



Press Release

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Federal Fishery Managers Agree on Fishing Measures for Rose Atoll Marine National Monument, Poised to Set Measures for Mariana Trench Monument

TUMON BAY, GUAM (24 March 2010) The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council yesterday at the Fiesta Resort and Spa, Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), agreed on fishery management measures for the Rose Atoll Marine National Monument (MNM) in American Samoa and other fishery measures for the US Pacific islands. The Council is mandated by Congress to manage fisheries in federal waters (generally 3 to 200 miles from shore) around Hawaii, Guam, CNMI, American Samoa and eight other remote island areas. Decisions by the Council are transmitted to the Secretary of Commerce for final approval.

For the Rose Atoll MNM, the Council recommended the following measures:

- To authorize fishing conducted for sustenance, subsistence or traditional indigenous purposes or uses as allowed for under customary exchange of fish;
- To establish a no-take area from 0 to 12 miles from shore with the Council to review the no-take regulations after three years;
- To require permits and catch reporting for all fishing in the MNM and to include the American Samoa Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources (DMWR) in the administration and monitoring of the permits and logbooks; and
- To exempt the American Samoa DMWR from permit requirements related to scientific research or exploration.

The Council defined "customary exchange" as "the non-market exchange of marine resources between fishers and community residents for goods and/or services for cultural, social or religious reasons and may include cost recovery through monetary reimbursements and other means for actual trip expenses (e.g., ice, bait, food, fuel) that may be necessary to participate in the fisheries in the Western Pacific Region."

The Council yesterday also voted favorably on the following actions among others:

- To move forward with management measures for offshore aquaculture in federal waters of the Western Pacific Region. The preliminary preferred alternatives for the plan would limit the number of aquaculture operations in the Western Pacific Region, establish a review process for these operations and require permit and reporting for aquaculture activities. The plan will be based on the Council's current aquaculture policy, which can be found at http://wpcouncil.org/documents/Final_Council_Aquaculture_Policy.pdf.
- To consider revising management of the CNMI bottomfish fishery to exclude non-bottomfish gear from the regulations and reduce the 0 to 50-nautical mile (nm) from shore bottomfish closure in the southern islands to 0 to 30 nm and reduce the 0 to 10-nm closure around Alamagan to 0 to 1 nm. The Council also recommended that CNMI Department of Lands and Natural Resources (DLNR) enforcement section be allowed access to vessel monitoring system information for all vessels operating in the US exclusive economic zone around the CNMI and that the National Marine Fisheries Service provide bottomfish permitting and reporting training workshops for all inhabited islands of the CNMI.
- To support CNMI DLNR's plan for incorporating capacity building as a condition of issuing permits for activities to be conducted in northern islands. The federal government would be required to obtain local permits in conducting research or studies with conditions such as training, technical assistance, employment and other benefits for the local people as part of the permit. This would also allow the local government to know the types and extent of research or studies to be conducted prior to their implementation.

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- To request that the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) funded study by the University of Guam (UOG) and CNMI Coastal Resources Management (CRM) office of hump-head wrasse and bump-head parrot fish and any associated management recommendations be thoroughly reviewed by the Council's advisory bodies as well as Guam's Department of Agriculture and CNMI's Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW). The Council expressed concern that NMFS had provided this direct funding assistance to non-fishery agencies to develop fishery management regulations for the CNMI and will ask NOAA to investigate the study. The Council also noted the need to carefully consider the natural baseline differences among locales and not misinterpret low abundance as evidence of a decline (e.g., the bumphead parrotfish is typically found in low abundance in the Marianas Archipelago and American Samoa).
- To request that the White House Council on Environmental Quality and the US Department of Defense to use of an independent contractor to verify information on baseline conditions with regards to future impacts of proposed military operations in the Marianas Archipelago.

The Council reconvenes from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. tomorrow and Friday, March 25 and 26, 2010, at the Guam Resort and Spa, Tumon Bay, Guam. Public testimony will be taken as part of the decision-making process. Among the key items on the agenda are the following:

- Fisheries measures for the Mariana Trench and the Pacific Remote Islands Area (PRIA) MNMs;
- Management measures for the Hawaii longline bigeye tuna fishery under a catch limit;
- Options to modify the catch limit for Hawaii deep-set tuna longline trips;
- Modifications to the American Samoa longline limited entry program;
- Options for refining essential fish habitat for the main Hawaiian Islands bottomfish fishery; and
- Non-commercial federal permitting exemptions in the Western Pacific Region for fishermen under 16 years of age and permit fee exemptions for fishermen over 65 years of age and US military veterans.

As part of its meeting, the Council will host a Fishers Forum from 6 to 9 p.m. on March 25th at the Hilton Guam. The Forums will feature nearly a dozen booths showcasing ways fishermen can inform science, through tagging, bio-sampling, community monitoring and more.

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.

Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council Members: Appointees by the Secretary of Commerce from nominees selected by Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa and CNMI governors: Stephen Haleck, business owner (American Samoa) (Chair); William Sword, recreational fisherman (American Samoa) (Vice Chair); Manuel Duenas, Guam Fishermen's Cooperative Association (Guam) (Vice Chair); David Itano, researcher (Hawaii) (Vice Chair); Benigno Sablan, cultural practitioner (CNMI) (Vice Chair); Frederick Duerr, resort and hotel consultant (Hawaii); Sean Martin, Pacific Ocean Producers (Hawaii); and Peter Young, environmental consultant (Hawaii). **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; Don Palawski, 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.