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

OCT 25 2012

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: Revised 2012 Butterfish Specifications Environmental Assessment (EA)

LOCATION: Atlantic Exclusive Economic Zone

SUMMARY: The interim final rule for butterfish specifications, which would be in effect from the publication of this action through the end of the 2012 fishing year (December 31, 2012), specifies the butterfish acceptable biological catch (ABC) at 4,200 mt, the annual catch target (ACT) at 3,780 mt, domestic annual harvest (DAH) and domestic annual processing (DAP) at 872 mt, and a butterfish mortality cap of 3,165 mt.

At the August 2012 Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) meeting, several longfin squid industry members expressed concern that the current 2012 ABC for butterfish (3,622 mt) was too conservative, and that the butterfish mortality cap on the longfin squid fishery derived from this ABC may close the longfin squid fishery prior to the end of the 2012 fishing year. In response to this concern, and in light of the Scientific and Statistical Committee's (SSC) recommended butterfish ABC for the 2013 fishing year (8,400 mt), the Council requested that the SSC reconsider its butterfish ABC recommendation for 2012. The SSC met on September 13, 2012, and revised its 2012 butterfish ABC recommendation to 4,200 mt based on the information that supported their 2013 ABC recommendation, and noted that the additional mortality at the end of the 2012 fishing year should not result in overfishing. Based on the SSC's revised recommendation, the Council met on September 14, 2012, and recommended an increase of the butterfish ABC and annual catch limit (ACL) to 4,200 mt for the remainder of the 2012 fishing year (through December 31, 2012).

These specifications and management measures promote the utilization and conservation of the Atlantic mackerel, squid, and butterfish resource.

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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 supporting 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