



WESTERN  
PACIFIC  
REGIONAL  
FISHERY  
MANAGEMENT  
COUNCIL

## PRESS RELEASE

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Contact: Sylvia Spalding +808 522-5341

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### **Scientists to Consider Fishery Management Measures for Hawaii and American Samoa**

HONOLULU (2 October 2006) The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council will convene Oct. 3-5, 2006, at the Council office, 1164 Bishop St., Suite 1400, Honolulu. The SSC will review and may make recommendations on a variety of fishery management measures for the U.S. Pacific Islands including, but not limited to, fishing regulations for the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI) Marine National Monument, procedures to close the Hawaii longline fishery when it reaches its allowable annual interaction level with sea turtles, management of sharks in Hawaii, management of Hawaii deepwater shrimp and management of fisheries around fish aggregation devices (FADs) in American Samoa. The Council will convene Oct. 16-19, 2006, at the Ala Moana Hotel, Honolulu, to consider recommendations by the SSC and its other advisory groups.

The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council (Council) is the policy-making organization for fisheries management in federal waters (generally 3-200 miles offshore) of the U.S. Pacific Islands. Recommendations approved by the Council are forwarded to the Secretary of Commerce for approval. For more information, contact the Council at (808) 522-8220, [info.wpcouncil@noaa.gov](mailto:info.wpcouncil@noaa.gov) or [www.wpcouncil.org](http://www.wpcouncil.org).

#### **BACKGROUND**

##### **NWHI Monument**

On June 15, 2006, President George W. Bush issued Presidential Proclamation No. 8031 establishing the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI) Marine National Monument. The Proclamation directs the Secretaries of Commerce and the Interior to promulgate regulations to restrict access to the Monument, prohibit commercial fishing in Ecological Reserves and Special Preservation Areas, establish annual catch limits for bottomfish and pelagic species, prohibit anchoring, and require vessel monitoring systems on all domestic vessels, among other management measures. Because the Presidential Proclamation and its implementing final rules are exempt from administrative rulemaking procedures and judicial reviews, no environmental review to assess the biological or social impacts of the monument regulations has been or will be conducted by NOAA. However, affected NWHI fishermen have already pointed out issues that will severely restrict their ability to fish in the NWHI under the Monument provisions.

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## ISSUE 1: FISHING FOR FIVE YEARS PARADOX

While Presidential Proclamation No. 8031 allows commercial fishing for bottomfish and pelagic species to continue for five years, some NWHI fishermen have expressed grave concern that the prohibition on fishing within Ecological Reserves and Special Preservation Areas, combined with the no-anchoring provision, will make it virtually impossible to catch bottomfish fish within the Monument.

Currently, the impacts of these provisions primarily affect fishers in NWHI Hoomalu zone (from French Frigate Shoals to Kure Atoll) as the two Ecological Reserves and seven of the nine Special Preservation Areas are located in this zone. However, among the individual Hoomalu Zone fishers, the restrictions affect catches and revenues differently as each fisher have different fishing areas within the zone.

To alleviate the “unintended consequences” of the Monument designation, the Council staff is proposing to alter the zoning structure of the NWHI permit areas which may allow all permit holders to fish in both the Mau Zone and the Hoomalu Zone or which may combine the Mau and Hoomalu Permit Zones.

## ISSUE 2: FISHING OUTSIDE THE MONUMENT

Despite demonstrated participation in fishing the NWHI, several commercial pelagic troll and handline fishermen licensed by the State of Hawaii have been immediately ousted from the NWHI and displaced from their traditional fishing grounds. These fishermen have expressed interest in continuing to fish commercially for pelagic species seaward of the outer boundary of the Monument. These fishermen have also expressed interest in retaining *uku* (*Aprion virescens*), a bottomfish management unit species which is incidentally caught when trolling for ono (*Acanthocybium solandri*) and other pelagic species around NWHI banks. Currently, federal regulations prohibit harvesting bottomfish management unit species in the NWHI without a permit issued by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Pacific Islands Regional Office, making *uku* a regulatory discard for fishermen who do not have a federal NWHI bottomfish permit.

The SSC will review several options that would maintain fishing opportunities for Hawaii’s troll and handline fishermen seaward of the outer boundary of the Monument, and eliminate regulatory discarding of *uku* by this fishery.

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### **Swordfish Closure**

Unlike 2005, the Hawaii longline swordfish fishery reached its limit of loggerhead turtle interactions (17) in 2006 compared to 12 interactions in 2005. Current regulations allow for a seven-day period to shut down the swordfish fishery following reaching of the sea turtle interaction limit. However, there is a danger that additional turtles may be caught during the grace period. The swordfish fishery was closed by emergency rule in 2006 within three days of the catch of the 17th loggerhead turtle. From this experience, it appears that a better mechanism is needed to alert vessels when the limit is being approached, so as to give fishermen advanced warning of impending closure and to prevent adverse impacts on markets and other factors.

### **Shark Management**

The SSC will consider whether the Council should impose a limit on the number of non-blue sharks that can be landed by the Hawaii longline fishery. The SSC will also consider various options regarding management of shark viewing operations which are conducted off the north shore of Oahu in federal waters, including, but not limited to, prohibiting use of chum to attract sharks to and in conjunction with, shark tour operations, consistent with Hawaii State law.

### **Deepwater Shrimp Management**

In 1999, the Council declined to add deep-water shrimp (*Heterocarpus laevigatus* and *Heterocarpus ensifer*) to the Crustaceans Fishery Management Plan (FMP) list of management unit species (MUS). A small-scale fishery for these species exists. Currently, data is collected through the State of Hawaii's commercial catch reports. However, no monitoring of the fishery is currently occurring. As the Council moves towards amending its FMPs to Fishery Ecosystem Plans (FEPs), it may want to look at adding these species to the MUS list, to collect the data and monitor the fishery.

### **American Samoa FADs**

The SSC has heard in the past that despite the implantation of 50 nm area closures to pelagic fishing vessels of > 50-foot, trollers fishing around Tutuila (the main island of American Samoa) wanted additional protection from competition with small-scale *alia* longliners. Troll fishermen have expressed concerns that troll fishing catch-per-unit-effort rates around Tutuila have declined since the advent of the longline fishery. The SSC will review alternatives for implementation of management measures for small scale longline fishing around Tutuila, including, but not limited to, the potential for implementing 5 nm longline exclusion zones around FADs deployed around American Samoa.

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Scientists to Consider Fishing Measures for Hawaii, American Samoa 4-4-4-4-4

**SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE**

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Dr. Robert Skillman	NMFS Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center
Mr. Michael Trianni	Northern Mariana Islands Division of Fish & Wildlife