



Federal Fishery Managers Vote to Prohibit Shark Feeding

HONOLULU (23 October 2006) The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council Thursday in Honolulu concluded its four-day 135th meeting by voting to amend the Pelagic Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for the Western Pacific Region (i.e., federal waters surrounding the U.S. Pacific Islands) to prohibit “shark feeding.” The measure would prohibit “the introduction of, or an attempt to introduce, food or any other substance into the water to attract sharks for any purpose other than to harvest sharks or other marine life.” Chumming in conjunction with fishing activities or for traditional Hawaii cultural or religious practices would still be allowed.

The State of Hawaii had passed similar measures in State waters in response to community concern about the impacts of shark viewing operations on the North Shore of Oahu. The operators moved their operations beyond 3 miles from shore and into federal waters.

Junior Afalla of the Alii Holo Kai Freediving Club testified Thursday for the ban on shark feeding, saying the number of shark encounters on the North Shore has increased to the point where free divers and surfers are afraid to continue their water activities.

Jimmy Hall of Hawaii Shark Encounters testified against the ban, noting that there is no research to prove that the sharks attracted by the shark viewing operations are responsible for the increased shark encounters on shore. He said the operations focus on deepwater sharks with an occasional tiger shark coming to the shark viewing cages, while the primary concern on shore is tiger sharks.

In other action Thursday, the Council voted favorably on the following measures related to open ocean fisheries in the Western Pacific Region:

- To recommend that the American Samoa Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources deploy one or two fish aggregating devices (FADs) around Pago Pago for the exclusive use of vessels utilizing non-longline gear. The recommendation addresses user-conflict concerns between sportfishing vessels and small alia longline vessels. Pelagic fishing vessels of greater than 50 feet are already prohibited from operating within 50 nautical mile of shore.

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- To recommend revision of the framework process for the Pelagics Fisheries Management Plan to allow for the domestic allocation of quotas for highly migratory species.
- To recommend that the U.S. delegation to the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) undertake the following:
 1. Support effective conservation measures such as limited entry programs for longline fisheries across the WCPFC convention area as well as the development of pelagic fisheries in the U.S. territories;
 2. Collect information on the number of pieces of bigeye tuna caught by purse seine vessels (if properly designed this would identify those vessels which are catching large volumes of juvenile bigeye tuna and improve understanding of the ecosystem impacts of juvenile bigeye fishing mortality); and
- To recommend that the Department of State amend the South Pacific Tuna Treaty (SPTT) to include the participation of the U.S. longliners in the exclusive economic zones (EEZs) of parties to the treaty and that some of the funds from the treaty be distributed to the U.S. territories for fisheries development. This recommendation takes into account the reduction of the U.S. purse seine fleet in the Western Pacific Region and the inclusion of the U.S. longline fleet in the SPTT.
- To direct the Council staff to develop option papers for the longline fisheries in the Western Pacific Region that will review the closed areas in Guam, the limited entry program in American Samoa and the potential for the current prohibition on longline fishing in the main Hawaiian Islands buffer zones to include a Community Development Program exemption. The Community Development Program is a part of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act aimed at promoting access to fisheries by indigenous communities in the Western Pacific Region.

The Council is the policy-making organization for fisheries management in federal waters (generally 3-200 miles offshore) of the U.S. Pacific Islands. For more information, contact the Council at (808) 522-8220, info.wpcouncil@noaa.gov or www.wpcouncil.org.

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Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council Members

The Council, by Congressional mandate, is made up of the following 16 representatives.

Four designated state officials

- Ignacio Dela Cruz, Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands (CNMI)
Department of Land & Natural Resources
- Adrienne Loerzel, Guam Office of the Governor
- Ray Tulafono, American Samoa Department of Marine & Wildlife Resources
- Peter Young, Hawaii Department of Land & Natural Resources

Four designated federal officials

- RAdm Sally Brice-O'Hara, U.S. Coast Guard 14th District
- Bill Gibbons-Fly, U.S. Department of State
- Jerry Leinecke, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Bill Robinson, Pacific Islands Regional Office, National Marine Fisheries Service

Eight members who are nominated by the governors of Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa and CNMI and selected by the Secretary of Commerce

- Manuel Duenas, Guam Fishermen's Cooperative Association (Guam)
- Frederick Duerr, resort and hotel consultant (Hawaii)
- Edwin Ebisui, attorney at law (Hawaii)
- Rick Gaffney, boat dealer and ocean recreation consultant (Hawaii)
- Stephen Haleck, business owner (hotel and gas station) (American Samoa)
- Sean Martin, Pacific Ocean Producers (Hawaii)
- Frank McCoy, Harbor & Environmental Services (American Samoa)
- Benigno Sablan, cultural practitioner (CNMI)