



WESTERN  
PACIFIC  
REGIONAL  
FISHERY  
MANAGEMENT  
COUNCIL

## PRESS RELEASE

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### Federal Fishery Managers Recommend Measures to Protect Sea Turtles, Tuna Stocks

HONOLULU (20 October 2008) The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, Friday in Honolulu, recommended a variety of management measures for pelagic fisheries in the offshore waters of the US Pacific islands.

To protect endangered leatherback sea turtles, the Council voted to maintain the current Hawaii shallow-set longline fishery's annual allowable interactions with the species at 16. The Council in June 2008 had voted to up the fishery interactions to 19. Interaction is defined as any hooking, snagging, entangling or other contact between a sea turtle and fishing gear. The majority of interactions do not result in mortality.

The Council reexamined its previous decision in light of a recent biological opinion on the fishery by the Protected Resources section of the NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Pacific Islands Regional Office in Honolulu. According to the biological opinion, 19 interactions would pose no jeopardy to the status of the leatherback stock. However, the Council chose to continue the lower allowable interaction rate as a precautionary measure.

Regarding the threatened loggerhead sea turtles, the Council upheld its June recommendation to allow the fishery 46 interactions with this species. If the fishery were to reach the allowable interaction rate for either sea turtle species, it would be closed for the remainder of the year.

Leatherback and loggerhead sea turtles sometimes make transoceanic migrations between nesting beaches and foraging grounds during which they may transit through waters where the Hawaii fishery operates.

To protect threatened green sea turtles, the Council voted to recommend that hooks in the American Samoa longline fishery be set at a minimum depth of 100 meters. The Council directed its staff to work with NMFS, fishermen and the US Coast Guard to develop gear configurations that are enforceable at sea. The Council also recommended that NMFS examine observer data to determine the ecological and economic impacts of requiring the 100-meter hook depth in this fishery.

To protect migratory tuna stocks, the Council reiterated its previous recommendations regarding fish aggregation devices (FADs). The recommendations include defining FADs as all floating objects that have been purposefully deployed, enhanced or instrumented to attract fish and requiring that each FAD within the US exclusive economic zone waters of the Western and Central Pacific Ocean be registered with NMFS and be individually and uniquely marked to identify the FAD, the associated vessel name and other specific information.

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The increased use of FADs by purse seine fleets has been identified as one of the primary causes for overfishing of bigeye tuna in the Pacific Ocean. Purse seiners deploy FADs to attract skipjack tuna for canning. The FADs also attract juvenile bigeye and yellowfin tuna, which are not the species wanted by the purse seiners but rather the species targeted, in their adult stage, by longline vessels for sashimi and restaurant markets.

The Council at its March 2009 meeting in American Samoa will consider further measures regarding FADs and the purse seine fishery. Consideration will be given to allowing US purse seine vessels with US built hulls to continue to fish in EEZ waters surrounding several US Pacific remote island areas and to regulating the use of FADs in these waters. The Council on Friday made a preliminary recommendation to prohibit the deployment and use of purse seine FADs and purse seine fishing in all other EEZ waters of the US Pacific Islands where purse seine fishing is allowed.

The Council is the policy-making agency for fisheries management in the offshore waters of the U.S. Pacific Islands. Recommendations made by the Council are transmitted 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).

**Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council Members:** Designated state officials: Ignacio Dela Cruz, CNMI Department of Land & Natural Resources; Alberto Lamorena, Guam Bureau of Statistics and Plans; Laura Thielen, Hawaii Department of Land & Natural Resources; and Ray Tulafono, American Samoa Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources. Designated federal officials: Bill Robinson, NMFS Pacific Islands Regional Office; Jerry Leinecke, 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. Appointees by the Secretary of Commerce from nominees selected by Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa and CNMI governors: William Sword, recreational fisherman/civil engineer/manager (American Samoa); Stephen Haleck, business owner (hotel and gas station) (American Samoa) (Vice Chair); Manuel Duenas, Guam Fishermen's Cooperative Association (Guam) (Vice Chair); Frederick Duerr, resort and hotel consultant (Hawaii) (Vice Chair); Peter Young, environmental consultant (Hawaii); David Itano, researcher (Hawaii); Sean Martin, Pacific Ocean Producers (Hawaii) (Chair); and Benigno Sablan, cultural practitioner (CNMI) (Vice Chair).

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