

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration****50 CFR Part 660**

[I.D. 092399D]

Western Pacific Fishery Management Council; Public Hearings

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of public meeting/public scoping hearing/public hearing.

SUMMARY: The Western Pacific Fishery Council (Council) will hold its 72nd meeting of its Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) in Honolulu, HI. A public hearing will be held on the draft Coral Reef Ecosystem Fishery Management Plan (FMP). A public scoping hearing on the intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be held on the Bottomfish and Seamount Groundfish FMP.

DATES: The SSC meeting will be held on October 12–14, 1999, from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., each day, except for the first day, which will start at 9:00 a.m.

ADDRESSES: The 72th SSC meeting will be held at the Council office conference room, 1164 Bishop St., Suite 1400, Honolulu, HI; telephone: (808–522–8220).

Council address: Western Pacific Fishery Management Council, 1164 Bishop St., Suite 1400, Honolulu, HI 96813.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Kitty M. Simonds, Executive Director; telephone 808–522–8220.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The SSC will discuss and may make recommendations to the Council on the agenda items listed here. The order in which agenda items will be addressed are subject to change.

8:30 a.m. Tuesday, October 12, 1999

A. Draft Coral Reef Ecosystem FMP/ Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)

1. Introduction to the FMP
2. Description of the fisheries
3. Description of threats/management issues
4. Management objectives, program and impacts
 - a. Fishing permit (alternatives include, but are not limited to, exploratory permit and reporting requirement, general permit based on standard eligibility requirements, moratorium to prohibit all harvest of

coral reef species, and status quo (no action))

b. Marine Protected Areas (alternatives include, but are not limited to, candidate areas, such as remote U.S. atolls, and the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands shallower than 20 meters, or status quo (no action))

c. Restrictions of gear and methods (alternatives include, but are not limited to, allow only selective, non-destructive gear and methods, allow no gear or methods, allow use of other gears and/or methods, restrict other methods and practices, or status quo (no action))

d. Restrict harvest of a particular management unit species (alternatives include, but are not limited to, restrict harvest of corals and live rock, restrict harvest of other selected species, restrict the harvest of all management unit species, or no restrictions (no action))

e. Framework provisions (alternatives include, but are not limited to, establish a framework regulatory process with options for future consideration, or status quo (no action))

5. Description of resource ecosystem

6. Essential Fish Habitat

7. Sustainable Fishery Act

determinations

8. Relationship to existing laws and policies

9. Future needs

10. Plan Team recommendations

11. Advisory Panel recommendations

12. Public hearing on draft FMP/DEIS

B. Bottomfish FMP issues

1. Update on status of activities
 - a. Main Hawaiian Islands bottomfish meeting
 - b. Need to prepare EIS for Bottomfish FMP
2. Public scoping hearing on Bottomfish FMP

C. Precious Corals FMP issues

1. Final action on adjustments to the FMP regarding harvest quotas, definitions, size limits, gear restrictions, bed classifications and reporting and recordkeeping requirements. Recent research and surveys have provided new information on precious corals in the waters around Hawaii, including information on the size and condition of certain classified precious coral beds, potential increases in fishing pressure on black corals, the presence of a new precious coral bed near French Frigate Shoals and the possible importance of precious coral beds as foraging areas for Hawaiian monk seals. Based on a discussion of these issues at the 100th Council meeting, the Council identified the following preferred actions: Suspend the harvest quota for gold coral at the Makapu'u Bed until additional

information is available on the impact of harvesting on subsequent recruitment of gold coral at the Makapu'u Bed; redefine precious coral as precious coral that has live coral polyps or tissue, and redefine dead precious coral as precious coral that no longer has any live coral polyps or tissue; apply size limits to live coral only; prohibit the harvest of black coral unless it has attained either a minimum stem diameter of 1 inch (2.54 cm), measured 1 inch (2.54 cm) from the top of the living holdfast, or a minimum height of 48 inches (121.92 cm), measured from the base to the greatest vertical extremity of the colony; only selective gear may be used to harvest precious corals from all permit areas; apply the current size limit for pink coral to all permit areas; revise the boundaries of Brooks Bank, Permit Area C-B-3, to include the area within a radius of 2.5 nautical miles (nm) of a point 23° 58.8' N. lat. and 166° 42' W. long., and change the harvest quota for pink coral to 200 kg and suspend the harvest quota for gold coral until additional scientific information becomes available on the impact of harvesting gold coral on monk seal foraging habitat; classify the newly-discovered French Frigate Shoals-Gold Pinnacles Bed as a conditional bed, Permit Area C-B-5, which includes the area within a radius of 0.25 nm of a point at 23° 55' N. lat. and 165° 23.11' W. long., and set the annual harvest quota for all types of precious coral at zero until additional information becomes available on the impact of harvesting gold coral on monk seal foraging habitat; list all managed species of precious corals on the NMFS Daily Precious Coral Harvest Log and Precious Coral Sales Trip Report, and revise reporting and recordkeeping requirements as follows: A permit holder shall, within 72 hours of landing, mail to NMFS Pacific Island Area Office (PIAO) a copy of the NMFS Daily Precious Coral Harvest Log with complete information including:

(1) Vessel information - (i) Name of vessel; (ii) Call sign of vessel; and (iii) permit number of vessel.

(2) Fishing information - (i) beginning and ending time, and date, of all dives, including the dives when no harvest is made; (ii) beginning and ending position in degrees latitude and longitude of each dive, and distance traveled; (iii) maximum and minimum depth of each dive; (iv) number of live and dead colonies harvested on each dive, by species; (v) weight of harvested coral on each dive by species, to the nearest tenth of a kilogram (landed weight air dried for at least 24 hours); (vi) number of live and dead colonies

damaged but not harvested on each dive, by species; (vii) method of harvest; (viii) observations that may be made about the habitat (current, bottom type, bottom topography, bottom slope, etc.).

(3) Sale information - (i) amount of coral sold, by species; (ii) sale price; (iii) date of sale; (iv) name(s) and address(es) of buyer(s).

(4) any other information specified in the permit. Any video tapes made during harvest operations shall be made available to the NMFS PIAO upon request. The video recording should continuously display date and time. Although these measures were identified as the preferred actions, the other alternatives are still being analyzed and considered.

Plan Team Recommendations

8:30 a.m. Wednesday, October 13, 1999

D. Pelagic FMP issues

1. 2nd quarter 1999 Hawaii and American Samoa longline fishery report
2. Status of bigeye and yellowfin tuna tagging around the Hawaiian Islands
3. Shark incidental catch in the Hawaii longline fishery
 - a. Update on catch trends and NMFS shark studies
 - b. Cultural study of sharks and shark fishing in Western Pacific (WP) Region
 - c. Management of shark fishing in the WP Region
 - d. State of Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources and Council action on sharks in Hawaii.
4. Seabird interactions in the Hawaii longline fishery
 - a. Update on trends and numbers
 - b. Mitigation project final draft
 - c. Final action on measures to reduce the incidental catch of seabirds in the Hawaii longline fishery.

Based on a discussion of these issues at the 100th Council meeting, the Council identified the following preferred actions: Require vessels with Hawaii Longline Limited Entry Permits operating with longline gear above 25° N. lat. to adhere to two or more of the following measures to mitigate seabird-longline interactions: maintain adequate quantities of blue dye on board and use only completely thawed, blue-dyed bait; use strategic offal discards while setting and hauling the line; tow a NMFS-approved deterrent (such as a tori line or a buoy) while setting and hauling the line; deploy line with a shooter so that the line is set faster than the vessel's speed; ensure that weights greater than 45 grams are attached to branch lines within 1 meter of each hook; begin setting 1 hour after sunset and complete setting 1 hour before sunrise, using minimal vessel lighting. In addition,

vessels must make every reasonable effort to ensure that birds brought onboard alive are released alive and that hooks are removed without jeopardizing the life of the birds, and all vessel captains must complete an annual protected species educational workshop conducted by NMFS. Although these measures were identified as the preferred actions, the other alternatives are still being analyzed and considered.

5. Turtles longline fishery interactions
 - a. Update on trends and numbers
 - b. Update on mitigation studies
 - c. Outcome of recent litigation
6. Marine debris
7. International meetings
8. Recreational fisheries data task force

8:30 am Thursday, October 14, 1999

E. Crustaceans FMP issues (NWHI lobster fishery)

1. Status of the fishery
2. Public Education Project
3. Status of state regulations for NWHI import license

Although non-emergency issues not contained in this agenda may come before this Council for discussion, those issues may not be the subject of formal Council action during this meeting. Council action will be restricted to those issues specifically listed in this document and any issue arising after publication of this document that requires emergency action under section 305(c) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, provided the public has been notified of the Council's intent to take final action to address the emergency.

F. Other Business

List of authorized fishing gear/fisheries

Special Accommodations

This meeting is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Kitty M. Simonds, 808-522-8220 (voice) or 808-522-8226 (fax), at least 5 days prior to meeting date.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: September 27, 1999.

Gary C. Matlock,

Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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50 CFR Part 660

[I.D. 092499A]

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Proposed Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Highly Migratory Species (HMS) off the West Coast

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare an EIS; request for comments.

SUMMARY: NOAA announces its intention to prepare an EIS in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act for the proposed FMP for HMS fisheries off the West Coast. The NMFS and Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) will jointly hold public scoping hearings in California, Oregon, and Washington on management issues and alternatives to be analyzed under the FMP and associated EIS.

DATES: Written comments on the intent to prepare the EIS will be accepted on or before November 1, 1999. Public scoping meetings are scheduled for October 12 and 13 and October 18 and 19, 1999 (see SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION).

ADDRESSES: Written comments on suggested alternatives and potential impacts should be sent to Larry D. Six, Executive Director, Pacific Fishery Management Council, 2130 SW Fifth Avenue, Suite 224, Portland, OR 97201; and to Svein Fougner, Assistant Regional Administrator for Sustainable Fisheries, Southwest Region, NMFS, 501 W. Ocean Blvd., Suite 4200, Long Beach, CA 90802. See SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION for specific dates and times.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Larry Six, at 503-326-6352.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Dates and Times

The following locations and times have been set for scoping meetings:

1. California - San Pedro Hilton Hotel, Madeo Ristorante and Banquet Center, 2800 Via Cabrillo Marina, San Pedro, October 12, 1999, beginning at 7:00 P.M.;
2. California - Hilton Monterey, Vista del Mar Banquet Room, 1000 Agujito Road, Monterey, October 13, beginning at 7:00 P.M.;