



**WESTERN
PACIFIC
REGIONAL
FISHERY
MANAGEMENT
COUNCIL**

MEMORANDUM

April 8, 2019

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: *Kitty*
Kitty M. Simonds

SUBJECT: Summary of Action Item for the 177th meeting of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council

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

The 177th meeting of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council will convene April 12, 2019, via teleconference. 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), April 10, 2019, by postal mail, fax or email as indicated below. Opportunities to present oral public comment will be provided during the 177th Council meeting.

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Summary of Action Item

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

The Council at its 173rd 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 limits 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 new BiOp was originally scheduled to be completed by October 31, 2018, but the draft was not completed in time for the October SSC and Council meeting. Following the October meetings, PIRO set a new timeline to deliver the draft BiOp by January 31, 2019, and a final BiOp by February 28, 2019. Due to the federal government shutdown, draft BiOp timeline was further delayed to March 25, 2019.

At its October 2018 meeting, the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) received a presentation from the Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center (PIFSC) on the population viability analysis (PVA) for loggerhead and leatherback turtles prepared for the ongoing Section 7 consultation. The modeling was conducted in response to a request by the Pacific Islands Regional Office (PIRO) Protected Resources Division for the purpose of examining the long-term viability of the species. PVA results indicate that the North Pacific loggerhead population has a mean estimated population growth rate of 2.4%, while the Western Pacific leatherback turtle population has a mean estimated population growth rate of -5.3%. The growth rates reflect long-term population trends based on nesting beach data representing approximately 52% of the North Pacific loggerhead turtle population and approximately 85% of the Western Pacific leatherback turtle population.

The Council at its 174th Meeting in October 2018 reviewed the Approach to the Assessment for the Biological Opinion and considered the SSC's report regarding the PVA. The Council recommended convening an interim Council meeting, if needed, to review draft BiOp and consider any revisions to June 2018 recommendations based on the BiOp, and stated that it will reconsider a specification of leatherback individual trip limits if necessary.

The Council convened its 175th Meeting on December 17, 2018, to consider final action on additional mitigation measures for the Western Pacific leatherback turtles in advance of the draft BiOp completion, taking into consideration the results of the PVA model indicating a continuing long-term declining trend of the population. The Council deferred action until the draft Biological Opinion and more complete information on the impacts of the fishery on the Western Pacific leatherback turtles are available to fully inform the Council decision.

At its 177th Meeting, the Council will review its recommendations on the management framework from the 173rd Meeting for consistency with the draft BiOp and may consider taking final action on the management framework.