



2013-2014 Fishery Catch Quotas and Striped Marlin Overfishing Trend on Agenda for Federal Fishery Scientists, Managers

HONOLULU (17 June 2013) Each year since 2011, federal fishery managers have been required to set annual catch limits (ACLs) for all federally managed fish stocks with a few exceptions. During this week and next, the scientists and managers responsible for setting the ACLs for Hawaii and the US Pacific island territories meet to set the limits for 2014. The sustainable catch level is based on not only scientific factors but also socioeconomic and management uncertainty considerations.

On June 18 to 20, the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) of the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council will determine the “acceptable biological catch” (ABC) for the stocks. The ABCs are based on stock assessments, which in turn are based on catch data, life histories of the species and other information. Because the data and information are lacking for the majority of the thousands of coral reef fish and other stocks in the US Pacific islands, the SSC has previously relied on setting the ABC for many species at 75 percent of their historic catch. During discussions on the 2014 ABCs, the scientists will review recent life history investigations and assessments for Hawai`i bottomfish, evaluate the 2012 catches relative to the 2012 ACLs, and evaluate various options for determining ABCs.

Among the exceptions to the ACL requirement are pelagic fisheries that are managed internationally. In the Pacific, these tuna, billfish and other pelagic species fall under the auspices of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) and the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC). The United States is a member of both organizations. In preparation for the 10th regular session of the WCPFC to be held Dec. 2 to 6, in Australia, the SSC will review data that indicates that North Pacific striped marlin is likely experiencing overfishing in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO) and may be overfished. Catch of North Pacific striped marlin in this region has exhibited a long-term decline since the 1970s and is about half of the amount harvested at that time.

Hawaii’s accounts for about 14 percent of the total impact on the North Pacific striped marlin stock in the WCPO. In 2010, the WCPFC adopted a measure directing WCPFC countries to reduce the total catches of North Pacific striped marlin in a phased reduction that by Jan. 1, 2013, the catch would be at 80 percent of the levels caught in 2000 to 2003. The CMM covered all fisheries, not just longliners. In Hawai`i about 90 percent of the striped marlin is landed by the longline fishery, and about 90 percent comes from WCPO. Applying the 2010 measure to the period 2000-2003, where the maximum catch was 573 mt, produces a 2013 catch limit of 458 mt. The SSC may recommend that a new CMM is needed or that the current WCPFC measure should remain in effect.

The SSC may also make recommendations on management of Pacific bluefin tuna and bigeye tuna as well as modifying the swordfish trip limit in the American Samoa longline fishery. The SSC will meet at the Council office, 1164 Bishop St., Suite 1400, Honolulu. The Council will review the recommendations of the SSC and its advisory bodies as well as public comments when it convenes June 26-28 at the Laniakea YWCA-Fuller Hall, 1040 Richards St., Honolulu. Recommendations by the Council are transmitted to the US Secretary of Commerce for final approval.

—more—

As part of the Council meeting, a free **Fishers Forum on King Shark: From Manō to Jaws – The Science, Culture and Management of Sharks in Hawai`i** will be open to fishermen and the general public 6 to 9 p.m. 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, presentations, door prizes and more as they join in the discussion about the role of sharks in Hawaiian culture, the science used to study them, and how they are managed in Hawaii.

The Western Pacific Fishery Management Council was established by Congress to manage fisheries in offshore waters around Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and the US Pacific remote island areas. Serving as a bridge between the local communities, fishermen, and the federal government, the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council continues its commitment to keep fisheries sustainable, protecting the fishing industry and the local communities that that depend on it. 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: Michael Duenas, Guam Fishermen's Cooperative Association (Guam) (Vice Chair) ; McGrew Rice, commercial and charter fisherman (Hawaii); William Sword, recreational fisherman (American Samoa) (Vice Chair); Richard Seman, education and outreach specialist (CNMI); Julie Leialoha, environmentalist (Hawaii); Edwin Ebisui (Hawaii) (Vice Chair); and Michael Goto, United Fishing Agency Ltd. (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 Dr. Ruth Matagi-Tofiga, American Samoa Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources. Designated federal officials: Michael Tosatto, NMFS Pacific Islands Regional Office; Susan White, Pacific Reefs National Wildlife Refuges Complex; RAdm Cari B. Thomas, 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. Judith Amesbury (Micronesian Archeological Research Services), 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. Donald Kobayashi (NMFS PIFSC), Dr. Molly Lutcavage (University of New Hampshire), 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), Dr. Erik Franklin (Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology), Mr. David Itano (NMFS Pacific Islands Regional Office), Mr. James Lynch (K & L Gates, Seattle), Dr. Domingo Ochavillo (American Samoa DMWR), Dr. Pierre Kleiber (NMFS PIFSC), Dr. Robert Skillman (NMFS PIFSC), Dr. Todd Miller (CNMI Division of Fish & Wildlife), and Mr. Alton Miyasaka (Hawaii Division of Aquatic Resources)