



APR 22 2004

Dear Reviewer:

In accordance with the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), we enclose for your review the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (DSEIS) for Amendment 2 to the Monkfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP). The New England Fishery Management Council (New England Council) and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Mid-Atlantic Council) jointly manage the monkfish fishery. The New England and Mid-Atlantic Councils, in cooperation with the National Marine Fisheries Service, prepared the enclosed DSEIS.

Amendment 2 was developed to address a number of issues that have arisen since implementation of the original Monkfish FMP in 1999. In summary, the goals and objectives for the amendment as identified by the Councils include: (1) prevention of overfishing and rebuilding overfished stocks as necessary; (2) addressing problems identified at the time of implementation of the FMP; (3) improving data collection and research on monkfish; (4) addressing deficiencies in meeting requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act; (5) addressing protected resources and fishery interactions, and (6) reducing the complexity, where possible, of the FMP.

In addition, recent Court decisions directly or indirectly have affected the monkfish fishery (Hall v. Evans, C.A. No. 99-549L; American Oceans Campaign (AOC) et. al. v. Daley et al. C.A. No. 99-982(GK); and Conservation Law Foundation, et al. v. Evans, et al.) In particular, alternatives regarding essential fish habitat were developed pursuant to the Joint Stipulation and Order Joint Stipulation filed in the AOC v. Evans case.

Additional copies of this DSEIS may be obtained from the New England Fishery Management Council, 50 Water Street, Newburyport, MA 01950, (978) 465-0492. The document is also accessible through the New England Council's website at <http://www.nefmc.org>.

Comments or questions on the DSEIS submitted during the 90-day comment period must be received by July 28, 2004. Written comments should be submitted by mail to Patricia Kurkul, Regional Administrator, Northeast Regional Office, National Marine Fisheries Service, One Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930-2298. Comments may be submitted by facsimile (fax) to (978) 281-9135. Electronic comments may be submitted by e-mail to MonkfishDSEIS@noaa.gov. Please include in the comment subject line the following DSEIS



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identifier: Monkfish Amendment 2 DSEIS. A copy of your comments should also be submitted to me by mail to the NOAA Strategic Planning Office (PPI/SP), SSMC3, Room 15603, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910; by fax to (301) 713-0585; or by e-mail to nepa.comments@noaa.gov.

Sincerely,



for Susan A. Kennedy
Acting NEPA Coordinator

Enclosure