

8:30 a.m.–5 p.m.

HMS Presentation—Russel Dunn
Enforcement Reports
-Puerto Rico
-US Virgin Islands
-NOAA
-US Coast Guard
Administrative Committee
Recommendations from May 3, 2005
Meetings attended by Council
members and staff
Other Business
Next Council Meeting

The meetings are open to the public, and will be conducted in English. Fishers and other interested persons are invited to attend and participate with oral or written statements regarding agenda issues. Although non-emergency issues not contained in this agenda may come before this group for discussion, those issues may not be the subject of formal action during this meeting. Action will be restricted to those issues specifically identified in this notice and any issues arising after publication of this notice that require emergency action under section 305(c) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, provided the public has been notified of the Council's intent to take final action to address the emergency.

Special Accommodations

These meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. For more information or request for sign language interpretation and/or other auxiliary aids, please contact Mr. Miguel A. Rolón, Executive Director, Caribbean Fishery Management Council, 268 Muñoz Rivera Avenue, Suite 1108, San Juan, Puerto Rico, 00918–2577, telephone (787) 766–5926, at least five days prior to the meeting date.

Dated: March 30, 2005.

Emily Menashes,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.
[FR Doc. E5–1480 Filed 4–1–05; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–22–S

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 032905C]

Western Pacific Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

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

ACTION: Notice of public meetings.

SUMMARY: The Western Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) will hold meetings of its Pelagics Plan Team (PPT) in Honolulu, HI to discuss fishery issues and develop recommendations for future management.

DATES: The meeting of the PPT will be held on May 3–5, 2005, from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held at the Council Office Conference Room, Western Pacific Fishery Management Council, 1164 Bishop St., Suite 1400, Honolulu, HI 96813; telephone: (808) 522–8220.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Kitty M. Simonds, Executive Director; telephone: (808) 522–8220.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The PPT will meet on May 3–5, 2005, at the Council Conference Room to discuss the following agenda items:

Tuesday May 3, 2005, 8.30 a.m.

1. Introduction
2. Annual Report review
 - a. Review 2004 Annual Report modules and recommendations
 - b. 2004 Annual Report region-wide recommendations

Wednesday & Thursday, May 4–5, 2005, 8.30 a.m.

3. Bigeye tuna overfishing
4. Management of Hawaii offshore headline fishery
5. Status of North Pacific Albacore
6. International pelagic fishery management
7. Recreational fisheries
8. Economic research
9. Protected species research and management
10. Other business

The order in which the agenda items are addressed may change. The PPT will meet as late as necessary to complete scheduled business. Although non-emergency issues not contained in this agenda may come before the PPT for discussion, those issues may not be the subject of formal action during these meetings. Plan Team action will be restricted to those issues specifically listed in this document and any issue arising after publication of this document that requires emergency action under section 305(c) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, provided the public has been notified of the Council's intent to take final action to address the emergency.

Special Accommodations

These meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language

interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Kitty M. Simonds, (808) 522–8220 (voice) or (808) 522–8226 (fax), at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.

Dated: March 30, 2005.

Emily Menashes,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.
[FR Doc. E5–1482 Filed 4–1–05; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–22–S

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 032805A]

Atlantic Highly Migratory Species; Environmental Assessment; Exempted Fishing Permits

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

ACTION: Notice of availability; request for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces the availability of an Environmental Assessment (EA) prepared pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act to analyze the potential impacts associated with exempting six pelagic longline vessels from existing area closures and other regulations for the purpose of evaluating whether gear modifications and/or various fishing techniques can avoid/reduce bycatch and associated regulatory discards of juvenile highly migratory species (HMS) in the Gulf of Mexico, Florida East Coast, South Atlantic Bight, Mid-Atlantic Bight, and Northeast Coastal statistical areas of the Atlantic Ocean. The EA examines alternatives available to authorize activities otherwise prohibited by regulations for the conduct of scientific research and the investigation of bycatch, consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act), and other relevant Federal laws. NMFS is requesting comments on the alternatives outlined in the EA.

DATES: Written comments on this action must be received no later than 5 p.m., local time, on April 11, 2005.

ADDRESSES: Copies of the EA can be obtained by contacting Heather Stirratt (see **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**) or by viewing the document online at <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/>.

Comments regarding the EA and issuance of Exempted Fishing Permits

(EFPs) can be submitted by any of the following methods:

- Email: ID032805A@noaa.gov.

Include in the subject line the following identifier: I.D.032805A.

- Mail: Heather Stirratt, NMFS Highly Migratory Species Management Division, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

- Fax: (301) 713-1917.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Heather Stirratt at (301) 713-2347.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: EFPs are requested and issued under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Act (16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*) and/or the Atlantic Tunas Convention Act (16 U.S.C. 971 *et seq.*). Regulations at 50 CFR 600.745 and 635.32 govern scientific research activity, exempted fishing, and exempted educational activity with respect to Atlantic HMS.

Six operators of permitted Atlantic pelagic longline vessels have requested exemptions from certain regulations applicable to the harvest and landing of HMS in order to conduct bycatch reduction research in the following regions of the Atlantic Ocean: North of Cape Hatteras, South of Cape Hatteras, and Gulf of Mexico (GOM). Specifically, the vessels propose to test gear modifications and/or various fishing techniques to avoid incidentally-caught white marlin, blue marlin, bluefin tuna, and sea turtles, while allowing for the targeted catches of allowed species.

To conclusively demonstrate the effectiveness of gear modifications, in the shortest timeframe, it is necessary to test bycatch reduction measures in those areas where pelagic longlines are most likely to encounter the bycatch species of concern (i.e., juvenile HMS). As such, it is necessary to conduct comparison experiments both inside and outside of existing closed areas. Restricted access within existing closed areas has been proposed by the applicants as terms and conditions of the proposed research in order to minimize or eliminate the potential for gear and/or fishing grounds conflicts. Within the GOM region, two pelagic longline vessels propose to conduct 100 compensated bycatch reduction fishing sets (approximately 750 hooks/set) during a limited time period (late April through September). Within the North of Cape Hatteras region, two pelagic longline vessels propose to conduct 50 compensated bycatch reduction fishing sets (approximately 680 hooks/set) during a limited time period (June through August). Within the South of Cape Hatteras region, two pelagic longline vessels propose to conduct 50 compensated bycatch reduction fishing

sets (approximately 556 hooks/set) during a limited time period (late April through June).

This research may benefit all interested parties by providing fishery managers with additional gear modifications and/or fishing techniques that reduce or avoid incidental capture/bycatch mortality of HMS in the research areas as proposed above.

The regulations that would prohibit the proposed activities include requirements for size limits (50 CFR 635.20), commercial retention limits for sharks and swordfish (50 CFR 635.24), and definitions as they apply to closed areas (50 CFR 635.2).

NMFS invites comments from interested parties on potential concerns should these EFPs be issued. Copies of the EA are now available for review and comment (see **ADDRESSES**).

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 971 *et seq.* and 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: March 30, 2005.

Alan D. Risenhoover,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.
[FR Doc. 05-6598 Filed 3-30-05; 1:47 pm]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-S

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 033005A]

Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act Provisions; Application for Exempted Fishing Permits

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

ACTION: Notice; request for comments.

SUMMARY: The Director, State, Federal and Constituent Programs Office, Northeast Region, NMFS (Office Director) has made a preliminary determination that the subject Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) application contains all the required information and warrants further consideration. The Office Director has also made a preliminary determination that the activities authorized under the EFPs would be consistent with the goals and objectives of Federal management of the American lobster resource. However, further review and consultation may be necessary before a final determination is made to issue EFPs. Therefore, NMFS announces that the Office Director proposes to issue EFPs that would allow

a maximum of seven vessels to conduct fishing operations involving the use of one juvenile lobster collector trap per vessel that are otherwise restricted by the regulations governing the American lobster fisheries of the Northeastern United States.

The EFP involves the non-destructive collection of size frequency and population data on legal and sublegal lobsters as part of an ongoing research project to monitor the offshore lobster fishery in Lobster Management Area 3. It would not involve the authorization of any additional trap gear in the area. A maximum of seven participating commercial fishing vessels will collect detailed abundance and size frequency data on the composition of lobsters in four general offshore study areas in a collaborative effort with the Atlantic Offshore Lobstermen's Association (AOLA). This EFP requests that each participating commercial fishing vessel utilize one modified juvenile lobster collector trap to collect population data. The lobster trap modifications are to the escape vents, and trap entrance head, not to the trap's size or configuration. Therefore, this modified trap would impact its environment no differently than the regular lobster trap it replaces and will add no additional traps to the area. After data is collected on lobsters in the trap, all sub-legal and berried female lobsters will be immediately returned to the sea. The EFP waives the American lobster escape vent requirement for a maximum of one trap per vessel for a maximum of seven vessels in the program. Therefore, this document invites comments on the issuance of EFPs to allow a maximum of seven commercial fishing vessels utilize a maximum of seven modified lobster traps and to collect statistical data using modified lobster trap gear.

DATES: Written comments on this lobster EFP notification for offshore lobster monitoring and data collection must be received on or before April 19, 2005.

ADDRESSES: Written comments should be sent to Patricia A. Kurkul, Regional Administrator, NMFS, Northeast Regional Office, 1 Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930-2298. Mark the outside of the envelope "Comments - Lobster EFP Proposal". Comments also may be sent via fax to 978-281-9117. Or, comments may be submitted by e-mail to Lob0205@noaa.gov. Include in the subject line the following document identifier: "Comments - Lobster EFP Proposal".

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Bob Ross, Fishery Management Specialist, 978-281-9234, fax 978-281-9117.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: