



Press Release

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Public Meetings to Address Federal Management of US Pacific Island Fisheries

HONOLULU (1 October 2010) Scientists and fishery managers will meet the next two weeks in Honolulu to make recommendations on the management of Hawaii's longline fishery, American Samoa's longline and large pelagic vessel fisheries, and other federally managed fisheries in the US Pacific Islands. The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) will meet 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Oct. 6 to 8 at the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council office, 1164 Bishop St., Suite 1400, Honolulu. The Council's executive and budget standing committee will meet 2 to 5 p.m. Oct. 11 at the Council office. The full Council will consider recommendations by the SSC, standing committee and other advisory bodies, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Oct. 12 to 14, at the Laniakea YWCA-Fuller Hall, 410 Atkinson Dr., Honolulu. Eric Schwaab, assistant administrator for NOAA Fisheries, is scheduled to open the Council meeting on Oct. 12. Council recommendations are transmitted to the Secretary of Commerce for final approval.

Major agenda items to be considered by the SSC and the Council include the following:

- **Hawaii Longline Bigeye Tuna Catch Limit Management:** The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has published a proposed rule to limit the catch of bigeye tuna in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean by U.S. longline vessels at 3,763 mt (8,278,600 lbs) annually through 2011. This is consistent with the recommendations of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission, to which the United States is a party. The Council will consider changing the fishing year for the Hawaii longline fishery, which currently aligns with the calendar year. In 2009, the fishery reached its bigeye quota on Dec. 29th. This year, it is expected to reach its quota in mid-November. Hawaii demand for bigeye tuna spikes during the holiday season.
- **Hawaii Longline Catch Shares:** Current federal policy supports the use of "catch shares," also known as individual transferrable quotas, to manage fisheries. As a first step to considering a catch shares program for the Hawaii longline fishery, NMFS logbook and fishery permit databases have been merged into a single database that describes ownership patterns, vessel and permit sales, associated catch reports and other characteristics. Council staff will report on how the merged database could be used to generate catch shares for the Hawaii longline fishery based on catches from 2000 to 2009.
- **American Samoa Longline Large-Vessel Closed Area:** The SSC and Council will examine measures to enhance the available fishing area for the American Samoa longline fleet. Currently, pelagic fishing vessels greater than 50 feet in length are prohibited from fishing out to approximately 50 nautical miles offshore from the islands in the archipelago. This prohibited area was implemented in 2002 to separate large and small vessels. The American longline fishery prior to 2002 was comprised primarily of small artisanal longliners, known locally as alia. Despite the closed area and a limited entry program established in 2004, the alia fleet has declined. In 2009 and 2010, only one alia operated. Measures to be considered acknowledge the transformation of the American Samoa longline fishery to a conventional large vessel monohull longline fleet as well as the recent Presidential proclamation establishing the Rose Atoll Marine National Monument and closing about 9,000 square nautical miles to commercial fishing.
- **Process for Establishing Annual Catch Limits:** The Council is expected to take final action on measures to address the current federal policy requiring that annual catch limits (ACLs) be established for all federally managed stocks. The SSC and Council will review alternatives for establishing annual

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biological catches on which the ACLs are based. They will also consider statutory exceptions for some stocks and a suite of accountability measures.

Other major agenda items to be considered by the Council:

- **Community Development Program exemption request** to teach native Hawaiian students to fish commercially using traditional basket gear and methods in the Hawaiian Islands longline closed area.
- **American Samoa longline limited entry program modifications** to include two class size categories (small and large) instead of four class size categories; a three-year minimum landing requirement of 500 lbs of managed pelagic fish for the small vessel category and 5,000 lbs for the large vessel category; and eligibility criteria limited to US nationals and US citizens, with no other qualifying criteria. Final action on the American Samoa longline limited entry program is scheduled for March 2011, when the Council convenes in American Samoa.

As part of the Council meeting, a free Fishers Forum will be held 6 to 9 p.m. Oct. 12, at the Aloha Tower Marketplace. Open to fishermen, ocean users and the general public, “Marine Spatial Planning: Fishermen and Ocean User Perspectives” will feature informational booths, a panel discussion, a public forum and more. It addresses President Obama’s program to zone the ocean for different uses, including emerging offshore energy and aquaculture ventures. Free validated parking at Aloha Tower Marketplace or Topa Center.

The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council was established by Congress to manage fisheries in offshore waters around Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and the US Pacific remote island areas. For more information or the agendas, visit www.wpcouncil.org or email info.wpcouncil@noaa.gov; phone (808) 522-8220, or fax (808) 522-8226.

Scientific and Statistical Committee: Dr. Stewart Allen (NMFS 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 (NMFS PIFSC), Dr. Molly Lutcavage (University of New Hampshire), Dr. Minling Pang (NMFS PIFSC), Dr. Marlowe Sabater (American Samoa Marine & Wildlife Resources Department), Dr. Craig Severance (University of Hawaii 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).

Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council: Appointees by the Secretary of Commerce from nominees selected by Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa and CNMI governors: Stephen Haleck, business owner (American Samoa) (Chair); William Sword, recreational fisherman (American Samoa) (Vice Chair); Manuel Duenas, Guam Fishermen’s Cooperative Association (Guam) (Vice Chair); David Itano, researcher (Hawaii) (Vice Chair); Benigno Sablan, cultural practitioner (CNMI) (Vice Chair); Frederick Duerr, resort and hotel consultant (Hawaii); Julie Leialoha, environmentalist (Hawaii); and Sean Martin, Pacific Ocean Producers (Hawaii). Designated state officials: Ignacio Dela Cruz, CNMI Department of Land & 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: Michael Tosatto, NMFS Pacific Islands Regional Office; Don Palawski, 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.