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Press Release
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Scientific and Statistical Committee Chairs Hold Landmark National Workshop

HONOLULU (14 November 2008) Approximately 50 fishery scientists and managers concluded a three-day workshop today in Honolulu. This landmark meeting constituted the first-ever convening of the chairs and members of the Scientific and Statistical Committees (SSCs) of the nation's eight Regional Fishery Management Councils. These Committees are mandated by the Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Conservation and Management Act to provide advice to the Councils on the management of fisheries in waters seaward of the United States, its territories and possessions.

The workshop revealed that the ways that SSCs function within the Council decision-making process varies significantly across the nation. The differences reflect their geographic and socioeconomic diversity as well as the fact that some regions have data-rich fisheries and others data-poor fisheries. The general consensus was that a uniform SSC process is not practical given these differences.

The participants also agreed that the SSCs should be the final arbiter regarding what constitutes the best available scientific information used by Councils for fishery management decisions. This issue addresses current efforts by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to revise guidelines regarding the Magnuson-Stevens Act requirement that federal fishery conservation and management measures be based on the best scientific information available.

The participants of this first SSC National Workshop strongly recommended that a second workshop be convened before 2010, which is the deadline for annual catch limits to be set for all fisheries in federal waters that are experiencing overfishing or are overfished. In 2011, annual catch limits must be set for all federally managed fisheries.

"The anticipated increase in SSC responsibility will clearly necessitate increases in Council funding over the next few years," noted Paul Callaghan, SSC chair for the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council.

The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, which hosted the workshop, is the policy-making agency for fisheries management in offshore waters around the US Pacific Islands. For more information, contact the Council at (808) 522-8220, (808) 522-8226 (fax), info.wpcouncil@noaa.gov or www.wpcouncil.org.

SSC Participants: South Atlantic S: Luiz Barbieri, Carolyn Belcher, John Carmichael, Andi Stephens; North Pacific Fishery Management Council: Patricia Livingston, Keith Criddle, Terry Quinn; Caribbean Fishery Management Council: Barbara Kojis, Jim Berkson, Miguel Rolon; Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council: Brian J. Rothschild, Robert J. Latour, Ed Houde, Rich Seagraves; New England Fishery Management Council: Steve Cadrin, Robert O'Boyle, Jake Kritzer, Chris Kellog; Pacific Fishery Management Council: Steve Ralston, Robert Conrad, Mike Burner, Donald McIsaac, Vidar Wespestad; Gulf Fishery Management Council: Walter Keithly, Will Patterson, Harry Blanchet, Richard Leard; Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council: Paul Callaghan, Pierre Kleiber, John Sibert, Bob Skillman.
Council Staff Participants: Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council: Paul Dalzell, Marcia Hamilton, Eric Kingma; North Pacific Fishery Management Council: David Witherell, Gail Bendixen.
National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Participants: Pacific Islands Region: Alvin Katekaru; Headquarters, DC: John Boreman, Rick Methot, Galen Tromble; Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center: Sam Pooley