



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NMFS - Southeast Fisheries Science Center
75 Virginia Beach Dr., Miami, FL 33149

November 15, 2007

Dr. Tom McIlwain
Chairman, Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council
2203 North Lois Avenue, Suite 1100
Tampa, Florida 33607

Dear Dr. McIlwain:

Thank you for your letter dated November 8, 2007, in which you request that the SEFSC evaluate the risks of allowing harvest of red drum from the EEZ to collect data for stock assessments. This is to confirm that we will carry out the analyses requested in time for the January 28-31, 2008, Council meeting. In our analyses, we plan to address the following questions which derive from your letter, from the SEFSC research recommendations after the last assessment and from the discussions held by the Ad Hoc Review Panel for Red Drum:

- (1) Determine how many fish would need to be sampled for age composition in the EEZ to increase the precision of the 2009 SEDAR stock assessment;
- (2) determine how many fish should be tagged in order to achieve different levels of precision in the estimates of stock size, assuming different recovery and survival rates;
- (3) evaluate, based on projections from the last stock assessment, the risks to the Gulf of Mexico red drum stock from carrying out the activities in (1) and (2), above.

I hope that addressing these three issues will satisfy the Council's needs for the January meeting.

Best regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alex Chester".

Alex Chester
Director

