

Treaty on Fisheries between the Governments of Certain Pacific Island States and the Government of the United States of America

South Pacific Tuna Treaty (SPTT)

Implementing Legislation

South Pacific Tuna [Act](#) of 1988 as amended (U.S.C. 973 et seq.)

Parties

The United States and Pacific Island Parties (Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu)

Description

The SPTT entered into force in 1988. After an initial 5-year agreement, the SPTT was extended in 1993 and again in March 2003. At the same time, the related Economic Assistance Agreement between the United States and the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) was also extended for a term of 10 years. The Treaty provides licenses for up to 40 U.S. purse seine fishing vessels with an option for 5 additional licenses reserved for joint venture arrangements, to fish in the EEZ's of the Pacific Island Parties. The Treaty includes a number of requirements including mandatory observers and vessel monitoring system (VMS). The Treaty has linkages to the requirements of Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Convention (WCPFC), and the Nauru Agreement.

In 2013, the United States and the Pacific Island Parties (PIPs) agreed to extend the South Pacific Tuna Treaty for an interim period of 18 months. This interim arrangement maintains the treaty text, but adopts new financial terms and incorporates some new elements from the latest round of negotiations, including the use of a vessel day scheme. The interim arrangement was extended again in October 2014 to allow negotiators additional time to finalize the text of a renewed treaty.

Budget

Under the interim arrangement for 2015, the industry financial terms amount to \$69 million for 8,301 fishing days in the PIP EEZs for up to 40 U.S. purse seine fishing vessels.

Also associated with the SPTT is an Economic Assistance Agreement between the U.S. Government (U.S. Agency for International Development) and the FFA. The U.S. Government will pay \$21 million annually, subject to the availability of appropriated funds for this purpose, into an economic development fund administered by the FFA. The FFA ensures that the fund is used to support economic development programs in the region.

Under the terms of the current arrangement, both the U.S. tuna industry and the U.S. Government annual payments total \$90 million. In addition to paying vessel day fees, the U.S. tuna industry also pays the costs associated with observer coverage (including training), vessel monitoring system deployment and associated recurring costs, and a regional registration fee. Under the interim agreement, the overall costs of the industry supported observer fund will be based on 40 vessels making an average of seven trips and an average observer placement cost of approximately \$4,500 per trip. Also included are agreed costs for observer program management (\$30,000) and training (\$20,000) resulting in an estimated total cost to a U.S. vessel of approximately \$2 million annually.

U.S. Administration

U.S. operational, administrative, and enforcement commitments under the SPTT are carried out by the NOAA Fisheries Service (NMFS) Pacific Islands Regional Office located in Honolulu, Hawaii.

Regulatory Actions

When the revised treaty is adopted, regulations will be developed to implement appropriate measures.

Future Meetings

The Pacific Island Parties and the U.S. Government and industry have been meeting to modify the economic assistance agreement and extend the Treaty—the meetings are expected to continue in 2015.

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