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:

MAY 21 2012

Under the National Environmental Policy Act, NMFS conducted an environmental review for the following action.

TITLE: Revised Swordfish Trip Limits in the Hawaii Deep-set Longline Fishery (RIN 0648-BB48)

LOCATION: U.S. EEZ around Hawaii

SUMMARY: The Western Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) prepared a regulatory amendment and environmental assessment (EA), with a regulatory impact review, to consider alternatives for revising the limits on the number of swordfish that may be landed or possessed during any given Hawaii-based deep-set longline fishing trip. Currently, a deep-set vessel may keep up to 10 swordfish on any given trip. The Council recommended no limit on the number of swordfish retained on a trip with a NMFS observer on board, regardless of the type of hook used. There would be a limit of 25 swordfish on a trip using only circle hooks without an observer on board. For a trip not using circle hooks and not carrying a National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) observer, the current limit of 10 fish would remain unchanged. All other measures applicable to the deep-set fishery would remain unchanged. The proposed rule intends to reduce regulatory discards and optimize the yield of swordfish. The environmental review was conducted with public input, and found that the proposed action would not result in substantial changes to the deep-set fishery. The combined regulatory amendment, EA and regulatory impact review, identified by NOAA-NMFS-2012-0097, is available at www.regulations.gov or from the following address:

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL:
Michael D. Tosatto
Regional Administrator
NOAA NMFS Pacific Islands Region
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The environmental review process led us to conclude that this action will not have a significant impact on the environment, so 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 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,

for Patricia A. Montanio
NEPA Coordinator

Enclosure

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