UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
PROGRAM PLANNING AND INTEGRATION
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

To All Interested Government Agencies and Public Groups:

Under the National Environmental Policy Act, an environmental review has been performed on the following action.

TITLE: Supplemental Environmental Assessment for a Rule to Implement Decisions of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission for: Restrictions on the Use of Fish Aggregating Devices in Purse Seine Fisheries for 2015 – RIN 0648-BE36

LOCATION: Area of Application of the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean

SUMMARY: The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is issuing regulations under authority of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Convention Implementation Act to establish restrictions on the use of fish aggregating devices (FADs) by U.S. purse seine vessels in the western and central Pacific Ocean. The restrictions include a prohibition on setting on FADs and other specific uses of FADs during January and February, and July through September of 2015, and a limit of 3,061 sets that may be made on FADs in 2015. This action is necessary for the United States to implement provisions of a conservation and management measure adopted by the Commission for the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean and to satisfy the obligations of the United States under the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean, to which it is a Contracting Party.

NMFS prepared a supplemental environmental assessment (SEA) that analyzed two action alternatives for implementing the FAD restrictions for 2015, as well as the No-Action Alternative. One action alternative (Alternative 2) would prohibit setting on FADs and on fish that have aggregated in association with a fishing vessel, in the WCPFC's area of competence between the latitudes of 20° North and 20° South, from July 1 through September 30, 2015. There would also be a specified 2,202 limit on the number of FAD sets that could be made in 2015. The other action alternative (Alternative 3, which is NMFS' preferred alternative and what is being implemented in the final rule) would prohibit setting on FADs and on fish that have aggregated in association with a fishing vessel, in the Convention Area between the latitudes of 20° North and 20° South, during the months of January, February, July, August and September in 2015. There would also be a specified 3,061 limit on the number of FAD sets that could be made in 2015. The SEA concluded that all of the alternatives would have similar and minor effects to resources in the human environment. However, the extent of the

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effects could vary somewhat depending on the period of time that the FAD restrictions would be in effect under the different action alternatives.

RESPONSIBLE
OFFICIAL: Michael D. Tosatto
Regional Administrator, Pacific Islands Region
National Marine Fisheries Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
1845 Wasp Blvd., Bldg 176
Honolulu, HI 96818
(808) 725-5000

The environmental review process led us to conclude that this action will not have a significant impact on the environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement was not prepared. A copy of the finding of no significant impact (FONSI), including the supplemental environmental assessment (SEA), is enclosed for your information.

Although NOAA is not soliciting comments on this completed SEA/FONSI we will consider any comments submitted that would assist us in preparing future NEPA documents. Please submit any written comments to the Responsible Official named above.

Sincerely,

TRONVIG.KRISTEN.A.1365886012

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Patricia A. Montanio
NOAA NEPA Coordinator
for

Enclosure