

and to keep stocks from becoming locally overfished through a limited access program for the Hawaii-based longline fishery, prohibition on the use of drift gill nets, and various longline area closures in Federal waters around American Samoa, Guam, and Hawaii. Additional measures that may be considered by the Council in the event of overfishing include reductions in the number of limited access longline permits, size restrictions, etc.

The crustaceans FMP contains measures to prevent overfishing and keep NWHI stocks from becoming overfished including gear restrictions, trap specifications (to allow juvenile lobsters to escape), a limited access permit program for the NWHI commercial lobster fishery, a limit on the number of lobster traps allowed per vessel, seasonal and area closures, and annual bank-specific harvest guidelines. Additional measures that may be considered by the Council, if needed, include adjustments to the NWHI seasonal closure, temporary fishery closures, and size or species harvest restrictions.

Supplemental FMP amendments pertaining to bycatch issues describe

bycatch levels and patterns in the bottomfish and seamount groundfish and pelagic fisheries. Management measures currently require all primary and relief operators (captains) in the NWHI limited access fisheries to complete one-time protected species workshop. The supplemental amendments describe recent improvements in bycatch reduction and bycatch reporting, as well as non-regulatory management initiatives to further minimize bycatch and reduce bycatch mortality, and improve the measurement of bycatch and analyses thereof in these fisheries. These initiatives include fishery outreach programs that foster awareness of bycatch issues, research into fishing methods and gear modification to reduce bycatch and bycatch mortality, development of markets for low value fish that would otherwise be discarded by fishermen, and improvements to information collection for bycatch.

The supplemental amendments for the bottomfish and seamount groundfish, pelagics, crustaceans, and precious corals FMPs define each of the major inhabited main Hawaiian islands as a fishing community. This island-by-

island designation definition of fishing communities is based on analyses indicating that the social and economic cohesion of fishery participants is strongest at the island level. Fishing, support services, and fishery infrastructure are critically important to all of Hawaii's populated areas. As such fishing communities in Hawaii are not distinguished according to a particular fishery or gear type. The supplemental amendments define Hawaii's fishing communities as the islands of Niihau, Kauai, Oahu, Molokai, Maui, Lanai, and Hawaii.

Public comments on any or all of the supplemental FMP amendments must be received by June 6, 2003, to be considered by NMFS in the decision whether to approve, disapprove, or partially approve the amendments.

The supplemental amendments contain no implementing regulations.

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

Dated: April 2, 2003.

**Richard W. Surdi,**

*Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.*  
[FR Doc. 03-8398 Filed 4-4-03; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3510-22-S**