F/V Atlantic Runner

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NOAA Fisheries Service
Southeast Regional Office
Sustainable Fisheries Division
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Attention: Kate Michie

Re: Comment on the Environmental Impact Statement for South Atlantic Snapper Grouper Amendment 17

As Amendment 17 is the most multi faceted Amendment to date I believe. Not only is it broken down into A & B, but that A itself has have 6 different measures, and B has 8. Directly following is Amendment 18, having another 8 measures. Both these on the heels of Amendment 16 having 5 different measures. That is 27 measures of fisheries management in a year and a half. And more to come.

We welcome the opportunity to comment as the amendments not only hold fishermen's lively hoods in the balance; but that of the environment as well. The same environment that must support the lives of people as well as animals. The Bible teaches people first in fact...animals being our food... Judging from Amendment 17, nearly 400 pages, I assume environmental impact to you means, biological first, economical second, and social third.

Environment to me means the world around me. And my world has been tumbling down due to financial ruin. Financial ruin caused by over regulation of my fishing industry, my fishing business, my job, my life, by my government that I pay for with my taxes. And this is spreading like a wild fire out of control up and down the Atlantic seaboard. No, around the entire country. Every fisherman is effected whether he be commercial or recreational. Head boats and charter boats are suffering the same as commercial boats. Every business in a fishing community is suffering whether it be a bait & tackle shop or a motel or restaurant in these tourist driven economic areas.

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We read that NOAA is asking the Federal government for 50 million dollars for funding to "implement catch shares". Another management act on top of, not in place of, everything else. 50 million dollars that could be better spent subsidizing fishermen for their lost incomes.

Environmentally, we are obviously being mismanaged out of business. We ourselves had to close our retail and wholesale seafood facility January of this year. We could not afford to keep the doors open any longer due to over regulation. The bee-liner closure last fall from Amendment 16 was the last straw. More and more fishermen have left the industry, more and more fish houses are closing. So many that actually these management measures are unneeded, and most certainly unwarranted.

We would like to propose that the government, and I intend to circulate this, through NOAA, **fund a buyout of fishermen**. They could buyout 13% of the snapper grouper permit holders with that 50 million dollars, at 1 million dollars each, and they would never fish again. Now I think that would be money wisely spent. And a win, win situation for the environment.

The **environment would greatly benefit** if the government would fund a buyout of fishermen. The money would stimulate the economies in fishing communities, the same communities it is evaporating from now due to over regulation. And with less fish being caught from our oceans, environmentally they should thrive. Essentially it really is a win, win situation as it would actually **save the government money in the long run**, because they would not have to keep funding management programs.

They would not have to buyout all the permit holders, just the amount of them that they feel would be beneficial. Then let the fishermen decide who would like to be bought out. The bigger, younger guys may want to stay in. Us, veterans, however that have great catch histories, having had permits since the beginning, would most likely love to be bought out. Those good catch histories too that are supposed to be so "monetarily valuable" in the "catch share program" should definitely be worth 1 million dollars each when you were counting on fishing for the next 20 years due to the economy and the fact that during these reductions we have not been able to save any money for the last 10 years. @ 100,000 gross per year = 50,000 net x 20 years = 1,000,000. Not even counting the man's boat that he could finally use for recreation. Again adding more revenue back into the environment.

Thank you for any and all consideration you feel you could afford us. ><>

Kathy + Capt. Gilbert Mathis