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

MAY 22 2013

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: Amendment 4 to the Fishery Management Plan for Corals and Reef Associated Plants and Invertebrates of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI; Coral FMP): Seagrass Management [RIN 0648-BC38]

LOCATION: United States Caribbean Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)

SUMMARY: Amendment 4 to the Coral FMP proposes to address the management of seagrasses in the U.S. Caribbean EEZ. Four species and one species group of seagrasses are included in the Coral FMP. The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act requires that annual catch limits (ACLs) and accountability measures (AMs) be established for stocks in the fishery. This requirement was addressed in the 2010 and 2011 Caribbean ACL Amendments for most species managed in U.S. Caribbean federal waters. However, ACLs and AMs for seagrasses were not established at that time. In this amendment, the Caribbean Fishery Management Council (Council) considered whether to set an ACL for seagrasses, designate seagrasses as ecosystem component species, or remove seagrasses from the Coral FMP. If implemented, the final rule would remove seagrass species from the Coral FMP. The Council determined that federal management of these species is unnecessary because there is no known targeted or indirect harvest of seagrasses in federal waters of the U.S. Caribbean and future harvest is not anticipated. In addition, seagrasses are more common in state waters of Puerto Rico and the USVI than in EEZ waters, and are designated as essential fish habitat in all Council fishery management plans.

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL:

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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 (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,

Patricia A. Montanio
NOAA NEPA Coordinator

Enclosure