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

JUN 10 2013

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: Amendment 28 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region (Amendment 28) (RIN 0648-BC63)

LOCATION: Exclusive economic zone off the South Atlantic coast

SUMMARY: The harvest of red snapper was prohibited on January 4, 2010. In 2012, a limited red snapper fishing season was established through an emergency action under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. At that time, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (South Atlantic Council) determined that some directed harvest could be allowed without compromising the rebuilding of the red snapper stock to target levels, and they saw the limited harvest as an opportunity to collect additional data on red snapper. Similarly, the South Atlantic Council has determined that retention of a limited number of red snapper, beginning in 2013, would not jeopardize the rebuilding of the red snapper stock if the acceptable biological catch (ABC) is not exceeded the previous year. As such, the South Atlantic Council has developed a process with formulas in Amendment 28 where the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) would (1) determine if there would be a fishing season for a particular year and (2) calculate the magnitude of red snapper harvest that might be allowed for that year. If harvest is allowed (when the previous year's mortality level is less than the previous year's ABC), NMFS would announce in the *Federal Register* the annual catch limit (ACL) as computed by the equation developed in Amendment 28. In years when harvest is allowed, the South Atlantic Council has chosen start dates for the commercial and recreational seasons in the amendment as the second Monday and second Friday in July, respectively. If the fishing seasons do not open exactly on these dates, they would open as close to these dates as possible as stated in the proposed rule. NMFS would also announce the end dates of the recreational season; the commercial harvest would be monitored and the season would be closed when the ACL is projected to be met. Amendment 28 would also implement the following measures during the red snapper openings: (1) a commercial trip limit of 75 pounds gutted weight; (2) a recreational bag limit of one per person per day; and (3) removal of the minimum size limit.

RESPONSIBLE
OFFICIAL: Roy E. Crabtree, Ph.D.
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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 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,

Patricia A. Montanio
NOAA NEPA Coordinator

Enclosure