



Federal Fishery Managers to Convene in American Samoa Next Week

HONOLULU (6 March 2013) The Western Pacific Fishery Management Council will convene its 156th meeting next week at the Governor H. Rex Lee Auditorium (Fale Laumei), Pago Pago, American Samoa. The Council is responsible for providing the US Secretary of Commerce with recommendations for federally managed fisheries in Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) and the remote US Pacific Island areas. Sam Rauch, NOAA Acting Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, will be attending the meeting. The Council meeting will open with a traditional `ava ceremony, presented by the Office of Samoan Affairs. The `ava ceremony is one of the most important customs of the Samoa Islands involving a solemn ritual where a ceremonial beverage is shared to mark most important occasions in Samoan society.

Among the key issues the Council will address during the week are the following:

American Samoa South Pacific Albacore: The current catch is at about 95 percent of maximum sustainable yield. The catch per unit effort is in a long-term decline. There is concern about potential risk of overfishing and about the economic viability of the albacore fisheries in American Samoa and neighboring countries.

False Killer Whale Assessments: Under current guidelines and approaches, the Hawai`i deep-set longline fishery for tuna can interact with only two false killer whales (FKWs) before it is restricted from the southern exclusion zone, an area encompassing 112,575 square nautical miles. This is in addition to the year-round longline exclusion zone from 0 to 50 or 0 to 75 nautical miles around the main Hawaiian Islands (MHI). The longline fishery has had one interaction with FKW this year.

Listing of MHI Insular False Killer Whales as Endangered: Evidence used to determine the discreteness of the MHI insular stock is mostly genetic. The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), which provides scientific expertise to the Council, has asked for a comprehensive review of the evidence.

Proposed Rule to List 66 Species of Coral as Endangered or Threatened: The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is considering listing 66 coral species of an initial 82 proposed species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) The SSC advises that the “determination tool” used to indicate listing or not is flawed and recommends that the Council suggests that NMFS consider an alternative determination tool.

For a complete agenda, go to www.wpcouncil.org/meetings or email info.wpcouncil@noaa.gov; phone (808) 522-8220, or fax (808) 522-8226.

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