

Press Release

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WESTERN
PACIFIC
REGIONAL
FISHERY
MANAGEMENT
COUNCIL

Federal Fishery Managers Agree to Annual Catch Limit Process for Coral Reef Fish, Invertebrates and Mollusks; Conservation Recommendations for Pacific Bigeye Tuna

HONOLULU (18 June 2011) The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council concluded its three-day meeting in Honolulu today with agreement on the mechanism for setting annual catch limits (ACLs) for coral reef finfish, crustaceans, mollusks, opelu, akule and black coral in Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), as appropriate. As there are thousands of coral reef finfish species, these ACLs will be specified at the family level for the top 90 percent of the species that are caught. The remaining 10 percent will be grouped into a single complex with a single ACL. Particularly rare or vulnerable species, such as the bumphead parrotfish, will receive a specific ACL based upon the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) recommendations when the Council meets in October. The SSC and Council will also address deepwater bottomfish ACLs for American Samoa, Guam and CNMI in October. The Council yesterday agreed to the Hawaii bottomfish ACL. Once the ACLs are calculated based upon the approved process, NMFS will publish them in a Federal Register notice. They will apply to the fishing year beginning Jan. 1, 2012, except for Hawaii bottomfish, which has a fishing season that begins on Sept. 1, 2011.

The Council today also addressed coastal and marine spatial planning (CMSP) pursuant to the executive order signed by President Obama in July 2010. The Council recommends that the Regional Planning Body members responsible for CMSP in the US Pacific Islands include the Council as well as representatives from the sub-regions of Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam and CNMI. Moreover, the representation from each island area should include representatives from each County to recognize their unique culture and resources. The Council also recommends that federal agencies that possess data from each sub-region provide this data to the Pacific Integrated Ocean Observing System to further develop its online CMSP data tools and that the establishment of permanent shipping lanes/routes be considered to avoid important fishing areas and banks.

Regarding measures to address overfishing of Pacific bigeye tuna, the Council recommends that NMFS draft international measures to present to the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission that would 1) maintain distant-water fishing nations' longline catch limits as well as establish longline bigeye catch limits of 2,000 metric tons or less from Small Island Developing States and Participating Territories with the ability to trade or transfer their quota; 2) establish annual bigeye catch limits for purse seine vessels that would reduce their overall catch of bigeye by 30 percent in 2014 from their 2001-2004 baseline levels; and 3) apply longline catch limits for vessels greater than 24 meters and purse-seine catch limits by vessel class, as done in the Eastern Pacific by the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission.

The Council also considered the impacts of increased military activities and impending buildup on Guam and recommended actions to allow better access to open ocean and coastal fishing areas to local fishermen. The population is projected to increase by about 30,000, including marines, their family members and contract workers from Korea, Philippines and China.

For more on the Council decisions, monitor www.wpcouncil.org/meetings or call 808 522-8220.

Western Pacific Fishery Management Council members: Secretary of Commerce appointees nominated by their respective governors: AMERICAN SAMOA: William Sword, recreational fisherman/ civil engineer/ manager, and Stephen Haleck, hotel/gas station owner (vice chair); GUAM: Manuel Duenas, Guam Fishermen's Cooperative Association (chair); HAWAII: Frederick Duerr, resort/hotel consultant; Julie Leialoha, environmentalist; David Itano, researcher (vice chair); Sean Martin, Pacific Ocean Producers; and CNMI: Benigno Sablan, cultural practitioner (vice chair). Designated state officials: Arnold Palacios, CNMI Department of Land & Natural Resources; Marquita Taitague, Guam Department of Agriculture; William Aila, Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources; Ray Tulafono, American Samoa Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources. Designated federal officials: Mike Tosatto, NMFS Pacific Islands Regional Office; Don Palawski, US Fish & Wildlife; RAdm Charles Ray, US Coast Guard 14th District; Bill Gibbons-Fly, US Department of State.

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