



## **Council Recommends Evaluation of Hawaii's Bottomfish Fishery Management Regimes**

HONOLULU (14 October 2010) The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council yesterday concluded the second day of its three-day meeting in Honolulu, with recommendations regarding federal management of insular fisheries of the US Pacific Islands, including the main Hawaiian Islands (MHI) bottomfish fishery. The meeting ends today, after the Council addresses pelagic fisheries issues, including management of the Hawaii and American Samoa longline fisheries, as well as protected species issues and a process for setting annual catch limits. Council recommendations are transmitted to the Secretary of Commerce for final approval.

Regarding the MHI bottomfish fishery, the Council is concerned about inconsistencies between the federal and State management measures.

- In federal waters (3 to 200 miles offshore), non-commercial bottomfish fishermen are required to comply with mandatory permit and reporting requirements. The State has not implemented consistent permit and reporting requirements as once agreed.
- The State has a series of Bottomfish Restricted Fishing Areas (BRFAs), which represents 20 percent of the available MHI bottomfish grounds. There are no federal BRFAs.
  - Most of the State BRFAs are located in part in federal waters. The State has jurisdiction of waters 0 to 3 miles offshore and does not have authority to enforce the portions of the BRFAs in federal waters. The US Coast Guard and NOAA Office of Law Enforcement do not enforce the BRFAs in federal waters as there are no federal regulations for them.
  - The BRFAs are not factored into the MHI bottomfish stock assessment, which is used to determine the total allowable catch (TAC) for MHI bottomfish to prevent overfishing of the stock. The TAC is a part of both the federal and State management regimes.

The Council recommended that the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) reevaluate the State of Hawaii's bottomfish management regime for consistency with federal regulations and that the State evaluate the performance of the BRFAs. Specifically, the State should a) assess if there are spillover effects of the closures on bottomfish catch rates in waters adjacent to the BRFAs; b) evaluate whether the BRFAs actually protect bottomfish spawning areas or spawning aggregations; c) determine to what extent the BRFAs contributed to the reduction of fishing mortality; and d) evaluate if the reduction of fishing within the BRFAs can be used to generate natural mortality rates for bottomfish to be used in stock assessments.

The Council also recommended that PIFSC provide an evaluation of potential island by island MHI bottomfish catch allocations for Council consideration.

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The Council also made the following recommendations concerning insular fisheries in the US Pacific Islands:

- To work with the fishing and seafood industry and NMFS to provide comments to State of Hawaii regarding options to further define the State's Shark Fin law;
- To work on a community development plan with the NMFS Pacific Islands Regional Office and an applicant requesting a Hawaii longline area closure exemption under the Community Development Program. The program promotes the participation of island communities in fisheries that they have traditionally depended upon, but in which they may not have the capabilities to support continued and substantial participation. It is open to communities residents descended from aboriginal people indigenous to the region who use traditional fishing practices and meet other federal criteria;
- To support an aquaculture workshop for the Mariana Archipelago in January 2011, in partnership with the Northern Marianas College Cooperative Research Education and Extension Service;
- To support funding to conduct a study to determine the impacts of the impending military buildup in the Marianas Archipelago with respect to fisheries and fishermen; and
- To work with American Samoa Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources on a community-based marine debris removal grant to clean up and remove debris that resulted from the 2009 tsunami and that persists in the nearshore areas of American Samoa.

Additional information on the Council meeting and the major agenda items may be found at the Council's website at [www.wpcouncil.org](http://www.wpcouncil.org). Information may also be requested by contacting the Council by phone (808) 522-8220, fax (808) 522-8226 (fax) or email [info.wpcouncil@noaa.gov](mailto:info.wpcouncil@noaa.gov).

**Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council:** Appointees by the Secretary of Commerce from nominees selected by Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa and CNMI governors: Stephen Haleck, business owner (American Samoa) (Chair); William Sword, recreational fisherman (American Samoa) (Vice Chair); Manuel Duenas, Guam Fishermen's Cooperative Association (Guam) (Vice Chair); David Itano, researcher (Hawaii) (Vice Chair); Benigno Sablan, cultural practitioner (CNMI) (Vice Chair); Frederick Duerr, resort and hotel consultant (Hawaii); Julie Leialoha, environmentalist (Hawaii); and Sean Martin, Pacific Ocean Producers (Hawaii). Designated state officials: Ignacio Dela Cruz, CNMI Department of Land & Natural Resources; Joe Torres, Guam Department of Agriculture; Laura Thielen, Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources; and Ray Tulafono, American Samoa Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources. Designated federal officials: Michael Tosatto, NMFS Pacific Islands Regional Office; Don Palawski, U.S. Fish and Wildlife; RAdm Stephen Mehling, District Commander, U.S. Coast Guard 14th District; and Bill Gibbons-Fly, U.S. Department of State.