



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

JAN - 7 2005

JAN 7 2005

NEW ENGLAND FISHERY  
MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Dear Reviewer:

In accordance with provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, we enclose for your review the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (FSEIS) for Amendment 2 to the Monkfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP).

The purpose of Amendment 2 is to address a number of issues that arose out of the implementation of the original FMP, as well as issues that were identified during public scoping. Issues of concern specific to the original FMP include: (1) The displacement of vessels from their established monkfish fisheries due to restrictive trip limits; (2) unattainable permit qualification criteria for vessels in the southern end of the range of the fishery; (3) discards (bycatch) of monkfish due to regulations (i.e., minimum size restrictions and incidental catch limits); and (4) deficiencies in meeting Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) requirements pertaining to protection of Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) in accordance with the Joint Stipulation and Order resulting from the legal challenge American Oceans Campaign, et al. v. Daley. Issues arising from public scoping include: (1) Deficiencies in meeting Magnuson-Stevens Act requirements, including preventing overfishing and rebuilding overfished stocks; (2) a need to improve monkfish data collection and research; (3) the need to establish a North Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) exemption program for monkfish; (4) multiple vessel baseline specifications for limited access monkfish vessels; (5) a need to update environmental documents describing the impact of the FMP; and (6) a need to reduce FMP complexity where possible. The intent of this action is to provide efficient management of the monkfish fishery and to meet conservation objectives.

Amendment 2 would implement the NEFMC and MAFMC's preferred alternative, which was approved for submission to the Secretary of Commerce at the NEFMC's September 14-16, 2004, meeting, and the MAFMC's October 4-7, 2004, meeting. The proposed alternative would implement the following measures:

- Closure of Oceanographer and Lydonia Canyons to vessels fishing on a monkfish day-at-sea (DAS);
- A roller gear restriction when fishing in the Southern Fishery Management Area (SFMA);
- An offshore trawl monkfish fishery in the SFMA;
- A new limited access monkfish permit for vessels fishing in the southern range of the fishery;
- A research DAS set-aside program;
- A NAFO Regulated Area Exemption Program;
- Revisions to the monkfish incidental catch limits;
- A decrease in the minimum monkfish size in the SFMA;



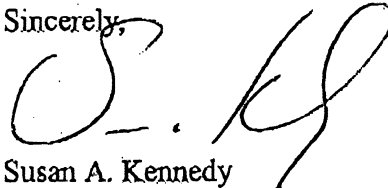
- Removal of the 20-day block requirement;
- An opportunity to revise the vessel=s permit baseline characteristics; and
- New frameworkable measures.

Additional copies of the FSEIS may be obtained from Paul J. Howard, Executive Director, New England Fishery Management Council, 50 Water Street, Newburyport, MA 01950. The document is also available electronically through New England Fishery Management Council's website at [www.nefmc.org](http://www.nefmc.org).

Comments or questions on this document submitted during the agency's 30-day review period for the FSEIS must be received by February 14, 2005. Written comments should be submitted by mail to Patricia A. Kurkul, Northeast Regional Administrator, National Marine Fisheries Service, One Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930. Comments may be submitted by facsimile (fax) to (978) 281-9135. Electronic comments may be submitted by e-mail to [monkfseis@noaa.gov](mailto:monkfseis@noaa.gov); include in the comment subject line the following document identifier: "Comments on FSEIS for Monkfish Amendment 2." A copy of your comments should be submitted to me by mail to the NOAA Strategic Planning Office (PPI/SP), SSMC3, Room 15603, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910; by fax to (301) 713-0585; or by e-mail to [nepa.comments@noaa.gov](mailto:nepa.comments@noaa.gov).

NMFS is not required to respond to comments received as a result of the issuance of the FSEIS. However, comments received will be reviewed and considered for their impact on the issuance of a record of decision (ROD). The ROD will be made available publicly following final agency action.

Sincerely,



Susan A. Kennedy  
Acting NEPA Coordinator

Enclosure