

COUNCIL MAKES GOOD ON ITS COMMITMENTS: A REVIEW OF 2014

The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council is committed to giving people a voice in the decisions that are made regarding fishery management, to supporting the fishing industry and the livelihood and culture of fishermen, to preventing overfishing and protecting the ocean's ecosystem, and to providing consultation and recommendations as required by law.

In 2014, our participatory bottom-up process ranged from work with the Village of Malesso (Merizo), Guam, to develop a community-based fishery management plan; to assisting the 'Aha Moku o Maui to convene a Puwalu of the 'Aha Moku island councils throughout the Hawaiian archipelago; to listening to fishermen's views at Council meetings, Fishers Forums and various advisory group and community meetings, which led to the setting of the 2015 annual catch limits and ongoing efforts to better address noncommercial fishing and improve management of 'ahi, striped marlin and bottomfish, including the reopening of some of Hawai'i's bottomfish restricted fishing areas.

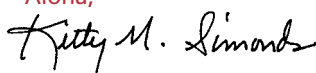
To support the industry, livelihood and culture of fishing, the Council deployed community fish aggregating devices in Maui, Kaua'i, West Hawai'i and Guam; helped in the rehabilitation of Agat Marina Dock A in Guam; undertook a skipjack population assessment in the Mariana Archipelago; and spearheaded several fishery development projects in American Samoa, including the Manu'a Fishermen Facilities, Fagotogo Fish Market renovation and fresh fish processing training. The Council also convened international workshops on the movement and connectivity of Pacific bigeye tuna and on defining disproportionate conservation burden within the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission.

Among our efforts to prevent overfishing and protect the ocean's ecosystem, the Council fine-tuned its process for specifying annual catch limits, began a five-year review of its fishery ecosystem plans to further incorporate ecosystem-based management within them, developed a cooperative education memorandum of understanding and scholarship program aimed at building the capacity of the US Pacific Island territories to manage their fisheries and fishery-related resources, and completed a study on the utilization of Hawai'i seafood waste for aquaculture and agriculture uses.

The Council provided consultation and recommendations regarding Western Pacific Region fisheries at various national and international levels. We continued to encourage NOAA to use the term "noncommercial" instead of "recreational" fishing to better represent the diversity of subsistence, sustenance and cultural fishing in our communities. At the 2014 Recreational Saltwater Fishing Summit, we pushed for a regional approach to fisheries management to address the unique environmental, social, cultural and economic aspects of our region. We worked with a world-renowned coral expert to submit the best available scientific information to NOAA for consideration in the final decision to list reef-building corals under the Endangered Species Act. We also provided consultation to the White House that resulted in keeping 287,000 square miles around the US Pacific Remote Islands open to US commercial fisherman after President Obama announced plans to expand the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument.

These are just a few of the Council's achievements in 2014. I am grateful for all that you do to support our mutual goal of "Fish Forever!" Stay connected and involved, and together we can make 2015 the best year ever!

Aloha,



Kitty Simonds
Executive Director