

EPA received written requests to extend the comment period to give affected parties more time to address the issues raised in the ANPRM. One of the requests was for an extension to July 28, 1999; the other asked for the comment period to be extended to September 2, 1999.

Although we agree that additional time for the submittal of comments would be beneficial, we have a desire to make decisions regarding a proposal as soon as possible. Furthermore, the affected parties will have additional opportunities to comment during the rulemaking process. Therefore, EPA is extending the comment period 15 days to July 13, 1999.

Dated: June 9, 1999.

Robert Brenner,

Acting Assistant Administrator for OAR.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 660

[I.D. 061099A]

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Proposed Coral Reef Ecosystem Fishery Management Plan of the Western Pacific Region

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare an EIS; request for comments.

SUMMARY: NOAA announces its intention to prepare an EIS in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 for the proposed Coral Reef Ecosystem Fishery Management Plan of the Western Pacific Region (FMP).

DATES: Written comments on the intent to prepare an EIS will be accepted on or before July 15, 1999. Initial scoping meetings are scheduled as follows:

1. 100th Western Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) meeting/

public hearing, June 16, 1999, Ala Moana Hotel, Honolulu, HI.

2. Coral Reef Ecosystem Plan Team Meeting, July 13-15, 1999, Council Office Conference Room, Honolulu, HI.

3. Additional field hearings for public scoping are tentatively planned for July and August in American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam and Hawaii (details regarding times and locations will follow in a separate **Federal Register** announcement).

ADDRESSES: Written comments on suggested alternatives and potential impacts should be sent to Kitty Simonds, Executive Director, Western Pacific Fishery Management Council, 1164 Bishop St., Suite 1400, Honolulu, HI 96813, and to Charles Karnella, Administrator, NMFS, Pacific Islands Area Office, 2570 Dole St. Honolulu, HI 96822.

The following locations have been set for scoping meetings:

1. 100th Council Meeting/public hearing, June 16, 1999, 2 - 5:00 p.m. (estimated time), Ala Moana Hotel, 410 Atkinson Road, Honolulu, HI.

2. Coral Reef Ecosystem Plan Team Meeting, July 13-15, 1999, 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Council Office Conference Room, 1164 Bishop St., Honolulu, HI.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Kitty Simonds, (808) 522-8220.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The proposed action would include permit and reporting requirements for non-subsistence harvest of coral reef resources, establishment of several Marine Protected Areas and a list of allowable gear types to harvest coral reef resources in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ). It would also include Essential Fish Habitat, Habitat Areas of Particular Concern, fishing and non-fishing threats, as well as other required provisions under the Sustainable Fisheries Act (SFA). A framework amendment process will be included to allow for the addition of new measures rapidly. The proposed Coral Reef Ecosystem EIS/FMP, being developed by the Council will be its fifth FMP for Federal waters, which is the EEZ for all U.S. Pacific Islands. This area includes nearly 11,000 km² (4,000 square miles)

of coral reefs. Development of the FMP is timely considering new mandates and initiatives such as Ecosystem Principles in Fisheries Management, the President's 1998 Executive Order on Coral Reefs, and priorities of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force and the U.S. Coral Reef Initiative, as well as the SFA and other provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. The draft FMP describes the importance of coral reef resources to the region and current and potential threats that warrant a fishery management plan at this time. Information regarding the harvest of these resources in the EEZ is largely unknown. Potential for unregulated harvest and bio-prospecting for reef fish, live grouper, live rock and coral exists throughout the region. Marine debris, largely from fishing gear, is impacting reefs in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. To identify the scope of issues that will be addressed in the EIS and to identify potential impacts on the quality of the human environment, public participation is invited by providing written comments to the Council and attending the scoping meetings/hearings.

Public Information Meetings:

Additional public information meetings and public hearings on the proposed EIS/FMP will be held in various locations around the region later in the year. These meetings will be advertised in the **Federal Register** and the local newspapers.

Special Accommodations:

The meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Kitty Simonds (see **ADDRESSES**) at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.

Dated: June 11, 1999.

Gary C. Matlock,

Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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