



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Sylvia Spalding (808) 383-1069

Federal Management Council Recommends 35 Percent Increase in Main Hawaiian Islands Bottomfish Harvest for 2008-2009 Season

HONOLULU (17 October 2008) The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council yesterday in Honolulu recommended a total allowable catch (TAC) of 241,000 pounds of seven deepwater bottomfish in the main Hawaiian Islands (MHI) when the fishery reopens Nov. 15, 2008. This TAC represents a 35 percent increase from the 2007 TAC of 178,000 pounds, but is less than the 254,000 pounds recommended by the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) last week.

The 2008 TAC is based on an updated assessment of the archipelagic bottomfish stock by the NOAA Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center (PIFSC), which demonstrates that overfishing of Hawaii bottomfish is not occurring as previously determined and that the MHI segment of the stock is in better condition than the previous stock assessment indicated.

The TAC will be based on commercial catches only. However, non-commercial bottomfish fishermen will be required for the first time to obtain a permit and report their catches if fishing in federal waters, e.g., 3 to 200 miles offshore. If the TAC is reached before Aug. 31, 2009, then both the commercial and non-commercial sectors of the MHI bottomfish fishery will close until the 2009-2010 season begins on Sept. 1, 2009. The Council will consider the 2009-2010 TAC at its July 2009 meeting to be held in Kailua-Kona, Hawaii.

In related matters, the Council today also recommended that PIFSC, the Council and NOAA Pacific Islands Regional Office immediately initiate a Western Pacific Stock Assessment Review for Hawaii bottomfish and that PIFSC continue to improve the bottomfish stock assessment before this review. The review should be completed for the SSC and Council to consider at their July 2009 meetings.

The Council will conclude its four-day meeting today and is scheduled to address pelagic fisheries and international fishery management issues.

The Council is the policy-making agency for fisheries management in the offshore waters of the U.S. Pacific Islands. Recommendations made by the Council are transmitted to the Secretary of Commerce for approval. For more information, contact the Council at (808) 522-8220, info.wpcouncil@noaa.gov or www.wpcouncil.org.

Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council Members: Designated state officials: Ignacio Dela Cruz, CNMI Department of Land & Natural Resources; Alberto Lamorena, Guam Bureau of Statistics and Plans; 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. 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).

- # # # -