



JAN 22 2010

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 Amendment 31 to the Fishery Management Plan for Reef Fish Resources in the Gulf of Mexico: Addresses Bycatch of Sea Turtles in the Bottom Longline Component of the Reef Fish Fishery.

This FEIS is prepared pursuant to NEPA to assess the environmental impacts associated with NOAA proceeding with regulatory action. The FEIS analyzes the impacts of a range of alternatives intended to reduce sea turtle bycatch in the bottom longline component of the commercial reef fish fishery. The FEIS contains preferred options to establish gear modifications, season-area closures, and a restrictive endorsement program to allow continued participation in the bottom longline component of the reef fish fishery.

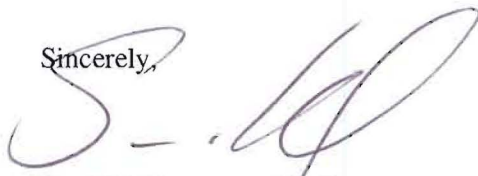
Additional copies of the FEIS may be obtained from the Responsible Program Official identified below. The document is also accessible electronically from the Council's Web site at <http://www.gulfcouncil.org>, or the e-Rulemaking Portal at <http://www.regulations.gov>.

NOAA is not required to respond to comments received during the agency's 30 day comment period as a result of the issuance of the FEIS. However, comments received by March 8, 2010 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 March 8, 2010.

Written comments should be submitted through mail, facsimile, or via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal at <http://www.regulations.gov> (Docket: NOAA-NMFS-2008-0310). All comments received are part of the public record and will generally be posted to <http://www.regulations.gov> without change. All personal identifying information (for example, name, address, etc.) voluntarily submitted by the commenter may be publicly accessible. Do not submit confidential business information or otherwise sensitive or protected information. NOAA Fisheries Service will accept anonymous comments. Attachments to electronic comments will be accepted in Microsoft Word, Excel, WordPerfect, or Adobe PDF file formats only. Written comments submitted during the agency's 30 day public comment period must be received by March 8, 2010. When submitting mailed or faxed comments, include the following document identifier: Comments on Amendment 31.

Responsible Program Official: Roy E. Crabtree, Ph.D.  
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Sincerely,

*for*   
Paul N. Doremus, Ph.D.  
NOAA NEPA Coordinator

Enclosure

