

Recommendations to the Council from the 74th Meeting of the Scientific and Statistical Committee

Ecosystem & Habitat (Draft Coral Reef Ecosystem FMP)

Council Office Conference Room
Honolulu, Hawaii
16-18 May 2000

The SSC heard comments on the draft Coral Reef Ecosystem FMP from nine of the Council's advisory bodies (Plan Teams and/or Advisory Panels: Coral Reef Ecosystem, Ecosystem and Habitat, Bottomfish, Crustaceans, Precious Corals and Fishery Rights of Indigenous Peoples). The comments focused primarily on the Council's preferred alternative for management measures and on priority research needs.

The SSC discussed and made the following revisions to the Council's preferred alternative for the FMP, in consideration of comments from the advisory bodies.

I. MANAGEMENT UNIT SPECIES (MUS)/TAXA

The management unit shall include virtually all biota in the coral reef ecosystem, except species already covered under existing fishery management plans (FMPs). The management unit shall be divided into two groups of species or taxa:

- "Currently Harvested Coral Reef Taxa," i.e., organisms that are currently harvested but not covered by existing FMPs, for which adequate information is available to begin management [current version of Table 2 made from April summary].
- "Potentially Harvested Coral Reef Taxa," i.e., organisms that are not known to be currently harvested, or for which adequate information is not available [current version of Table 3 made from April summary].

The currently harvested list of the draft CRE plan should be reviewed and revised as necessary, adding management unit species to the other FMPs where appropriate.

For information, all species (MUS) managed under other FMPs should be listed in the CRE plan.

II. FISHING PERMIT AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

- A General Permit shall be required for Currently Harvested Coral Reef Taxa except where state/territorial permitting and reporting systems are in effect, or as noted below.
- A Special Permit shall be required for Potentially Harvested Coral Reef Taxa, and for all taxa in marine protected areas.
- No permits shall be issued for commercial take of wild live rock. A special permit will be required to take small amounts of live hard corals as seed stock for aquaculture purposes, or for traditional/ceremonial purposes by indigenous peoples.
- Permits may be issued for scientific and management activity (including anchoring, limited collecting, and bioprospecting) in all areas and depths, including (take and no-take) MPAs and with regard to all taxa. Scientific research should be closely related to ecology and resources of the coral reef ecosystem of the region. These permits should not cover bulk harvesting or extractive activities beyond individual prospecting for bio-active materials.
- Existing FMP fisheries shall follow the permit and reporting requirements in their respective plans.
- Existing FMP fisheries shall report incidentally caught reef species (no additional permit needed).
- Special permits may be required for particularly vulnerable species (see CREPT's prohibited list); additional species may be added/removed from the list through framework.

III. FISHING GEARS AND METHODS

- Only the following selective, non-destructive fishing gears shall be allowed: hand harvest, spear, slurp gun, hand net/dip net, hoop net (for kona crab), throw net, barrier net (for aquarium fish), surround/purse net (for akule and aku bait fishing only), hook-and-line (includes handline [powered or not], rod-and-reel, and trolling), and remote-operating vehicles/submersibles.
- Nets shall be tended at all times (except hoop nets for kona crabs).
- Traps shall be allowed in appropriate areas and with appropriate conditions (e.g., minimal bycatch mortality, negligible habitat impact, and provisions to minimize the possibility of ghost fishing); traps must be permanently marked to identify owner.
- Use of poisons, explosives and intoxicating substances is prohibited.
- Spearfishing with assisted breathing apparatus at night is prohibited in the PRIAs and NWHI, and fishing with assisted breathing apparatus will be frameworked in other areas consistent with local regulations.
- Existing FMP fisheries shall follow allowable gear/methods listed in their respective plans.

IV. MARINE PROTECTED AREAS (MPAs)

Significant coral reef areas of special value shall be designated as marine protected areas (MPAs) for their protection, conservation and management (existing FMP fisheries follow conservation and management measures in their respective plans, except in no-take MPAs).

MPAs shall be established in the following areas:

1) Wake Atoll, Johnston Atoll, Midway, Jarvis Island, Howland Island, Baker Island, Kingman Reef and Palmyra Atoll

- Special Permit Zones: 0 to 50 fathoms.

2) Guam's Southern Banks

- No anchoring by fishing vessels larger than 50 feet.

3) Northwestern Hawaiian Islands

- No-Take Zones (including existing FMP fisheries): 0 to 10 fathoms around all islands and 0 to 50 fathoms around Laysan and French Frigate Shoals. Within No-Take Zones, anchoring shall not be allowed in areas of particular concern (to be identified).
- Special Permit Zones: 10 to 50 fathoms around all islands (except as noted above for Laysan and French Frigate Shoals).
- Recommend that the State of Hawaii and the US Fish and Wildlife Service adopt consistent regulations.

V. FRAMEWORK ACTIONS

A framework regulatory process shall be established to allow management adjustments to be made rapidly. The following options may be considered for addition to the FMP in the future:

A. Mooring and Anchoring

To protect essential fish habitat from damage, anchoring of vessels in MPAs should be prohibited except in serious emergencies or in prescribed areas that the Council may designate, depending on category of vessel, type of permit, and fishing area. Mooring buoys may be

installed in zones designated by the Council.

B. Insurance

Permitted fishing vessels may be required to have insurance to cover the cost of vessel removal and pollution liability (and possibly mitigation) in the event of a grounding, depending on category of vessel, type of permit, and fishing area.

C. Vessel Monitoring System

Fishing vessels operating in MPAs may be required to carry remote electronic vessel monitoring systems (VMS), if funded by NMFS, as part of an effective monitoring and enforcement system for state, territorial and federal agencies, depending on category of vessel, type of permit and fishing area.

D. Others

Movement of management unit species between the lists (Currently Harvested and Potentially Harvested) should be included under the framework provisions of the FMP.

VI. PROPOSED NON-REGULATORY ACTIONS

- Establish formal process for coordination among plan teams to identify and address impacts to coral reef ecosystems by existing FMP fisheries.
- Facilitate consistent state and territorial level management of coral reef resources.
- Create social, economic and political incentives for sustainable use (including bioprospecting) and disincentives for unsustainable use of coral reef resources.
- Conduct education, public outreach and “coral reef management diplomacy”.

Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPC)

The SSC reviewed proposed criteria for identifying coral reef habitat areas of particular concern. The SSC offered constructive comments based on ecology, research, exploitation and recreation.

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