



Federal Fishery Managers Address Hawai‘i, American Samoa, Protected Species Issues

HONOLULU (18 March 2015) The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council concluded the second day of its three-day meeting in Honolulu yesterday with recommendations for federally managed fisheries in Hawai‘i and American Samoa as well as protected species. Federally managed fisheries operate seaward of state waters, which generally encompasses waters 0 to 3 miles from shore.

Main Hawaiian Islands Deepwater Bottomfish: Six deep-water snappers and a single grouper, known collectively as the Deep 7, are bottomfish species favored by local consumers and fishermen in Hawai‘i. The Deep 7 caught in waters around the main Hawaiian Islands (MHI) are jointly managed as a single stock complex by the Council, the State of Hawai‘i and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). When the commercial sector of the fishery reaches an annual catch limit (ACL), commercial and non-commercial catches in federal and state waters are restricted until the start of the next fishing year. In preparation for setting the ACL for the 2015-2016 fishing year, which begins Sept. 1 for this fishery, the Council requested that NMFS deliver the stock assessment for the MHI Deep 7 bottomfish no later than April 15, 2015. This would allow for needed analysis to be performed before the Council’s Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) meets in June to set the acceptable biological catch (ABC) for the fishery. The Council uses the ABC to set the ACL after considering social, economic, ecology and management uncertainties regarding the fishery. One of these uncertainties is the quality of the catch data utilized to develop the stock assessment. In this regard, the Council will work with the State of Hawai‘i and others to conduct education and outreach to explain to fishers how to fill out the Hawai‘i commercial catch report and why it needs to be done correctly.

Fish Processing Waste: Warren Dominy of Aquafeed Consulting explained the potential use of fish processing waste as fish meal, fish oil, fish silage and fish fertilizer. The results of the Council-funded study are applicable to Hawai‘i and the US Pacific Islands. Currently, wholesaler cost to dispose of fish waste on O‘ahu is more than \$100,000 annually, and statewide the estimated cost is more than \$1 million per year. An estimated 4,215 tons of fish waste, about 40 percent of the fish landings, are produced in Hawai‘i each year. Instead of filling landfills, this waste could generate up to \$3 million annually. The report is available at www.wpcouncil.org/category/upcoming-council-and-advisory-body-meetings/ and will be disseminated to interested parties.

American Samoa: The Council recommended that NMFS provide American Samoa with assistance in developing a database for its non-commercial data collection program and to provide the results of the NMFS bio-sampling program in American Samoa for the Territory to consider in catch size monitoring.

False Killer Whales: The Council suggested that NMFS explore alternative approaches to mitigate interactions between the Hawai‘i deep-set longline fishery for tuna and the pelagic stock of false killer whales as the effectiveness of the current measures may never be analyzed conclusively due to the rare nature of these interactions, which have historically ranged from 0 to less than 10 observed interactions annually for the entire fleet. Current measures outlined in the False Killer Whale Take Reduction Plan (TRP) restrict the fleet from operating in the US exclusive economic zone (EEZ, 3 to 200 miles from shore) in the southern part of the Hawaiian Islands, i.e., the Southern Exclusion Zone, when two mortalities or serious injuries from the fishery are observed occurring in the EEZ. The TRP’s five-year incremental goal is to reduce the mortalities and serious injuries to less than 10 percent of the potential biological removal (PBR) of 9.1. The Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) defines PBR as the maximum number of animals, not including natural mortalities, that may be removed from a marine mammal stock while allowing that stock to reach or maintain its optimum sustainable population. “Ten percent of the 9.1 PBR for the pelagic false killer whale is less than one,” noted Kitty Simonds, Council executive director. “The goal of the MMPA is to

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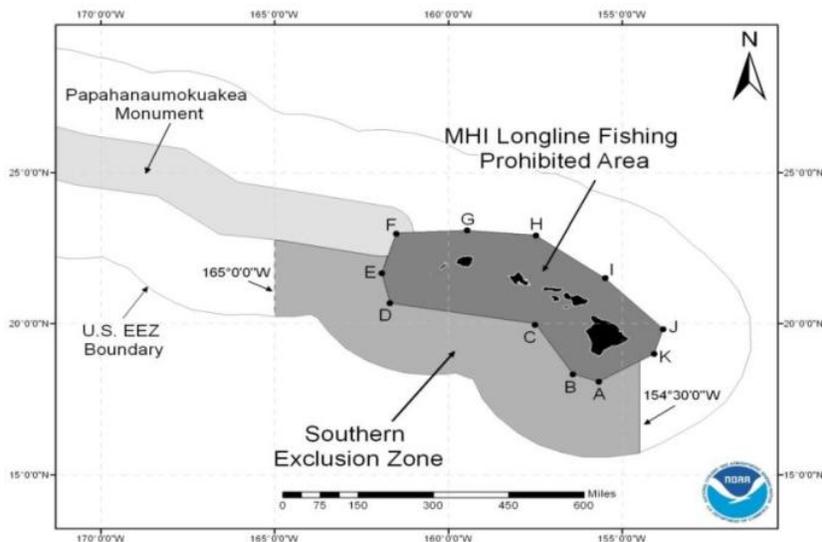
reduce mortalities to zero. Only one level of fishing can guarantee a zero level of mortality and that is zero, which is intolerable and formidably stupid considering the rare occurrence of interactions with the pelagic false killer whales in the Hawai'i longline fishery for tuna.”

Corals: Regarding coral species found in American Samoa, Guam and Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) that were recently listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act, the Council expressed concern that basic questions on distribution and abundance are not answerable at this time and that there are difficulties regarding species identification. The Council, therefore, recommended that NMFS continue to improve coral habitat maps and make such maps available to the public.

The Council meeting continued today at the Laniakea YWCA, 1040 Richards St., Honolulu, with a focus on the Mariana Archipelago, pelagic and international fisheries as well as administrative matters. For more information, go to www.wpcouncil.org/category/upcoming-council-and-advisory-body-meetings/ or call 808 522-8220.

Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council: Appointees by the Secretary of Commerce from nominees selected by American Samoa, CNMI, Guam and Hawai'i governors: Michael Duenas, Guam Fishermen's Cooperative Association (Guam) (vice chair); Edwin Ebisui (Hawai'i) (chair); Michael Goto, United Fishing Agency Ltd. (Hawai'i); John Gourley, Micronesia Environmental Services (CNMI) (vice chair); Julie Leialoha, biologist (Hawai'i); Dr. Claire Tuia Poumele, Port Administration (American Samoa); McGrew Rice, commercial and charter fisherman (Hawai'i) (vice chair); and William Sword, recreational fisherman (American Samoa) (vice chair). Designated state officials: Carty Chang, Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources; Dr. Ruth Matagi-Tofiga, American Samoa Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources; Richard Seman, CNMI Department of Lands and Natural Resources; and Mariquita Taitague, Guam Department of Agriculture. Designated federal officials: Matthew Brown, USFWS Pacific Islands Refuges and Monuments Office; David Hogan, US Department of State; RAdm Cari B. Thomas, US Coast Guard 14th District; and Michael Tosatto, NMFS Pacific Islands Regional Office.

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The False Killer Whale Take Reduction Plan restricts the Hawai'i deep-set longline fishery fleet from operating in the Southern Exclusion Zone for the remainder of the year when two mortalities or serious injuries from the fishery are observed in the EEZ.