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

OCT 29 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: Issuance of a Special Fishing Permit to Authorize the Use of an Anchored Pod to Culture and Harvest a Coral Reef Ecosystem Management Unit Species, *Seriola rivoliana*, in Federal Waters West of Hawaii Island (RIN 0648-XC791)

LOCATION: U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone, between 7.5 nm and 3.5 nm west of the Island of Hawaii

SUMMARY: An environmental assessment (EA) was prepared by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), as the Lead Agency, and reviewed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), as a Cooperating Agency. The environmental assessment, dated October 25, 2013, evaluates the potential environmental impacts of issuing a Special Coral Reef Ecosystem Fishing Permit (SCREFP) to Kampachi Farms, LLC, for a one-year period. The permit is required under the approved Hawaii Fishery Ecosystem Plan and its issuance will be consistent with implementing federal regulations (50 CFR 665.224) pertaining to management of coral reef ecosystem fisheries. The permit is required for harvests of coral reef management unit species using gear that is not specifically authorized. Once approved, the permit will authorize Kampachi Farms to culture and harvest a limited number (2,000) of Almaco Jack or kampachi (*Seriola rivoliana*) using a brass-link mesh cage (CuPod), which is approximately 21 ft in diameter and attached to a 28-ft long feed vessel moored in deep waters 5.5 nm west of Keauhou, Hawaii. The fish to be grown and harvested using the CuPod and feed vessel, would be first generation offspring from wild-caught fish. The permit would be valid for one year.

The applicant will also need to obtain a Department of the Army permit, in accordance with Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899.

If approved, the NMFS and Army permits will allow the applicant to test the feasibility of raising this species using an anchored CuPod and feed vessel (the Velella array) in the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone.

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL:

Michael D. Tosatto
Regional Administrator
Pacific Islands Region
NOAA NMFS
1601 Kapiolani Blvd., Suite 1110
Honolulu, HI 96814-4700
Tel: (808) 944-2200; Fax (808) 973-2941

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On August 13, 2013, NMFS provided the public with an opportunity to review and comment on a draft EA. NMFS considered all comments in eight comment letters and either made no change to the document or improved information in the baseline and the clarity of the document. None of the comments resulted in substantial changes to the analysis about the significance of impacts of the proposed action on the human environment.

The environmental review process led us to conclude that this action 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 NOAA is not soliciting further comments on this project, 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