



WESTERN
PACIFIC
REGIONAL
FISHERY
MANAGEMENT
COUNCIL

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Start of Bottomfish Closed Season Moved to May 15, 2007

HONOLULU (1 May 2007) Starting on May 15, 2007 (at 12:01 a.m.) and ending on Oct. 1, 2007 (at 12:01 a.m.), it will be against Federal and/or State law to fish for, possess or sell seven commonly caught deep-bottomfish species from the main Hawaiian Islands (MHI). Known as the "Deep 7," they consist of onaga or ulaula koae (long-tail snapper), opakapaka (pink snapper), ehu (squirrelfish snapper), hapuupuu (seabass), lehi (sliver jaw jobfish), gindai (snapper) and kalekale (snapper). If any of these fish are caught incidentally, they must immediately be returned to the ocean.

The intended effective date of this seasonal closure **has been changed from the previously announced May 1– October 1, 2007 time period to May 15–October 1, 2007**. The change was necessary to accommodate administrative processing of the regulations. The Hawaii Board of Land & Natural Resources approved the State regulations on Friday, April 27, 2007, and sent them to the Lt. Governor's office for filing. The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council voted for the Federal measures on March 15, 2007. They were then forwarded through the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to the Secretary of Commerce for approval.

During the closure, fishing for, and possession of, Deep 7 bottomfish species is prohibited 0-200 nautical miles from shore surrounding the MHI. The new regulations also prohibit the sale of Deep 7 bottomfish in Hawaii during the closure, unless the fish were caught legally in the federally permitted Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI) bottomfish fishery or can be documented as legally imported. The NWHI bottomfish fishery is managed under a Federal limited-entry program and catch quotas; therefore, it is not subject to these rules.

This seasonal closure reflects coordinated State-Federal regulations implemented to eliminate overfishing of these deep-water bottomfish in the MHI. These rules will be cooperatively enforced by the State of Hawaii Division of Conservation and Resource Enforcement, National Marine Fisheries Service Office of Law Enforcement and the U.S. Coast Guard.

"This cooperative effort between the State and Federal governments is a bold, sweeping action," notes Edwin Ebisui, vice chair of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council. The Council is the policy-making organization for fisheries management in federal waters (generally 3-200 miles offshore) of Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and other US Pacific Islands.

For more information on the regulations or on methods to release incidentally caught bottomfish, call NMFS (808 944-2200), Hawaii Division of Aquatic Resources (808 587-0100) or the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council (808 522-8220).

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