



## **164<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council**

October 20-22, 2015

Governor H. Rex Lee Auditorium, Utulei, American Samoa

### **Synopsis**

#### **Territorial Bottomfish SEEM Meeting**

Council staff convened a meeting Friday, September 21, 2015 at the Council office and via teleconference line to consider whether any social, economic, ecological or management uncertainty (SEEM) issues warrant the Council to consider additional catch reduction in territorial bottomfish fisheries, beyond what the P\* risk assessment group recommended. Participating in the meeting were:

SEEM dimension factors could include a fishing community's economic reliance on the fishery, whether of the MUS are an important component of another species' diet, and whether managers have the tools to constrain catch to the limits they set. The P\* assessment considers whether and how much to reduce catch from Overfishing Limit (OFL) to Allowable Biological Catch (ABC), whereas SEEM considers whether to recommend a reduction from ABC. Like P\*, SEEM is reductionary or neutral, since ACL cannot exceed ABC. There is no guidance or instruction on developing a SEEM score.

Previous SEEM meetings have identified important social and economic factors associated with our various the fisheries, and these factors have remained constant. Given that the catch to assumed biomass relationship typically skews (in some cases heavily) towards biomass in many of our island area fisheries, previous SEEM working groups have not recommended a reduction from ABC based on any social or economic issue. However, SEEM working groups have recommended relatively modest percentage reductions based on ecological and management uncertainty factors. Considering the current catch to assumed biomass relationship, these recommendations were precautionary.

The territorial bottomfish SEEM working group that met on September 25, 2015 is recommending the Council consider reductions of 5.3% (American Samoa), 5% (Guam) and 6% (CNMI) for SEEM factors. These numbers are driven largely by working group members' concerns with several management uncertainty factors.

If the Council chooses to accept the recommendations from the P\* and SEEM working groups, it may elect to set the ACL directly based on the reductions described in Table 2 (i.e,  $ACL = OFL - (P^* \text{ reductions} + SEEM \text{ reductions})$ ), or it may elect to set the ACL equal to ABC and use the SEEM reductions as the basis for an annual catch target.

