

rule and are not repeated here. This action does not contain any collection-of-information, reporting, or recordkeeping requirements. It will not duplicate, overlap, or conflict with any other Federal rules. This action is taken under authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Act and regulations at 50 CFR part 648.

All of the affected businesses (fishing vessels and dealers) qualify as small entities under the standards described in NMFS guidelines. There were 2,215 vessels, 6 known processors, and 72 known dealers participating in the fishery in 1999. The proposed increase in OY of 26,000 mt would provide additional opportunities for increased harvests. It cannot reasonably be expected to cause a significant increase in catch, however, given that vessels caught less than half the current OY in 1999. Therefore, the proposed increase in OY is not likely to result in any significant impact on the revenues of vessels, producer surplus or consumer surplus. Other alternatives considered and rejected, either "no-action" or increasing the allowable biological catch, would have a similar impact.

If foreign vessels avail themselves of the opportunity to harvest some or all of the TALFF, and those vessels are obligated to engage in JVs with U.S. fishing vessels, there would be a positive impact on the revenues of those U.S. vessels participating. Since the number of vessels that would be involved in the JVs and the specifics of the financial arrangements between the harvesters and foreign processor are not known, the per-vessel revenue impacts cannot be estimated. If the full amount of the JVP (10,000 mt) is harvested, revenues to the participating vessels would approximate \$1.2 million, based on an average price of \$120/mt. This would represent an increase in overall fleet revenues of 10–12 percent. While this represents a maximum dollar benefit, the net economic benefit would have to take into account opportunity costs in the form of revenues that could have been earned by delivering herring to shoreside processors, assuming that there is coincidental shoreside demand. In comparison, setting TALFF at 0 mt (the "no-action" alternative) would not provide as much incentive for foreign vessels to establish operations in the exclusive economic zone and would likely preclude the utilization of JVP, based on the activity in the fishery during the past 2 years. Alternatively, setting TALFF at a higher level, as considered by the Herring Committee,

would have essentially the same economic impact as the proposed action because the economic benefits to the domestic fishery are realized through, and limited by, the utilization of the JVP specification (which is not changed), not the TALFF.

While a higher specification of TALFF may provide a greater incentive to foreign participants, there is no experience on which to base an estimate of this effect. The economic impact to shoreside processors from JVP (enhanced by a specification of TALFF) is uncertain. A reduction in supply to shoreside processors could result in an increase in the cost of herring to shoreside processors or bait dealers. Conversely, if domestic vessels concentrate on increasing supply of herring to shoreside processors, a decrease in cost could occur.

The President has directed Federal agencies to use plain language in their communications with the public, including regulations. To comply with this directive, we seek public comment on any ambiguity or unnecessary complexity arising from the language used in this proposed rule. Such comments should be sent to the Northeast Regional Administrator (see **ADDRESSES**).

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: February 26, 2001.

William T. Hogarth,

*Acting Assistant Administrator for Fisheries,
National Marine Fisheries Service.*

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 648

[I.D. 012401D]

Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Supplemental Environmental Impact Statements (SEISs) for the Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Components of the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan (FMP) and Atlantic Sea Scallop FMP

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notification of intent to prepare an SEIS; request for comments; extension of the comment period.

SUMMARY: NMFS recently announced its intention to prepare SEISs in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) for the EFH components for both the Northeast Multispecies FMP and Atlantic Sea Scallop FMP. NMFS will accept written comments to determine the range of management alternatives to be addressed in the SEISs to describe and identify EFH, minimize to the extent practicable the adverse effects of fishing on EFH, and identify other actions to encourage the conservation and enhancement of EFH. NMFS is extending the comment period for the submission of written comments to ensure opportunity for public comment.

DATES: Written comments on the intent to prepare the SEISs must be received on or before 5 p.m., local time, April 4, 2001.

ADDRESSES: Written comments on the intent to prepare the SEISs and requests for the scoping document or other information should be directed to the National Marine Fisheries Service, One Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930, Attn: Louis A. Chiarella. Telephone (978) 281–9277. Comments may also be sent via facsimile (fax) to (978) 281–9301. NMFS will not accept comments by e-mail or Internet.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Louis A. Chiarella, Essential Fish Habitat Coordinator,
(Lou.Chiarella@noaa.gov), (978) 281–9277, fax (978) 281–9301.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On February 1, 2001 (66 FR 8568), NMFS published notification of its intention to prepare SEISs for the EFH components of the Northeast Multispecies FMP and Atlantic Sea Scallop FMP. See the February 1, 2001, **Federal Register** notification for background and scoping information related to the development of these SEISs. NMFS is extending the comment period so that written comments will now be accepted through April 4, 2001, rather than through March 5, 2001.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: February 27, 2001.

Bruce C. Morehead,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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