



Press Release

For Immediate Release – 30 October 2012

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Federal Fishery Managers Address Gold Coral, Protected Species in US Pacific Islands

HONOLULU (30 October 2012) The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council gathered today at the Laniakea YWCA-Fuller Hall, 1040 Richards St., Honolulu for the second day of its four-day meeting to address federally managed fisheries based in or operating in waters surrounding the US Pacific Islands. Decisions made this morning included the following, among others:

- **Gold Coral:** The Council voted to extend the moratorium on the gold coral fishery for five years. This decision was based, in part, on new scientific information indicating gold coral grows slower than previously thought. The Council further recommended that maximum sustainable yield reference points for the gold coral fishery be revised prior to the expiration of the extended moratorium in 2018.
- **Hawaiian green sea turtles:** The Council recommended that it explore management options with the State of Hawaii, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument and other potential partner agencies. Hawaii, NMFS and USFWS representatives are among the 16 members who make up the Council. Currently, the turtles are listed as threatened under the endangered species act. NMFS is conducting a status review in response to a petition to delist the species from the Endangered Species Act.
- **False Killer Whales:** The Council supported the establishment of a subcommittee of its Scientific and Statistical Committee to review existing scientific information on the species. The Council also recommended that, additionally, NMFS commission an independent review of the current scientific information on the Hawaii false killer whale population abundance, genetics and stock structure. Interactions between the false killer whales and the Hawaii longline fishery have led to proposed measures that could negatively impact the fishery, such as closing portions of the fishing grounds when a certain interaction level is reached.
- **Pacific Scientific Review Group (PSRG),** the Council will send a request to NOAA asking that two new members with expertise in commercial fishing technology and practices for Hawaii and the U.S. Pacific Insular Areas be added to the PSRG prior to its next scheduled meeting in April 2013. The Council will also request that a Western Pacific subgroup of the PSRG be formed to represent Hawaii and the U.S. Pacific Insular Areas. PSRG currently consists of 11 members for the entire Pacific Coast and Hawaii, but does not have any commercial fishery expertise from Hawaii or the U.S. Pacific Insular Areas despite the group's growing interest in marine mammal interactions with fisheries in the Western Pacific Region. The PSRG is one of three SRGs established under the Marine Mammal Protection Act. It advises NMFS and USFW on the status of marine mammal stocks.

The Council will cover Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) fisheries this afternoon and reconvene tomorrow, Oct. 31, from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. to address Hawaii, the US Pacific Remote Islands Areas, pelagic and international fisheries. The Council holds three regularly scheduled meetings annually. This meeting is the final one for 2012. For more information or the Council meeting agenda, visit www.wpcouncil.org or contact the Council at info.wpcouncil@noaa.gov; phone (808) 522-8220, or fax (808) 522-8226. The Council was established by Congress to manage fisheries in offshore waters around Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, CNMI and the US Pacific remote island areas. Recommendations made by the Council are transmitted to the Secretary of Commerce for final approval.

Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council: Appointees by the Secretary of Commerce from nominees selected by American Samoa, CNMI, Guam and Hawaii governors:, Michael Duenas, Guam Fishermen's Cooperative Association (Guam); Richard Seman, education and outreach specialist (CNMI); William Sword, recreational fisherman/civil engineer/manager (American Samoa) (Vice Chair); Edwin Ebisui, attorney (Hawaii); Julie Leialoha, environmentalist (Hawaii); and F. McGrew Rice, charter fisherman (Hawaii). Designated state officials: Arnold Palacios, CNMI Department of Land & Natural Resources (Vice Chair); Mariquita Taitague, Guam Department of Agriculture (Vice Chair); William Aila, Hawaii Department of Land & Natural Resources (Interim Chair); and Ray Tulafono, American Samoa Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources. Designated federal officials: Michael Tosatto, NMFS Pacific Islands Regional Office; Don Palawski, U.S. Fish and Wildlife; RAdm Charles Ray, U.S. Coast Guard 14th District; and Bill Gibbons-Fly, US Department of State.

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