

Commercial Fishing and the proposed Pacific Remote Islands National Marine Sanctuary

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[A new analysis](#) shows that designating a new National Marine Sanctuary to protect the Pacific Remote Islands (PRI) to the full extent of the U.S. EEZ would have effectively no impact on U.S.-flagged fishing fleets' existing practices and catch, nor the operations of the tuna cannery based in American Samoa.

The Environmental Markets Lab (emLab) at the University of California Santa Barbara (UCSB) utilized publicly available AIS vessel monitoring data from Global Fishing Watch (GFW) and catch data reported by the Western & Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) to shed light on fishing dynamics in the region.

The findings show that very little fishing effort and catch are occurring inside the proposed protected area. Specifically:

- Over the last ten years (2013-2022), the U.S. purse seine and U.S. longline fleets have spent less than 0.5% of their fishing effort inside the proposed protected area (0.41% and 0.02%, respectively).
- WCPFC-reported catch data indicates that only 0.10% of the U.S. purse seine fleet's catch came from within the proposed Sanctuary.

The analysis also provides data-driven evidence to suggest that the U.S. purse seine fleet and cannery based out of American Samoa would not be negatively affected by the new Sanctuary. Specifically:

- U.S. purse seine vessels landing in Pago Pago harbor in American Samoa over the past ten years spent only 2.65% of their total effort fishing in the proposed Sanctuary
- U.S. longline vessels landing in Pago Pago harbor in American Samoa over the past ten years spent 0.00% of their total effort in the proposed Sanctuary.
- The majority of fishing effort by the U.S. purse seine fleet landing in Pago Pago occurs in the high seas (60.24%) or within non-US Exclusive Economic Zones (33.54%), while the U.S. longline fleet's effort landing in Pago Pago predominantly takes place within the American Samoa EEZ area (98.28%).

Further, evidence increasingly shows protected areas improve fishing outside of their boundaries. A [new study](#) showed that tuna fisheries around the nearby Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument have experienced a 54% increase in catch since the monument's expansion in 2016, due to spillover of healthy tuna populations within the protected area. [Yet another study](#) showed that the previous expansion of PRI in 2014 was followed by increased profitability for one of the fisheries operating in the area. There is strong reason to expect that protections offered by a new Sanctuary would help – rather than hinder – the region's fisheries in the long run.