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MANAGEMENT  
COUNCIL

## Recommendations to the Council from the 73<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Scientific and Statistical Committee

### Ecosystem & Habitat (Coral Reef Ecosystem FMP)

Council Office Conference Room  
Honolulu, Hawaii  
22-24 February 2000

The SSC heard presentations on the status of existing FMP fisheries in the NWHI (bottomfish, crustaceans and precious corals), the Council's preferred alternative for management measures for the Coral Reef Ecosystem FMP/DEIS, federal initiatives and agency research plans for coral reefs, and concerns regarding existing NWHI fisheries from various agencies and organizations. Recommendations from the Council's Hawaii advisory bodies were also provided.

#### Draft Coral Reef Ecosystem FMP:

The SSC reviewed the Council's preferred alternative for the Plan, including MPAs, allowable gear, permit and reporting, and framework actions. These alternatives were largely the ones previously recommended by the SSC. The SSC continued to concur with these management alternatives with two exceptions: allowable gear and MPAs (see below). **The SSC recommends that the prohibition on scuba spearfishing at night be expanded to disallow this method at anytime in the EEZ and to allow typical hoop net fishing for Kona crab.**

#### Marine Protected Areas (MPAs):

The SSC continues to endorse the Council's preferred alternative for the NWHI MPA to include all substrate from the shoreline to a depth of 50 fm and be zoned for no-take from 0-10 fm, and for limited-take by "special permit" only from 10-50 fm, with fishing for species managed under existing FMPs to follow their own respective regulations.

**The SSC is aware of no scientific based justification for additional no-take areas at this time. However, if due to other reasons, the Council chooses to identify additional no-take MPAs in the NWHI, the SSC offers the following recommendations:**

- 1) All NWHI coral reef ecosystems to 10 fm for all fisheries (13.0%).**
- 2) The coral reef ecosystem around Laysan to 50 fm for all fisheries (3.2%).** (Note: lobster

fishing is already prohibited within 20 nmi around Laysan.)

- 3) The coral reef ecosystem around Midway to 50 fm for all fisheries, except that catch and release is allowed for sport and charter fishing activities (7.0%).**
- 4) The coral reef ecosystem around French Frigate Shoals to 50 fm to all fisheries (1.6%).**

The percentages of total NWHI coral reef habitat indicated above are inclusive to the shoreline. The SSC recommends that the Council request the state to adopt concurrent no-take zones in nearshore areas under its jurisdiction. In the SSC's opinion, these designated no-take MPAs are representative of the range of species diversity and reef types along the length of the entire archipelago. Midway and Laysan represent the reef type and fauna typical of the of northern extent of the archipelago. French Frigate Shoals is characteristic of the mid-region of the archipelago. These three sites provide useful counterparts to the MPAs in the main Hawaiian Islands to the south. These four areas comprise 24.8% (8.7% in state waters) of the total coral reef ecosystem habitat in the NWHI.

**The SSC understands that one of the seven Hoomalu Zone permit holders has a history of catch at French Frigate and is incapable of moving further up the chain, therefore the SSC requests that the Council grandfather this 45 ft. vessel.**

**Additionally, the SSC discourages anchoring outside of designated areas in no-take MPAs and encourages the installation of mooring buoys at appropriate locations.**

#### NWHI Research Needs:

**Regarding research recommendations to help resolve NWHI fishery concerns, the SSC recommends the following:**

- 1) The Monk Seal Recovery Team should specify its recovery targets and periodically produce population projections so that progress towards these targets can be assessed.**
- 2) A monitoring program should be implemented both inside and outside the MPAs to allow periodic assessment of the effectiveness.**

#### Crustaceans and Bottomfish Fisheries Lawsuit:

**Regarding the pending lawsuit, the SSC recommends a vigorous defense of the scientifically based fisheries management process and the continuation of these fisheries.**

#### CRTF Action Plan:

**Management of coral reefs should remain at the local/regional level following the Council system under M-S Act. Further, the SSC comment on national plans of action in general can be found in the SSC's pelagics report (10.H).**

NWHI Contaminants:

The SSC heard an oral presentation by the FWS that suggested some contamination by PCBs and lead around Tern Island, French Frigate Shoals. The SSC views the possibility of such contamination with great concern. However, the samples were small, particularly a single specimen of an unstated species of lobster, and the results were poorly articulated with respect to sample size and distribution.

**The SSC recommends that Council staff obtain a complete written report of the current environmental toxicology study from the FWS when it becomes available. The SSC further recommends that a rigorous scientific survey be conducted during calendar year 2000 of PCB and lead contamination in the biota of French Frigate Shoals.**

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