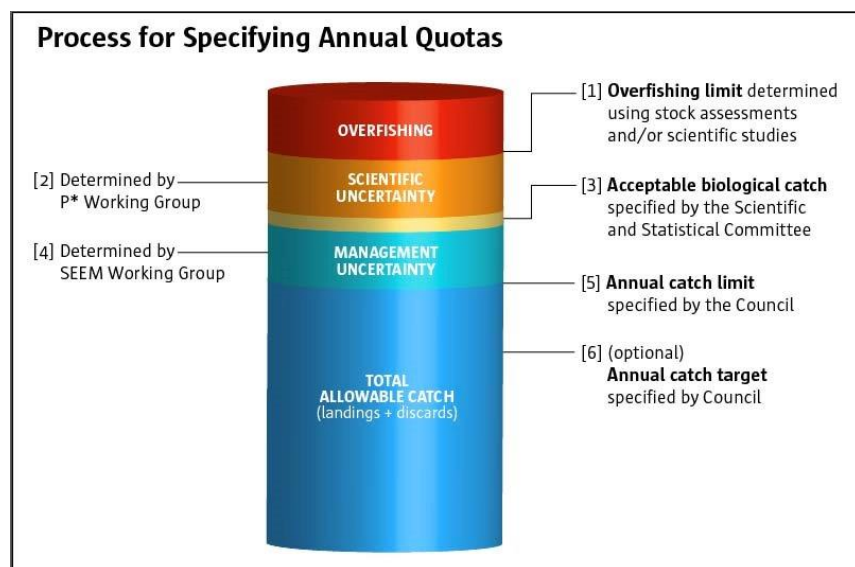




Scientists Specify Annual Biological Catches for US Pacific Island Fisheries, Recommend Refinements to Precious Coral Habitat Designations

HONOLULU (17 October 2018) Scientists from throughout the Pacific meeting this week in Hilo on the island of Hawai‘i have made the following recommendations on federally managed fisheries of Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) and the US Pacific Remote Islands. The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council will conclude its meeting later today. The SSC recommendations will then be considered by the Council at its 174th meeting to be held Oct. 23 and 24 in Saipan, CNMI, and Oct. 26 and 27 in Guam. Under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976, the Council has authority over fisheries seaward of state waters in Hawaii and other US Pacific Islands.

During the first two days of the meeting the SSC specified annual biological catches (ABCs) for a suite of managed species. The Council will consider the ABC specifications in recommending annual catch limits (ACLs) for these species. ACLs can be equal to or lower than the ABCs set by the SSC, depending on management uncertainties. The Council’s ACL recommendations will be transmitted to the Secretary of Commerce for final approval.



The SSC noted the general underutilization of the stocks for which it specified ABCs and discussed how best to incorporate this into ACL specification with little to no fishing effort. The SSC also noted that under-reporting continues to be an issue for most of these stocks. The last deep-water shrimp assessment was in 1988, and there is a clear need to update the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) for this stock. The SSC specified the following ABCs:

Managed Species/Complex	Fishing Year(s)	ABC (lbs.)
Main Hawaiian Islands (MHI) grey snapper (<i>Aprion virescens</i>)	2019-2021	127,205
MHI Kona crab	2019	3,500
MHI deep-water shrimp	2019-2021	250,773
American Samoa bottomfish complex	2019	106,000
Guam bottomfish complex	2019	66,000
CNMI bottomfish complex	2019	228,000
Auau Channel black coral	2019-2021	7,500
Makapuu Bed pink coral	2019-2021	3,009
Makapuu Bed bamboo coral	2019-2021	571
180 Fathom Bank pink coral	2019-2021	668

180 Fathom Bank bamboo coral	2019-2021	126
Brooks Bank pink coral	2019-2021	1,338
Brooks Bank bamboo coral	2019-2021	256
Kaena Point Bed pink coral	2019-2021	201
Kaena Point Bed bamboo coral	2019-2021	37
Keahole Bed pink coral	2019-2021	201
Keahole Bed bamboo coral	2019-2021	37
Precious coral in MHI exploratory area	2019-2021	2,205

The SSC also recommended refining the essential fish habitat (EFH) for precious coral in the Hawaii Archipelago and updating the EFH information for the Fishery Ecosystem Plan for the Hawaii to incorporate new data from submersible research dives. For deep-water precious coral (e.g., pink and bamboo), the SSC recommended defining the geographic extent of precious coral EFH based both the existing EFH beds as well as the newly identified beds. For the shallow water precious corals, the SSC recommended updating the EFH definitions with the habitat characteristics and geographic extent. This description would increase the percentage of precious coral observations contained within the EFH areas of the MHI from 56 percent to 92 percent. The SSC noted that bottom current is important to understanding precious coral habitat, but data on the bottom current data is not available now or in the foreseeable future.

For complete agendas and background materials on these meetings, go to www.wpcouncil.org/category/upcoming-council-and-advisory-body-meetings or contact the Council at info.wpcouncil@noaa.gov or (808) 522-8220.

Scientific and Statistical Committee: James Lynch (K&L Gates LLP) (chair); Debra Cabrera (St. John's School, Guam); Frank Camacho (University of Guam); Milani Chaloupka (University of Queensland); Erik Franklin (Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology); Shelton Harley (Ministry for Primary Industries, NZ); Ray Hilborn (University of Washington); Justin Hospital (NMFS Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center); David Itano (fisheries consultant); Donald Kobayashi (NMFS PIFSC); Steve Martell (SeaState Inc.); Domingo Ochavillo (American Samoa Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources); Ryan Okano (Hawaii Division of Aquatic Resources); Graham Pilling (Secretariat of the Pacific Community); Kurt Schaefer (Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission); Craig Severance (University of Hawai'i at Hilo, retired); Michael Tenorio (CNMI Division of Fish and Wildlife; and Michael Seki (ex-officio) (NMFS PIFSC).

Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council: Secretary of Commerce appointees from nominees selected by American Samoa, CNMI, Guam and Hawaii governors: John Gourley, Micronesian Environmental Services (CNMI) (acting chair); Michael Duenas, Guam Fishermen's Cooperative Association (Guam) (vice chair); Dean Sensui, film producer (Hawaii) (vice chair); Archie Soliai, StarKist (American Samoa) (vice chair); Michael Goto, United Fishing Agency (Hawaii); Christinna Lutu-Sanchez, commercial fisherman (American Samoa); Edwin Watamura (Hawaii). Designated state officials: Raymond Roberto, CNMI Department of Lands and Natural Resources; Suzanne Case, Hawaii Department of Land & Natural Resources; Matt Sablan, Guam Department of Agriculture; Henry Sesepasra, American Samoa Department of Marine & Wildlife Resources. Designated federal officials (voting): Michael Tosatto, NMFS Pacific Islands Regional Office. Designated federal officials (non-voting): RADM Kevin Lunday, USCG 14th District; Michael Brakke, US Department of State; Brian Peck, USFWS.

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