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

MAY - 2 2013

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: Finding of No Significant Impact and Environmental Assessment: Fishing Restrictions and Observer Requirements in Purse Seine Fisheries for 2013 and 2014; RIN 0648-BC87

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 promulgating a rule to implement certain provisions adopted by the Commission for the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean. The specific provisions are part of the "Conservation and Management Measure for Bigeye, Yellowfin and Skipjack Tuna in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean" (CMM 2012-01) and include the following: (1) limits on fishing effort by U.S. purse seine vessels in the U.S. exclusive economic zone and on the high seas; (2) restrictions on the use of fish aggregating devices (FADs); and (3) requirements for U.S. purse seine vessels to carry observers.

NMFS prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) that analyzed three action alternatives for implementing the purse seine provisions of CMM 2012-01, as well as the No-Action Alternative. Each of the action alternatives includes a different variation of the fishing effort limits. NMFS identified two variations for implementing the Fish Aggregating Device (FAD) restrictions, which were incorporated into the three action alternatives. NMFS identified only one manner of implementing the observer requirements, so all the action alternatives include identical observer requirements. Alternative 1 is the No-Action Alternative. Alternative 2 includes the most restrictive fishing effort limits as well as the FAD restrictions prohibiting fishing on FADs during certain periods. Alternative 3 includes the fishing effort limits based on past regulatory precedent, and FAD restrictions prohibiting fishing on FADs and setting on fish that have aggregated in association with a vessel during certain periods. Alternative 4 includes the least restrictive fishing effort alternative as well as FAD restrictions prohibiting fishing on FADs during certain periods. The rule implements Alternative 3, which includes neither the most restrictive nor the least restrictive fishing effort limits, but rather, is based on similar fishing effort limits established in past regulations. The FAD restrictions under Alternative 3 are expected to serve CMM 2012-01's objective of reducing the tuna stocks' fishing mortality rates through seasonal prohibitions on the use of FADs better than the variation for this element of the rule considered under Alternatives 2 and 4.

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RESPONSIBLE
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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 EA, 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,

Patricia A. Montanio
NOAA NEPA Coordinator

Enclosures