

2.0 FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

() Draft

(X) Final Environmental Statement

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Name of Action: (X) Administrative

() Legislative

Abstract:

The proposed action will result in management of the billfish fishery in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of the South Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, Caribbean, Mid-Atlantic, and New England Councils. The species regulated are the sailfish, Istiophorus platypterus; the white marlin, Tetrapturus albidus; the blue marlin, Makaira nigricans, and the longbill spearfish, Tetrapturus pfluegeri. The objectives are to: 1) maintain the highest availability of billfishes to the U.S. recreational fishery; 2) optimize the social and economic benefits to the nation by reserving the billfish resource for its traditional use which on the continental U.S. is almost entirely a recreational fishery. In the Caribbean, the fishery is both a recreational and small-scale handline fishery where billfishes are used as food; 3) increase understanding of the condition of the billfish stocks and the billfish fishery. Optimum yield for billfishes is the greatest number of billfish that can be caught by the recreational fishery in the EEZ, consistent with the provisions of this fishery management plan, considering the biological limitations of the stock and the unavoidable incidental catches in other fisheries. Management measures proposed include a prohibition on the sale of billfish; a prohibition on possession by commercial longline and drift net vessels; minimum size limits; reporting requirements; permits for foreign vessels; and time and area restrictions on foreigners with a bycatch of billfish. The management actions will be implemented under the Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976 (16 U.S.C. 1801, et seq.).

Comments requested by:

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This integrated document contains all elements of the Fishery Management Plan (FMP), Regulatory Impact Review (RIR), and Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), and Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis (IRFA). The table of contents for the FEIS elements is provided separately to aid the reviewer in referencing corresponding sections of the FMP.

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List of Preparers

The FMP, RIR, IRFA, and FEIS were prepared by the South Atlantic, New England, Mid-Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, and Caribbean Fishery Management Councils with principal input from South Atlantic Council Staff. Early drafts were prepared using the Preliminary Management Plan for Billfishes and Sharks as a starting point. The scientific and statistical committees, the advisory panels and the technical staff of each of the five Councils involved reviewed the plan and provided suggestions and corrections.

Earlier drafts of the plan were prepared principally by Jackson Davis, Deborah Canavan and Barbara Anderson of the South Atlantic Council staff. Much of the information contained in those drafts has been incorporated into this document. The present draft was prepared principally by the following South Atlantic Council staff:

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List of Agencies, Organizations, and Persons To Whom Copies of the Statement Are Sent

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 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
 U.S. Department of Commerce
 Office of Coastal Zone Management
 U.S. Department of the Interior
 Bureau of Land Management
 Fish and Wildlife Service
 National Park Service
 U.S. Department of State
 U.S. Department of Agriculture
 U.S. Department of Transportation
 Coast Guard
 U.S. Department of Energy
 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
 Regions I, II, III, IV, VI
 Center for Environmental Education
 Conservation Council of Angling Clubs
 Embassy of Japan
 Embassy of Spain
 Federation of Japan Tuna Fisheries Co-operative Association
 Fisheries Agency of the Government of Japan
 Fishery Management Councils
 Florida League of Anglers
 Gulf & South Atlantic Fisheries Development Foundation
 Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission
 Japan Tuna Association
 Marine Advisory Agents
 Marine Mammal Commission
 Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Development Foundation
 National Coalition for Marine Conservation
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 Sea Grant Advisory Services (5 Council Area)
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 Rhode Island New Hampshire Georgia Texas
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 North Carolina Virginia Maryland Alabama
 Pennsylvania Connecticut Massachusetts Mississippi
 Delaware New Jersey New York Puerto Rico
 Virgin Islands

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Draft Statement to EPA: September 18, 1987

Final Statement to EPA: