

Pacific nations look to increase tuna fishing fees

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Pacific island nations boost conservation by raising entry fees for tuna fishing boats, a US ship is pictured in November 2010, in the Marshall Islands This photo taken in November, 2010 shows a net filled with tuna being hauled out of the freezer hold of the US-flagged fishing boat Raffaello for off-loading to a mother ship that will take the tuna to Asian canneries at the port in Majuro. A group of 17 Pacific island nations began putting pressure on the United States on March 19, 2011 to reshape a 23-year-old fisheries treaty. AFP PHOTO / GIFF JOHNSON

Pacific island nations announced plans Thursday to dramatically increase the fees they charge tuna fishing boats for the right to enter their waters, saying it will boost revenue and help conservation efforts.

Around half the world's skipjack tuna, the most commonly canned variety, is caught in waters belonging to an eight-nation group known as the Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA), which opened its annual meeting in Majuro on Thursday.

Much of the fishing is conducted by so-called "distant water" fleets from as far afield as Europe, the United States, China, South Korea, Japan and Taiwan, who pay US\$6,000 a day for the privilege.

Marshall Islands President Christopher Loeak said a plan by PNA nations to lift the day rate to US\$10,000 in 2015 would help them improve management of a vital natural resource and ensure it was sustainable.

The fee system had allowed Pacific nations to increase earnings from their tuna fisheries from US\$60 million in 2010 to more than US\$240 million last year, he said.

"The PNA has shown how valuable the tuna resource is," Loeak said Thursday.

"The need for enhanced, closer cooperation has never been more crucial if we want to continue reaping economic gains from our tuna resources."

The PNA allocates 50,000 fishing days a year to [tuna](#) boats, with demand high from both international and local operators.

The PNA comprises Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Palau, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Nauru, Tuvalu and Marshall

Islands.

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