



**WESTERN  
PACIFIC  
REGIONAL  
FISHERY  
MANAGEMENT  
COUNCIL**

MEMORANDUM

September 13, 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) Deep Water 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 Hawai'i-Based Shallow-Set Longline Fishery**
- 3. Mandatory Electronic Reporting for Hawai'i 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, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (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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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 Management Unit Species (BMUS) 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., Lee H., and Piner K. 2015. Characterization and Assessment of the Main Hawaiian Island Kona Crab (*Ranina ranina*) Fishery. Assessment conducted: 2010–2011. Report prepared October 2015, 34.

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

## 2. Managing Loggerhead and Leatherback Sea Turtle Interactions in the Hawai`i-Based Shallow-Set Longline Fishery

The Council at its 173<sup>rd</sup> Meeting in June 2018 recommended amending the Pelagic Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP) to establish a management framework for the Hawai`i 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 (BiOp) 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 BiOp 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 BiOp is expected to be available by October 1, 2018, and the final BiOp is expected to be completed by October 31, 2018.

New observations of precious corals have occurred throughout the region, with research concentrated in the Hawai'i 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 Hawai'i 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 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. Since 1999, observations and research show that other beds may exist throughout the Hawai'i Archipelago. The options the Council will consider are as follows:

- 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 as follows:

- 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 Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (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.