



WESTERN  
PACIFIC  
REGIONAL  
FISHERY  
MANAGEMENT  
COUNCIL

MEMORANDUM

February 23, 2026

TO: Interested Parties

FROM: Kitty M. Simonds

SUBJECT: Summary of Action Items for the 206<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council

- 1. ACL Specifications for MHI Kona Crab for 2027-2030**
  - 2. Recommendations for Commercial Fishing Regulations in the Pacific Islands Heritage Marine National Monument Expansion Area**
  - 3. Recommendations for Commercial Fishing Regulations in the Papahānaumokuākea, Rose Atoll, and Marianas Trench Marine National Monuments**
  - 4. Review of the Guam, CNMI, and PRIA Marine Conservation Plans**
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The 206th meeting of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council (Council) will convene in person March 24-26, 2026, at the Ala Moana Hotel, Hibiscus Ballroom, Honolulu, HI. A remote participation option will be available by web conference (Webex).

The Webex link is <https://tinyurl.com/206CouncilMtg> (if prompted, enter event number: 2864 435 3423; password: CM206mtg). 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/206th-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, March 19, 2026, via postal mail, fax or email as indicated below.

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## Summary of Action Items at the 206th Council Meeting

### 1. ACL Specifications for MHI Kona Crab for 2027 to 2030 (Initial Action)

The Council will consider specifying multi-year harvest limits for the main Hawaiian Islands (MHI) Kona crab for fishing years 2027-2030. The best scientific information available is the 2019 benchmark stock assessment with catch projection to 2026<sup>1</sup>. Based on 2019 stock assessment, the maximum sustainable yield was estimated to be at 73,609 pounds and the overfishing limit at 33,989 pounds. In 2019, the Council's P\* (Risk of Overfishing) and SEEM (Social, Economic, Ecological and Management Uncertainty) Working Groups and the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) evaluated the scientific, social, ecological, economic, and management uncertainties and recommended a risk level to the Council. The risk of overfishing informs the Council's consideration of annual catch limit (ACL) specification, and the management uncertainty informs the Council's consideration in setting the annual catch target (ACT).

At its 206<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Council will review the following options and consider taking initial action to specify harvest limits and the accountability measures that will prevent the fishery from overfishing the stock.

- 1) No Action. No harvest limits will be specified for fishing years 2027-2030.
- 2) Specify an ACL at 30,802 pounds and ACT at 25,491 pounds (equal to the 2023–2026 values)
- 3) Specify an ACL at 30,802 pounds and ACT at 28,324 pounds (ACT higher than the 2023–2026 level).

### 2. Recommendations for Commercial Fishing Regulations in the Pacific Islands Heritage Marine National Monument Expansion Area (Final 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 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 (MSA), and therefore the Council may provide recommendations on how to address the Proclamation's repeal of commercial fishing within the PIHMNM expansion area.

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<sup>1</sup> Kapur MR, Fitchett MD, Yau AJ, Carvalho F. 2019. 2018 Benchmark Stock Assessment of Main Hawaiian Islands Kona Crab. NOAA Tech Memo. NMFS-PIFSC-77, 114 p. doi:10.25923/7wf2-f040

Currently, commercial fishing is prohibited in 50-200 nm around Wake, Johnston, and Jarvis as required by Presidential Proclamation 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 206<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Council will consider final action on 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. Final alternatives that the Council may consider include:

- 1) No Action – Keep the existing prohibitions on commercial fishing;
- 2) Remove all commercial fishing prohibitions within the 50-200 nm area of Wake, Jarvis and Johnston;
- 3) Remove all commercial fishing prohibitions within the 50-200 nm area of Wake, Jarvis and Johnston and include enhanced management measures.

### **3. Recommendations for Commercial Fishing Regulations in the Papahānaumokuākea, Rose Atoll, and Marianas Trench Marine National Monuments (Final Action)**

On April 17, 2025, President Trump issued Executive Order 14276, “Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness,” that directed the Secretaries of Commerce and the Interior to review existing restrictions on commercial fishing in marine national monuments and other federally protected marine areas. The order called for recommendations to promote sustainable U.S. seafood production while maintaining conservation objectives. In response, at its 204<sup>th</sup> Meeting in September 2025, the Council endorsed a letter to the Secretary of Commerce providing an analysis and recommendations in accordance with Section 4(h) of EO 14276. The Council also directed staff to initiate an analysis of options to remove commercial fishing prohibitions and evaluate potential impacts to resources in the remaining marine national monuments should the Administration remove the fishing prohibitions.

A directive that removes the commercial fishing prohibitions would require the Council to consider the current fisheries management framework for the Marianas Trench (MTMNM), Papahānaumokuākea (PMNM), and Rose Atoll Marine National Monuments (RAMNM) under the authorities of the MSA. A restoration of commercial fishing would necessitate the removal of current commercial fishing prohibitions in the area through an amendment to the Council’s Fishery Ecosystem Plans (FEPs). The Council may also review existing fishing regulations for the area and provide updated management measures that reflect the current and potential fishing in the area.

In order to prepare for a potential decision on commercial fishing in the marine national monuments, the Council, at its 206<sup>th</sup> meeting, may recommend revising fishing regulations in the RAMNM, PMNM, and MTMNM in order to expedite the process. The Council will review options that may include:

- 1) No Action - Do not remove commercial fishing prohibitions;
- 2) Restore Regulated Access and Manage **ALL** Fishing Under Existing MSA Regulations (MTMNM 0-50 nm, RAMNM 12-50 nm, PMNM/Expansion 3-200 nm)
- 3) Restore Regulated Access and Manage **Pelagic and Bottomfish Fishing** Under Existing MSA Regulations (MTMNM 0–50 nm, RAMNM 12–50 nm, PMNM/Expansion 3–200 nm).

#### **4. Review of the Guam, CNMI and PRIA Marine Conservation Plans**

Section 204(e) of the MSA authorizes the Secretary of State, with the concurrence of the Secretary of Commerce and in consultation with the Council, to negotiate and enter into a Pacific Insular Area Fishery Agreement (PIAFA). A PIAFA would allow foreign fishing within the 200-mile U.S. exclusive economic zone (EEZ) around American Samoa, the CNMI, Guam or the PRIA with the concurrence of, and in consultation with, the applicable governors. According to the MSA, before entering into a PIAFA, the appropriate governor, with the concurrence of the Council, must develop a three-year MCP providing details on uses for any funds collected by the Secretary under the PIAFA.

In addition to PIAFA funds, the MSA provides that fines and penalties of violations by foreign vessels occurring within the EEZ around the Pacific Insular Areas, including sums collected from forfeiture and disposition or sale of property seized by the federal government, are to be deposited into the applicable local government's treasury and to be used to implement the respective MCP. Also authorized by the MSA is the Western Pacific Sustainable Fisheries Fund, which allows the Council to use funds to implement MCP projects.

The MSA requires that the MCPs shall be consistent with the Council's FEPs. The MSA also requires that the MCP include, but not be limited to, the following conservation and management objectives:

- i. Pacific Insular Area observer programs, or other monitoring programs, that the Secretary determines are adequate to monitor the harvest, bycatch and compliance with the laws of the United States by foreign fishing vessels that fish under Pacific Insular Area fishing agreements;
- ii. Conduct of marine and fisheries research, including development of systems for information collection, analysis, evaluation and reporting;
- iii. Conservation, education and enforcement activities related to marine and coastal management, such as living marine resource assessments, habitat monitoring and coastal studies;
- iv. Education and training in the development and implementation of sustainable marine resources development projects, scientific research, and conservation strategies; and
- v. Western Pacific community-based demonstration projects under section 112(b) of the Sustainable Fisheries Act and other coastal improvement projects to foster and promote the management, conservation and economic enhancement of the Pacific Insular Areas.

The MCPs for Guam, CNMI and PRIA expire in August 2026. At its 206<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Council will review the MCPs for concurrence and approval. After review by the Council, the MCPs are transmitted to the Secretary of Commerce for approval. If approved by the Council and Secretary of Commerce, the MCPs are valid for three years; however, an MCP can be modified at any time and resubmitted for approval.