



WPRFMC Recommendations for Fishing Regulations in the Monument Expansion Area

Regarding NWHI fishing regulations for the Monument Expansion Area, the Council recommended amending the Hawaii and Pelagic Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP) to prohibit commercial fishing and allow for sustainable non-commercial fishing and Native Hawaiian subsistence fishing practices in the Monument Expansion Area (MEA), including bringing back resources to the Main Hawaiian Islands (MHI). Fishing regulations would include:

- **Commercial Fishing Prohibition:** Commercial fishing as defined in 50 CFR 665 – Western Pacific Fisheries would be prohibited in the MEA.
- **Allowable Species:** Only Hawaii bottomfish management unit species (MUS) as defined at [50 CFR 665.201](#) and western Pacific pelagic MUS as defined at [50 CFR 665.800](#) would be allowed to be caught in the MEA. Fishing for all other Hawaii FEP MUS and Hawaii FEP ecosystem component species (ECS), as defined in [50 CFR 665 - Subpart C, Hawaii Fisheries](#) would be prohibited.
- **Allowable Gear Types:** Only handline, hook and line, rod and reel and spear as authorized at [50 CFR 600.725 – General Prohibitions](#) would be allowed to be used to catch bottomfish MUS and pelagic MUS in the MEA. All other gear types, including longline, bottom set longline, trawl and poisons would be prohibited from use in the MEA.
- **Catch Limits:** Establish a preliminary annual catch limit for bottomfish MUS at 350,000 lbs. and pelagic MUS at 180,000 lbs. for the MEA. NMFS and the Council would monitor catches from within the original monument authorized by NOAA, and in the MEA authorized by NMFS towards this limit. As an accountability measure (AM), if NMFS forecasts the limit would be reached NMFS would prohibit all fishing in the MEA for the remainder of the fishing year.
- NMFS and the Council will annually report fishery performance (e.g., number of permits issued, catch and effort information, etc.) in the annual Hawaii FEP and Pelagics FEP Stock Assessment and Fisheries Evaluation (SAFE) Reports. NMFS and the Council will also evaluate fishery performance after an appropriate time not to exceed 5 years from the effective date of the fishery regulations and will continue to conduct evaluations as necessary in order to ensure the resources are managed sustainably. Such evaluations will take into consideration the best scientific information available and evaluate whether additional specific actions are necessary for the proper care and management of monument objects, including fishery resources, consistent with Proclamation 9478.
- **Non-Commercial Fishing Permit and Reporting:** Any person engaging in non-commercial fishing in the MEA must obtain a MEA non-commercial fishing permit and comply with reporting and record keeping requirements codified at [50 CFR 665.14 – Reporting and Recordkeeping](#), as required for all Magnuson-Stevens Act permits issued by NMFS.
- **Disposition of Non-Commercial Catch:** Bottomfish MUS and pelagic MUS legally caught by an individual holding a valid MEA non-commercial fishing permit may be brought back to the MHI for consumption, including community sharing. However, fish caught from within the MEA under this permit cannot enter commerce through sale, barter, or trade and may not recoup costs associated with the trip to the MEA.
- **Native Hawaiian Subsistence Practices Fishing Permit Application Process:** An applicant for a Native Hawaiian Subsistence Practices Permit must complete and submit an application to NMFS that includes, but is not limited to a statement describing the objectives of the fishing

activity for which a permit is needed, including a general description of the expected disposition of the resources harvested under the permit. If cost recovery is requested through sale, the application must include estimated costs for fuel and ice, and other trip costs to make a trip from the main Hawaiian Islands to the MEA along with a statement explaining why cost recovery is necessary for the intended action.

- If an application contains all of the required information, NMFS will forward copies of the application to the Council, the USFWS, the ONMS, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA), and the Chair of the Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources. The Council may consult with any of its Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App. 2) exempt advisory bodies established pursuant to Section 302(g) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act to provide comments on the application. NMFS will also make the permit application available for public review for no less than 30 days.
- Within 30 days following receipt of a complete application, NMFS will consult with the Council through its Executive Director, and the USFWS, NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS), Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA), and the Chair of the Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) concerning the permit application and will receive their recommendations for approval or disapproval of the application.
- Disposition of Native Hawaiian Subsistence Practices Catch: Bottomfish MUS and Pelagic MUS legally caught by an individual holding a valid MEA Native Hawaiian Subsistence Practices fishing permit may bring catch back to the main Hawaiian Islands for consumption, including community sharing, barter and trade. Additionally, permittees may request NMFS consider the ability to recover costs through sale of catch associated with the trip to the MEA.
- Trip Mixing: To ensure fish caught from inside the MEA for non-commercial and Native Hawaiian practices are not commingled with fish caught commercially seaward of the MEA, NMFS and the Council would prohibit any person from fishing both inside and outside the MEA on the same trip. Similarly, to ensure fish caught inside the original monument area for sustenance purposes are not commingled with fish caught in the MEA for non-commercial and Native Hawaiian practices and sharing in the MHI, NMFS and the Council would prohibit any person from engaging in both non-commercial fishing inside and outside the MEA as well as sustenance fishing in the original monument area on the same trip. However, sustenance fishing in the original monument and MEA on the same trip shall not be prohibited.
- Observer and VMS Requirements: All fishing vessels must carry an activated and functioning NOAA-provided VMS unit on board at all times whenever the vessel is in the Monument, and an observer if directed to do so by NMFS.
- Notification: Permit holders must notify NMFS prior to making any fishing trip to the MEA so NMFS may place a VMS unit and/or an observer on board as directed. Additionally, permit holders must contact NMFS at least 24 hours before landing any catch harvested under an MEA permit, and report the port and the approximate date and time at which the catch will be landed.
- Other Requirements: All fishing vessels must also comply with regulations codified at 50 CFR 665 – Western Pacific Fisheries applicable in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) comprising the MEA.