




WESTERN
PACIFIC
REGIONAL
FISHERY
MANAGEMENT
COUNCIL

MEMORANDUM

September 28, 2021

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Kitty M. Simonds 
SUBJECT: Summary of Action Items for the 188th Meeting of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council

1. American Samoa Bottomfish Management Unit Species Rebuilding Plan

The 188th meeting of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council will convene October 19, 2021, by web conference (WebEx) with host sites at the following locations:

- Tedi of Samoa Building, Suite 208B, Fagatogo Village, American Samoa
- Cliff Pointe, 304 W. O'Brien Drive, Hagatña, Guam
- BRI Building, Suite 205, Kopa Di Oru St. Garapan, Saipan, CNMI

The WebEx link is <https://tinyurl.com/188thCM> (if prompted, enter event number: 2469 054 2743; password: 188CMmtg).

The Council will consider and may take action on the issues summarized below, including any public comments on them. Written public comments on final action items should be received by the Council's executive director by 5 p.m. (HST), Friday, October 15, 2021, by postal mail, fax or email as indicated below.

Instructions for connecting to the WebEx and providing oral public comments during the meeting will be posted on the Council website at https://www.wpcouncil.org/event/188th-council-virtual-meeting/?instance_id=271.

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Summary of Action Items at the 188th Council Meeting

1. American Samoa Bottomfish Management Unit Species Rebuilding Plan (Final Action)

In February 2020, NMFS informed the Council about the change in stock status for the American Samoa bottomfish management unit species complex from not overfished and not subject to overfishing to overfished and subject to overfishing. The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) and National Standard 1 requires the Council to develop a rebuilding plan and submit the amendment package within 15 months from notification. This is the first rebuilding plan for American Samoa. For one year, the Council has worked with NMFS and the territory of American Samoa to develop a rebuilding plan to comply with MSA section 304(e)(3) and implementing regulations at 50 CFR 600.310(j)(2). An interim catch limit was implemented in the American Samoa bottomfish fishery through an interim measure emergency rule making to curb the impact of the change in stock status and sudden drop in the annual catch limit (ACL) (85 FR 73003, Nov. 16, 2020). This level of catch is 13,000 pounds, with the possibility of extension if this is not reached.

The biomass projection is now based on the most recent catch data in the American Samoa FEP Annual Stock Assessment Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) Report published in June 2021. The catch for 2020 was below the interim catch limit and is no longer based on an estimate as it was done in the January 2021 projection.

The Council at its 188th meeting will consider taking final action on the American Samoa Rebuilding Plan and will consider the following alternatives:

- 1) Status quo – continue to utilize an ACL of 13,000 pounds with an in-season accountability measure (AM).
- 2) Implement an ACL of 1,500 pounds with an in-season AM and higher performance standard that would close the federal waters until measures are in place to control the additional source of fishing mortality. If the total catch is maintained below this level, the bottomfish stock will be rebuilt in 9 years.
- 3) Apply a temporary moratorium on bottomfish fishing in federal waters. If the territory is able to apply a similar moratorium in territorial waters, the bottomfish stock will be rebuilt in 8 years.
- 4) Implement an ACL of 5,000 pounds with an in-season AM and higher performance standard that would close the federal waters until measures are in place to control the additional source of fishing mortality. If the total catch is maintained below this level, the bottomfish stock will be rebuilt in 10 years