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AMERICAN SAMOA GOVERNMENT**

WESPAC

Serial No.: 546 - 23

June 1, 2023

Kristina Kekuewa
Pacific Islands Regional Director
NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
1845 Wasp Bldg.
Honolulu, HI 96818

Subject: Request for Extension of comment period on the Proposed Designation of a National Marine Sanctuary for the Pacific Remote Islands

Dear Ms. Kekuewa:

I write to express my grave concerns about the process by which this designation of a national marine sanctuary within the Pacific Remote Island Areas (PRIA) has been proposed. A single public scoping meeting for our people is insufficient time for proper dialogue and review of an action that will have significant and irreparable harm to this community. There has been a lack of meaningful conversation with our indigenous communities since this proposal was introduced, which certainly warrants additional time for us to make informed comments on the matter. In addition to a joint letter with the Territorial Governors of Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, I have twice written to President Biden requesting further consultation and objecting to this proposal (letters attached). I have not received a response to those requests.

NOAA has provided very limited information and data on the proposal, include fishing effort within the PRIA and economic impacts. It appears the basis of this proposal rests on reports and studies furnished by the proponents of the measure without proper validation. Utilizing unreliable data without consideration of cumulative fishery closures in US waters and the reality of the existing regulatory landscape leads to a false narrative on the value of the PRIA to the US and American Samoa. I cannot submit an informed position and statement based on unreliable data.

I respectfully request that the comment period for this matter be extended to August 16, 2023 or beyond. As explained in detail in my attached letters to President Biden, the proposal has the potential to significantly harm the way of life of the indigenous people of American Samoa. Our community must have an ample opportunity to thoroughly review the economic, social and cultural consequences that this proposed sanctuary will have on our people.

LEMANU P. S. MAUGA
Governor

Enc.: Serial Letter 338-23 to Hon. Gina M. Raimondo
Serial Letter 311-22 to President Joe Biden
Territorial Governors' Letter to POTUS

cc: Hon. Gina M. Raimondo, Secretary, U.S. Department of Commerce
Hon. Amata Coleman Radewagen, Member of U.S Congress, American Samoa
Hon. Talauega E. V. Ale, Lt. Governor, American Samoa
Hon. Tuaolo Manaia E. Fruean, President, American Samoa Senate
Hon. Savali Talavou Ale, Speaker, American Samoa House of Representatives
Taotasi Archie Soliai, Director, Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources
Atuatasi-Lelei Peau, Superintendent, National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa
John Armor, Director, NOAA Office of Marine Sanctuaries
Nicole LeBoeuf, Assistant Administrator, NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries