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

DEC 1 6 2011

To All Interested Government Agencies and Public Groups:

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

TITLE: RIN 0648-XA674: Annual Catch Limit Specifications and Accountability Measures for Pacific Islands Bottomfish Fisheries in 2012 and 2013

LOCATION: U.S. EEZ around American Samoa, Guam, the CNMI, and Hawaii

SUMMARY: NMFS proposes to specify an annual catch limit (ACL) and accountability measures (AM) for bottomfish stocks and stock complexes in American Samoa, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and for non-Deep 7 bottomfish stock Hawaii. The ACLs and AMs will be applicable in fishing years 2012 and 2013, which run from January 1 to December 31. The purpose of this action is to comply with provisions of the fishery ecosystem plans (FEP) for American Samoa, the Mariana Archipelago, and Hawaii which require NMFS to specify an ACL for each stock and stock complex in the western Pacific bottomfish fisheries and implement AMs that prevent ACLs from being exceeded, and correct or mitigate overages should they occur. The ACL specifications and AMs were developed by the Council using the best available scientific information and were coordinated with the public. The ACLs and AMs are intended to provide for long-term sustainability of the bottomfish fisheries of the western Pacific.

NMFS prepared an environmental assessment (EA) to consider the effects of the proposed specifications on the environment. The ACL specifications are not accompanied by in-season closures, but rather, by AMs that call for a post-season fishery review of the fishery to determine whether an ACL was exceeded, and, if so, additional consideration of whether stocks were adversely affected, and the possibility of adjusting the ACL. Because there is no in-season management measure (such as a fishery closure should an ACL be reached), the manner in which the bottomfish fisheries of the region are conducted is not likely to change. Future evaluations of the fishery and ACL adjustments are expected to prevent any of the fish stocks from being subject to overfishing or becoming overfished.

The EA and proposed specifications, identified by RIN 0648-XA674, are available from www.regulations.gov; or by mail from the following:

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL:

Michael D. Tosatto
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The environmental review process led us to conclude that the proposed 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 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,

Patricia A. Montanio
NOAA NEPA Coordinator

Enclosure