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

JUN 8 2011

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: Omnibus Amendment for the Western Pacific Region to Establish a Process for Specifying Annual Catch Limits and Accountability Measures including an Environmental Assessment (RIN 0648-AY93)

LOCATION: U.S. EEZ around American Samoa, Hawaii, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), and the Pacific Remote Island Areas (PRIA)

SUMMARY: The Western Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) prepared a fishery ecosystem plan (FEP) amendment for all five western Pacific FEPs. The amendment to the American Samoa, Hawaii, the Mariana Archipelago (Guam and the CNMI), PRIA, and western Pacific pelagic fisheries FEPs provides specific guidance on how future annual catch limits (ACLs) and accountability measures (AMs) will be developed for western Pacific fisheries. It also identifies the management unit species that qualify for statutory exceptions to the ACL/AM requirements and specifies the qualification criteria for "ecosystem component species." ACLs and AMs are not required for species classified as ecosystem components.

The purpose of the amendment is to ensure that western Pacific fishery management plans comply with requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act to include a mechanism for specifying annual catch limits for all fisheries at a level such that overfishing does not occur and to implement measures to ensure accountability for adhering to these limits.

The environmental impact analysis found that the proposed action is administrative and will not result in large or adverse effects on the environment. The approval of the mechanism and process will not result in any environmental change or in a change in fishing activity by any of the fleets, or change in monitoring by the Council, NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), or other fishery management entity. In the future, when specific annual catch limits and accountability measures are proposed, the Council and NMFS will analyze the potential environmental impacts. In general, ACLs and AMs are not expected to result in large impacts to the environment because many of the ACLs are likely to be based on recent harvests and, therefore, will not result in significant changes to most fisheries.

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The combined FEP amendment and EA, identified by RIN 0648-AY93, is available from www.regulations.gov ; or by mail at the following address:

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL:

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The environmental review process was conducted with public input and no changes were required to the environmental impact analysis. The analysis in the EA led us to conclude that approving and implementing a mechanism and process to develop annual catch limit and accountability measures for qualifying fisheries 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 environmental assessment is enclosed for your information.

Although NOAA is not soliciting comments on this completed EA/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,

Paul N. Doremus, Ph.D.
NOAA NEPA Coordinator

Enclosure