



Press Release

Contact: Sylvia Spalding (808) 383-1069 or Sylvia.Spalding@noaa.gov
John Calvo (671) 688-6400 or John.Calvo@noaa.gov
Jack Ogumoro (670) 322-9830 or Jack.Ogumoro@noaa.gov

Federal Fishery Managers to Consider Customary Exchange and Expense Recovery for Non-Commercial Fishing in the Marine National Monuments

TUMON BAY, GUAM (20 March 2010) When President George W. Bush created three large Marine National Monuments (MNM) in the US Pacific Islands in January 2009, he ended commercial fishing operations in these areas but made allowances for non-commercial fishing to be permitted. The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council will convene next Monday and Tuesday, March 22 and 23, 2010, at the Fiesta Resort and Spa, Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), and on March 25 and 26, 2010, at the Guam Resort and Spa, Tumon Bay, Guam, to consider management measures for such non-commercial fishing and address other issues for federally managed fisheries in the US Pacific islands. Decisions by the Council are transmitted to the Secretary of Commerce for final approval.

During its decision-making, the Council will consider public testimony as well as the recommendations of its advisory bodies, including its Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC). This group of natural and social scientists concluded a three-day meeting yesterday on Guam with the recommendation that permitted fishing activity in the Rose Atoll MNM and Islands Unit of the Marianas Trench MNM should be based on "customary exchange."

According to the SSC, customary exchange is the non-market exchange of goods, services and social support. It differs from monetary exchange and even trade and barter in that there is not a calculated equivalency or an expectation of immediate return. This giving and sharing establishes, supports and reinforces social relations between family, friends, created kin and relations between chiefs and followers in important cultural and ceremonial contexts. Among the indigenous communities in the Western Pacific, giving fish on ceremonial occasions is critically important to participating in and contributing to the maintenance of the social fabric and cultural continuity of those communities.

Given the distances to the MNMs, the SSC also recommended that fishermen who want to gain fishing access for non-commercial, sustenance, traditional indigenous and recreational purposes in the Rose Atoll, Marianas Trench and Pacific Remote Islands Area (PRIA) MNMs be allowed to recover the costs of expenditures to fish. Unless they are allowed some reimbursement for fuel, bait, ice and provisions, it is likely that they would not fish in the MNMs, the SSC noted. Rose Atoll, which is traditionally known as *Muliva'a* or *Nu'u o Manu*, is located 65 miles east of Ta'u in the Manua Islands and approximately 130 nautical miles east-southeast of Pago Pago Harbor on the island of Tutuila in American Samoa. The three islands of the Marianas Trench MNM are located approximately 260 to 315 north of Saipan, CNMI. The PRIA MNM includes Baker, Howland, Jarvis and Wake Islands; Palmyra and Johnston Atolls; and Kingman Reef. The distance from Honolulu to these islands and atolls ranges from 720 to 2,100 nautical miles.

The SSC also concurred with the following recommendations from the Council's Plan Teams for managing non-commercial fishing in the MNMs:

- **PRIA MNM**: Maintain existing federal permit and logbook requirements for all fishery participants; and develop an outreach, education and compliance program for potential users.

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- Rose Atoll and Mariana Trench Islands Unit MNMs: Require permits and catch reporting for all fishing; include the American Samoa Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources (DMWR) and the CNMI Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW), respectively, in the administration and monitoring of the permits and logbooks; design the permit application and catch reporting procedures with the permit applicant in mind and not pose a barrier to participation in permitted fishing activities; and exempt the American Samoa DMWR and CNMI DFW, respectively, from permit requirements related to scientific research or exploration.

Other major issues and recommendations the Council will consider when it convenes next week include the following:

- **Congressional mandate to set annual catch limits (ACLs) for all federally managed fishery species by 2011:** The SSC has formed two working groups to address the thousands of coral reef associated species that are federally managed in the US Pacific islands. Data and scientific information for most of these fish are limited. One working group will consider which species are caught by fishermen and need to have ACLs and which species can be considered ecosystem species that do not need ACLs. The second working group will determine the way catch limits are established for ACL species based upon the level of data and information available.
- **Managing the Hawaii longline bigeye tuna fishery under a catch limit:** Consistent with an international arrangement, to which the United States is a member, the Hawaii longline fleet has an annual catch limit in 2009-2011 of 3,763 metric tons of bigeye tuna in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO). In July 2009, the National Marine Fisheries Service requested that the Council also take action on yellowfin catch limits. In October 2009, the Council considered a wide range of potential options for managing the fishery and narrowed its choice to changing the fishing year and effort limitation as an additional measure to keep the fishery below the 3,763 mt catch limit. The SSC reviewed these options and noted that there is a need for comprehensive evaluation of economic impacts of alternative fishing years. There are various factors associated with changing fishing year and shifting fishing effort from the WCPO to the Eastern Pacific Ocean. The SSC continues to be very concerned about over capacity in the Hawaii longline fishery in terms of the number of hooks and latent permits because it increases the difficulty of managing the fishery under catch limits.
- **Options to modify the catch limit of swordfish caught incidentally by the Hawaii deep set longline fishery targeting tuna:** Currently, the Hawaii deep set tuna fishery is limited to the harvest of 10 swordfish per trip. The SSC supports the Plan Team recommendation to establish a 25 swordfish trip limit for deep set tuna targeting longline vessels using circle hooks and 10 swordfish per trip for vessels using tuna-hooks. The circle hooks are less likely to hook sea turtles.

Among the other items the Council will consider are management measures for aquaculture and for Hancock Seamount at the northernmost end of the Hawaii Archipelago, options for exemptions from federal fishery permits, recommendations for modifications to the American Samoa longline limited entry program, and options for refining essential fish habitat for the main Hawaiian Islands bottomfish fishery.

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As part of its meeting, the Council will host Fishers Forums at the Fiesta Resort in Saipan on March 22 and at the Guam Hilton on March 25. The Forums will run from 6 to 9 p.m. and will consist of nearly a dozen booths showcasing ways fishermen can inform science, through tagging, bio-sampling, community monitoring and more.

The Council meeting agenda and additional information on the major items under consideration may be found at the Council's website at www.wpcouncil.org or by contacting the Council by phone (808) 522-8220, fax (808) 522-8226 (fax), or email info.wpcouncil@noaa.gov.

The Western Pacific Fishery Management Council was established by the US Congress to manage fisheries in the exclusive economic zone around Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands and the US Pacific remote island areas. The management process is bottom-up with recommendations from fishermen and other interested persons moving through advisory groups to the SSC and then to the Council. Decisions made by the Council are transmitted to the US Secretary of Commerce for final approval.

Scientific and Statistical Committee Members: Dr. Stewart Allen (NOAA Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center), Dr. Judith Amesbury (Micronesian Archeological Research Services), Dr. Brian Bowen (Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology), Dr. Paul Callaghan (University of Guam retired), Dr. Frank A. Camacho (University of Guam), Dr. Milani Chaloupka (University of Queensland), Dr. Charles Daxboeck (BioDax Consulting Tahiti), Dr. Richard Deriso (Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission), Dr. John Hampton (Secretariat of the Pacific Community), Dr. Pierre Kleiber (NMFS Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center), Dr. Donald Kobayashi (NMFS Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center), Dr. Molly Lutcavage (University of New Hampshire), Dr. Minling Pan (NMFS Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center), Dr. Dan Polhemus (Hawaii Department of Land & Natural Resources), Dr. Marlowe Sabater (American Samoa Marine & Wildlife Resources Department), Dr. Craig Severance (University of Hawaii at Hilo retired), Dr. John Sibert (Pelagic Fisheries Research Program), Dr. Robert Skillman (NMFS Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center retired) and Mr. Michael Trianni (Northern Mariana Islands Division of Fish & Wildlife).

Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council Members

Appointees by the Secretary of Commerce from nominees selected by Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa and CNMI governors: Stephen Haleck, business owner (hotel and gas station) (American Samoa) (Chair); William Sword, recreational fisherman/civil engineer/manager (American Samoa) (Vice Chair); Manuel Duenas, Guam Fishermen's Cooperative Association (Guam) (Vice Chair); David Itano, researcher (Hawaii) (Vice Chair); Benigno Sablan, cultural practitioner (CNMI) (Vice Chair); Frederick Duerr, resort and hotel consultant (Hawaii); Sean Martin, Pacific Ocean Producers (Hawaii); and Peter Young, environmental consultant (Hawaii).

Designated state officials: Ignacio Dela Cruz, CNMI Department of Land & Natural Resources; Joe Torres, Guam Department of Agriculture; 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.