

‘New Normal’ Trumpets a Bigger Role for U.S. Seafood

Caribbean
Miguel Rolon
Executive Director
Carlos Farchette
Chair

Gulf of Mexico
Dr. Carrie Simmons
Executive Director
Dr. Thomas Frazer
Chair

Mid Atlantic
Dr. Christopher Moore
Executive Director
Mike Luisi
Chair

New England
Thomas Nies
Executive Director
Dr. John Quinn
Chair

North Pacific
David Witherell
Executive Director
Simon Kinneen
Chair

Pacific
Chuck Tracy
Executive Director
Phil Anderson
Chair

South Atlantic
John Carmichael
Executive Director
Jessica McCawley
Chair

Western Pacific
Kitty M. Simonds
Executive Director
Archie Soliai
Chair

HONOLULU (27 May 2020) Leaders of the nation’s eight Regional Fishery Management Councils convened the first of their biannual meetings in 2020 today by teleconference. The Council Coordination Committee (CCC) meeting provides the Councils and heads of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to discuss issues relevant to all of the Councils. Heading today’s agenda was COVID-19 impacts on U.S. fisheries and federal efforts to address them, including President Trump’s Executive Orders on Promoting American Seafood Competitiveness and Economic Growth and on Regulatory Relief to Support Economic Recovery and the CARES Act \$300M stimulus package for fisheries and aquaculture.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has made our responsibility more poignant and highlights the often overlooked fact that managing our nation’s fisheries is about ensuring that Americans have food,” stated Taotasi Archie Soliai, chair of the Western Pacific Council, which hosted the meeting. “Yes, management is about making certain fish stocks and protected species remain healthy. Yes, management is about guaranteeing that our fishermen can earn a decent living, pursue the sport of recreational fishing and continue their cultural traditions. But the bottom line is the goal of management of our fisheries is to ensure that our nation can provide nutritious seafood to its people from its waters, which comprise the second largest exclusive economic zone (EEZ) in the world.”

Assistant Administrator for NOAA Fisheries Chris Oliver said the agency “is looking to support a ‘new normal’ where seafood plays an even bigger role in our economy and in our households. ... The Presidential Executive Order greatly adds the horsepower we needed, by codifying our role to support you. It calls for regulatory reform to maximize commercial and recreational fishing opportunities and enforcement of common-sense restrictions on seafood imports that do not meet American standards. And it places NOAA firmly in charge of coordinating the federal process for aquaculture permitting. The Executive Order and the CARES Act funding create an exciting new opportunity to address long-term challenges to expanding the domestic seafood sector.”

Offshore wind issues, bycatch and changing stock assessment status were among other items covered today. The meeting continues tomorrow and is open to the public. The agenda and conference call-in instructions are posted at <http://www.fisherycouncils.org/ccc-meetings/may-2020>.

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