

Press Release

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Contact: Sylvia Spalding at sylvia.spalding@noaa.gov
or +1 (808) 522-5341 or (808) 383-1069



**WESTERN
PACIFIC
REGIONAL
FISHERY
MANAGEMENT
COUNCIL**

Council Votes to Keep Hawaii Bottomfish Catch Limit at Last Season's Level

HONOLULU (30 June 2010) Hawaii seafood consumers can expect to enjoy slightly more local bottomfish from the main Hawaiian Islands (MHI) during the 2010-2011 MHI bottomfish season than they did during the 2009-2010 season. The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, yesterday in Honolulu voted to keep the 2010-2011 commercial MHI bottomfish TAC at 254,050 pounds—the same as the 2009-2010 season. They also voted on other measures to help ensure that the state and federal governments do not prematurely close the fishery before the TAC is reached, as was done during the current season. The seven species covered are onaga, ehu, kalekale, opakapaka, gindai, hapuu and lehi. When the commercial MHI bottomfish TAC is reached, the non-commercial fishery (recreational, subsistence, cultural) as well as the commercial MHI bottomfish fishery are closed in both state and federal waters.

This year the MHI bottomfish fisheries closed on April 20, 2010, at about 40,000 pounds less than specified. The premature closing of the fisheries this season was due to the Hawaii Division of Aquatic Resources (HDAR) and the NOAA Pacific Islands Fishery Science Center (PIFSC) inadvertently double-counting online and paper catch reports. The new fishing year opens on Sept. 1, 2010, and will run until Aug. 31, 2011, or until the 2010-2011 TAC is reached, whichever comes first.

To ensure that the fisheries are not closed prematurely again, the Council voted for the establishment of a Hawaii Bottomfish Advisory Review Board consisting of representatives from the bottomfish fishing community throughout the MHI, representatives from the seafood processor and marketing communities, and NMFS and HDAR representatives who are on the Council's Plan Team. The Board will review available bottomfish landing and sales data, consider recent fishery performance and provide guidance to the Bottomfish Principals Group. This latter group determines the closure date when the TAC is expected to be reached prior to the end of the season. Members of the group include the Regional Administrator of the NOAA Pacific Islands Regional Office, the PIFSC director, the HDAR administrator and the Council executive director.

The MHI is currently the only source of local bottomfish, following closure of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI) bottomfish fishery earlier this year, due to the establishment of the NWHI marine national monument (also known as Papahānaumokuākea). The NWHI historically provided about half of the local bottomfish landings.

Among the other Hawaii bottomfish decisions made by the Council yesterday are the following:

- o Work with NMFS to change the federal MHI bottomfish fishery closure notice to include a seven-day notice instead of the 14-day delay that has been used in closing the fishery in previous years.

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- o Support the continued future monitoring of the NWHI bottomfish fishery; recommend that the NWHI monument provide a report on the level of sustenance fishing for bottomfish in the NWHI; and support monitoring of the NWHI bottomfish resource through experimental or cooperative fishing research.
- o Work with NMFS and the State of Hawaii to continue education and outreach efforts to support the MHI bottomfish fishery management program emphasizing the importance of collecting fishery data for the monitoring and management of this fishery.
- o Have the Council's Plan Team look at a way to obtain non-commercial bottomfish fishery data from State waters that will complement the federal non-commercial permit and reporting requirement.
- o Request that the State of Hawaii provide a report on the effectiveness of its Bottomfish Restricted Fishing Areas (BRFAs) as evaluated in 2006.
- o Request that the State of Hawaii consider the elimination of the BRFAs as the fishery is now managed through the MHI Bottomfish TAC.
- o Request that NMFS evaluate the impact of the BRFAs and NWHI bottomfish closure on Hawaii archipelago bottomfish stocks.

The Council meeting runs through Thursday, July 1, at the Laniakea YWCA-Fuller Hall, Honolulu. The Council was established by Congress in 1976 to manage fisheries in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) waters surrounding the US Pacific Islands. Decisions made by the Council are transmitted to the Secretary of Commerce for final approval. For more information and the agenda, contact the Council at (808) 522-8220, email info.wpcouncil.org or go to www.wpcouncil.org.

Council Members: Secretary of Commerce appointees nominated 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) (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) (Vice Chair); Sean Martin, Pacific Ocean Producers (Hawaii); and Benigno Sablan, cultural practitioner (CNMI) (Vice Chair). Designated state officials: Ignacio Dela Cruz, CNMI Department of Land & Natural Resources; Joseph 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: Mike Tosatto, NMFS Pacific Islands Regional Office; Jerry Leinecke, U.S. Fish and Wildlife; RAdm Stephen Mehling, District Commander, U.S. Coast Guard 14th District; and Bill Gibbons-Fly, U.S. Department of State.