



DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 665

RTID 0648-XA646

Pacific Island Fisheries; 2020 U.S. Territorial Longline

Bigeye Tuna Catch Limits for the Commonwealth of the

Northern Mariana Islands

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

ACTION: Announcement of a valid specified fishing agreement.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces a valid specified fishing agreement that allocates up to 1,000 metric tons (t) of the 2020 bigeye tuna limit for the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) to U.S. longline fishing vessels. The agreement supports the long-term sustainability of fishery resources of the U.S. Pacific Islands, and fisheries development in the CNMI.

DATES: The specified fishing agreement was valid as of November 12, 2020. The start date for attributing 2020 bigeye tuna catch to American Samoa was November 15, 2020.

ADDRESSES: The Fishery Ecosystem Plan for Pelagic Fisheries of the Western Pacific (FEP) describes specified fishing agreements and is available from the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council), 1164 Bishop St.,

Suite 1400, Honolulu, HI 96813, tel 808-522-8220, fax 808-522-8226, or <http://www.wpcouncil.org>.

NMFS prepared environmental analyses that describe the potential impacts on the human environment that would result from the action. The analyses, identified by NOAA-NMFS-2020-0120, are available from <https://www.regulations.gov/docket?D=NOAA-NMFS-2020-0153>, or from Michael D. Tosatto, Regional Administrator, NMFS Pacific Islands Region (PIR), 1845 Wasp Blvd., Bldg. 176, Honolulu, HI 96818.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Lynn Rassel, NMFS PIRO Sustainable Fisheries, 808-725-5184.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: In a final rule published on August 19, 2020, NMFS specified a 2020 limit of 2,000 t of longline-caught bigeye tuna for each of the U.S. Pacific Island territories of American Samoa, Guam, and the CNMI (85 FR 50961). NMFS allows each territory to allocate up to 1,500 t of the 2,000 t limit to U.S. longline fishing vessels identified in a valid specified fishing agreement, but the overall allocation limit among all territories may not exceed 3,000 t.

On November 9, 2020, NMFS received from the Council a specified fishing agreement between the CNMI and the Hawaii Longline Association. The Council's Executive Director advised that the specified fishing agreement was consistent with the criteria set forth in 50 CFR 665.819(c)(1). On

November 12, 2020, NMFS reviewed the agreement and determined that it is consistent with the Pelagic FEP, implementing regulations, the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, and other applicable laws.

In accordance with 50 CFR 300.224(d) and 50 CFR 665.819(c) (9), vessels in the agreement may retain and land bigeye tuna in the western and central Pacific Ocean under the CNMI attribution specified in the fishing agreement. On November 15, 2020, NMFS began attributing bigeye tuna caught by vessels in the agreement to the CNMI, seven days before November 22, 2020, the date that NMFS forecasted that the fishery would reach the American Samoa bigeye tuna allocation limit of 1,000 t (85 FR 63216, October 7, 2020).

If NMFS determines that the fishery will reach the 1,000 t allocation specified in the CNMI agreement, we will restrict the retention of bigeye tuna caught by vessels in the agreement, unless the vessels are included in a

subsequent specified fishing agreement with another U.S. territory.

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

Dated: November 17, 2020.

Jennifer M. Wallace,
Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries,
National Marine Fisheries Service.