UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
PROGRAM PLANNING AND INTEGRATION
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

OCT 19 2010

To All Interested Government Agencies and Public Groups:

Under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), an environmental review has been performed on the following action.

TITLE: Environmental Assessment of the Marine Sanitation Device Discharge Regulations for the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary

LOCATION: Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary

SUMMARY: While the action is anticipated to have a beneficial effect on the condition of biological resources within the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS or sanctuary), its significance is expected to be limited. The discharge of treated sewage from vessels is one, relatively minor contributor to the declining water quality of the FKNMS.

In addition, the action is expected to have limited and noncontroversial effects on the human environment. It builds on an existing prohibition on sewage discharges from vessels into the sanctuary's state waters, which was designated a No Discharge Zone in 2002 (67 FR 35735) by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency[1]. Widely supported by the public, this regulatory action will create consistency, reduce confusion among vessel operators, and improve enforceability.

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL:

Daniel J. Basta
Director
Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
National Ocean Service
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
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[1] Section 312 of the Clean Water Act gives the Environmental Protection Agency and states the authority to designate "No Discharge Zones" (33 U.S.C. 1322(f)). A NDZ is an area of a waterbody or an entire waterbody into which the discharge of sewage (whether treated or untreated) from all vessels is completely prohibited. NDZs are designed to give states an additional tool to address water quality issues associated with sewage contamination.

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The environmental review process led us to conclude that this action will not have a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared. A copy of the environmental assessment (EA), which includes the resulting finding of no significant impact (FONSI), is enclosed for your information.

Although NOAA is not soliciting comments on this completed EA/FONSI, we will consider any comments submitted that would assist us in preparing future NEPA documents. Please submit any written comments to the responsible official named above.

Sincerely,

Paul N. Doremus, Ph.D.
for NOAA NEPA Coordinator

Enclosure