



**WESTERN  
PACIFIC  
REGIONAL  
FISHERY  
MANAGEMENT  
COUNCIL**

MEMORANDUM

November 28, 2018

TO: Interested Parties

FROM:  Kitty M. Simonds

SUBJECT: Summary of Action Item for the 175<sup>th</sup> 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**

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The 175<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council will convene December 17, 2018, 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), December 13, 2018, by postal mail, fax or email as indicated below. Opportunities to present oral public comment will be provided during the 175<sup>th</sup> 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 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 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 draft BiOp was expected to be available by October 1, 2018. However, completion of the draft BiOp was delayed and is now expected to be available by January 31, 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 174<sup>th</sup> 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.

At its 175<sup>th</sup> Meeting, the Council will consider taking final action on additional mitigation measures for the Western Pacific leatherback turtles under the management framework recommended at the 173<sup>rd</sup> Meeting, taking into consideration the results of the PVA model indicating a continuing long-term declining trend of the population.