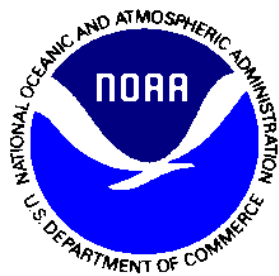


FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN
PELAGIC FISHERIES OF THE WESTERN
PACIFIC REGION

Prepared for



National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
National Marine Fisheries Service

Under contract to

Research Corporation of the University of Hawai'i

March 30, 2001

Prepared by

URS Corporation
615 Pi'ikoi Street, Suite 900
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96814

VOLUME I

FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN
PELAGIC FISHERIES OF THE WESTERN PACIFIC REGION

Prepared Under Contract to the Research Corporation of the University of Hawai'i
for National Marine Fisheries Service

Responsible Agency:

National Oceanic and Atmospheric
Administration (NOAA)
National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)
Southwest Region

Contact Person:

Rebecca Lent, Regional Administrator
Attn: Charles Karnella, Administrator
Pacific Island Area Office
1601 Kapi'olani Blvd., Suite 1110
Honolulu, HI 96814
Telephone: (808) 973 2935
Fax: (808) 973 2941

Abstract:

Pelagic fisheries in the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) of the State of Hawai'i, the territories of American Samoa and Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) and several western Pacific islands and atolls that are U.S. possessions under direct federal jurisdiction are managed under the Fishery Management Plan for Pelagic Fisheries of the Western Pacific Region. This Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) comprehensively analyzes the environmental impacts of various alternatives for management of U.S. pelagic fisheries in the Western Pacific Region. The fisheries analyzed in this EIS include longline fisheries in Hawai'i and American Samoa, commercial troll fisheries in Hawai'i, American Samoa, Guam and the CNMI, charter troll fisheries in Hawai'i, Guam and CNMI, commercial pelagic handliners in Hawai'i, recreational troll fishing in Hawai'i, American Samoa, Guam and CNMI, and the commercial pole-and-line skipjack fishery in Hawai'i. The scoping process identified five broad areas of public and agency concern: issues related to the management process; fisheries impacts on habitat, protected species and other non-fish species; sustainability of target species catches as well as effects on incidental catch species and bycatch; fisheries and gear conflicts; and cultural and economic issues. Pending management actions and recent litigation (Center for Marine Conservation v NMFS (D. Haw.) Civ. No. 99-00152 DAE) require decisionmaking to focus in particular on conduct of the Hawai'i-based longline fishery, and its interactions with protected sea turtles and seabirds, the harvest of sharks, and emerging conflicts between large and small vessels fishing near American Samoa. A range of alternatives is therefore analyzed for efficacy in meeting a set of objectives that include reduction of sea turtle and seabird takes, reduction of pelagic shark incidental catch, and resolution of gear conflict issues in American Samoa. The cumulative environmental impacts of these alternatives are discussed in the context of natural variability of the pelagic environment and the ongoing fishing efforts of other U.S. (purse seine) and non-U.S. fisheries in the Western Pacific Region.