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

OCT 18 2011

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: Regulatory Amendment to the Reef Fish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) of the Gulf of Mexico to Set the 2011-2015 Total Allowable Catch (TAC) and Adjust the Bag Limit for Red Grouper [RIN 0648-BB22]

LOCATION: Exclusive economic zone in the Gulf of Mexico

SUMMARY: This regulatory amendment would increase the 2011 TAC from the existing 5.68 million pounds (MP) to 6.68 MP, set TACs through 2015, and increase the red grouper bag limit from two to four fish. A rerun of the stock assessment including new information and lower than projected 2010 landings showed an improved condition of the stock and supported an increase in the 2011 and subsequent TACs. These increases are consistent with the goals and objectives of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council's FMP for the management of this species. Resultant rulemaking would increase the 2011-2015 commercial quotas, and because red grouper are a part of the shallow-water grouper (SWG) quota, also set the 2011-2015 SWG quotas. The amendment and subsequent rulemaking would also increase the red grouper bag limit from two to four fish to allow the recreational sector to harvest their allocation of the TAC. The environmental assessment (EA) provides a review of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) criteria for significant effects (40 CFR Part 1508.27) and NOAA Fisheries Service criteria for significance (NAO 216-6 Section 6.02), and concluded no significant effect on the quality of the human environment is anticipated from this action.

RESPONSIBLE
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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 EA, 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.
NOAA NEPA Coordinator

Enclosure