



**WESTERN
PACIFIC
REGIONAL
FISHERY
MANAGEMENT
COUNCIL**

MEMORANDUM

TO: Interested Parties

October 27, 2017

FROM: Kitty M. Simonds

SUBJECT: Action Items for 172nd Council Meeting

**1. Modifying the Swordfish Trip Limit in the American Samoa Longline Fishery
(Final Action)**

The Council will consider the issue summarized below, including any public comments on this initiative. The Western Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) will hold its 172nd meeting by teleconference and webinar to discuss and make recommendations on fishery management issues in the Western Pacific Region.

The Council will meet on November 15th, 2017, between 2 p.m. and 5 p.m. (Hawaii Standard Time (HST)); 1:00 and 4:00 p.m. (American Samoa Standard Time (ASST)); and November 16th, 2017, between 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 pm. (Marianas Standard Time (MST)). All times listed are local island times.

The meeting will be held by teleconference and webinar. The following venues will also be host sites for the teleconference: Council Conference Room, 1164 Bishop Street, Suite 1400, Honolulu, Hawaii; Land Grant Conference Room, American Samoa Community College, Agriculture, Community and Natural Resources, Mapusaga Road, Malaeimi Village, American Samoa; Guam Hilton Resort and SPA, 202 Hilton Road, Tumon Bay, Guam; Department of Land and Natural Resources Conference Room, Santa Remedio Drive, Lower Base, Saipan, MP.

Written comments should be received by the Council's Executive Director by 5:00 p.m. (Hawaii time) Friday October 13, 2017, FAX or email as indicated below.

Mail: Executive Director
Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council
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1. Modifying the Swordfish Trip Limit in the American Samoa Longline Fishery (Final Action)

In 2009, the Council recommended an amendment to the Pelagic Fisheries Ecosystem Plan (PFEP) to require all hooks set below 100 meters (m) in depth by gear modifications in order to minimize the incidental catch of green sea turtles by the American Samoa longline fishery.

The measure includes a trip limit of 10 swordfish per trip to discourage fishermen from setting their gear shallow to target swordfish on the same trip. The swordfish trip limit was instituted as a safeguard to prevent targeting swordfish and reduce the potential for incidental interactions with sea turtles, especially shallower in the water column. The limit was adopted directly from the Hawaii deep-set longline fishery as a disincentive for fishermen to surreptitiously switch from deep setting to shallow setting on unobserved trips and thus maximize swordfish catches.

Statements by American Samoa longline fishery suggests that the 10-fish limit occasionally forces them to throw away swordfish caught in excess of the limit (“regulatory discards”). The current trip limit for the deep-set fishery may result in an inefficient use of fishery resources and may lead to wasteful regulatory discards and lost revenue, which are contrary to several National Standards in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act). Further, there is a demand for fresh swordfish in American Samoa which would be partially met by the small increase in the volume of landing

At the 157th Council Meeting in June 2013, the Council directed staff to prepare a regulatory amendment to the Pelagics FEP, and selected as its preliminary preferred alternative, that the existing swordfish per trip limit for the American Samoa longline fishery be removed.

The Council is expected to take **Final Action** on this amendment, which provides the analysis required to remove the 10-swordfish per trip limit.