



Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council

Ecosystem-Based Management of Fisheries in the US Pacific Islands

The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council manages the fisheries in the United States exclusive economic zone (EEZ), 3 to 200 nautical miles (nm) around the State of Hawaii; the Territories of American Samoa, Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI); and the US Pacific remote island areas (PRIAs) – an area of nearly 1.5 million square nm. The Council is one of eight U.S. regional councils established under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) in 1976, the preeminent law governing management of the nation's living marine resources.

Council decision-making emphasizes public participation and involvement of fisheries management at the local level. Council recommendations are based on the best available scientific information, transmitted to the Secretary of Commerce for approval, implemented by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and enforced by the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement, US Coast Guard and local enforcement agencies.

The Council's 16 members include fishery heads from Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa and CNMI; one individual from each area and four at-large representatives nominated by the respective governor and selected by the Commerce Secretary; and representatives from NMFS, US Fish and Wildlife Service, US Coast Guard and the State Department.

Achievement Highlights

1983 Precious Corals Fishery Management Plan (FMP): Bans bottom trawling and destructive, non-selective gear; minimum sizes and quotas; no-take marine protected areas (MPAs) in Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI) and around the PRIAs

1983 Crustaceans FMP: NWHI marine conservation zone; limited entry; gear restrictions to protect monk seals and release bycatch and undersized catch; vessel size limit; risk-based bank-specific quotas (13% of the exploitable biomass with 10% risk of overfishing); real-time reporting, vessel monitoring system (VMS), observers

1984, 2000, 2003 International marine debris conferences

1986 Bottomfish and Seamount Groundfish FMP: Bans bottom trawling and destructive gear; restricts large commercial fishing vessels around Guam, CNMI and NWHI; Hancock Seamount groundfish moratorium; NWHI limited entry and observers; NWHI and main Hawaiian Islands (MHI) quotas; MHI commercial and non-commercial permit and reporting; CNMI VMS requirements for >40-foot vessels

1987 Pelagic FMP: Bans drift gillnetting prior to Congress passing the Driftnet Impact Monitoring Assessment & Control Act; Hawaii and American Samoa limited entry programs; spatial management near coastal areas—e.g., NWHI Protected Species Zone—to minimize protected species impacts and user conflicts; develops automated satellite VMS and implements its first application worldwide for fishing vessels; Hawaii longline fishery 94% compliance to the UN FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries; longline observer coverage (100% Hawaii swordfish trips, 20% Hawaii tuna trips, 8-10% American Samoa trips); mandatory closure after 17 loggerhead or 16 leatherback sea turtle interactions for Hawaii longline swordfish fishery

1998 First International Black-Footed Albatross Population Workshop

1999 Recreational Fishing Data Task Force

1999-2000 Fourth, Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Sessions of the Multilateral High-Level Conference (MHLC) for the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Central and Western Pacific Ocean, which entered into force in June, establishing the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission

2001 Coral Reef Ecosystem FMP. First ecosystem plan for fisheries in the US

2002 2nd International Fishers Forums (IFF) in Hawaii and IFF3, 4 and 5 in Japan 2005, Costa Rica 2007 and Taiwan 2010 to transfer best practices to reduce bycatch and other issues

2007 Fishery Ecosystem Plans (FEPs) shifts management focus from a species-based to a place-based conservation ethic. Forms Regional Ecosystem Advisory Committees on each archipelago

2005 Fisheries Legislation and Community-Based Fisheries Management Workshop, with support from FAO and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community

2006 First Workshop on South Pacific Albacore Longline Fisheries

2007 International Pacific Marine Educators conference, launching the International Pacific Marine Educators Network (IPMEN) and biennial conferences in Australia 2008, Fiji 2010, Chile 2012, Japan 2014 and Indonesia 2016

2007 Quota based management program for Main Hawaiian Island "Deep-7" bottomfish fishery requiring complimentary and coordinated Federal and State regulatory changes

2010 Annual catch limits (ACLs) for 115 management unit species/species groups/stock complexes

2011 ACL Workshop for the Data Limited Coral Reef Fisheries

2012, 2014 First Stewards Conferences for coastal peoples to address climate change

2014 Pacific Pelagic FEP Amendment 7 authorizes American Samoa, Guam and CNMI to allocate a portion of its specified catch or effort limit to US fishing vessels through a specified fishing agreement

2014 International workshop on Disproportionate Burden of WCPFC Conservation and Management Measures

2015 International Workshops on Purse-Seine Bigeye Management in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean

2015 Pelagic and Archipelagic Annual Reports expanded to include protected species information, social and cultural data, marine planning, habitat, and climate change indicators

2015 Pacific Island Fisheries Research Program to enhance research opportunities to address the Council's 5 year research priorities

