



Press Release

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Fishermen, Public Invited to Participate in Meeting on Federal Management of Offshore Fisheries in US Pacific Islands and in Fishers Forum “Marlin on the Menu”

HONOLULU (16 July 2009) The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council—which was established by Congress to manage fisheries in the offshore waters of Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) and other US Pacific island areas—will convene July 22 to 25, 2009, at the King Kamehameha Kona Beach Hotel, Kailua-Kona, Hawaii. Prior to decision-making, the Council will consider public comment and review recommendations of its advisory groups, including the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), which meets July 20 to 22, 2009, at the King Kamehameha Kona Beach Hotel. Public comment on the Council’s agenda items will be taken throughout the Council meeting as well as through written testimony. Public comment on non-agenda items will occur from 3:30 to 4 p.m. July 23, 2009. Council decisions are transmitted to the Secretary of Commerce for approval and implemented by the National Marine Fisheries Service.

Fishermen and the public are also invited to participate in the Fishers Forum “Marlin on the Menu,” 6:30 to 9 p.m. July 23, 2009, at the King Kamehameha Kona Beach Hotel. The Forum will discuss the past, present and future of the fisheries for marlin in the US Pacific Islands and management measures to ensure that these fisheries remain sustainable and viable.

Complete agendas for these public meetings and additional information on the major items under consideration by the SSC and the Council may be found at the Council’s website at www.wpcouncil.org or by contacting the Council by phone (808) 522-8220, fax (808) 522-8226 (fax), or email info.wpcouncil@noaa.gov.

Major items to be considered by the SSC and the Council:

Fishing Regulations in the Pacific Marine National Monuments: The Council is expected to take preliminary action on definitions and management measures for the new Marianas Trench, Rose Atoll and Pacific Remote Islands Area Marine National Monuments designated by President George W. Bush. Potential definitions to be considered include sustenance fishing, recreational fishing, traditional indigenous fishing, non-commercial fishing, and culturally significant subsistence, cultural and religious uses of fish resources.

Hancock Seamounts Groundfish Moratorium: Pelagic armorhead at the Hancock Seamounts has been considered overfished and subject to a moratorium on domestic fishing since the inception of the Bottomfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) in 1986. The current moratorium expires in August 2010. The Council will consider ending the moratorium in August 2010, extending the moratorium to August 2016 or designating the Hancock Seamounts as a Large Marine Ecosystem Management Area for scientific research on seamount fisheries to facilitate

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the establishment of management measures to effectively rebuild the armorhead stock. Only 3 to 5 percent of the pelagic armorhead stock and habitat lies within US jurisdiction, so rebuilding of the stock must be accomplished through coordinated international management.

Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for Main Hawaiian Islands (MHI) Bottomfish 2009-2010

Season: The Council will consider a range of alternatives for the 2009-2010 TAC that are based on the 2009 assessment provided by NMFS. The alternatives would allow between 241,000 and 262,000 lbs of seven deepwater bottomfish species to be harvested commercially in the MHI.

Catch Shares for the MHI Bottomfish Fishery: Catch shares is a general term for fishery management programs that allocate allowable catches or portions of allowable catches to individuals or groups. Because initial allocation of catch shares is likely to be based on the catch history of fishery participants, the Council will consider options for compiling catch histories for MHI commercial vessels targeting Deep 7 bottomfish species, including linking the catches to vessels, vessel owners, vessel captains and/or crew members.

Annual Catch Limits: Based on advice from the SSC, the Council will consider the development of annual catch limits for the following managed species: Hawaii Precious Coral Beds, Hawaii Akule, Hawaii Opelu, Hawaii Deepwater Shrimp, Hawaii Bottomfish Complex, American Samoa Bottomfish Complex, CNMI Deepwater Shrimp, CNMI Bottomfish Complex and Guam Bottomfish Complex. The Council is expected to recommend preliminarily preferred annual catch limits and to direct Council staff to hold public meetings on these catch limits prior to final Council action.

Cross Seamount/NOAA Weather Buoy Fishery Limited Entry Program and Control Date:

The Council will continue ongoing discussions on implementing a limited entry program for one or more gear types or areas fished by Hawaii's offshore non-longline pelagic fisheries. The Council will consider the area of application, affected gear types, participation criteria and transferability of the permits. The Council is expected to take action to select preliminarily preferred alternatives for each of the above issues including the establishment of a new control date if appropriate, and/or to recommend additional alternatives for analysis, and direct Council staff to hold public meetings on these alternatives prior to final Council action.

Tuna Quota Monitoring: The Hawaii longline fishery is subject to an annual bigeye catch limit in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean and, based on historical landings, the quota could be reached prior to the end of the fishing year. The current catch reporting and data logging system cannot adequately monitor fishery catches to avoid inadvertent quota underages and overages. The Council will consider the options to improve the monitoring of tuna catches in Hawaii's longline fishery.

Tuna Quota Management: The Council will consider a range of actions to further manage the longline fishery in the Western Pacific Region. Options include a region-wide limited entry longline program, region-wide port access program, catch shares or a limited access privilege program, sector allocations, trip limits for non-target sector, temporary bigeye or yellowfin prohibition trigger, seasonal tuna prohibition, change in the fishing year, monthly landing limits, domestic bigeye catch limits for the US territories and CNMI, waiver of observer requirements when no observers are available, three-year rolling catch limits and effort limits. The Council is

expected to recommend one or more of these approaches and/or additional approaches for analyses. The Council may recommend pursuing one approach for the long-term, while recommending one or more different approaches for the immediate future.

Catch Shares for the Hawaii-based Longline Fleet: Because the initial allocation of catch shares is likely to be based on the catch history of fishery participants, the Council will consider options for compiling catch histories for Hawaii-based longline vessels. These options could link catch histories to federal permits (which is transferred with a vessel or permit to its new owner), federal permit holders, vessels, vessel owners, vessel captains and/or crew members. The Council is expected to take action to recommend a preliminarily preferred alternative or alternatives for compiling catch histories for Hawaii-based longline fishery, and/or to recommend additional measures for analysis, and to direct Council staff to provide an overview of those results at its next meeting.

Scientific and Statistical Committee Members

Dr. Stewart Allen (NOAA Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center), Dr. Judith Amesbury (Micronesian Archeological Research Services), Dr. Brian Bowen (Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology), Dr. Paul Callaghan (University of Guam retired), Dr. Frank A. Camacho (Guam Community College), Dr. Milani Chaloupka (University of Queensland), Dr. Charles Daxboeck (BioDax Consulting Tahiti), Dr. Richard Deriso (Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission), Dr. John Hampton (Secretariat of the Pacific Community), Dr. Pierre Kleiber (NMFS Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center), Dr. Molly Lutcavage (University of New Hampshire), Dr. James Parrish (Hawaii Cooperative Fishery Research Unit retired), Dr. Dan Polhemus (Hawaii Department of Land & Natural Resources), Dr. Marlowe Sabater (American Samoa Marine & Wildlife Resources Department), Dr. Craig Severance (University of Hawaii at Hilo retired), Dr. John Sibert (Pelagic Fisheries Research Program), Dr. Robert Skillman (NMFS Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center retired) and Mr. Michael Trianni (Northern Mariana Islands Division of Fish & Wildlife).

Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council Members

Designated state officials: Ignacio Dela Cruz, CNMI Department of Land & Natural Resources; Joe Torres, Guam Department of Agriculture; Laura Thielen, Hawaii Department of Land & Natural Resources; and Ray Tulafono, American Samoa Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources. Designated federal officials: Bill Robinson, NMFS Pacific Islands Regional Office; Jerry Leinecke, U.S. Fish and Wildlife; RAdm Manson K. Brown, District Commander, U.S. Coast Guard 14th District; and Bill Gibbons-Fly, U.S. Department of State. Appointees by the Secretary of Commerce from nominees selected by Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa and CNMI governors: William Sword, recreational fisherman/civil engineer/manager (American Samoa); Stephen Haleck, business owner (hotel and gas station) (American Samoa) (Vice Chair); Manuel Duenas, Guam Fishermen's Cooperative Association (Guam) (Vice Chair); Frederick Duerr, resort and hotel consultant (Hawaii) (Vice Chair); Peter Young, environmental consultant (Hawaii); David Itano, researcher (Hawaii); Sean Martin, Pacific Ocean Producers (Hawaii) (Chair); and Benigno Sablan, cultural practitioner (CNMI) (Vice Chair).