



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 4
ATLANTA FEDERAL CENTER
61 FORSYTH STREET
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30303-8960

November 17, 2016

Dr. Roy E. Crabtree, PhD
Regional Administrator
Southeast Regional Office
National Marine Fisheries Service, NOAA
263 13th Avenue South,
St. Petersburg, Florida 33701-5505

SUBJECT: Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS): Amendment 37 to the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region, Modification to the Hogfish Fishery Management Unit; CEQ No. 20160246.

Dear Dr. Crabtree:

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reviewed the subject document pursuant to its Clean Air Act (CAA) §309 responsibilities consistent with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) §102(2)(C). The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (the Council) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) proposed action concerns hogfish, one of 59 species managed under the Snapper Grouper FMP by the Council. This action proposes to increase the commercial and recreational minimum hogfish-size limit to 16 inches for the Florida Keys/East Florida (FLK/EFL) stock and to 17 inches for the Georgia – North Carolina (GA-NC) stock. It establishes commercial trip limits for both stocks. It decreases the recreational bag limit to one (1) fish per person per day for the FLK/EFL stock and establishes a two-fish per person per day limit for the GA-NC stock. It recalculates the commercial to recreational sector allocations for both stocks. It proposes a stock rebuilding plan to rebuild the FLK/EFL stock in 10 years and establishes an annual recreational fishing season from July through October because this stock has been determined to be overfished and undergoing overfishing. From our review of the FEIS, the EPA has not identified any significant environmental impacts associated with the proposed action.

Should you have any questions, please contact Ms. Beth Walls of my staff at walls.beth@epa.gov or 404-562-8309.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Chris A. Militscher".

Christopher A. Militscher
Chief, NEPA Program Office
Resource Conservation and Restoration Division