

ANNUAL CATCH LIMITS FOR THE MARIANA ARCHIPELAGO

What is an Annual Catch Limit?

An annual catch limit (ACL) is the yearly harvest limit of a population or population complex that is established to prevent overfishing. If the ACL is met or exceeded, accountability measures are triggered.

What is an Accountability Measure?

Accountability measures are management controls, such as a seasonal closure or quota closure, to prevent ACLs from being exceeded. These measures can also correct or mitigate occurrences of exceeding an ACL.

Why Do We Need ACLs?

To improve conservation of managed fishery resources, the reauthorized Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) of 2006 required Regional Fishery Management Councils to develop ACLs for each of their managed fisheries and to establish a mechanism for specifying a harvest level that prevents overfishing.

Do All Species Have ACLs?

The MSA provides limited exceptions to ACL requirements. ACLs and accountability measures are not required for species that have an annual life cycle with only one reproductive cycle (e.g., squid), species managed under international agreements (e.g., tuna and billfish in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean), and ecosystem component species, i.e., non-target species that are not overfished or likely to become subject to overfishing and are not generally kept for sale or personal use.

What Are the ACLs for the Mariana Archipelago in 2012?

In 2011, the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council specified the following ACLs for 2012 for fisheries operating in federal waters surrounding the Mariana Archipelago, i.e., the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) and Guam.

FEDERALLY MANAGED SPECIES	CNMI ACL (lbs)	GUAM ACL (lbs)
<i>Selar crumenophthalmus</i> (atulai)	7,459	56,514
Acanthuridae – surgeonfish	6,884	70,702
Lutjanidae – snapper	3,905	17,726
Mullidae – goatfish	3,670	25,367
Mollusk	4,446	21,941
Carangidae – jacks	21,512	45,377
Lethrinidae – emperor	27,466	38,720
Scaridae – parrotfish	3,784	28,649
Serranidae – grouper	5,519	17,958
Holocentridae – squirrelfish	-	8,300
Mugilidae – mullet	3,308	15,032
Siganidae – rabbitfish	2,537	26,120
Kyphosidae – chubs/rudderfish	-	13,247
Labridae – wrasse	-	5,195
Algae	-	5,329
Other crustacean	-	5,523
Other coral reef managed species	9,820	83,214
Reef sharks	5,600	6,942
Bumphead parrotfish	797	797
Humphead wrasse	2,009	1,960
Deepwater shrimp	275,570	48,488
Spiny lobster	5,500	2,700
Slipper lobster	60	20
Kona crabs	6,300	1,900
Bottomfish (all managed species)	182,500	48,200
Black corals	2,100 kg	700 kg
Other precious corals*	1,000 kg	1,000 kg

* There is a moratorium for gold coral harvests through June 30, 2013.

How Were the ACLs Calculated?

The analyses for the ACLs were done on the entire range of the stocks. The available catch information is incomplete and thus resulted in the low ACL limits.

What Will Happen if an ACL Is Exceeded?

If the post-season accounting of the 2012 catches shows that more fish were caught during the year for a species/species group than the 2012 ACL allowed, then the 2013 ACL for that species/species group will be adjusted accordingly.

How Can You Help?

Fishermen and vendor participation in the catch reporting and creel surveys implemented by the local fishery management agency is crucial. Accurate estimates of the island-wide catches will reduce management uncertainty and increase catch limits.

For more information, go to www.wpcouncil.org or contact the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council at info.wpcouncil@noaa.gov.

About the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council

In 1976, the US Congress through the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) established eight Regional Fishery Management Councils to manage the nation's fisheries in the US EEZ (generally 3-200 miles offshore). The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council's jurisdiction includes the EEZ waters around the State of Hawaii; US Territories of American Samoa and Guam; the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI); and the US Pacific remote island areas. This area of nearly 1.5 million square miles constitutes about half of the entire US EEZ. The Council prepares, monitors and amends management plans to support sustainable fisheries, mitigate interactions with protected species, and conserve marine habitat and ecosystems. The Council also fosters opportunities for indigenous island communities to participate in fishing and fishery resource management using their culture and traditional practices.