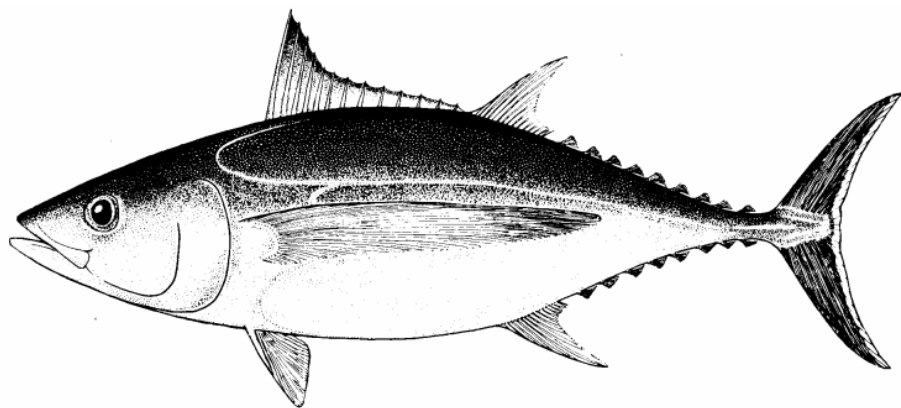




SCTB17 Working Paper

NFR-14

National Tuna Fisheries Report for the Marshall Islands



Glen Joseph

Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority (MIMRA)
Marshall Islands

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Introduction:

For the most part, 2003 meant very low fishery production in the RMI EEZ for the purse seine fleet, targeting skipjack tuna. The pole and line fishery also decreased in catch and vessel operating in zone for the 2003 year. The longline fishery operated relatively stable, with slight increase in yellowfin and bigeye catchability. While this report will show operation in-zone for 2003, it will also highlight catch differences over the last few years. In short, it will highlight and summarize the trends in the fishery from 2001 to 2003.

The Tuna fishery:

Several distant water fishing nations have access to the RMI zone, whether by bilateral, multilateral or regional arrangements. These are depicted in table 1.

Table 1: Access Agreements in RMI for 2003

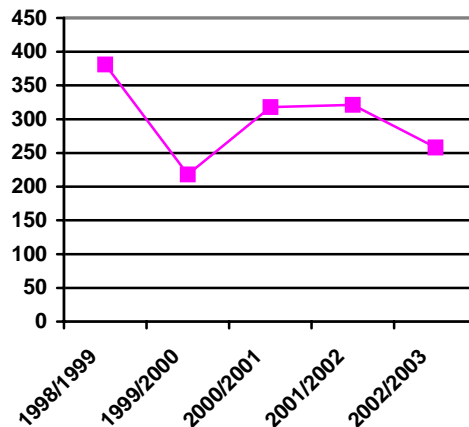
Country/Party	Type	Administrator	Type
USA	Multilateral	FFA	Regional Arrangement
Japan	Bilateral	MIMRA	Government to Government
Taiwan	Bilateral	MIMRA	Industry to Government
Korea	Bilateral	MIMRA	Industry to Government
FSM Arrangement	Multilateral	FFA	Sub-Regional
Fong Seong Co.	Bilateral	MIMRA	Industry to Government
*Shandong Fishery Co.	Bilateral	MIMRA	Industry to Government
*Shangai Fishery Co.	Bilateral	MIMRA	Industry to Government
*MIFV	Bilateral	MIMRA	Industry to Government
New Zealand	Bilateral	MIMRA	Industry to Government
*EdgeWater Fishery Co.	Bilateral	MIMRA	Industry to Government

All of the parties in 2002 retained access in the RMI during 2003. The fleet component and the number of licensed vessels in 2003 is shown in table 2.

Table 2: Access Agreements in RMI for 2003-gear types/flag/fleet/numbers

Country/Party	Gear/method	Number of Boats	Flag
USA	Purse Seine	26	USA
Japan	Purse Seine	34	Japan
	Longline	23	Japan
	Pole and line	74	Japan
Taiwan	Purse Seine	42	Taiwan
Korea	Purse Seine	27	Korea
!FSM Arrangement	Purse Seine	23	FSM,RMI,KI, SI, PNG
Fong Seong Co.	Purse Seine	2	Vanuatu
Shandong Fishery Co.	Purse Seine	2	PROC
Shangai Fishery Co.	Purse Seine	2	PROC
MIFV	Longline	30	PROC, Taiwan
New Zealand	Purse Seine	4	NZ
*Clear Water Fishery	Longline	5	FSM

Graph 1: Licensed vessels since 1998.



Although 2003 retained the same fleet in the RMI for access right, the operation, level of deployment and the number of trips conducted in-zone dropped significantly from that of the previous years, as depicted in graph 1. The graph shows the number of vessels (all gears and types) licensed in the RMI EEZ from 1998/99 period to 2002/2003 period. 1998 counted licensed vessels at 385 vessels, 1999 at 219 vessels, 2000/2001 at 316, 2001/2002 licensed 321 vessels, and finally, 2002/2003, totaled 258 vessels.

The shift in transshipment attributed greatly to the differences, as 2003 saw less carriers licensed for transshipment purposes. Hence, transshipment activity also recorded low level of activity in port as well for the year. The purse seine effort, and the pole and line vessels also reported low activity in the zone for the year.

Longline Fishery:

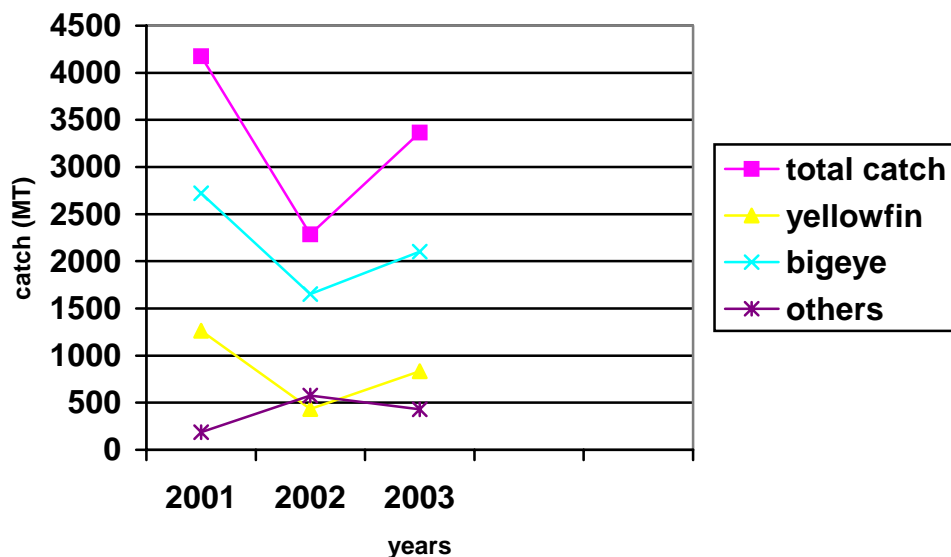
Table 3 shows the longline fleet by flag operating in the RMI from 2001, 2002 and 2003. The longline fishery operated relatively the same in terms of the number of vessels licensed in-zone. In 2001, the longline fish base in Majuro commenced bringing in additional boats categorized as locally based foreign logline fleet. That fleet (locally based foreign fleet) operates mainly for the fresh sashimi tuna market, while the Japanese fleet operates for the frozen tuna market.

Although 2003 total catch for longline is higher than 2002, it is lower than 2001. With the establishment of the tuna longline fishbase (Marshall Islands Fishing Venture) in late 2000, saw an increase in longline vessels from China and Taiwan in 2002 and 2003. By comparison, the Japanese longline operates relatively stable from 2001 to 2003. Graph 2 shows the total catch for the longline fleet operated in zone throughout the three years (2001-2003), and the catch by main target species, including others (lump bycatch and incidental catch).

Table 3: Annual longline catch in Marshall Islands waters by fleet, 2001-2003
(Source: Logsheet data provided to SPC by the Marshall Islands)

YEAR	FLAG	BOATS	BIGEYE		YELLOWFIN		OTHER	TOTAL	
			MT	CPUE	MT	CPUE	MT	MT	CPUE
2001	CN	2	0	0.0	0	0.0	4	4	1.0
2001	JP	37	2,722	0.9	1,264	0.6	182	4,168	1.5
2001	TW	2	0	0.1	0	0.0	1	2	0.3
			2,723		1,264		187	4,174	
2002	CN	36	387	0.5	87	0.1	93	568	0.8
2002	FM	4	103	0.5	21	0.2	13	137	0.7
2002	JP	23	1,148	1.1	321	0.4	85	1,555	1.5
2002	TW	9	12	0.1	3	0.1	10	26	0.3
			1,651		432		576	2,659	
2003	CN	35	701	0.4	298	0.2	251	1,250	0.9
2003	FM	4	134	0.5	50	0.2	18	203	0.8
2003	JP	23	1,266	1.0	483	0.6	154	1,902	1.7
2003	TW	7	4	0.0	1	0.0	7	12	0.2
			2,104		832		430	3,367	

Graph 2: total catch and target catch for the longline fleet combined. 2001-2003.



Yellowfin catch in-zone doubled in 2003, as compared to the 2002 catch (about 400 tons in 2002 and about 800 tons in 2003). Bigeye catch rate increased from a total of 1,600 tons in 2002 to just over 2,000 tons in 2003. Figure 1 shows the distribution of Longline effort (all fleets) in the Marshall Islands EEZ for 2003, while Figure 2, for comparison, shows the effort for 2002.

Figure 1: Distribution of Longline effort (all fleets) in the Marshall Islands EEZ for 2003.

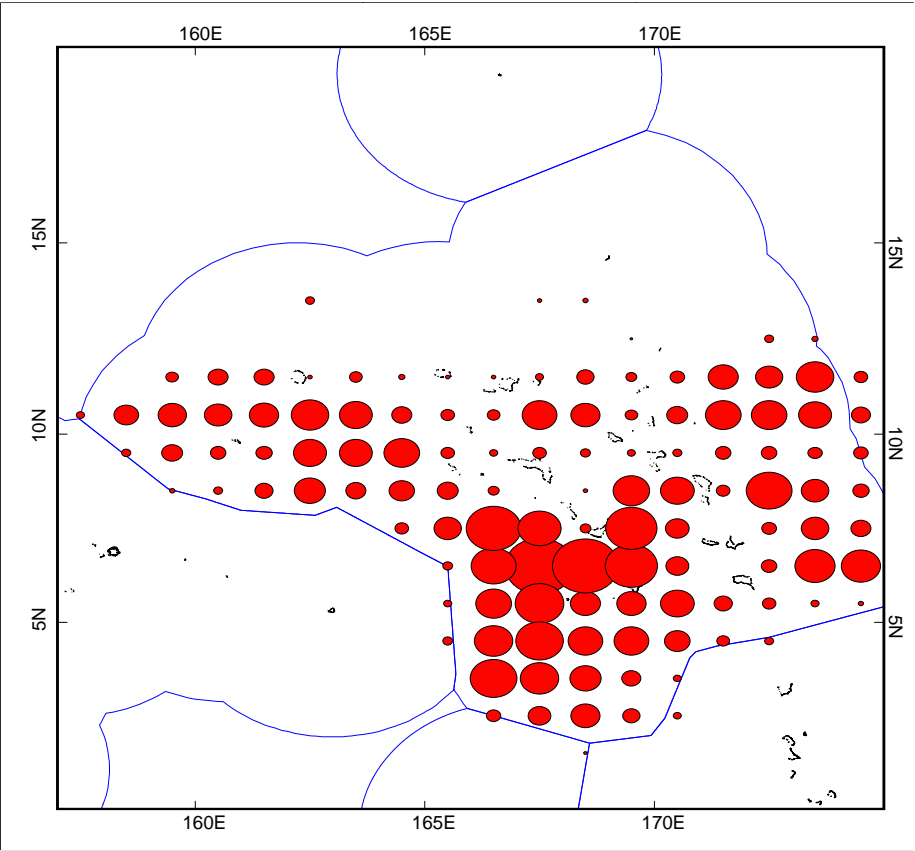
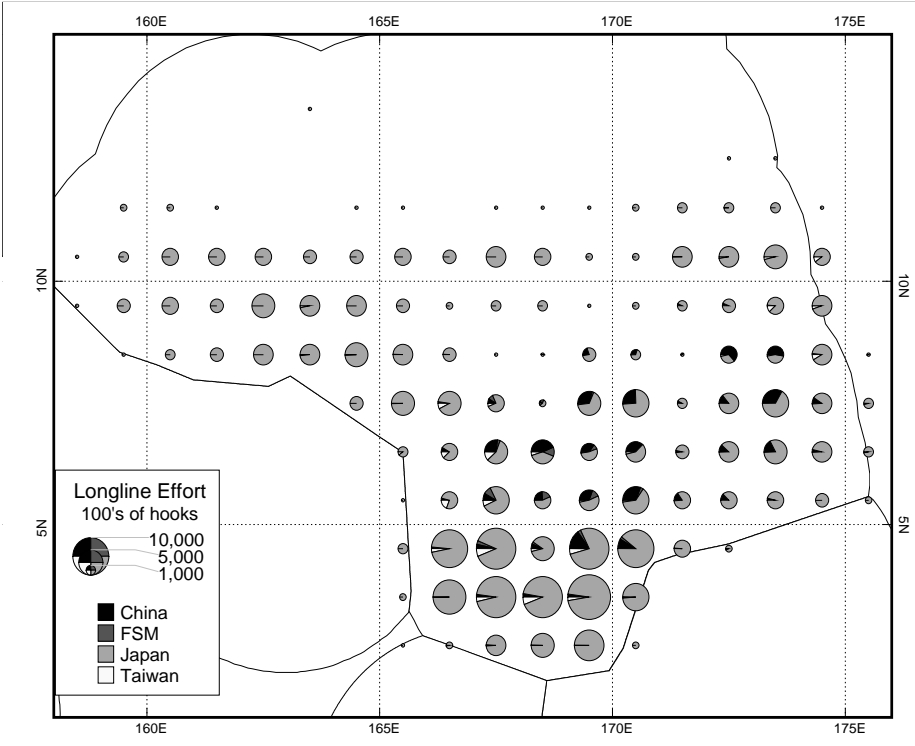


Figure 2: Distribution of Longline effort (all fleets) in the Marshall Islands EEZ for 2002.



Purse seine Fishery:

Table 3 show the purse seine catch in the RMI for 2001-2003. A significant drop in catch for the entire fleet resulted in 2003.

*Table 3: Annual purse-seine catch in Marshall Islands waters by fleet, 2001-2003.
(Source: Regional Tuna Database, SPC)*

			SKIPJACK		YELLOWFIN		BIGEYE		OTHER	TOTAL		
YEAR	FLAG	Days	MT	CPUE	MT	CPUE	MT	CPUE	MT	MT	CPUE	
2001	FM	68	1,193	17.5	174	2.6	0	0.0	0	1,367	20.1	
2001	JP	346	6,646	19.2	894	2.6	1	0.0	351	7,892	22.8	
2001	KR	492	12,803	26.0	605	1.2	0	0.0	0	13,408	27.3	
2001	MH	182	4,858	26.7	500	2.7	0	0.0	0	5,358	29.4	
2001	PG	91	2,722	29.9	596	6.5	0	0.0	0	3,318	36.5	
2001	TW	652	6,575	10.1	1,659	2.5	25	0.0	0	8,259	12.7	
2001	US	87	1,315	15.1	60	0.7	3	0.0	0	1,378	15.8	
			1,918	36,112	18.8	4,488	2.3	29	0.0	351	40,979	21.4
2002	CN	12	25	2.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	25	2.1	
2002	FM	17	237	13.9	73	4.3	0	0.0	0	310	18.2	
2002	JP	480	8,010	16.7	865	1.8	5	0.0	248	9,128	19.0	
2002	KR	452	10,630	23.5	305	0.7	5	0.0	0	10,940	24.2	
2002	MH	115	2,620	22.8	35	0.3	35	0.3	0	2,690	23.4	
2002	PG	75	1,960	26.1	225	3.0	0	0.0	0	2,185	29.1	
2002	SB	3	49	16.3	1	0.3	0	0.0	0	50	16.7	
2002	TW	434	5,896	13.6	345	0.8	21	0.0	0	6,262	14.4	
2002	US	6	27	4.5	5	0.8	0	0.0	0	32	5.3	
			1,594	29,454	18.5	1,853	1.2	66	0.0	248	31,621	19.8
2003	FM	2	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	
2003	JP	45	473	10.5	74	1.6	0	0.0	23	570	12.7	
2003	KR	22	50	2.3	75	3.4	0	0.0	0	125	5.7	
2003	MH	89	1,205	13.5	245	2.8	0	0.0	0	1,450	16.3	
2003	NZ	12	88	7.3	49	4.1	0	0.0	0	137	11.4	
2003	PG	24	108	4.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	108	4.5	
2003	TW	52	782	15.0	50	1.0	11	0.2	1	844	16.2	
2003	US	37	366	9.9	22	0.6	21	0.6	0	408	11.0	
			283	3,072	10.9	515	1.8	32	0.1	24	3,643	12.9

The purse seine fleet (all flags) catch for all species combined in the RMI zone for 2003 totaled just over 3,500 tons, about 2% of the total catch for all species caught in 2002 (31,621 tons).

Graph 2: Total catch (combined) for Purse Seine fleet (combined) in RMI EEZ.

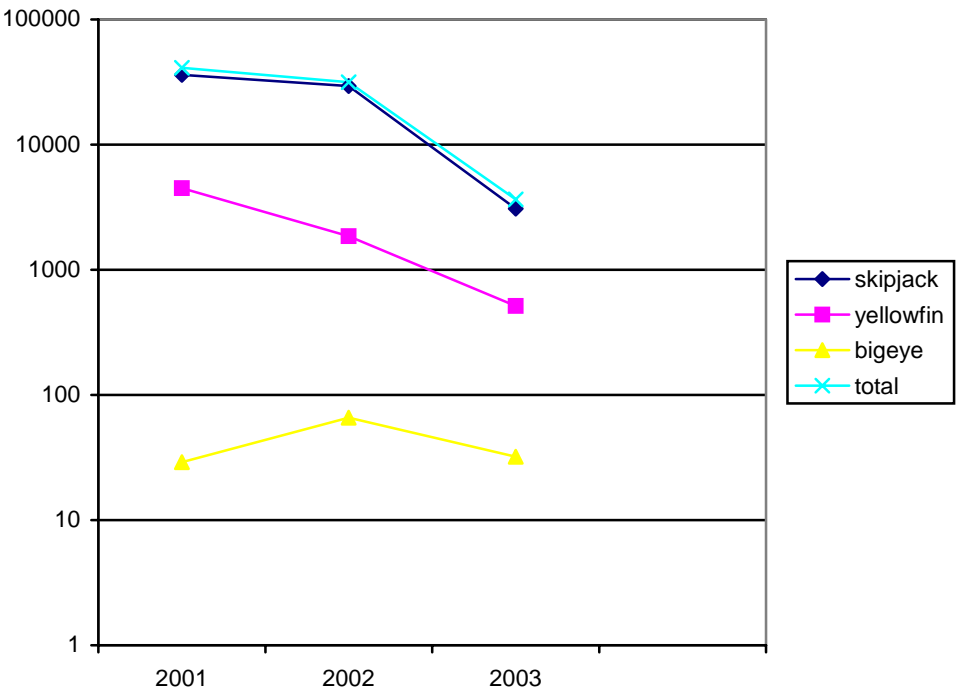


Figure 3: Distribution of Purse Seine effort (all fleets) in the Marshall Islands EEZ for 2003.

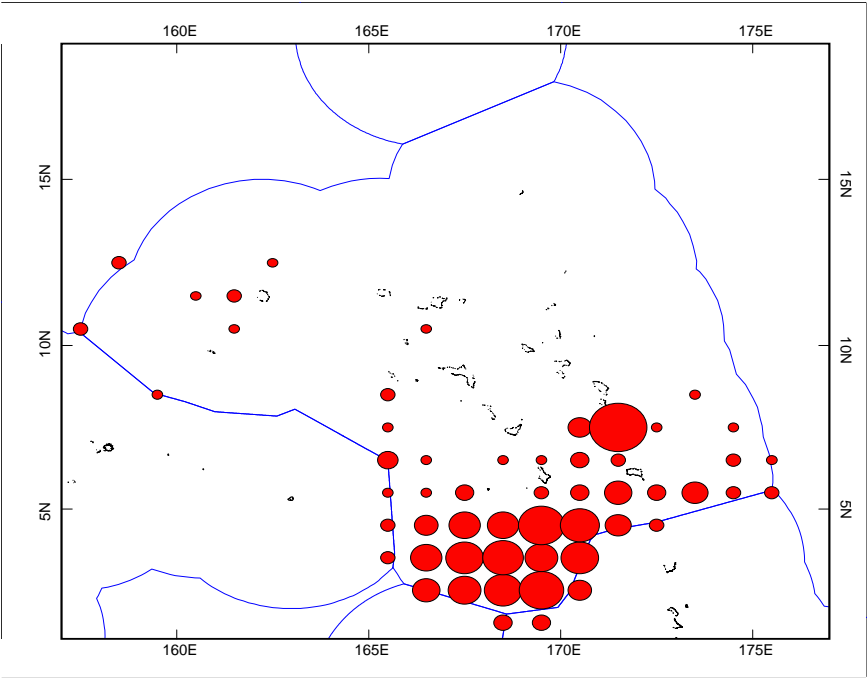
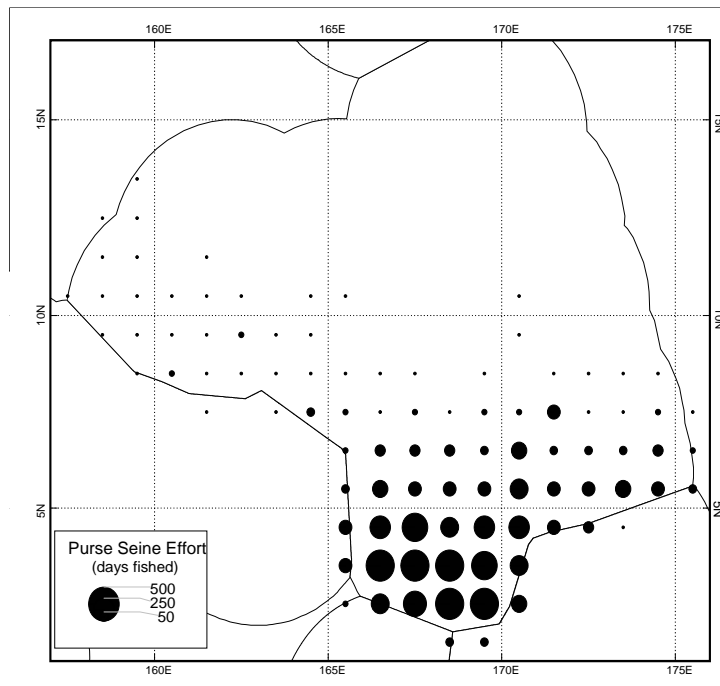
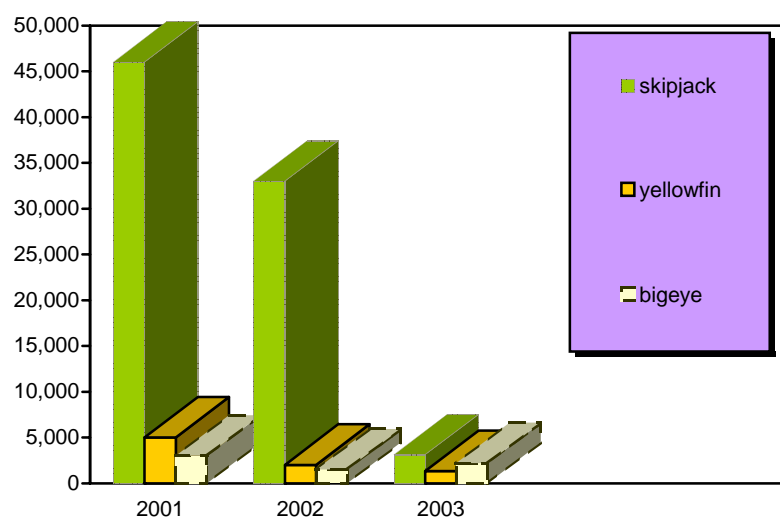


Figure 4: Distribution of Purse seine effort (all fleets) in the Marshall Islands EEZ for 2002.



Graph 3: Catch by target species - 3 main species by all gears (all fleet)



The catch for the three main species by all gears and fleet in 2003 dropped by more than 50%. Although the yellowfin and bigeye catch was relatively stable, the skipjack catch by the purse seine fleet dropped significantly.

Pole and Line:

The second significant shift in the tuna fishery in the RMI (2003) is that of the pole and line fleet. Japan operates the only fleet operating in the RMI with 2 vessels in 2003, as opposed to 35 vessels in 2002. Table 4 presents the tabulation of the pole and line operation in the RMI from 2001.

*Table 4: Annual pole-and-line catch in Marshall Islands waters by fleet, 2001-2003
(Source: Logsheet data provided to the Marshall Islands)*

YEAR	FLAG	Days	SKIPJACK		YELLOWFIN		OTHER	TOTAL	
			MT	CPUE	MT	CPUE		MT	CPUE
2001	JP	37	16,207	10.1	29	0.0	7	16,243	10.1
2002	JP	35	7,312	11.0	4	0.0	0	7,316	11.0
2003	JP	2	83	5.2	0	0.0	0	83	5.2

The catch for the fleet also dropped significantly from 16,000 tons in 2001 to just under 100 tons in 2003. Figure 5 shows the pole and line effort for 2003, while figure 6, for comparison purposes, shows the distribution of effort for 2002.

Figure 5: Distribution of effort for pole and line fleet in 2003.

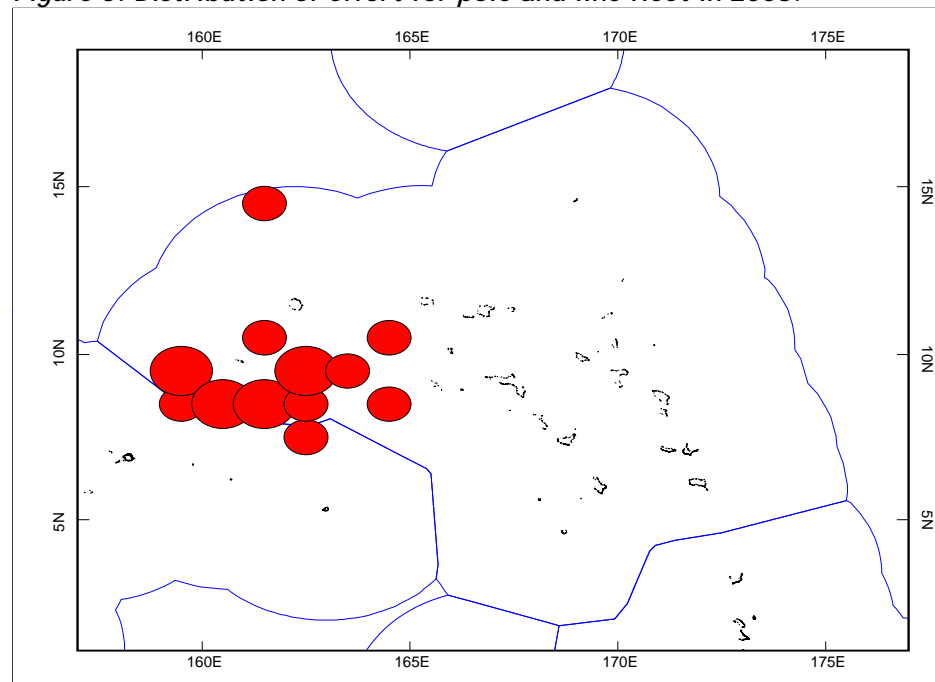
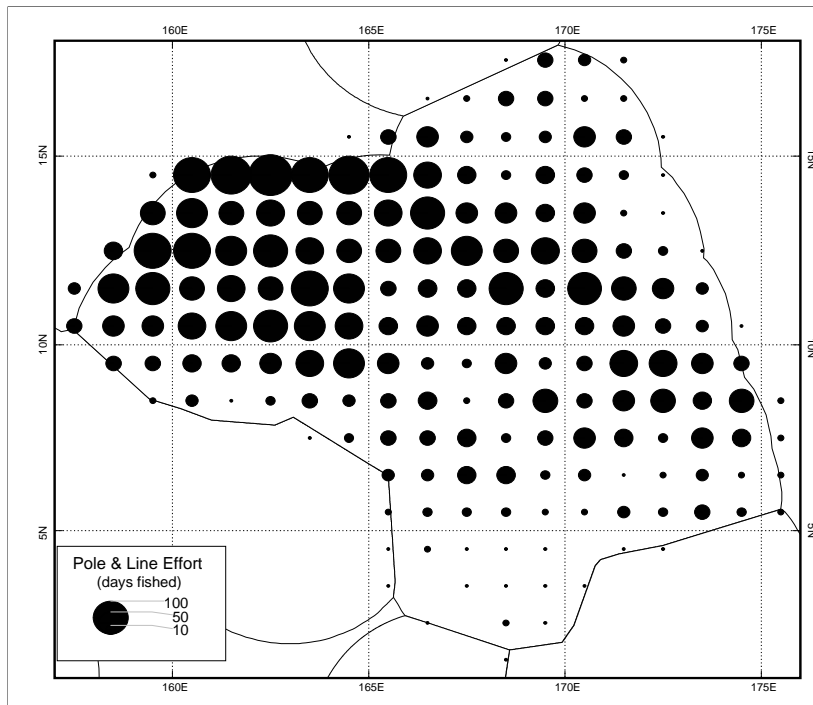


Figure 6: Distribution of effort for pole and line fleet in 2002.



Transshipment and unloadings:

Evident with the drop in catch, is also the drop in number of boats unloading and/or transshipping in Majuro port. Table 6 shows the number of purse seine (all fleet) unloading in Majuro, with the tonnage unloaded. It should be noted that not all the unloaded catch is caught in the RMI zone.

Table 6: Annual purse-seine unloadings in Majuro port, 2001-2003
(Source: Logsheet data - Regional Tuna database, SPC)

YEAR	FLAG	UNLOADINGS	METRIC TONNES			
			SKJ	YFT	BET	TOTAL
2001	CN	1	342	2	0	344
2001	FM	10	4,855	2,257	0	7,112
2001	KR	56	31,818	4,330	0	36,148
2001	MH	48	31,903	2,881	50	34,834
2001	NZ	4	2,729	491	0	3,220
2001	PG	24	16,733	2,602	5	19,340
2001	SB	1	645	110	0	755
2001	TW	169	95,027	23,503	201	118,731
2001	US	8	3,213	966	0	4,179
		321	187,265	37,142	256	224,663
2002	CN	10	4,570	520	0	5,090
2002	FM	7	3,868	617	0	4,484
2002	JP	4	1,361	126	0	1,487
2002	KI	1	613	50	7	670
2002	KR	40	19,435	1,230	50	20,715
2002	MH	53	35,032	942	128	36,102
2002	NZ	7	4,559	605	5	5,170
2002	PG	33	23,849	1,144	5	24,998
2002	PH	2	1,187	88	3	1,278
2002	TW	212	131,475	7,630	586	139,691
		369	225,949	12,952	784	239,685
2003	FM	1	154	32	0	186
2003	KR	1	930	30	0	960
2003	MH	56	34,472	2,563	0	37,035
2003	NZ	3	1,997	411	0	2,408
2003	PG	13	8,512	2,616	0	11,128
2003	TW	57	28,645	6,674	435	35,754
2003	US	4	2,527	876	22	3,425
		135	77,237	13,202	457	90,895

A total of 135 vessels unloaded in Majuro during 2003 with a total of 30,000 tons transshipped (all species). The Taiwan fleet dominated the fleet in transshipment with a total of 35,000 tons of mixed fish (2003).

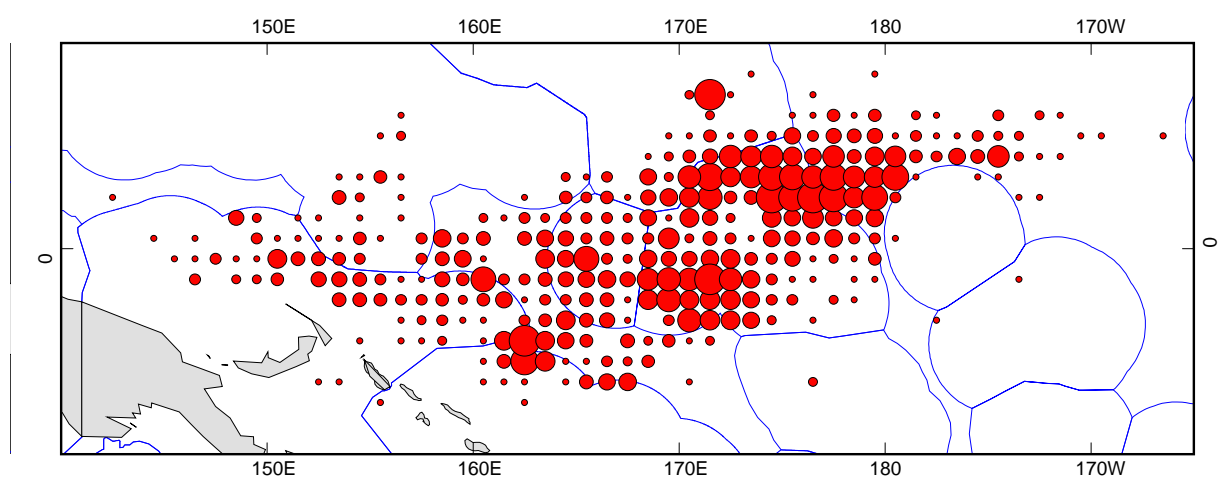
The RMI Fleet:

The RMI has 6 registered vessels, Purse Seine, operating under the Palau Arrangement. The catch statistics for the fleet is provided in table 7, with distribution of effort for 2003 in figure 7.

Table 7: Annual Catch statistics for the Marshall Islands purse-seine fleet, 1999-2003

Year	Vessels	Skipjack	Yellowfin	Bigeye	Others	Total
2000	5	6,625	900	35	0	7,560
2001	5	31,983	2,927	134	0	35,044
2002	5	37,057	1,101	84	0	38,242
2003	6	35,272	2,603	0	0	37,875

Figure 7: Distribution of effort by Marshall Islands purse-seine vessels during 2003



Developments:

Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority is under going a review to develop a National Tuna Management Plan. The objective is to develop management measures consistent with the regional and international measures, such as the WCPO convention.

The recently revised observer program, with assistance from the SPC, as undergone tremendous improvements in data collection efforts. The recruited coordinator from the Solomon Islands, Manaseh Avicks, is currently developing criteria for improving data collection, with collaboration with the SPC OFP. With this effort underway, it is anticipated to provide crucial, relevant information to compliment the national and regional tuna management measures.