



**WESTERN  
PACIFIC  
REGIONAL  
FISHERY  
MANAGEMENT  
COUNCIL**

MEMORANDUM

September 12, 2018

TO: Interested Parties

FROM: Kitty M. Simonds

SUBJECT: Summary of Action Items for the 174<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council

- 1. Multi-Year Specification of Annual Catch Limits (ACL) for the Main Hawaiian Islands (MHI) Deepwater Shrimp, Precious Corals, and Non-Deep Seven Bottomfish Fisheries and a Single-Year ACL for the Territory Bottomfish and the MHI Kona Crab Fisheries**
- 2. Managing Loggerhead and Leatherback Sea Turtle Interactions in the Hawaii-based Shallow-set Longline Fishery**
- 3. Mandatory Electronic Reporting for Hawaii Longline Fishery**
- 4. Refining Precious Coral Essential Fish Habitat**

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The 174<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council will convene October 23-24, 2018, at the Fiesta Resort & Spa, Garapan, Saipan, CNMI and on October 26-27, 2018 at the Hilton Guam Resort & Spa, Tumon, Guam. The Council will consider and may take action on the issues summarized below, including any public comments on them. Written public comments should be received by the Council's executive director by 5 p.m. (Hawai'i time), Friday, October 12, 2018, by postal mail, fax or email as indicated below. After October 12, it is the submitter's responsibility to provide at least 40 copies of the written comment to Council staff at the Council meeting.

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## Summary of Action Items

### 1. Multi-Year Specification of Annual Catch Limits (ACL) for the Main Hawaiian Islands (MHI) Deepwater Shrimp, Precious Corals, and Non-Deep Seven Bottomfish Fisheries and a Single-Year ACL for the Territory Bottomfish and the MHI Kona Crab Fisheries

The Council will specify multi-year ACLs for MHI deep water shrimp, precious corals, and non-deep 7 bottomfish for fishing years 2019, 2020, and 2021. There are no new stock assessments for these stocks. The best scientific information available for this ACL specification continues to be the following:

- Deep water shrimp: Tagami, D.T. and S. Ralston (1988) An assessment of exploitable biomass and projection of maximum sustainable yield for *Heterocarpus laevis* in the Hawaiian Islands. Southwest Fisheries Center Administration Report H-88-14, 22 pp
- Precious corals: Black corals at the Auau Channel - Grigg, R. W. (2004). Harvesting Impacts and Invasion by an Alien Species Decrease Estimates of Black Coral Yield off Maui, Hawai'i. Pacific Science 58(1), 1-6. University of Hawai'i Press. Retrieved August 14, 2018, from Project MUSE database.

Pink/Red and Bamboo Corals in established and conditional beds: Grigg, R. W. (2002). Precious corals in Hawaii: discovery of a new bed and revised management measures for existing beds. Marine Fisheries Review, 64(1), 13-20

- Non-deep 7 bottomfish: Nadon, M.O. (2017) Stock assessment of the coral reef fishes of Hawaii, 2016. U.S. Dept. of Commerce, NOAA Technical Memorandum NOAA-TM-NMFS-PIFSC-60, 217 p

The Council will evaluate the following options:

- 1) No Action. No ACLs will be specified for fishing years 2019, 2020 and 2021
- 2) Status quo – retain the previously recommended ACLs in absence of new scientific information. The ACLs are as follows:

Management Unit Species	ABC Control Rule Tier	Risk of Overfishing	ACL (lbs)
Non-deep 7 bottomfish	3	42 percent	124,205
Deep water shrimp	4	Not applicable	250,773
Black corals at Auau Channel	4	Not applicable	5,512
Pink corals at Makapuu Bed	4	Not applicable	2,205
Pink corals at 180 Fathom Bank	4	Not applicable	489
Pink corals at Brooks Bank	4	Not applicable	979
Pink corals at Kaena Point Bed	4	Not applicable	148
Pink corals at Keahole Bed	4	Not applicable	148
Bamboo corals at Makapuu Bed	4	Not applicable	551
Bamboo corals at 180 Fathom Bank	4	Not applicable	123
Bamboo corals at Brooks Bank	4	Not applicable	245

Bamboo corals at Kaena Point Bed	4	Not applicable	37
Bamboo corals at Keahole Bed	4	Not applicable	37
Precious corals in exploratory areas	NA	Not applicable	2,205

At its 174<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Council will consider taking final action to specify the 2019, 2020 and 2021 ACLs and accountability measures for the main Hawaiian islands non-deep 7 bottomfish, deep water shrimp and precious corals to prevent overfishing of the stock.

The Council will also specify a single-year ACLs for Territory Bottomfish and the MHI Kona Crab fisheries for fishing year 2019. There are no new stock assessments available for these stocks for the Council to use for ACL specification at the 174<sup>th</sup> Council meeting. New benchmark stock assessments are available in 2019 for the Territory Bottomfish and MHI Kona Crab. The best scientific information available for this ACL specification continues to be the following:

- Territory Bottomfish: Yau A, Nadon M, Richards B, Brodziak J, Fletcher E. (2016) Stock assessment updates of the Bottomfish Management Unit species of American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and Guam in 2015 using data through 2013 . U.S. Dept. of Commerce, NOAA Technical Memorandum, NMFS-PIFSC-51, 54 p. doi:10.7289/V5PR7T0G
- MHI Kona Crab: Thomas, L., H. Lee and K. Piner. (2015) Characterization and Assessment of the Main Hawaiian Island Kona Crab (*Ranina ranina*) Fishery. Assessment conducted: 2010–2011. Report prepared October 2015. 34pp

The Council will evaluate the following options:

- 1) No Action. No ACLs will be specified for fishing years 2019
- 2) Status quo – retain the previously recommended ACLs in absence of new scientific information. The ACLs are as follows:

Management Unit Species	ABC Control Rule Tier	Risk of Overfishing	ACL (lbs)
American Samoa BMUS	2	37	106,000
Guam BMUS	2	36	66,000
CNMI BMUS	2	36	228,000
MHI Kona Crab	NA	Not applicable	3,500

At its 174<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Council will consider taking final action to specify the 2019, ACLs and accountability measures for the MHI Kona crab and Territory bottomfish fisheries to prevent overfishing of the stock.

## **2. Managing Loggerhead and Leatherback Sea Turtle Interactions in the Hawaii-based Shallow-set Longline Fishery**

The Council at its 173<sup>rd</sup> Meeting in June 2018 recommended amending the Pelagic FEP to establish a management framework for the Hawaii shallow-set longline fishery that consists of

1) annual limits on the number North Pacific loggerhead and leatherback turtle interactions consistent with the anticipated level of annual interactions that is set forth in the current valid biological opinion; and 2) individual trip interaction limits for loggerhead and leatherback turtles.

The Council also recommended specifications under the framework as follows: 1) Annual limit of 37 North Pacific loggerhead and 21 leatherback turtles; and 2) individual trip limit of 5 North Pacific loggerhead turtles.

The Council's recommendation for specifying the loggerhead and leatherback turtle annual limits was based on the anticipated level of interactions analyzed in the Biological Evaluation (BE) initiating reconsultation of the Hawaii shallow-set longline fishery under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) Section 7 consultation process. As part of its recommendation, the Council noted that it would review its recommendation if the new Biological Opinion from the ongoing consultation results in a jeopardy decision or otherwise results in a different incidental take statement for North Pacific loggerheads or leatherbacks. The draft Biological Opinion is expected to be available by October 1, 2018, and the final BiOp is expected to be completed by October 31, 2018.

At its 174<sup>th</sup> Meeting, the Council will review its specification recommendations from the 173<sup>rd</sup> Meeting for consistency with the draft BiOp and may consider taking final action to revise its recommendations based on the best available information in the draft BiOp.

### **3. Mandatory Electronic Reporting for Hawaii Longline Fishery**

In 2007, regulations were established under the Pelagics FEP to allow the optional use of electronic reporting (e-reporting) of fishing logbook information to NMFS (50 CFR §665.14(b)(1)). Associated e-reporting software certification guidelines were developed in 2009 by PIFSC in consultation with the Council; however e-reporting in the fishery has had a slow uptake. Since 2014, PIFSC and the Council have been working on increasing e-reporting by the Hawaii-based fleet, with the main objective of improving efficiency and timeliness in fisheries data collection and longline quota management.

E-reporting involves software that contains logbook data fields of the same as those in the paper logbooks. These data are entered into an electronic device (phone, tablet, and computer) and transmitted via a vessel's VMS satellite system on a daily basis. Information such as vessel name, permit number, arrival and departure information, fishing dates and times and GPS locations of longline set and haul are automatically populated, which saves time for the captain and improves data accuracy. Daily e-reporting reduces time delays associated with traditional logbook data. Currently, logbook data are submitted as a hardcopy to NMFS at the end of a vessels trip. The duration of a Hawaii longline trip is generally 3 weeks long. NMFS quality controls the data before and after the information is key-punched into fishery monitoring databases at PIFSC. Typically, there is at least a 3-week delay for the logbook information to be collected, quality controlled, entered and stored. This delay in data collection and processing complicates estimating bigeye tuna catches to monitor quotas and forecasting when these quotas will reach their respective limits in the WCPO and EPO. Daily transmissions of longline fishing data will help fishery scientists improve the timeliness and accuracy of tracking of fishing quotas and provide fishery managers, fishery participants, and the public with more timely information.

After several years of development, PIFSC now has tablets available equipped with approved logbook software available for the entire Hawaii longline fleet. Based on this development, the Council, at its 174th meeting in October will consider amending the Pelagics FEP to mandate the use of e-reporting for vessels participating under the Hawaii longline limited entry permit program. If mandated, there may be an initial period where costs will be funded by NMFS, but future annual software subscriptions and data transmission costs could be borne on fishery participants. Initial action on this matter and other related issues will be discussed at the October Council meeting.

#### **4. Refining Precious Coral Essential Fish Habitat**

The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council is considering whether new information warrants update of its essential fish habitat (EFH) descriptions for precious corals in the Western Pacific Region. EFH information was reviewed through the 2015 and 2016 Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) report cycles and will be provided to the Council in the form of options to consider for management.

New observations of precious corals have occurred throughout the region, with research concentrated in the Hawaiian Archipelago. While observations in the territories and of the larval phase of precious corals are rare or nonexistent, new information exists to refine the habitat characteristics and geographic extent of deep and shallow-water precious coral EFH in the Hawaiian Archipelago. Narrative information on which the EFH designations are based and information to fulfill the EFH requirements of fishery management plans may also be used to update the archipelagic Fishery Ecosystem Plans (FEPs). The refinement of precious corals EFH is framed in three separate actions: refinement of deep-water species complex EFH; refinement of shallow-water precious coral species complex EFH; and update of the narrative information.

##### ***Refinement of deep-water species complex EFH***

EFH for deep-water precious coral species is six known beds of precious corals, at Keāhole Point, Makapu‘u, Ka‘ena Point, Westpac Bed, Brooks Bank, and 180 Fathom Bank. Observations and research since 1999 show that other beds may exist throughout the Hawaiian Archipelago. The options the Council will consider are:

- Keep the same EFH designation; describe EFH as all hard substrate within the 200 to 600 m isobaths throughout the EEZ;
- Update the current designation with the best available scientific information on the geographic extent of the bed; or
- Update the current designations and add newly discovered beds to the EFH designation.

##### ***Refinement of shallow-water precious coral species complex EFH***

EFH for shallow-water precious corals is between Miloli‘i and South Point on Hawai‘i, ‘Au‘au Channel between Maui and Lāna‘i and the southern border of Kaua‘i. Mapping data in the depth range of shallow-water black corals, 20 and 120 m, is limited. The options the Council will consider for update of EFH are:

- Keep the same EFH designation; or
- Provide habitat characteristics and the geographic extent of EFH.

***Update of the existing EFH narrative information in the FEPs***

Narrative information in the FEPs with respect to precious corals EFH includes species descriptions, upon which EFH and HAPC designations are based; fishing activities that may adversely affect EFH; prey species; and research and information needs. The options the Council will consider are:

- Update the FEPs based on the new information; or
- Not update the FEPs based on the new information.

The Council may choose to initiate action on any or all of the three separate actions at its 174<sup>th</sup> Meeting in October. Should the Council choose to take action, an amendment to the FEPs would be developed for final action at a future Council Meeting.