



US Pacific Islands Advance Fishery Ecosystem Plans, Address Climate Change

HONOLULU (17 March 2015) The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council concluded the first day of its three-day meeting in Honolulu yesterday with a suite of recommendations to improve five fishery ecosystem plans used to regulate federally managed fisheries in Hawai'i, American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) and remote US Pacific island possessions. Federally managed fisheries operate seaward of state waters, which generally encompasses waters 0 to 3 miles from shore. The five plans include those for each of these island areas plus one for pelagic fisheries.

The plans were initially approved in 2009 and codified in 2010. Recent region-wide scoping meetings resulted in recommendations to engage fishing communities and stakeholders in a review of the goals and objectives of each of the plans, which are place-based in nature. Currently, all five plans share the same goals and objectives. Along with revision of the plans, the Council will revise the structure of its annual fishery reports so they include more ecosystem components, such as protected species, climate change, human dimensions and habitat. The Council will also restructure its Plan Teams into a single Plan Team that includes more ecosystem experts. The Plan Team is an advisory body of the Council responsible for developing and amending the fishery ecosystem plans. Copies of the existing plans and annual reports can be found at www.wpcouncil.org/fishery-plans-policies-reports and the list of current Plan Team members can be found at www.wpcouncil.org/about-us/council-advisory-panels/plan-teams/.

The Council also approved a Marine Planning and Climate Change Policy to be used when developing and amending the fishery ecosystem plans and Council programs and activities. The policy was developed by the Council's Marine Planning and Climate Change Committee. The policy can be found at www.wpcouncil.org/fishery-plans-policies-reports. The members of the Marine Planning and Climate Change Committee, which includes coastal managers and others from each of the island areas, are listed at www.wpcouncil.org/about-us/council-advisory-panels/other-advisory-bodies.

Also at yesterday's meeting, Council Member Michael Goto of the United Fishing Agency was sworn in as a new US Commissioner to the Commission for the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean. The Commission develops international conservation and management measures for species such as tuna. NOAA Fisheries Pacific Islands Regional Administrator Michael Tosatto presented a plaque from President Barack Obama recognizing Goto's integrity and ability for the appointment.

Also recognized on Monday was Keena Leon Guerrero of the CNMI, one of two recipients of the Council's inaugural US Pacific Territories Fishery Capacity-Building Scholarship. Leon Guerrero is studying marine biology at Hawaii Pacific University. The other scholarship recipient is Fa'asalafa Kitona of American Samoa, who studies marine science at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo. Recipients of the scholarship agree to participate in an internship at the Council, Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center or other fisheries-related organization and to work at their local territorial fishery agency upon graduation.

"The scholarship is one of several instruments being developed by the Council's Education Committee to help build the capacity of not only the territories to manage their fishery ecosystems but also universities in Hawai'i and Guam to provide robust fishery science and management education to these future territorial fisheries managers," explains Kitty Simonds, the Council's executive director.

The Council meeting continues today at 8:30 a.m. at the Laniakea YWCA, 1040 Richards St., Honolulu, with a focus on American Samoa, Hawai'i and protected species issues, plus a free public Fishers Forum on stock assessments from 6 to 9 p.m. at Harbor View Center, Pier 38, Honolulu. For more information, go to www.wpcouncil.org/category/upcoming-council-and-advisory-body-meetings/ or call 808 522-8220.

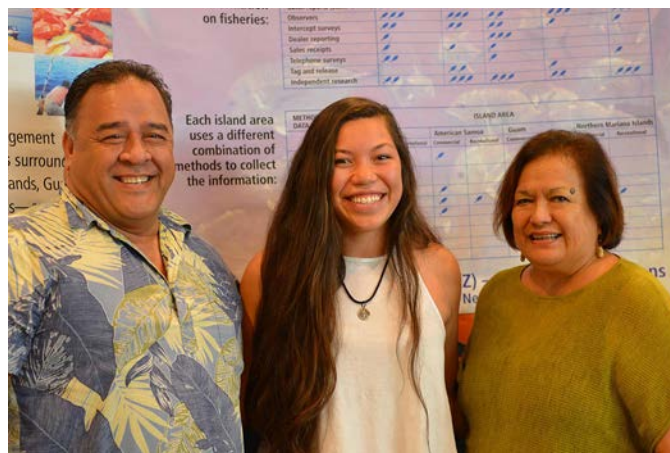
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Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council: Appointees by the Secretary of Commerce from nominees selected by American Samoa, CNMI, Guam and Hawai'i governors: Michael Duenas, Guam Fishermen's Cooperative Association (Guam) (vice chair); Edwin Ebisui (Hawai'i) (chair); Michael Goto, United Fishing Agency Ltd. (Hawai'i); John Gourley, Micronesian Environmental Services (CNMI) (vice chair); Julie Leialoha, biologist (Hawai'i); Dr. Claire Tuia Poumele, Port Administration (American Samoa); McGrew Rice, commercial and charter fisherman (Hawai'i) (vice chair); and William Sword, recreational fisherman (American Samoa) (vice chair). Designated state officials: Carty Chang, Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources; Dr. Ruth Matagi-Tofiga, American Samoa Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources; Richard Seman, CNMI Department of Lands and Natural Resources; and Mariquita Taitague, Guam Department of Agriculture. Designated federal officials: Matthew Brown, USFWS Pacific Islands Refuges and Monuments Office; David Hogan, US Department of State; RAdm Cari B. Thomas, US Coast Guard 14th District; and Michael Tosatto, NMFS Pacific Islands Regional Office.

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Council Member Michael Goto (left) receives a plaque from President Obama recognizing his “integrity and ability” to serve as a US Commissioner on the Commission for the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean. Also pictured are Michael Tosatto (center), NOAA Fisheries Pacific Islands Regional Administrator, and Goto’s grandfather, Frank Goto, longtime general manager of United Fishing Agency and an inaugural member of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council (1976–79).



Keena Leon Guerrero (center) is the recipient of one of two US Pacific Territories Fishery Capacity Building Scholarships for 2015-2016. Leon Guerrero, who hails from CNMI, is studying marine biology at Hawai'i Pacific University. She is flanked by Richard Seman, secretary, CNMI Department of Lands & Natural Resources, and Kitty Simonds, executive director, Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council.