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

NOV - 9 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: Environmental Assessment (EA) for a Final Rule to Adjust the Atlantic Bluefin Tuna (BFT) General and Harpoon Category Regulations (RIN 0648-AX85)

LOCATION: Atlantic Ocean (including Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea)

SUMMARY: In this action, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) would adjust regulations governing the U.S. BFT fishery to: (1) Increase the General category *maximum* BFT daily retention limit from three to five fish (with limit adjustments to be executed via inseason actions when and if appropriate); (2) Allow the BFT General category season to remain open until the January subquota is reached or March 31 (whichever happens first); and (3) Increase the Harpoon category daily retention limit of BFT measuring 73 to 81 inches from two to four fish. This action is intended to enable more thorough utilization of the available U.S. BFT quota for the General and Harpoon permit categories; minimize bycatch and bycatch mortality to the extent practicable; expand fishing opportunities for participants in the commercial winter General category fishery; and increase NMFS' flexibility for setting the General category retention limit depending on available quota. This action would be consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, the Atlantic Tunas Convention Act, and the 2006 Consolidated Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan. This action is not expected to significantly alter current fishing practices and bycatch mortality rates, or increase fishing effort, and it is not expected to change previously analyzed endangered species or marine mammal interaction rates or magnitudes.

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL: Alan D. Risenhoover
Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
1315 East West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910
(301) 713-2334

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The environmental review process led us to conclude that this action will not have a significant impact on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement was not prepared. A copy of the finding of no significant impact (FONSI) and the supporting 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.
NEPA Coordinator

Enclosure