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## Governor Presses for Reopening of Marine National Monument to Commercial Fishing

### Lolo implores President Trump to use Executive Authority to roll back harmful restrictions

(Governor's Office-Pago Pago-March 10, 2020) Governor Lolo Moliga today continued his pressure campaign to compel the Trump Administration to reopen the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument (PRIMNM) to commercial fishing.

In a letter to President Donald Trump, the Governor once again urged the President to use his Executive Authority to reopen the waters within the Marine National Monument to fishing in order to alleviate the economic harm that the establishment and later expansion of the PRIMNM continue to have on American Samoa's economy.

In his letter, Governor Moliga quoted a statement that the President made in 2017 in announcing that he was using his executive power to shrink the size of two national monuments in Utah. Those monuments were created by Presidential Proclamation under the Antiquities Act of 1906. In his statement, President Trump said, **"These abuses of the Antiquities Act give enormous power to faraway bureaucrats at the expense of the people who actually live here, work here and make this place their home."**

The Antiquities Act states that it is intended for: "... the protection of objects of historic and scientific interest," and gives broad powers to the President to set aside certain valuable public natural areas as park and conservation land. However, President Trump has repeatedly stated that he believes certain of his predecessors have abused their power under the Antiquities Act and has been reviewing all such actions that have taken place since 1996.

The Governor went on to point out that President Obama's expansion of the PRIMNM in 2014, and again in 2016, were done with no local input and resulted in a prohibition of fishing in a swath of the Pacific Ocean that is 20% larger than the area of the states of Texas and California combined.

“For a thousand years, American Samoa’s identity has been one with the sea,” the Governor wrote, “and we appreciate and agree with the need to protect endangered coral reefs and other wonderful, important resources they house. However, such protections must be weighed against the tremendous burden the fishing ban is placing on our tiny, remote, economically challenged territory of 53,000 people. My appeal to you is not to shrink the size of the PRIMNM, but to simply allow the restoration of fishing rights to these waters as recommended to you in an April 14, 2017 letter from the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council.”

In April 2017, President Trump issued an Executive Order directing Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke to perform a *Study into Designations Made Under the Antiquities Act*. Based upon the findings in his report, Secretary Zinke recommended that decisions on fishing within PRIMNM’s boundaries be left to the regional fishery management council as authorized by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

“Secretary Zinke’s findings and recommendation were presented to you on December 5, 2017, the day after you visited Utah to reduce the size of two over-expanded national monuments there,” the Governor wrote, “and numerous meetings and discussions have taken place since then between myself, the Governors of Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, our Representatives in Congress and your Administration. It is well past time that this issue be favorably resolved as have similar overreaches by the Obama Administration in the Western United States.”

This is the Governor’s third letter to President Trump on the issue. He has also contacted the Secretaries of the Interior and Commerce whose Departments each have a role in the oversight and management of the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

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