UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dr. Christofer Boggs
NMFS PIC
2570 Dole Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96822

SEP - 9 2005

Dear Dr. Boggs:

On December 16, 2004, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued a directive requiring Federal Agencies to have "influential scientific information" and "highly influential scientific assessments" peer reviewed. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has decided that certain sections of the Draft Consolidated Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan (HMS FMP) could contain "influential scientific information," which is defined as: scientific information (factual inputs, data, models, analyses, technical information, or scientific assessments) that the agency reasonably can determine does have or will have a clear and substantial impact on important public policies or private sector decisions. As such, we would like you to conduct a peer review of the standardized bycatch reporting methodology, time/area closure analyses, and essential fish habitat (EFH) sections of the Draft HMS FMP. The specific sections (enclosed) are Sections 3.8.2 through 3.8.5 (the standardized bycatch reporting methodology), Section 4.4.2 (Time/Area Closures), Chapter 10 (Essential Fish Habitat), Appendix A (Time/Area Closures), and Appendix B (Essential Fish Habitat).

Such a peer review should evaluate the clarity of hypotheses, the validity of the research design, the quality of data collection procedures, the robustness of the methods employed, the appropriateness of the methods for the hypotheses being tested, the extent to which the conclusions follow from the analysis, and the strengths and limitations of the overall product. NMFS will use your peer review, as appropriate, to clarify assumptions, findings, and conclusions of the bycatch, time/area closure, and EFH sections of the Final HMS FMP.

As part of your peer review, NMFS requests a written report that describes the nature of your review, your findings, and your conclusions. Per the OMB Peer Review Bulletin (OMB Bulletin), NMFS will need to disclose your name and any organizational affiliations and disseminate your findings on a website along with all the materials related to the peer review. Your review will also be included as part of the administrative record and discussed in the preamble for the final rule implementing the Final HMS FMP.

Given the timeframe of the rulemaking for the Draft HMS FMP, we would like your completed review by October 18, 2005. Please contact Karyl Brewster-Geisz if you have any questions or if you cannot make the timeframe.

Thank you for your assistance in the management of Atlantic highly migratory species.

Sincerely,

John H. Dunnigan
Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries

Enclosure

cc: Samuel Pooley, Michael Seki, Keith Bigelow, Gerard Dinardo

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