



WESTERN
PACIFIC
REGIONAL
FISHERY
MANAGEMENT
COUNCIL

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Federal Management Council Recommends Management Measures for Pelagic Fisheries in the US Pacific Islands

HONOLULU (22 June 2007) The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council concluded its four-day meeting today in Honolulu agreeing to a variety of management measures for pelagic (i.e., open ocean) fisheries operating in federal waters (3 to 200 miles offshore) of the U.S. Pacific Islands. Decisions made by the Council are forwarded to the Secretary of Commerce for approval.

To address potential conflicts between artisanal fisheries and larger offshore fisheries, the Council recommends that purse seine vessels be prohibited from fishing around the Mariana and American Samoa Archipelagos and longline vessels be prohibited from operating around the islands and banks of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). Council staff will analyze alternatives that would prohibit these operations from 50 and 200 miles from shore

To promote opportunities for indigenous communities to participate in fisheries, the Council recommends that a trial operation be pursued on Guam that would focus on the commercial feasibility and training of longline fishing. There are currently no local longline vessels operating commercially in Guam. This trial operation would be pursued under the auspices of the Community Development Program (CDP), as mandated in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. The Council proposes that the trial (i) operates outside a closed area of approximately 12 miles around the island of Guam, with additional 5 mile closed areas around all offshore banks; (ii) implements established turtle mitigation measures for deep-setting longlines; (iii) carefully monitors and documents any conflicts with the troll and charter boat sectors; and (iv) be subject to a sunset clause.

To avoid sea turtles in the Hawaii longline swordfish fishery, the Council recommends that the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) provide advisories to the fishermen not only in English but also the other primary languages of these fishermen (e.g., Vietnamese and Korean) and that these advisories provide information on the probable location of the sea turtles by longitude as well as latitude.

To address management of troll, handline and other non-longline pelagic fisheries in the Western Pacific Region, the Council directed its staff to explore reasonable measures that would enable these fisheries to meet federal annual catch limit requirements and to analyze whether management measures for these fisheries should be phased in, beginning with the pelagic fisheries targeting species of concern, especially bigeye and yellowfin tunas.

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To improve international management of highly migratory species, such as tuna, the Council supported a Memorandum of Understanding between the nation's three Regional Fishery Management Councils with jurisdiction in the Pacific Ocean, i.e., the Pacific (California, Oregon and Washington), North Pacific (Alaska) and Western Pacific (Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa, CNMI and other US Pacific Islands) to collaborate with respect to management of fisheries under the jurisdiction of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission.

Regarding administrative and programmatic matters, the Council voted to express its confidence in Kitty Simonds as the Council's executive director. The Council voiced its belief that the recent allegations that Simonds has engaged in unethical and illegal activities are without merit. The Council said it wished to continue to be the recipient of Simonds' vision, tireless efforts and wisdom. The Council also recommended unanimously, with one member abstaining, that the Puwalu series, which were cited in the allegations against Simonds, continue in Hawaii and that a Puwalu-type series be developed for Guam, CNMI and American Samoa.

During the closing of today's meeting, the Council recognized the substantial contributions to outgoing Council Vice Chairs Edwin Ebusui Jr. of Hawaii and Frank McCoy Sr. of American Samoa. The Council approved Fred Duerr as the new Vice Chair from Hawaii and Stephen Haleck as the new Vice Chair from American Samoa.

For more information about these and other decisions made by the Council, visit www.wpcouncil.org or contact the Council at (808) 522-8220 or at info.wpcouncil@noaa.gov.

WESTERN PACIFIC REGIONAL FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Appointed by Secretary of Commerce

- AMERICAN SAMOA: Vice Chair Frank W. McCoy Sr. (longline operator) and Stephen Haleck (Samoa High Talking Chief)
- GUAM: Vice Chair Manuel Duenas (Guam Fishermen's Cooperative Association)
- HAWAII: Chair Sean Martin (Pacific Ocean Producers), Vice Chair Edwin Ebusui Jr. (recreational fishermen), Frederick Duerr (resort and hotel consultant) and Rick Gaffney (yacht broker)
- CNMI: Benigno Sablan (cultural practitioner)

Designated State Officials

- Ray Tulafono (American Samoa Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources)
- Vice Chair Ignacio Dela Cruz (CNMI Department of Lands and Natural Resources)
- Tony Lamorena (Guam Bureau of Statistics and Plans)
- Allan Smith (Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources)

National Marine Fisheries Service Regional Administrator

- Bill Robinson (Pacific Islands Regional Office)

Non-Voting Members

- Bill Gibbons-Fly (US Department of State)
- Jerry Leinecke (US Fish and Wildlife Services)
- RAdm. Sally Brice-O'Hara (US Coast Guard 14th District)

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