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: Environmental Assessment: Specification of Bigeye Tuna Catch and Allocation Limits for Pelagic Longline Fisheries in U.S. Pacific Island Territories in 2015 and 2016, including a Regulatory Impact Review (RIN 0648-XD998)

LOCATION: U.S. Pacific Islands Region

SUMMARY:

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) will specify a 2015 catch limit of 2,000 mt of longline-caught bigeye tuna for each of the U.S. Pacific territories (American Samoa, Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands). NMFS will also authorize each territory to allocate up to 1,000 mt of its limit to U.S. longline fishing vessels that are identified in a valid specified fishing agreement with a territory. NMFS will attribute the catches of bigeye tuna made by vessels in a valid specified fishing agreement to the U.S. territory to which the agreement applies. Funds received under a specified fishing agreement will be applied toward fisheries development projects identified in a territorial marine conservation plan. As an accountability measure, also recommended by the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council, NMFS would monitor all U.S. longline catches of bigeye tuna. . When NMFS projects that the fishery would reach a territorial limit (either catch or allocation), NMFS would prohibit the retention of longline-caught bigeye tuna in the applicable U.S. territory and/or operating under a specified fishing agreement, as appropriate.

The public had an opportunity to comment on the proposed catch and allocation limits during a public comment period for the proposed specifications and draft environmental assessment (EA) published on August 24, 2015 (80 FR 51193). NMFS considered public comments in finalizing the 2015 territorial bigeye tuna catch and allocation specifications and EA.

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL: Michael D. Tosatto
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The environmental review process led us to conclude that this action, as well as a possible identical action for fishing year 2016, will not have a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared. A copy of the finding of no significant impact (FONSI), including the supporting EA, is enclosed for your information. Although NMFS is not soliciting comments on this completed EA and 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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Kristen A. Tronvig
Acting NOAA NEPA Coordinator

Encl.