

**Western
Pacific
Regional
Fishery
Management
Council**

June 26, 2014

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to express our dismay and respectfully offer our advice regarding your June 17th announcement of the proposed expansion of the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument (MNM). Fishing is the only existing activity that will be impacted by such an expansion as currently proposed. We are surprised that your staff did not consult with the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council as part of your decision making process. The Council has been developing management measures and monitoring the fisheries operating in these waters for nearly four decades, and strongly advises against banning US fishermen from fishing in the waters surrounding the US Pacific Remote Islands.


As noted in the findings of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, "Pacific Insular Areas contain unique historical, cultural, legal, political, and geographical circumstances which make fisheries resources important in sustaining their economic growth." The Pacific Remote Islands are important tuna fishing grounds for US pelagic longline vessels operating out of Hawaii and US purse seine vessels operating from American Samoa. Events such as El Niño/La Niña lead to shifts in tuna biomass by many thousands of miles, and, at these times, the US exclusive economic zone (EEZ) around the Pacific Remote Islands becomes extremely important to our fishermen.

Neither fishery poses a threat to the pristine coral reef and reef associated habitats around the US Pacific Remote Islands, and fishing is already banned in waters from 0 to 50 nautical miles from shore of these islands through the existing monument boundaries. These fisheries also have no significant impact to any other marine resource in the waters contained within the proposed monument expansion.


We, therefore, strongly advise that it is in the best interests of the US Pacific Islands region and the nation, which benefits from the fresh and canned tuna from our fisheries, that US commercial fishing continue to be allowed in perpetuity in the US EEZ around the US Pacific Remote Islands from 50 to 200 nautical miles from shore should any proposal to expand the Pacific Remote Islands MNM move forward. Our position statement is enclosed.



Arnold Palacios
Chair

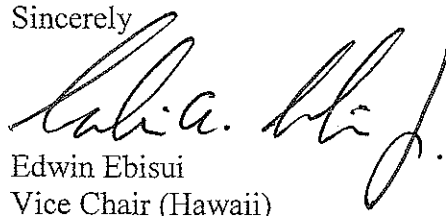


William Sword
Vice Chair (American Samoa)




Richard Seman
Vice Chair (Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands)

Sincerely



Edwin Ebisui
Vice Chair (Hawaii)



Michael Duenas
Vice Chair (Guam)

Enclosure: "Obama Administration's Proposed Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument Expansion Betrays US Fishermen, Places Unfair Burden on US Pacific Islands"

Cc: Mr. Michael Boots, Acting Director, Council on Environmental Quality
Congressional Delegation of US Pacific Islands