

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE****National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

[I.D. 110698A]

**Western Pacific Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting**

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

**ACTION:** Notice of public meeting.

**SUMMARY:** The Western Pacific Fishery Council (Council) and its standing committees will meet in Honolulu, HI, during the first week of December.

**DATES:** The meetings will be held on December 1-3, 1998. See

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for specific dates and times.

**ADDRESSES:** The 98th Council meeting will be held at the Hawaii Prince Hotel, Mauna Kea Ballroom, 100 Holomoana Street, Honolulu, HI 96815; telephone: (808-956-1111).

*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 Council's Standing Committees will meet on December 1, 1998 as follows:

7:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.—Enforcement  
8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.—Crustaceans  
9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.—VMS  
10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.—Pelagics and Bottomfish (concurrent)

1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.—Indigenous Fishing Rights and Ecosystem & Habitat (concurrent)

3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.—Precious Corals and Executive/Budget & Programming (concurrent)

The full Council will meet on December 2-3, 1998, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., each day.

**Agenda**

The full Council will meet to address the agenda items below. The order in which agenda items will be addressed can change. The Council will meet as late as necessary to complete its scheduled business.

9:00 a.m., *Wednesday, December 2, 1998*

A. Call to order, opening remarks, introductions

Approval of Agenda and 97th Council Minutes

B. Reports from the Islands, American Samoa, Guam, Hawaii, and Northern Mariana Islands

**C. Enforcement**

1. Reports from the U.S. Coast Guard, National Marine Fisheries Service Office of Enforcement, and NOAA General Counsel for Enforcement and Litigation, Southwest Region

2. Cooperative agreement for Guam and Northern Mariana Islands

3. Improving vessel safety through new technology and equipment

4. Standing Committee recommendations

**5. Public comment****D. Vessel Monitoring System (VMS)**

1. Report on NMFS Industry Advisory Panel and National VMS Program

2. Report on the Hawaii VMS program  
3. Standing Committee recommendations

**E. Pelagic Fishery Management Plan (FMP) issues**

1. 2nd/3rd quarter 1998 longline fishery report (for Hawaii and American Samoa)

2. Status of area closure measure for American Samoa

3. Outline for a comprehensive data amendment

4. Blue marlin management options  
5. Protected species interactions, considering: 3rd quarter 1998 turtle takes and research, 1998 bird takes, bird mitigation project and population dynamics workshop, other sources of mortality for seabirds, and reports of Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) Rome expert consultations on shark fisheries, seabird/fishery interactions and fishing capacity

6. Sharks, including finning update and research initiatives  
7. Report on the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting - Honolulu - October

8. Upcoming meetings: Interim Scientific Committee (ISC) - Honolulu - January, and Fourth Multilateral High Level Conference (MHLC4) - Honolulu - February

9. Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) and Standing Committee Recommendations

**F. Crustaceans FMP issues (Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI) lobster fishery)**

1. Update on the 1998 commercial fishing season  
2. Results from the 1998 research cruise

3. Status of NMFS tagging project  
4. Possible final action and framework regulatory measure for bank-specific harvest guidelines for NWHI lobster fishery (see F.4. continued)

5. SSC and Standing Committee Recommendations

6. SSC and Standing Committee Recommendations

7. SSC and Standing Committee Recommendations

8. SSC and Standing Committee Recommendations

9. SSC and Standing Committee Recommendations

10. SSC and Standing Committee Recommendations

G. Fishermen's Forum: Information needs

9:00 a.m., *Thursday, December 3, 1998*

H. Reports from Fishery Agencies and Organizations, including: Department of Commerce National Marine Fisheries Service Southwest Region, Southwest Fisheries Science Center, and NOAA General Counsel Southwest Region; Department of the Interior Fish and Wildlife Service

**I. Precious corals FMP issues**

1. Status of fishery  
2. Findings of recent research in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands

3. Plan Team, SSC and Standing Committee recommendations

**J. Bottomfish FMP issues**

1. Status of onaga, ehu and hapuupuu, and request to NMFS to remove from overfished list

2. Report on Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology (HIMB) and NMFS research activities

3. Report on state management in Main Hawaiian Islands (MHI)

4. Selection of preferred option for Federal management in MHI: considering delegation of authority to state and other options (see J.4. continued)

5. SSC and Standing Committee recommendations

**K. Native Rights and Indigenous Fishing issues**

1. Status of Marine Conservation Plans

2. Report of Community Development Program

3. NMFS Vessel Loan Programs

4. Report on Northern Mariana Islands turtle conservation workshop

5. SSC and Standing Committee recommendations

**L. Ecosystem & Habitat issues**

1. Comments on Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for Farallon de Mendinilla, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI)

2. Other issues/activities

3. Development of Coral Reef Ecosystem FMP, including goals and objectives, draft outline, proposed initial regulations, and research and assessment needs

**M. Program Planning issues**

1. Review of Council Programs

2. Report from Western Pacific Fisheries Information Network (WpacFIN)

3. SSC and Standing Committee recommendations

**N. Administrative Matters**

1. Administrative Reports

2. Meetings and Workshops

3. 99th Council Meeting

4. Review Advisory Panel applicants and select new members

5. Standing Committee recommendations

O. Other Business

1. Election of new officers for 1999

P. Supplemental information for agenda items F.4. and J.4  
F.4. (Continued) Possible final action on framework regulatory measure for bank-specific harvest guidelines

1. The Council will be discussing and may be taking final action to establish a process for setting annual bank-specific harvest guidelines for the 1999 NWHI lobster season and beyond.

2. Action is being taken under the framework procedure for new measures in the Crustacean FMP.

3. At its April 1998 meeting, the Council requested the development of options governing the process by which the NMFS Southwest Regional Administrator, in consultation with the Council, allocates the annual harvest guideline among banks or areas to prevent overfishing and achieve optimum yield.

4. At its July 1998 meeting, the Council selected the partial bank-specific harvest guidelines alternative as its preferred option.

5. At its December 1998 meeting, the Council will also consider two new options: (1) full bank-specific harvest guidelines and (2) Necker- Maro-Gardner- bank-specific harvest guidelines. If it continues to endorse its preferred alternative, final Council action can be taken. Selection of a different alternative would be considered initial action under the Crustacean FMP framework process.

6. A background document summarizing this issue, need for framework management measure, and alternative actions is available for public comment (see ADDRESSES) and was distributed to all NWHI limited entry permit holders, Crustacean Advisory Panel, and Crustacean Plan Team members.

J.4. (Continued) Selection of preferred option for Federal management in MHI

1. The Council will be discussing and may be taking action to delegate authority to the State of Hawaii to manage bottomfish in the Federal Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) off the MHI, or other options so the state rules can be enforced in all MHI waters.

2. Other alternatives for the Council to help facilitate the effectiveness of the state's new bottomfish management plan, that will be considered at the meeting, include (1) status quo, (2) Council resolution, (3) regulatory fix, and (4) withdrawal of Federal management.

3. At its July 1998 meeting, the Council requested the development of

options for assisting the state with MHI bottomfish management, including delegation of authority to the state.

4. A background document summarizing this issue and proposed alternative actions is available for public comment (see ADDRESSES).

Although other issues not contained in this agenda may come before the Council for discussion, in accordance with the Magnuson-Stevens Conservation and Management Act, those issues may not be the subject of formal action during this meeting. Action will be restricted to those issues specifically identified in this notice.

#### 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.

Dated: November 16, 1998.

**Bruce C. Morehead,**

*Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.*  
[FR Doc. 98-30975 Filed 11-18-98; 8:45 am]

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 111298D]

#### Marine Mammals; Scientific Research and Enhancement Permit (PHF# 116-1477)

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

**ACTION:** Receipt of application.

**SUMMARY:** Notice is hereby given that Sea World of Texas, 10500 Sea World Drive, San Antonio, Texas, 78251, has applied in due form for a permit to take Hawaiian monk seals (*Monachus schauinslandi*) for purposes of scientific research and enhancement.

**DATES:** Written comments must be received on or before December 21, 1998.

**ADDRESSES:** The application and related documents are available for review upon written request or by appointment in the following office(s):

Permits Division, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13130, Silver Spring, MD 20910 (301/713-2289);

Regional Administrator, Southwest Region, 501 West Ocean Boulevard,

Suite 4200, Long Beach, CA 90802-4213 (562/980-4001); and

Protected Species Program Manager, Pacific Islands Area Office, 2570 Dole Street, Room 106, Honolulu, HI 9682-2396 (808/973-2987).

Written data or views, or requests for a public hearing on this request, should be submitted to the Director, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13705, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Those individuals requesting a hearing should set forth the specific reasons why a hearing on this application would be appropriate.

Comments may also be submitted by facsimile at (301) 713-0376, provided the facsimile is confirmed by hard copy submitted by mail and postmarked no later than the closing date of the comment period. Please note that comments will not be accepted by e-mail or by other electronic media.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Jeannie Drevenak, 301/713-2289.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The subject permit is requested under the authority of the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*), the Regulations Governing the Taking and Importing of Marine Mammals (50 CFR part 216), the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*), and the regulations governing the taking, importing, and exporting of endangered fish and wildlife (50 CFR part 222.23).

The application is for the permanent transfer of ten (10) currently captive, unreleasable female Hawaiian monk seals from the National Marine Fisheries Service's Kewalo Research Facility to Sea World of Texas for research and enhancement purposes. The primary objective of the proposed activity is to make the seals available for scientific research on an opportunistic basis in order to benefit the wild population of Hawaiian monk seals. A secondary objective is to increase public awareness of the status of the Hawaiian monk seal through education efforts and by providing an opportunity to observe the species in captivity.

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), an initial determination has been made that the activity proposed is categorically excluded from the requirement to prepare an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement.

Concurrent with the publication of this notice in the **Federal Register**, NMFS is forwarding copies of this application to the Marine Mammal Commission and its Committee of Scientific Advisors.