



Fishermen, Public Invited to Participate in Meetings on Federal Management of Offshore Fisheries in US Pacific Islands and Fishers Forum

HONOLULU (13 October 2009) The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council—which was established by Congress to manage fisheries in the offshore waters of Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) and other US Pacific island areas—announces the following public meetings:

Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC): 8:30 to 5 p.m., Oct. 14 to 16, 2009, at the Council office, 1164 Bishop Street, Suite 1400, Honolulu. See major agenda items below.

146th Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council meeting: 2 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Oct. 20 (with public comment on non-agenda items at 5 p.m.) and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Oct. 21 to 23, 2009, at the Laniakea YWCA-Fuller Hall, 1040 Richards Street, Honolulu. The Council's Executive and Budget Committee will meet 10 a.m. to noon, Oct. 20 at the Council office. See major agenda items below.

Fishers Forum: Fishermen as Scientists: 6 to 9 p.m. Oct. 21, 2009, at the Aloha Tower Marketplace, Pier 11, Honolulu. Validated parking at Aloha Tower Marketplace or Topa Center across from Pier 11. Fishermen and members of the public are invited to learn, through hands-on demonstrations, how they can participate in community efforts to collect fishery information.

During the SSC meeting, the scientists will review and may make recommendations on the following items that are up for Council action the following week:

Management of Hawaii Longline Tuna Quota: U.S. longline vessels operating in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean have a 3,763 metric ton (mt) annual catch limit for 2009-2011. The Hawaii longline fleet may reach this year's quota in December, although in some years the bigeye catch limit could be achieved by October or earlier. The months of October through February are prime bigeye fishing months for Hawaii-based vessels in terms of market demand. The SSC and Council will consider a range of management options to minimize adverse impacts of the tuna quota to the human environment (including fishery participants and fishing communities), optimize yields and socioeconomic benefits, and maintain viable longline fisheries in the Western Pacific Region.

Territorial Longline Quotas: The SSC and Council will consider amendments to the Pelagics Fishery Management Plan that would enable American Samoa, Guam, and CNMI to utilize their annual 2,000 mt bigeye catch limits in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean through domestic charter arrangements.

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Shortline Management in the Main Hawaiian Islands: There is some speculation that use of shortlines—i.e., less than 1 nautical mile (nm) in length—may increase in the near future. Concerns have been expressed by some fishery participants and managers that currently use of shortline gear is currently unregulated except for the required adherence to the State of Hawaii's commercial marine license reporting requirements. By comparison, Hawaii-based longline fishery participants must adhere to a multitude of regulations, including a prohibition on fishing in the longline closed area around the main Hawaiian Islands from shore out to 25 to 75 nautical miles offshore, depending on the season and geographic location. Increased shortlining activity may lead to conflicts with fishermen using other types of gear and localized depletion of bigeye or other pelagic species.

Management of Tuna and Seamount Monchong at the Cross Seamount: The Council will consider setting a total allowable catch on the Cross Seamount for both tuna and monchong.

Annual Catch Limits: Under the reauthorized Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, annual catch limits (ACLs) must be set for managed stocks by 2011. The following stocks will be addressed at this time: Hawaii precious coral beds; Hawaii akule; Hawaii opelu; Hawaii and CNMI deepwater shrimp; and Hawaii, American Samoa, CNMI and Guam bottomfish complexes.

In addition to the above, the Council is expected to take action on the following when it convenes:

Hancock Seamount Armorhead Management: The armorhead fishery at Hancock Seamount at the far end of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands was overfished by foreign fleets prior to the establishment of the Council in 1976. Since 1986, the Council has placed the fishery under a series of moratoria. Alternatives the Council will consider include another six-year moratorium, expiration of the six-year moratorium, and creation of a Hancock Seamount large marine ecosystem management area.

Non-Commercial Fisheries: The Council will look at permitting and reporting options to collect fishery data from non-commercial fisheries.

Aquaculture Policy: The Council will consider amending its Aquaculture Policy to include a section for tracking escapes of fishes from aquaculture facilities as well as other modifications addressed by aquaculture experts.

Aquaculture Management: In the Western Pacific region, no aquaculture facilities currently exist in the exclusive economic zone. However there are two current operations in State of Hawaii waters with another three in the proposal stages. Currently, the Council has an aquaculture policy to deal with potential projects on a case-by-case basis. With the growing industry of offshore aquaculture, the Council may consider developing additional management measures for offshore aquaculture.

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Framework Process for Council Actions: The framework process for Council actions in each of its Fishery Ecosystem Plans needs to be revised to provide firm legal basis for taking final actions in a one-meeting process. This revision should clarify the process that the Council will use to make and transmit its recommendations, and the process that the National Marine Fisheries Service will use to review and approve/disapprove or partially approve them.

For more information on the above items and/or complete agendas, please go to www.wpcouncil.org/meetings or by contact the Council by phone (808) 522-8220, fax (808) 522-8226 (fax), or email info.wpcouncil@noaa.gov.

Scientific and Statistical Committee Members

Dr. Stewart Allen (NOAA Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center), 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 (University of Guam), 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 Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center), Dr. Molly Lutcavage (University of New Hampshire), Dr. James Parrish (Hawaii Cooperative Fishery Research Unit retired), Dr. Dan Polhemus (Hawaii Department of Land & Natural Resources), Dr. Marlowe Sabater (American Samoa Marine & Wildlife Resources Department), Dr. Craig Severance (University of Hawaii at Hilo retired), Dr. John Sibert (Pelagic Fisheries Research Program), Dr. Robert Skillman (NMFS Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center retired) and Mr. Michael Trianni (Northern Mariana Islands Division of Fish & Wildlife).

Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council Members

Designated state officials: Ignacio Dela Cruz, CNMI Department of Land and Natural Resources; Joe Torres, Guam Department of Agriculture; Laura Thielen, Hawaii Department of Land & Natural Resources; and Ray Tulafono, American Samoa Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources. Designated federal officials: Bill Robinson, NMFS Pacific Islands Regional Office; Jerry Leinecke, U.S. Fish and Wildlife; RAdm Manson K. Brown, District Commander, U.S. Coast Guard 14th District; and Bill Gibbons-Fly, U.S. Department of State. Appointees by the Secretary of Commerce from nominees selected by Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa and CNMI governors: William Sword, recreational fisherman/civil engineer/manager (American Samoa); Stephen Haleck, business owner (hotel and gas station) (American Samoa) (Vice Chair); Manuel Duenas, Guam Fishermen's Cooperative Association (Guam) (Vice Chair); Frederick Duerr, resort and hotel consultant (Hawaii) (Vice Chair); Peter Young, environmental consultant (Hawaii); David Itano, researcher (Hawaii); Sean Martin, Pacific Ocean Producers (Hawaii) (Chair); and Benigno Sablan, cultural practitioner (CNMI) (Vice Chair).