



Press Release

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Scientists Review Bottomfish Fisheries, Federal Fishery Managers Weigh In Next

HONOLULU (22 June 2012) The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) that advises the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council concluded its three-day meeting in Honolulu yesterday with recommendations on the management of bottomfish and other species in offshore waters surrounding Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and the remote US Pacific Island areas.

The SSC recommended that the annual catch target for the seven deepwater bottomfish species (Deep7) in the main Hawaiian Islands for fishing year 2013-2014 remain at 325,000 pounds. The SSC noted that it is highly unlikely that this target will be reached in the current 2012-2013 fishing year.

The SSC also raised concerns about the current way that the efficacy of the State of Hawaii's bottomfish fishing restricted areas (BRFAs) are evaluated. The scientists noted that initial results from the analysis indicate no measureable statistical difference in abundance within the BRFA and adjacent areas and determining any significant effects of the BRFAs on bottomfish size and abundance may take an additional 10 years. The SSC provided recommendations on additional approaches for evaluating the efficacy of the BRFAs and also raised the following points for Council consideration:

- The status of the Deep7 bottomfish stock is healthy (not overfished and no overfishing);
- The fishery operates under an annual catch limit, based on current stock assessment;
- The BRFAs have not been factored into the development and production of the accepted stock assessment;
- The fishery is now subject to near-real time monitoring through permitting and trip reporting; and
- No evidence has been presented to suggest that fishing mortality has been reduced through the implementation of the BRFAs.

The recommendations of the SSC and other Council advisory bodies will be reviewed by the Council's Standing Committees on June 25 at the Council office, 1164 Bishop St., Suite 1400, Honolulu. The full Council will take action on the recommendations June 26-28 at the Laniakea YWCA-Fuller Hall, 1040 Richards St., Honolulu. Council recommendations are transmitted to the US Secretary of Commerce for final approval. For a full agenda and more details on the Council meeting, go to www.wpcouncil.org/meetings.

As part of the Council meeting, a free **Fishers Forum on Managing for Recovery of the North Pacific Humpback Whale** will be open to fishermen and the general public 6 to 9 p.m.

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Wednesday, June 27, at Harbor View Center at Pier 38, above Nico's restaurant. Fishermen, ocean users and other members of the public are invited to enjoy informational booths, family activities, refreshments and prizes and join in the discussion about the remarkable recovery of this species and the challenges of having more than 21,000 humpback whales in the North Pacific, half of which come to Hawaii to winter.

The Western Pacific Fishery Management Council was established by Congress to manage fisheries in offshore waters around Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, CNMI and the US Pacific remote island areas. For more information or the agendas, visit www.wpcouncil.org 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: Manuel Duenas, Guam Fishermen's Cooperative Association (Guam) (Chair) ; Stephen Haleck, business owner (American Samoa) (Vice Chair); David Itano, researcher (Hawaii) (Vice Chair); William Sword, recreational fisherman (American Samoa); Richard Seman, education and outreach specialist (CNMI); Julie Leialoha, environmentalist (Hawaii); Sean Martin, Pacific Ocean Producers (Hawaii); and F. McGrew Rice, charter fisherman (Hawaii). Designated state officials: Arnold Palacios, CNMI Department of Land & Natural Resources; Mariquita Taitague, Guam Department of Agriculture; William Aila, Hawaii Department of Land & Natural Resources; and Ray Tulafono, American Samoa Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources. Designated federal officials: Michael Tosatto, NMFS Pacific Islands Regional Office; Don Palawski, U.S. Fish and Wildlife; RAdm Charles Ray, U.S. Coast Guard 14th District; and Bill Gibbons-Fly, US Department of State.

Scientific and Statistical Committee: Dr. Charles Daxboeck, chair, (BioDax Consulting Tahiti); Dr. Stewart Allen (NMFS Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center, PIFSC), Dr. Judith Amesbury (Micronesian Archeological Research Services), Dr. Brian Bowen (Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology), Dr. Paul Callaghan (University of Guam retired), Dr. Frank A. Camacho (Guam Community College), Dr. Milani Chaloupka (University of Queensland), Dr. Richard Deriso (Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission), Dr. John Hampton (Secretariat of the Pacific Community), Dr. Pierre Kleiber (NMFS PIFSC), Dr. Donald Kobayashi (NMFS PIFSC), Dr. Molly Lutcavage (University of New Hampshire), Dr. Domingo Ochavillo (American Samoa Department of Marine & Wildlife Resources), Francis Oishi (Hawaii Division of Aquatic Resources), Dr. Minling Pang (NMFS PIFSC), Dr. Craig Severance (University of Hawaii retired), Dr. John Sibert (Pelagic Fisheries Research Program retired), Dr. Robert Skillman (NMFS PIFSC retired) and Mr. Michael Tenorio (Northern Mariana Islands Division of Fish & Wildlife).