



Scientists Finalize Recommendations for Offshore Fisheries in Hawaii and within the Pacific Marine National Monuments

KAILUA-KONA (22 July 2009) The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council concluded its three-day meeting today at the King Kamehameha Beach Hotel in Kailua-Kona, Hawaii. The scientists finalized a suite of recommendations, which were subsequently reviewed by the Council's Standing Committees. The full Council will consider the recommendations by the SSC, Standing Committees and other advisory bodies as well as public comment prior to taking actions on the recommendations. The Council meeting opens this evening at the King Kamehameha Beach Hotel and runs through Saturday. Among the major SSC recommendations finalized today are the following:

Hawaii longline fishery for bigeye tuna: The SSC recommends alerting the Hawaii fishing industry about the possibility of closure of the fishery. The Hawaii longline fleet is limited by international management measures to 3,763 mt per year of bigeye in the Western Pacific Ocean, and vessels in the fleet over 24 meters in length are limited to 500 mt of bigeye in the Eastern Pacific. If the current catch trends continue, the fleet may reach the Western Pacific quota in mid-November. The SSC also recommended exploring the feasibility of implementing a limited access privilege program, a form of "catch shares," for the Hawaii longline fishery. It also recommended that the National Marine Fisheries Service conduct a study to estimate the precision of monitoring the fishery's catches through rapid tracking of logbooks and expanding observer data (called in daily or weekly) to estimate the catch for the entire fleet. Observers are placed on 20% of the Hawaii longline vessels targeting tuna.

Non-longline pelagic fishery: The SSC said that increased catches of seamount monchong may be sufficient reason for a precautionary control measure at Cross Seamount, such as a total allowable catch. However, the scientists did not recommend a limited entry for the non-longline pelagic fishery at Cross Seamount as participation and total catch have been declining at this fishing ground during the last decade. The SSC also did not recommend a limited entry program for the non-longline fishery operating near NOAA weather buoys, which operate as *de facto* fish aggregation devices, as these areas are fished even less than Cross Seamount.

Fishing Regulations for Pacific Marine National Monuments: The SSC recommended allowing approved fisheries operating within the Pacific Remote Island Areas, Rose Atoll, and Islands Unit of the Marianas Trench Marine National Monuments to sell their catches at a not-for-profit level. The SSC also recommended mandatory federal permitting and catch reporting to monitor all fishing activities in the monuments. It further recommended that Guam representation be included on the Advisory Council for the Marianas Trench Marine National Monument.

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The Council meeting agenda and additional information on the major items under consideration may be found at 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 the exclusive economic zone 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.

Scientific and Statistical Committee Members

Dr. Stewart Allen (NOAA Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center), Dr. Judith Amesbury (Micronesian Archeological Research Services), Dr. Brian Bowen (Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology), Dr. Paul Callaghan (University of Guam retired), Dr. Frank A. Camacho (University of Guam), Dr. Milani Chaloupka (University of Queensland), Dr. Charles Daxboeck (BioDax Consulting Tahiti), Dr. Richard Deriso (Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission), Dr. John Hampton (Secretariat of the Pacific Community), Dr. Pierre Kleiber (NMFS Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center), Dr. Molly Lutcavage (University of New Hampshire), Dr. Dan Polhemus (Hawaii Department of Land & Natural Resources), Dr. Marlowe Sabater (American Samoa Marine & Wildlife Resources Department), Dr. Craig Severance (University of Hawaii at Hilo retired), Dr. John Sibert (Pelagic Fisheries Research Program), Dr. Robert Skillman (NMFS Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center retired) and Mr. Michael Trianni (Northern Mariana Islands Division of Fish & Wildlife).

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; Joe 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.