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StarKist employees submit petition and comments opposing PIRA expansion

By Samoa News staff

~3 minutes

Pago Pago, AMERICAN SAMOA — More than 1,200 StarKist Samoa cannery workers have signed a petition, which voices their opposition to the federal proposal for marine sanctuary designation for the Pacific Remote Island Areas (PIRA) — a move that would expand the Pacific Remote Island Marine National Monument (PRINMM).

Cannery workers displayed their opposition during a public meeting on the proposal held last month at the Tauese P.F. Sunia Ocean Center in Utulei, as they joined ASG and others in the territory to oppose the federal plan.

The four-page petition, along with other public comments, was released recently on the federal portal (www.regulations.gov), which shows that as of yesterday morning nearly 6,000 comments have been received.

June 2 was the final date for comment submission and no new information is available on expanding the comment deadline as requested by Gov. Lemanu P.S. Mauga to the U.S Commerce

Secretary.

The public comments portal shows at least three cannery workers who posted their own short comments opposing the proposal, which has strong support from off-island based groups and individuals.

In the petition — which appears to have been submitted by StarKist, and publicly posted on the federal portal yesterday morning — the cannery workers declared that: “We stand firm in our opposition to the expansion” of the PRINMM.

“We urge the [federal] administration to reconsider and reverse this expansion in order to safeguard the American Samoan fishing industry, protect the local economy, and promote sustainable fishing practices,” the workers said.

It also notes that the signatures on the petition “are the many dedicated fish cleaners and cannery employees who represent the true faces of those who will be affected by the expansion.”

“They are among the thousands of workers who would bear the adverse consequences and they are here to emphasize the on-the-ground impact,” they said and declared in bold: **“WE SAY NO TO THE EXPANSION OF THE PRINMM.”**

The petition has the names of the workers, their StarKist Samoa employee badge number, village, phone number and signature.

Many local residents and some in the private sector also submitted comments which all oppose the proposed expansion, due to its impact on the cannery and the local economy.