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

MAY 14 2012

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 for a Regulatory Amendment to Revise Fall Recreational Fixed Closed Season and Set 2012 and 2013 Quotas for Red Snapper [RIN: 0648 BB91]

LOCATION: Gulf of Mexico

SUMMARY: The proposed actions analyzed in this environmental assessment would eliminate the fixed recreational red snapper closed season of October 1 – December 31, and set the 2012 and 2013 quotas for commercial and recreational harvest of red snapper in the Gulf of Mexico. Results from the red snapper update assessment in 2009, and projection updates in 2011 and 2012, indicate that the red snapper stock is no longer undergoing overfishing and the acceptable biological catch (ABC) can be increased from 7.185 million pounds (mp) whole weight to 8.080 mp whole weight for 2012 and to 8.690 mp whole weight for 2013. The increase in 2013 would be contingent on the 2012 ABC not being exceeded.

The environmental assessment analyzes the impacts of the proposed actions. By itself, this amendment is not controversial because the quota will be increased. This increase is sufficiently less than the overfishing limit such that the probability of overfishing is minimal. A determination of the season length will not be finalized until all 2011 recreational landings data are available for analysis.

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL: Roy E. Crabtree, Ph.D., Regional Administrator, Southeast Regional Office, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701, (727) 824-5305, FAX (727) 824-5308.

The environmental review process led us to conclude that these actions 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.

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,

for Patricia A. Montanio
NOAA NEPA Coordinator

Enclosure

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