

CCR database after the initial registration, the Contractor is required to confirm on an annual basis that its information in the CCR database is accurate and complete.

(d) Offerors and contractors may obtain information on registration and annual confirmation requirements via the Internet at <http://www.ccr2000.com> or by calling 888-CCR-2423 (888-227-2423).

(End of clause)

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 660

[I.D. 092999C]

Pelagics Fisheries 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 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS); Notice of Intent to prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA); scoping meetings; request for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces its intention to prepare an EIS on Federal management of the fishery for pelagic species in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) waters of the Western Pacific Region. The scope of the EIS analysis will include all activities related to the conduct of the fishery authorized and managed under the Fishery Management Plan for the Pelagic Fisheries of the Western Pacific Region (FMP) and all amendments thereto. Additionally, NMFS announces its intention to prepare an EA on the fishery for pelagic species in the EEZ waters of the Western Pacific Region. The scope of the analysis of the EA will include all activities related to the conduct of the fishery for the 2-year period NMFS anticipates is necessary to prepare the EIS. Both the EIS and EA will examine the impacts of pelagics harvest on, among other things, sea turtles and seabirds.

NMFS will hold concurrent scoping meetings to provide for public input into the range of actions, alternatives, and impacts that the EIS and EA should consider. Scoping for the EIS and EA commences with publication of this document. In addition to holding the scoping meetings, NMFS is accepting written comments on the range of actions, alternatives, and impacts it

should be considering for this EIS, as well as comments on the scope of the EA.

DATES: Written comments will be accepted through December 6, 1999.

See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for meeting times.

ADDRESSES: Written comments and requests to be included on a mailing list of persons interested in the EIS should be sent to Marilyn Luipold, Pacific Islands Area Office, NMFS, 1601 Kapiolani Blvd., Suite 1110, Honolulu, HI 96814-4700.

See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for meeting locations and special accommodations.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Marilyn Luipold, 808-973-2937 or 2935 extension 204.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, the United States has exclusive fishery management authority over all living marine resources within the EEZ between the seaward boundary of each state or U.S. island possession seaward to 200 nautical miles from the baseline used to measure the territorial sea. The management of these marine resources is vested in the Secretary of Commerce and in eight regional fishery management councils. The Western Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) has the responsibility to prepare FMPs for the marine resources that require conservation and management in the Western Pacific Region. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires preparation of EISs for major Federal actions significantly impacting the quality of the human environment (40 CFR 1502.9(a)).

The FMP was developed by the Council, and regulations implementing management measures were published on February 17, 1987 (52 FR 5983). An EA was prepared for the action implementing the FMP. The FMP has been amended seven times, and NEPA environmental documents (environmental assessments, categorical exclusions, findings of no significant impact, and an EIS) have been prepared for each FMP and regulatory amendment. However, many of these earlier documents have become outdated and/or focused on individual management actions, making it difficult to obtain a comprehensive view of issues and management options for the fishery as it exists today. NMFS is undertaking preparation of a comprehensive EIS in order to analyze the fishery as it is currently conducted, to address any and all impacts that

might have been overlooked in earlier analyses, and to improve management of the fishery. The Federal action under review is defined as, among other things, all activities authorized and managed under the FMP, as amended.

The EIS will present an overall picture of the environmental effects of fishing as conducted under the FMP, rather than focusing narrowly on one management action, and will include a range of reasonable management alternatives and an analysis of their impacts in order to define issues and provide clear basis for choice among options by the public, the Council, and NMFS. NMFS intends to assess the biological and socio-economic impacts that result from regulation of the pelagic fisheries of the Western Pacific Region, including license limitation, as well as present and potential controls on effort, harvest levels, location, timing, and methods of fishing. The effects on associated species, including interactions with protected species, will be assessed. NMFS intends to evaluate the significant changes that have occurred in the pelagic fisheries, including the significant cumulative effects of changes in fishing activities, socio-economics, the environment, and management. The assessment will include analysis of the cumulative or incremental impacts of actions and alternatives. Impacts associated with status quo management (i.e., continuation of fishing as currently conducted) will be presented and compared to situations simulating limits on fishing areas and/or gears over all or parts of the management area. Possible alternatives to the current conduct of the fishery include a range of area and/or seasonal closures for the longline fishery, gear restrictions and/or modifications, including prohibitions on the use of longline gear in some or all of the management area, and adjustments to requirements for handling incidental hookings and takings of protected species. The impacts of EEZ fishing activity and harvest on the marine environment will be assessed under representative alternative management scenarios that will ensure consideration of impacts that may reach beyond the EEZ. As the number of possible alternatives is virtually infinite, the EIS will not consider detailed alternatives for every aspect of the FMP. Therefore, a principal objective of the scoping and public input process is to identify a reasonable set of management alternatives that, with adequate analysis, will sharply define critical

issues and provide a clear basis for choice among the alternatives.

Issues

The environmental consequences section of the EIS will display the impacts of pelagics harvest accruing with present management regulations and under a range of representative alternative management regulations on Western Pacific ecosystem issues. These issues include: essential fish habitat (EFH), target and non-target species of fish (including tunas, swordfish, and sharks), fish that are discarded, marine mammals (Hawaiian monk seals and cetaceans), sea turtles, and seabirds present in the Western Pacific ecosystem. In addition, the environmental consequences section will contain a summary, interpretation, and predictions for socio-economic issues associated with conduct of the fishery on the following groups of individuals: (1) Those who participate in harvesting the fishery resources and other living marine resources, (2) those who process and market the fish and fishery products, (3) those who are involved in allied support industries, (4) those who consume fishery products, (5) those who rely on living marine resources in the management area either for subsistence needs or for recreational benefits, (6) those who benefit from non-consumptive uses of living marine resources, (7) those involved in managing and monitoring fisheries, and (8) fishing communities.

EA Issues

In the EA, NMFS intends to evaluate whether the conduct of the current

fisheries over the next 2 years will have significant environmental impacts. The Federal action under review in the EA is defined as all activities authorized and managed under the FMP, as amended, for the 2-year period anticipated to be necessary for preparation of the EIS. The EA will present an overall picture of the environmental effects over the next 2 years of fishing as conducted under the FMP. Efforts will be made to quantify and explain the intensity of projected impacts on EFH, target and non-target species of fish (including tunas, swordfish, and sharks), fish that are discarded, marine mammals (Hawaiian monk seals and cetaceans), sea turtles, and seabirds present in the Western Pacific ecosystem. Additionally, the EA will evaluate socio-economic impacts associated with the fishery on groups of individuals, including fishing communities, harvesters, processors and marketers, consumers, subsistence and recreational users of living marine resources in the management area, non-consumptive users, and individuals involved in allied support industries and management and monitoring of the fisheries. Although the focus of the EA will be analysis of impacts associated with continuation of fishing as currently conducted, reasonable alternatives for application in the 2-year period, including area and/or seasonal closures for the longline fishery, gear restrictions and/or modifications including prohibitions on the use of longline gear in part or all of the management area, and adjustments to requirements for handling incidental hookings and

takings of protected species, will be addressed.

Public Involvement and Meeting Times and Locations

Scoping for the EIS and EA begins with publication of this document. An informational presentation of the project will be made in conjunction with the Council's October meeting and will be at the Sheraton Waikiki Hotel, 2255 Kalakaua Ave., Honolulu, HI, October 19, 1999, at 6:30 p.m. Subsequent scoping meetings are planned during October and November for the Hawaii Islands of Oahu, Maui, Hawaii, and Kauai, and during November in Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands, and American Samoa. Specific times and locations will be announced in a separate **Federal Register** document. The Responsible Program Manager for this EIS is Rodney R. McInnis, Acting Southwest Regional Administrator, NMFS.

Special Accommodations

Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Marilyn Luipold, (see **ADDRESSES**), 808-973-2937 (voice) or 808-973-2941 (fax), at least 5 days before the meeting date.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et. seq.*

Dated: October 1, 1999.

Gary C. Matlock,

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

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