



**WESTERN
PACIFIC
REGIONAL
FISHERY
MANAGEMENT
COUNCIL**

MEMORANDUM

TO: Interested Parties

February 21, 2017

FROM: Kitty M. Simonds

SUBJECT: Action Items for 169th Council Meeting

1) Analysis of the Fishery Ecosystem Plan Management Unit Species for Ecosystem Component Designation

2) Developing Fishing Regulations for the Monument Expansion Area in the NWHI

The Council will consider the two issues summarized below, including any public comments on this initiative. The Council is expected to take action on these issues at its 169th Council Meeting to be held between March 21 and 23 at the Ala Moana Hotel, 410 Atkinson Drive, Honolulu. Written comments should be received by the Council's Executive Director by 5:00 p.m. (Hawaii time), March 17th by mail, FAX or email as indicated below.

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1. Analysis of the Fishery Ecosystem Plan Management Unit Species for Ecosystem Component Designation

Council staff will present the preliminary analysis on the Guam Fishery Ecosystem Plan management unit species for ecosystem component designation. The Guam FEP has 2,328 species that is considered “in need of federal conservation and management measures”. This presents a challenge in complying with the requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Act which includes specification of MSY, OY, SDC, OFL, ABC, ACL, EFH, and the status needs to be reported in the SAFE report. The majority of these species are considered data limited hence the MSA requirements cannot be met. At its, 165th meeting, the Council directed staff to work with PIFSC in applying the following criteria, in addition to the National Standard regulatory guidelines, to designate ecosystem component species. The criteria are as follows:

- Parsing the catch between state/territorial catch versus federal catch;
- Proportion of the catch;
- Frequency of species detected in the time series;
- Habitat association of each MUS species and habitat distribution;
- Existence of an active fishery

The Council further recommended to use a combination of these criteria and the analysis be conducted in a multi-dimensional statistical framework. The analysis should also consider weighting the criteria and use a range of threshold levels to evaluate the species to be designated as ecosystem components.

Following this recommendation, Council staff, using data provided by PIFSC, developed a master table of the MUS and assigned the following variables for each species (samples): total catch, mean catch, total number (pieces of fish), maximum depth, proportion of habitat in federal waters, and expanded species biomass. These variables are used as data proxies for some of the criteria described in the National Standard 1 guidelines. These are criteria that the Councils can use in evaluating whether a species is in need of conservation and management. The multi-dimensional ordination technique was used to determine similarities of the samples based on the variables. Species were screened using three cut-off thresholds: 25%, 50%, and 75%. Each step of the screening process follows a decision tree. Species that do not meet the threshold level will be designated as ecosystem components.

The Council may take action on the appropriate cut-off threshold and resulting species composition, including consideration of comments and recommendations from its Scientific and Statistical Committee.

2. Developing Fishing Regulations for the Monument Expansion Area in the NWHI

Presidential Proclamation 9478 set aside an area adjacent to the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument that constituted a Monument Expansion Area (MEA). Through the proclamation, the Secretary of Commerce (NOAA), in consultation with the Secretary of Interior (USFWS), was provided responsibility for management of activities and species within the monument expansion area under the MSA and ESA. The Proclamation prohibited fishing commercial fishing activities and anchoring on any living or dead coral. However, it also allows for regulated fishing activities including Native Hawaiian practices (including exercise of traditional, customary, cultural,

subsistence, spiritual, and religious practices) within the MEA, and non-commercial fishing (provided that the fish harvested either in whole or in part, does not enter commerce through sale, barter, or trade, and that the resource is managed sustainably).

On September 23, 2016, the NMFS sent the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council (Council) a letter requesting the Council's recommendations for amending the Hawaii and Pelagic FEPs to establish appropriate fishing requirements under the MSA including the prohibition on commercial fishing and the regulation of non-commercial fishing within the monument MEA. A similar process occurred in 2009 after the designation of marine national monuments for the Pacific Remote Islands, Rose Atoll and Marianas Trench.

The Council, at its 168th Meeting, recommended staff conduct public scoping sessions with the purpose of determining what information is available for the Council to begin the process of analyzing alternatives and recommending management regulations for the MEA. Public scoping was held in December 2016 and staff has begun compiling data for analysis. A report of the public scoping sessions will be provided to the Council for its consideration and direction for developing potential fishing regulations in the MEA.