrating on the handout content and not pay attention to the continuing presentation.

Since the contents of the Powerpoints had been reviewed by Luen Thai staff prior to the training, the presentations went smoothly. The participants were eager to participate in de-hooking and line cutting demonstrations. They appeared particularly impressed with the ability of the line cutters to easily cut the branch lines. It was pointed out by the consultant that the line cutters by themselves, i.e. not mounted on a pole or handle, can be a useful safety tool when there is a need to

quickly cut monofilament line such as when fishermen become entangled in the line. Mr. McCoy provided instructions on fabrication of the handle on which the line cutters are mounted. He also emphasized that, when using bolt cutters to cut the tip off a hook that is lodged in an organism, care should be taken, as pieces of the broken hooks can fly out and cause injury. The handling and release equipment should be located on deck so that captain and crew can easily and quickly access them when needed. Mr. McCoy determined that the hand-held de-hookers work with the circle hooks used by Luen Thai vessels. In some circle hooks, a notch has to be filed on the hook to make it extractable when using a de-hooker.

Mr. McCoy reviewed the handling and release equipment kits currently on each of the longline vessels, and made the following recommendations:

- Have a supply of replacement blade assemblies for the line cutter available, as the stainless steel blades are expected to corrode over time.
- After contact with seawater, rinse off the line cutters in fresh water and oil them after use to increase their life.
- Identify a commercial supplier of line cutters and handles. The line cutter handles should be fabricated with the same female threads to match the extension pole used on the two-piece long-handled de-hooker that is provided in the Jessn handling and release kits currently supplied to each LTFV longline vessel. A best-case scenario would be for Jessn (or some other entity) to modify the long-handled de-hooker with a threaded end that could accept either a de-hooker or cutting head interchangeably.
- The landing nets provided in the Jessn handling and release kits are not suitable for all but the very smallest turtles. They appear flimsy and would not last very long in the marine environment. Replace these with a sturdy landing net with the same matching female threads for mounting on the two-part handle pole included in the Jessn kit. The net hoop can be made from 9mm stainless steel rod and be at least 73 cm in diameter. The net bag on the ring should be at least 96 cm deep, with mesh no larger than 7.5 X 7.5 cm. The net can be made with heavy-duty purse seine twine commonly available on all tuna purse seiners or from net supply companies.
- Modify the two-part pole currently included in the Jessn kits so that it can be used with interchangeable heads for a de-hooker, line cutter and landing net.

LTFV staff committed to implement Mr. McCoy's recommendations and plan to develop an improved handling-and-release equipment kit that will be provided to each vessel, and training courses for captains and crews will include this improved kit.

LTFV is maintaining records of all training workshops conducted in the Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands and Cook Islands, and ensure that each captain receives training at least annually. Summaries of these records are available in progress reports prepared for the three Fishery Improvement Projects.

The two PowerPoint files, with English/Chinese text, are to be used and updated when warranted by LTFV and others to train captains in the three longline fisheries. In addition, the following materials will also be used in the captain training workshops, which are available, in English and Chinese, from the Fishery Improvement Project websites for the Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands and Cook Islands:

- Train-the-trainer workshop agenda
- WCPFC guidelines for handling and releasing sea turtles
- Guidelines for handling and releasing seabirds and avoiding bycatch
- Guidelines for handling and releasing sharks and rays
- Guidelines for handling and releasing whales and dolphins
- SPC logbook form instructions
- LTFV policy banning specified gear and methods for targeting sharks and banning the retention of sharks
- SPC Marine Species Identification Manual for Horizontal Longline Fishermen