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

JUL 21 2011

To All Interested Government Agencies and Public Groups:

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

TITLE: Environmental Assessment (EA) for a Final Rule to Modify the Retention of Incidentally-Caught Highly Migratory Species (HMS) in Atlantic Trawl Fisheries, RIN 0648-BA45

LOCATION: Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, and Caribbean

SUMMARY: This final action will modify the permitting and retention requirements for Atlantic HMS to address the incidental catch of North Atlantic swordfish in the *Illex* squid trawl fishery, and the incidental catch of species in the smoothhound shark complex (genus *Mustelus*) in all Atlantic trawl fisheries. The action will reduce regulatory dead discards of incidentally-caught swordfish in the *Illex* squid trawl fishery by establishing a new Incidental HMS Squid Trawl permit. It will also establish a retention limit for smoothhound sharks in all Atlantic trawl fisheries. This action will be consistent with the 2006 Consolidated Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan. The action is not expected to significantly alter current fishing practices or increase fishing effort, and is not be expected to change previously analyzed endangered species or marine mammal interaction rates or magnitudes, or affect critical habitat.

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL: Emily H. Menashes
Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries
National Marine Fisheries Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
1315 East West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910
(301) 713-2334

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

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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.
NOAA NEPA Coordinator

Enclosure