



WESTERN
PACIFIC
REGIONAL
FISHERY
MANAGEMENT
COUNCIL

MEMORANDUM

August 19, 2025

TO: Interested Parties

FROM: *Kitty*
Kitty M. Simonds

SUBJECT: Summary of Action Items for the 204th Meeting of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council

- 1. ACL Specifications for CNMI BMUS for 2026 to 2029**
 - 2. Recommendations for Commercial Fishing Regulations in the Pacific Islands Heritage Marine National Monument Expansion Area**
-

The 204th meeting of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council will convene in person September 16-17, 2025, at the Ala Moana Hotel, Garden Lanai, Honolulu, HI. A remote participation option will be available by web conference (Webex).

The Webex link is <https://tinyurl.com/204CouncilMtg> (if prompted, enter event number: 2861 677 9884; password: CM204mtg). Specific information on joining the meeting, 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/204th-council-meeting>.

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), Thursday, September 11, 2025, via postal mail, fax or email as indicated below.

Mail: Ms. Kitty M. Simonds, Executive Director
Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council
1164 Bishop St., Suite 1400
Honolulu, HI 96813

FAX: (808) 522-8226

E-mail: info@wpcouncil.org

Summary of Action Items at the 204th Council Meeting

1. ACL Specifications for CNMI BMUS for 2026 to 2029 (Initial Action)

At its 203rd meeting in June 2025, the Council received the 2025 Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) bottomfish management unit species (BMUS) stock assessment update (Bohaboy and Matthews 2025) that found the fishery was not overfished or experiencing overfishing. The stock assessment was updated with boat-based creel survey interviews from 2018 to 2023. The Council accepted it as the best scientific information available on the status of the fishery and directed staff to develop potential acceptable biological catches (ABCs) and annual catch limits (ACLs) for initial action at the 204th meeting.

The current ACL and annual catch target (ACT) for fishing years 2024 to 2025 were specified at a 39% and 34% risk of overfishing, respectively. This accounts for the assessment information, uncertainty characterization, stock status, productivity and susceptibility and the social, economic, ecological and management uncertainties related to the CNMI BMUS fishery. The catch associated with the ACL and ACT is 82,000 pounds and 75,000 pounds, respectively. The average catch from the commercial and non-commercial sectors in fishing years 2021 to 2023 was 44,054 pounds, which is 54% of the ACL.

At its 204th meeting, the Council will consider taking initial action on an option to specify ACLs and accountability measures (AMs) for the CNMI BMUS fishery for fishing years 2026 to 2029. The Council will consider the following options:

1. No Action, do not specify ACLs and AMs
2. Status quo, specify an ACL and ACT of 82,000 lbs and 74,000 lbs (Langseth et al. 2019)
3. Specify ACL (72,000 lbs) and ACT (66,000 lbs) based on the revised P* and SEEM scores (P*=40% and 35%)
4. Specify ACL (72,000 lbs) and ACT (66,000 lbs) below the revised P* and SEEM scores (P*<40% and 35%)

2. Recommendations for Commercial Fishing Regulations in the Pacific Islands Heritage Marine National Monument Expansion Area (Initial Action)

On April 17, 2025, President Donald Trump issued Presidential Proclamation 10918, “Unleashing American Commercial Fishing in the Pacific,” in which the President found that “managed commercial fishing would not put objects of scientific and historic interest within the PRIMNM at risk” and that “a prohibition on commercial fishing is not, at this time, necessary for the proper care and management of the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument (PRIMNM, since changed to Pacific Islands Heritage Marine National Monument via Presidential Memorandum January 2, 2025) or the objects of historic or scientific interest therein.” The Proclamation states that the Secretary of Commerce shall not prohibit commercial fishing within 50-200 nm of the boundaries of the monument. It also directs the Secretary of Commerce, through NOAA, to expeditiously publish new proposed rules in the *Federal Register* to amend or repeal all burdensome regulations that restrict commercial fishing in the PRIMNM.

In order to meet the Proclamation, NOAA will need to publish new proposed rules regarding commercial fishing in the expanded areas of the Pacific Islands Heritage Marine National Monument (PIHMNM) including Wake and Johnston Atolls and Jarvis Island. Fishing regulations are promulgated through the process described in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery

Conservation and Management Act, and therefore the Council may provide recommendations on how to address the Proclamation's repeal of commercial fishing within the PIHMNM expansion area.

Currently, commercial fishing is prohibited in 50-200 nm around Wake, Johnston, and Jarvis as required by Presidential Proclamations 9173 (September 25, 2014). Prior to its prohibition, commercial fishing was allowed by permit for bottomfish, precious corals, crustaceans, pelagic species, and coral reef fisheries. Those regulations were previously codified under the Council's Pacific Remote Island Areas Fishery Ecosystem Plan (PRIA FEP) and Pacific Pelagic FEP. Those permits and regulations continue to exist for the other areas of the PRIA (Palmyra Atoll, Kingman Reef, and Howland and Baker Islands) from 50-200 nm.

At its 204th meeting, the Council will consider recommendations for fishing regulations in the expansion area of the PIHMNM including Wake, Jarvis and Johnston. The Council may determine if any risk is posed to the monument from commercial fishing, identify any potential conservation and management measures needed to minimize or eliminate the risk, and ascertain the types of, and potential limits, of commercial fishing that may be allowed through regulation. Initial options that the Council may consider include:

- a. No Action – Keep the existing prohibitions on commercial fishing;
- b. Remove all commercial fishing prohibitions within the 50-200 nm area of Wake, Jarvis and Johnston;
- c. Remove prohibitions but limit commercial fishing within the 50-200 nm area of Wake, Jarvis and Johnston through additional conservation and management measures.