



WESTERN
PACIFIC
REGIONAL
FISHERY
MANAGEMENT
COUNCIL

Press Release

For Immediate Release

Contact: Sylvia Spalding (808) 522-6044

Plan Team, Advisory Panel to Meet for Final Review of Coral Reef Ecosystem Plan

HONOLULU (2 March 2001)—After nearly five years of research and development, the first US ecosystem-based fishery management plan (FMP) is only steps away from becoming reality. Members of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council's Coral Reef Ecosystem Plan Team and Ecosystem and Habitat Advisory Panel will meet noon to 5 p.m. March 8 at the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council office in Honolulu to make final comments and recommendations on the Coral Reef Ecosystem Fishery Management Plan (FMP) and draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) for the Western Pacific Region.

The FMP covers federal waters of the exclusive economic zone, or EEZ (generally, waters 3 to 200 miles from shore), surrounding the US Pacific islands. Coral reefs in these waters are mostly in remote areas—such as the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI), Guam southern banks, the Northern Islands of the Mariana archipelago and the US Pacific island possessions, such as Midway, Palmyra and Johnston Atolls. While these coral reef ecosystems are minimally exploited to date, there has been interest expressed for fisheries to expand in these areas. The proposed management measures would designate marine protected areas, including no-take marine reserves and areas zoned for specific fishing activities allowed only with a special permit; establish fishing permit and reporting requirements for fishing for coral reef resources in the EEZ; specify the use of selective, non-destructive gears and harvesting methods; and establish a framework measure to allow for future regulations. Additionally, a formal procedure would be established to assess and control ecosystem effects of the bottomfish, crustacean and precious coral fisheries in federal waters operating under already established FMPs.

Prior to making their final comments and recommendations, the plan team and advisory group will review public comments solicited in January and February 2001 and will consider the relationship between the FMP and President Clinton's executive orders issued Dec. 4, 2000, and Jan. 18, 2001, creating the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI) Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve. The comments and recommendations from the plan team and advisory panel will be reviewed on March 13 by the Council, which will take final action on the FMP. The FMP/EIS when finalized will be forwarded to the Secretary of Commerce for approval and is expected to be implemented by year's end.

For more information, please contact the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, 1164 Bishop Street, Suite 1400, Honolulu, HI 96813; ph. (808) 522-8220; fax (808) 522-8226; www.wpcouncil.org.