



Press Release

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Annual Catch Limits among Key Issues to be Addressed by Fisheries Scientists

HONOLULU (21 June 2010) The group of scientists who advise the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council will meet June 22-24, 2010, at the New Otani Hotel, Honolulu, to make decisions that could have significant impact on the amount of fish that fishermen can catch in the US Pacific Islands. The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) will consider methods to set annual catch limits (ACLs) for species caught in the exclusive economic zone waters of the Western Pacific Region, which span 3 to 200 miles offshore of Hawaii, American Samoa and Guam and 0 to 200 miles offshore of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) and eight US Pacific Remote Island Areas.

The need to set ACLs for all species in federal fisheries (both targeted and non-targeted stocks) by 2011 was established by Congress in the 2006 reauthorized Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Species that are exempt are those managed internationally and those that are considered ecosystem species, i.e., species that are not caught or targeted. The SSC is expected to provide recommendations regarding the criteria for determining the status of the stocks as well as the maximum sustainable yield for each species. The biggest challenge for the scientists is to meet these objectives for the thousands of fish species that are part of the coral reef ecosystems of the US Pacific Islands, especially as the scientific data on the vast majority of these species is limited or lacking. Another hurdle is addressing species that inhabit waters that fall under the jurisdiction of both the federal government and the state/territorial government.

Currently, there are two fisheries for which ACLs have been set. The main Hawaiian Islands bottomfish fishery, which is managed jointly by the federal government and the State of Hawaii, and the longline caught bigeye tuna fishery, which is managed by the federal government consistent with the measures of international regional fishery management organizations, such as the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC).

Other major agenda items to be considered by the SSC and the Council include Hawaii longline catch limit for bigeye tuna and trip catch limit for swordfish, Hawaii bottomfish essential fish habitat and total allowable catch, American Samoa longline limited entry program, marine national monuments, aquaculture management and WCPFC transshipment measures. For more information on the agendas, visit www.wpcouncil.org or email info.wpcouncil@noaa.gov; ph. (808) 522-8220, or fax (808) 522-8226.

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SSC members: Dr. Stewart Allen (NOAA Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center (PIFSC)), Dr. Judith Amesbury (Micronesian Archeological Research Services), Dr. Brian Bowen (Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology), Dr. Paul Callaghan (University of Guam retired), Dr. Frank A. Camacho (Guam Community College), Dr. Milani Chaloupka (University of Queensland), Dr. Charles Daxboeck (BioDax Consulting Tahiti), Dr. Richard Deriso (Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission), Dr. John Hampton (Secretariat of the Pacific Community), Dr. Pierre Kleiber (NMFS PIFSC), Dr. Donald Kobayashi (NOAA PIFSC), Dr. Molly Lutcavage (University of New Hampshire), Dr. Minling Pang (NOAA PIFSC), Dr. Dan Polhemus (US Fish & Wildlife Service), Dr. Marlowe Sabater (American Samoa Marine and Wildlife Resources Department), Dr. Craig Severance (University of Hawaii at Hilo retired), Dr. John Sibert (Pelagic Fisheries Research Program), Dr. Robert Skillman (NMFS PIFSC retired) and Mr. Michael Trianni (Northern Mariana Islands Division of Fish & Wildlife).