



Scientists and Fishery Managers to Consider Hawaii Bottomfish Quota, Other US Pacific Island Fisheries

HONOLULU (16 June 2012) The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) that advises the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council will convene Tuesday through Thursday this week at the Council office, 1164 Bishop St., Suite 1400, Honolulu, to discuss management of federally managed fisheries in Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) and the remote US Pacific Island areas. The recommendations of the SSC and other Council advisory bodies will be reviewed by the Council's Standing Committees on June 25 at the Council office. The full Council will take action on the recommendations June 26-28 at the Laniakea YWCA-Fuller Hall, 1040 Richards St., Honolulu. Recommendations by the Council are transmitted the US Secretary of Commerce for final approval. Among the key issues to be considered are the following:

2012-2013 Main Hawaiian Islands Bottomfish Annual Catch Limit. The SSC has the responsibility of setting an acceptable biological catch (ABC) for the upcoming 2012-13 main Hawaiian Islands Deep 7 bottomfish fishing year. The ABC for the 2011-12 fishing year was set at 346,000 lbs. Because there is no new stock assessment for this fishery and no foreseeable new information, it is unlikely the SSC will recommend a different ABC. The Council is expected to endorse the SSC's recommendation as it sets the annual catch target for the fishery, taking into social, economic, environmental and management considerations.

US Pacific Territory Bigeye Tuna and Other Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Catch Limits. In November 2011, Congress passed the FY2012 appropriations bill for the Department of Commerce that included provisions for American Samoa, Guam and CNMI to use, assign, allocate and manage catch limits of highly migratory fish stocks, or fishing effort limits, agreed to by the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission through arrangements with US vessels with Pelagic Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP) permits. The legislation remains in effect until Dec. 31, 2012, or earlier if the Council transmits, and the Secretary of Commerce approves and implements, an amendment to the Pelagics FEP. The Congressional legislation provides the US Territories a framework to manage HMS catch and effort limits as well as a simpler approach than the amendment to the Pelagic FEP that the Council was previously considering. The Council will consider modifying its existing recommendation to be aligned with the Congressional language or maintain its original amendment.

Options for Marianas Purse Seine Area Closure. The Council will consider implementing a purse seine fishing prohibition for the US exclusive economic zone waters around the islands of the Mariana Archipelago. The purpose of the closure is to prevent localized depletion of skipjack and yellowfin tuna stocks, catch competition between purse seine vessels and local longline and troll fishing vessels and impacts on bigeye tuna in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean. The proposed purse seine area closure would be the the same boundaries used for managing longline fishing around the archipelago.

American Samoa Longline and Purse Seine Landing Requirements. The Council will present options for landing requirements that apply to US longline and purse seine vessels operating in the region as well how these options promote American Samoa community participation in these fisheries.

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Implementation of the Incidental Take Statement in the 2012 Biological Opinion for Hawaii Shallow-set Longline Fishery. The National Marine Fisheries Service will provide an update on the rule-making that, if approved would increase the number of leatherback and loggerhead sea turtles authorized for take in the Hawaii shallow-set longline fishery for swordfish from 16 to 26 and from 17 to 34, respectively. The Council will consider whether the proposed rule is consistent with Amendment 18 to the Pelagics FEP.

Other major agenda items include **Cooperative Research Priorities** for the Marianas and Hawaii archipelago and the Pacific Pelagic fisheries, including tagging in the Hawaii bottomfish fishing restricted areas and mapping of critical fish habitats and shark tagging in the Marianas; the **American Samoa Marine Conservation Plan** providing details on uses for funds to be collected by the Secretary of Commerce under a Pacific Insular Area Fishery Agreement or from fines and penalties imposed from foreign fishing violations; and **Hawaii Essential Fish Habitat and Habitat Areas of Particular Concern** recommendations. For full agendas and more details, go to www.wpcouncil.org/meetings.

As part of the Council meeting, a free **Fishers Forum on Managing for Recovery of the North Pacific Humpback Whale** will be open to fishermen and the general public 6 to 9 p.m. Wednesday, June 27, at Harbor View Center at Pier 38, above Nico's restaurant. Fishermen, ocean users and other members of the public are invited to enjoy informational booths, family activities, refreshments and prizes and join in the discussion about the remarkable recovery of this species and the challenges of having more than 21,000 humpback whales in the North Pacific, half of which come to Hawaii to winter.

The Western Pacific Fishery Management Council was established by Congress to manage fisheries in offshore waters around Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, CNMI and the US Pacific remote island areas. For more information or the agendas, visit www.wpcouncil.org or email info.wpcouncil@noaa.gov; phone (808) 522-8220, or fax (808) 522-8226.

Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council: Appointees by the Secretary of Commerce from nominees selected by American Samoa, CNMI, Guam and Hawaii governors: Manuel Duenas, Guam Fishermen's Cooperative Association (Guam) (Chair) ; Stephen Haleck, business owner (American Samoa) (Vice Chair); David Itano, researcher (Hawaii) (Vice Chair); William Sword, recreational fisherman (American Samoa); Richard Seman, education and outreach specialist (CNMI); Julie Leialoha, environmentalist (Hawaii); Sean Martin, Pacific Ocean Producers (Hawaii); and F. McGrew Rice, charter fisherman (Hawaii). Designated state officials: Arnold Palacios, CNMI Department of Land & Natural Resources; Mariquita Taitague, Guam Department of Agriculture; William Aila, Hawaii Department of Land & Natural Resources; and Ray Tulafono, American Samoa Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources. Designated federal officials: Michael Tosatto, NMFS Pacific Islands Regional Office; Don Palawski, U.S. Fish and Wildlife; RAdm Charles Ray, U.S. Coast Guard 14th District; and Bill Gibbons-Fly, US Department of State.

Scientific and Statistical Committee: Dr. Charles Daxboeck, chair, (BioDax Consulting Tahiti); Dr. Stewart Allen (NMFS Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center, PIFSC), 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 (Guam Community College), Dr. Milani Chaloupka (University of Queensland), Dr. Richard Deriso (Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission), Dr. John Hampton (Secretariat of the Pacific Community), Dr. Pierre Kleiber (NMFS PIFSC), Dr. Donald Kobayashi (NMFS PIFSC), Dr. Molly Lutcavage (University of New Hampshire), Dr. Minling Pang (NMFS PIFSC), Dr. Craig Severance (University of Hawaii retired), Dr. John Sibert (Pelagic Fisheries Research Program retired), Dr. Robert Skillman (NMFS PIFSC retired) and Mr. Michael Tenorio (Northern Mariana Islands Division of Fish & Wildlife).