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

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 on updated regulations and final management plan for the Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary

LOCATION: Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary, off the coast of Georgia

SUMMARY: The final rule adds a clarification to the prohibition on anchoring and adds an exemption to allow the use of weighted marker buoys that are continuously tended and used during otherwise lawful fishing or diving activities. A revised management plan outlining management priorities for GRNMS for the next 5-10 years has also been prepared.

GRNMS regulations prohibit anchoring and the "placement" of any material on the bottom, which prevents the use of weighted marker buoys, not attached to a vessel, that are placed on the bottom for recreational diving safety and recreational fishing convenience. The rule exempts deployment of a weight on the bottom that is attached to a surface marker for fishing and diving in the sanctuary. The rule clarifies that "attempting" to anchor is also prohibited because deployment of anchors, even if the anchors do not set on the bottom, can result in impacts to the submerged lands. Enforcement officials have experienced occasions where sanctuary users were attempting to anchor in GRNMS despite the prohibition, but because the anchor had not yet been "set", the prohibition did not apply.

Responsible Official: Holly A. Bamford, Ph.D.
Assistant Administrator for Ocean Services and Coastal Zone Management

Sanctuary Official: George Sedberry, Superintendent
Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary
10 Ocean Science Circle, Savannah, GA 31411
Ph. (912) 598-2439

Printed on Recycled Paper

The environmental review process led us to conclude that this action will not have a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared. A copy of the finding of no significant impact (FONSI) including the supporting environmental assessment (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 sanctuary official named above.

Sincerely,

HIRSCHBERG.PAUL.ARTHUR.1365710526

Digitally signed by HIRSCHBERG.PAUL.ARTHUR.1365710526
DN: c=US, o=U.S. Government, ou=DoD, ou=PKI, ou=OTHER, cn=HIRSCHBERG.PAUL.ARTHUR.1365710526
Date: 2014.07.09 08:11:42 -04'00'

for Patricia A. Montanio
NOAA NEPA Coordinator

Enclosure