



Managers Finalize Recommendations on Military Impacts on Guam and CNMI Fishing Communities, 2009-2010 Hawaii Bottomfish Quota, Hancock Seamount Groundfish

KAILUA-KONA (24 July 2009) The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, meeting this week at the King Kamehameha Beach Hotel in Kailua-Kona, Hawaii, recommended that the US Department of Defense and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) address the impacts of increased military activities on fishing communities in Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI).

The Council recommended that the Defense Department reconsider its proposed extension of the current fishing area closure from 0 to 3 miles offshore around Farallon de Medinilla (FDM) to 0 to 10 miles offshore. The US Navy uses the island for military and bombing exercises. FDM is located 45 miles from Saipan, the largest island and capital of CNMI, and is an important bottomfish ground for local fishermen. The Council also recommended that the Defense Department consider opening waters around FDM to seasonal fishing during the calm season (March-June) and provide additional notifications of area closures for live fire training through additional media outlets in both Guam and CNMI.

Regarding the ongoing military buildup on Guam, the Council recommended that NMFS investigate the impacts to local fishing communities and develop a mitigation and compensation plan, including fish aggregation device and fishery development programs, to assist those affected. About 8,000 US marines and 9,000 dependents are expected to relocate to Guam by 2014. The military buildup will completely transform the US territory as the current population of approximately 170,000 jumps to a projected 225,000 in a few short years. Included among the 55,000 additional people will be workers to develop needed infrastructure, including thousands of immigrants expected to come principally from Asian countries, allowed to work temporarily in Guam and CNMI through a special immigration exemption approved by Congress.

Among the other recommendations by the Council are the following:

- **Main Hawaiian Islands (MHI) Bottomfish:** To set the total allowable catch (TAC) of the seven species of deepwater bottomfish (opakapaka, onaga, ehu, kalekale, gindai, lehi and hapuupu) for the 2009-2010 season at 254,050 pounds. While the TAC applies to the commercial fishery only, if it is reached prior to the end of the season on August 31, fishing for the seven species will be closed for all MHI fishing sectors (commercial, recreational, subsistence, etc.). The recommended 2009-2010 TAC is based on the analysis of the MHI bottomfish subpopulation by the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee and is a slight increase from the 2008-2009 TAC of 241,000 pounds. That TAC was reached before the end of the 2008-2009 bottomfish season, causing the MHI fishery to close on July 6, 2009. The MHI fishery will reopen on September 1, 2009. The Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI) bottomfish fishery operates under a separate quota and remains open.

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- Hancock Seamount Groundfish Moratorium: As a preliminary preferred alternative, to establish the Hancock Seamounts as a Large Marine Ecosystem Management Area in which fishing for armorhead and other seamount groundfish would be prohibited. Located in the northernmost part of the NWHI, the Hancock Seamounts was overfished by foreign fleets prior to the Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976, which provided federal management of the area. Since that time, the Council has placed the fishery under a continuous series of moratoria. The vast majority of the armorhead stock is found outside of US jurisdiction. The proposed Management Area would be a control site for scientific research on seamount fisheries. A five-year research plan would be developed and implemented by NMFS in consultation with the Council and the emerging international North Pacific Regional Fishery Management Organization to rebuild the armorhead stock throughout its range. The Council is expected to take final action on these measures at its October 2009 meeting.
- Fishing in the Pacific Marine National Monuments: As its preliminary preferred alternative, to define fishing permitted in the Pacific Remote Island Area, Rose Atoll and the Islands Unite portion of the Mariana Trench Marine National Monuments as “fishing conducted for sustenance; recreational; non-commercial; traditional; indigenous; culturally significant subsistence, cultural or religious uses; or for other culturally significant events, with sales or barter/trade of catch allowed to covers costs but not to provide profits to participants” and to require federal and/or local permits and catch reports for all fishing activities in the monuments. The Council will consider additional alternatives at its October 2009 meeting.
- Aquaculture: To amend the Council’s Aquaculture Policy to include requirements for the tracking of cultured stocks through tagging or equivalent methods for accountability in the event of fish escapes from aquaculture facilities. The Council will take final action on this measure at its October 2009 meeting.
- Seafood Labeling: To continue investigating the issue of name recognition of local Hawaii fish and the mislabeling of imported fish with Hawaiian names

The Council is scheduled to make further recommendations today and tomorrow on management and monitoring of the Hawaii longline fishery’s tuna quotas and on non-longline pelagic fishing at the Cross Seamount and NOAA weather buoys around Hawaii. For more information, visit the Council’s website at www.wpcouncil.org or by contacting the Council by phone (808) 522-8220, fax (808) 522-8226 (fax), or email info.wpcouncil@noaa.gov.

The Western Pacific Fishery Management Council was established by the US Congress to manage fisheries in offshore waters around Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands and the US Pacific remote island areas. The management process is bottom-up with recommendations from fishermen and other interested persons moving through advisory groups to the SSC and then to the Council. Decisions made by the Council are transmitted to the US Secretary of Commerce for final approval.

Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council Members

Appointees by the Secretary of Commerce from nominees selected by Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa and CNMI governors: William Sword, recreational fisherman/civil engineer/manager (American Samoa); Stephen Haleck, business owner (hotel and gas station) (American Samoa) (Vice Chair); Manuel Duenas, Guam Fishermen's Cooperative Association (Guam) (Vice Chair); Frederick Duerr, resort and hotel consultant (Hawaii) (Vice Chair); Peter Young, environmental consultant (Hawaii); David Itano, researcher (Hawaii); Sean Martin, Pacific Ocean Producers (Hawaii) (Chair); and Benigno Sablan, cultural practitioner (CNMI) (Vice Chair). Designated state officials: Ignacio Dela Cruz, CNMI Department of Land & Natural Resources; Joseph Torres, Guam Department of Agriculture; Laura Thielen, Hawaii Department of Land & Natural Resources; and Ray Tulafono, American Samoa Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources. Designated federal officials: Bill Robinson, NMFS Pacific Islands Regional Office; Jerry Leinecke, U.S. Fish and Wildlife; RAdm Manson K. Brown, District Commander, U.S. Coast Guard 14th District; and Bill Gibbons-Fly, U.S. Department of State.