



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

OCT 10 2008

Dear Reviewer:

In accordance with provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), we enclose for your review the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for Final Reef Fish Amendment 30B: Gag – End Overfishing and Set Management Thresholds and Targets; Red Grouper – Set Optimum Yield, Total Allowable Catch (TAC), and Management Measures; Area Closures; and Federal Regulatory Compliance.

This FEIS is prepared pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act to assess the environmental impacts associated with National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration proceeding with regulatory action being considered by the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council), which addresses overfishing of gag, establishes grouper management measures consistent with changes in the stock complex, and addresses federal regulatory compliance issues. The FEIS evaluates:

1) Management targets and thresholds for gag consistent with the requirements of the Sustainable Fisheries Act; 2) gag and red grouper TAC; 3) interim allocations for the commercial and recreational gag and red grouper fisheries; 4) annual catch limits (ACLs) and accountability measures for the commercial and recreational gag and red grouper fisheries; 5) commercial quotas and quota management for gag, red grouper, and shallow-water grouper; 6) measures to reduce grouper discard mortality in the reef fish fishery; 7) recreational measures to manage the grouper fishery consistent with proposed ACLs; 8) marine reserves and seasonal area closures to protect gag spawning aggregations; and 9) measures to improve federal regulatory compliance.

Additional copies of the FEIS may be obtained from the Responsible Program Official identified below. The document is also accessible electronically from the Council's Web site at <http://www.gulfcouncil.org>, or the e-Rulemaking Portal at <http://www.regulations.gov>.

NOAA is not required to respond to comments received during the agency's 30 day as a result of the issuance of the FEIS. However, comments received by November 24, 2008 will be reviewed and considered for their impact on issuance of a record of decision (ROD). Please send comments to the responsible official identified below. The ROD will be made available publicly following final agency action on or after November 24, 2008.

Responsible Program Official:

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Sincerely,

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Enclosure



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