



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

DEC 16 2010

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: Environmental Assessment to Revise the Vessel Capacity Limit in the Purse Seine Fishery in the Eastern Pacific Ocean in Accordance with Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) Resolution C-02-03; RIN 0648-AY75

LOCATION: The IATTC Convention Area, including the waters bounded by the coast of the Americas, the 50° N. and 50° S. parallels, and the 150° W. meridian

SUMMARY:

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is proposing regulations under authority of the Tuna Conventions Act of 1950, as amended to revise the current U.S. vessel carrying capacity limit for the purse seine fishery which targets tuna species in the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) Convention Area. The revision would make vessel capacity limits consistent with the amount authorized under resolutions adopted by the IATTC, which currently is 31,775 cubic meters, or about 27,147 metric tons. Currently, the U.S. fleet capacity limit is 8,969 metric tons. The exemption for small purse seine vessels to be on the IATTC Vessel Register would also be removed so all U.S. purse seine vessels that fish for tuna in the IATTC Convention Area would be required to be listed on the Vessel Register and categorized as active in order to use purse seine gear to fish for tuna in the IATTC Convention Area. However, small vessels which do not primarily fish for tuna would be exempt from the frivolous request provisions for active status regulations due to the fact that these vessels only opportunistically fish for tuna off the west coast of California in the summer and fall months when tuna schools occasionally come close enough to shore. These revisions would ensure that the United States is satisfying its obligations as a member of the IATTC and not exceeding its allotted capacity in the fishery, while allowing for controlled operational flexibility for the U.S. industry consistent with the IATTC management framework.

RESPONSIBLE

OFFICIAL: Rodney R. McInnis
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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 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,



for Paul N. Doremus, Ph. D.
NOAA NEPA Coordinator

Enclosure