

listed species incidental to, and not the purpose of, otherwise lawful activities. Section 10(a)(1)(B) of the ESA provides for authorizing incidental take of listed species. NMFS regulations governing permits for threatened and endangered species are promulgated at 50 CFR 222.307.

### Species Covered in This Notice

The following species are included in the conservation plan and Permit application: loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*), green (*Chelonia mydas*), and Kemp's ridley (*Lepidochelys kempii*) sea turtles.

### Background

GSML is a non-profit scientific and educational institution that holds an IRS 501(c)3 certificate of tax exemption and conducts sea turtle research and conservation activities. GSML uses small trawls (under 500 sq. ft. (46.5 sq. m)) without turtle excluder devices (TEDs) to collect marine fish, invertebrates and algae. Trawl times are less than 30 minutes in duration. GSML sells the marine organisms it catches to public aquariums, schools, research laboratories, and biomedical institutions. It utilizes the revenue to support its environmental education and sea turtle protection programs. The issuance of a Permit will allow for the continued harvest of marine fish, invertebrates and algae by GSML.

This application includes the Kemp's ridley, green and loggerhead sea turtles. This fishing activity does not target sea turtles, and while thus far GSML has not taken any turtles with the fishing gear it now uses, a take of one turtle every 3 years is anticipated. No mortalities are expected should this take occur.

The types of activities and effects that are considered under the ESA section 10 permitting process vary in complexity and degree of impact. Despite authorization of some small level of incidental take, the action authorized under a low-effect permit has a minor or negligible effect on the species covered in the permit. The determination of whether an incidental take permit qualifies for the low-effect category must be based on its anticipated impacts prior to implementation of the mitigation plan. Low-effect incidental take permits are categorically excluded from NEPA. NMFS has determined that this Permit (1417) qualifies for the low-effect category. Only one turtle is anticipated to be taken every 3 years, and these takes are expected to be non-lethal and result in zero injury.

### Conservation Plan

The conservation plan prepared by GSML describes measures designed to minimize and mitigate the impacts of any incidental takes of ESA-listed sea turtles. It includes provisions to ensure that any captured sea turtles in need of resuscitation are provided such care, per NMFS guidelines. Additionally, any animals needing medical attention or rehabilitation will be cared for by authorized persons and facilities.

The conservation plan will mitigate the impacts of any incidental takes of ESA-listed sea turtles by helping turtles that have been put at risk or harmed due to interactions with other fisheries in the area. Specifically, GSML will remove any turtles it encounters ensnared in fishing lines, nets, and trap ropes. If any of these sea turtles require care, GSML will transport them to a rehabilitation facility.

This conservation plan will be funded through GSML revenues derived from the sale of the marine fish, invertebrates, and algae collected from trawling, donations from membership in its aquarium, and from grants and contracts.

This notice is provided pursuant to section 10(c) of the ESA and the National Environmental Policy Act regulations (40 CFR 1506.6). NMFS will evaluate the application, associated documents, and submitted comments to determine whether the application meets the requirements of the ESA Section 10(a) permitting process. If it is determined that the requirements are met, a permit will be issued for incidental takes of ESA-listed sea turtles under the jurisdiction of NMFS. The final permit determinations will not be completed until after the end of the 30-day comment period and will fully consider all public comments received during the comment period. NMFS will publish a record of its final action in the **Federal Register**.

Dated: February 10, 2003.

#### Phil Williams,

Chief, Endangered Species Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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### DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

#### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 021003C]

#### New England Fishery Management Council; Public Meetings

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

**ACTION:** Notice of public meetings.

**SUMMARY:** The New England Fishery Management Council (Council) is scheduling a public meeting of its Groundfish and Habitat Oversight Committee in March, 2003 to consider actions affecting New England fisheries in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ). Recommendations from these groups will be brought to the full Council for formal consideration and action, if appropriate.

**DATES:** These meetings will be held March 3 and 4, 2003. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for specific dates and times.

**ADDRESSES:** The meetings will be held in Providence, RI. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for specific locations.

*Council address:* New England Fishery Management Council, 50 Water Street, Mill 2, Newburyport, MA 01950.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Paul J. Howard, Executive Director, New England Fishery Management Council; (978) 465-0492.

#### **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

##### **Meeting Dates and Agendas**

*Monday, March 3, 2003 at 9:30 a.m.*  
Groundfish Oversight Committee Meeting.

Location: Providence Biltmore, 11 Dorrance Street, Providence, MA 02903; telephone: (401) 421-0700.

The Groundfish Oversight Committee will continue development of Amendment 13 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan (FMP). The committee anticipates receiving a preliminary summary of the recent Peer Review Workshop at this meeting. This summary may include recommendations from the reviewers on the science underlying the development of Amendment 13. Based in large measure on those recommendations, the committee will consider adjustments to proposed status determination criteria, rebuilding trajectories and timelines as well as changes to the management measures in the Amendment. Changes to the measures could include revisions in the use of days-at-sea, gear, closed

areas, or any other measure identified by the committee. The committee's recommendations will be presented to the Council at its meeting March 4–6, 2003. Given time, the committee will address other business.

*Tuesday, March 4, 2003 at 8:30 a.m.*  
Habitat Oversight Committee Meeting.

Location: Providence Biltmore, 11 Dorrance Street, Providence, MA 02903; telephone: (401) 421–0700.

The Habitat Oversight Committee will review the advice from the joint advisory panel representative's meeting on habitat that occurred February 6–7, 2003. They will also review the draft Essential Fish Habitat (EFH), Draft Supplementary Environmental Impact Statement (DSEIS) for Amendment 13 to the Multispecies FMP. The EFH components of Amendment 13 have been pulled out and will be submitted as a separate DSEIS. This document will be presented to the Council at its March 4–6, 2003 Council Meeting, then the EFH DSEIS will be incorporated back into the final Amendment 13 DSEIS, which will be presented to the Council at the July Council meeting. The committee will review the EFH DSEIS for Amendment 13 and identify a preferred alternative if appropriate.

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 listed in this notice and any issues arising after publication of this notice that require emergency action under section 305(c) of the Magnuson-Stevens 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 Paul J. Howard (see ADDRESSES) at least 5 days prior to the meeting dates.

Dated: February 11, 2003.

**Theophilus R. Brainerd,**

*Acting Director/Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.*  
[FR Doc. 03–3759 Filed 2–13–03; 8:45 am]

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 021003B]

#### South Atlantic Fishery Management Council; Public Meetings

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

**ACTION:** Notice of public meetings.

**SUMMARY:** The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) will hold meetings of its Snapper Grouper Committee, Highly Migratory Species Committee, Habitat Committee, Advisory Panel Selection Committee (closed session) and Executive Committee. There will also be a full Council Session.

**DATES:** The meetings will be held in March 2003. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for specific dates and times.

**ADDRESSES:** The meetings will be held at the Holiday Inn Beach Resort, 200 South Beachview Drive, Jekyll Island, GA 31527; telephone: (1–800) 753–5955 or (912) 635–3311.

Copies of documents are available from Kim Iverson, Public Information Officer, South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, One Southpark Circle, Suite 306, Charleston, SC 29407–4699.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Kim Iverson, Public Information Officer; telephone: 843–571–4366 or toll free at 866/SAFMC–10; fax: 843–769–4520; email: kim.iverson@safmc.net.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

##### Meeting Dates

1. *Snapper Grouper Committee Meeting: March 3, 2003, 1:30 p.m. until 5 p.m.*

The Snapper Grouper Committee will meet to receive a presentation on the results of the Vermilion Snapper Black Sea Bass Stock Assessment and Review Workshops. In addition, the Committee will receive updates on the status of the NC pilot program for observer work on bycatch, a NOAA Fisheries report on estimating bycatch from logbooks, a progress report on economic data collection via logbooks, and the status of a snapper/grouper electronic logbook pilot study.

2. *Snapper Grouper Committee Meeting: March 4, 2003, 8:30 a.m. until 5 p.m. and continued March 5, 2003, from 8:30 a.m. until 12 noon.*

Following the presentations, the Committee will review draft

Amendment 13 to the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan (FMP) and develop recommendations for the Council. The Committee will also discuss the status of Amendment 14 to the Snapper Grouper FMP involving the use of marine protected areas as a management tool.

3. *Highly Migratory Species Committee Meeting: March 5, 2003, 1:30 p.m. until 2:30 p.m.*

The Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Committee will meet to hear a report on the HMS Advisory Panel meetings and discuss current HMS issues.

4. *Habitat Committee Meeting: March 5, 2003, 2:30 p.m. until 5 p.m.*

The Habitat Committee will meet to consider recommendations from the Habitat and Environmental Protection Advisory Panel and the Coral Advisory Panel and take action regarding those recommendations for consideration by full Council. The Committee will also develop guidance on revisions to current Policy Statements.

5. *Advisory Panel Selection Committee Meeting (CLOSED): March 6, 2003, 8:30 a.m. until 10:30 a.m.*

The Advisory Panel Selection Committee will meet to review current applications for advisory panel positions and develop recommendations.

6. *Executive Committee Meeting: March 6, 2003, 10:30 a.m. until 12 noon.*

The Executive Committee will meet to review and discuss major issues raised at the Council Chairmen/NOAA Fisheries meeting, hear a report on a recent meeting of Council representatives and staff with Dr. William Hogarth, NOAA Assistant Administrator of Fisheries and his staff, and review the status of Shrimp Amendment 6.

7. *Council Session: March 6, 2003, 1:30 p.m. until 5 p.m.*

From 1:30 p.m. 1:45 p.m., the Council will have a Call to Order, introductions and roll call, adoption of the agenda, and approval of the December 2002 meeting minutes.

From 1:45 p.m. 3:45 p.m., the Council will hear recommendations from the Snapper Grouper Committee and take action regarding draft Snapper Grouper Amendment 13.

From 3:45 p.m. 5 p.m., the Council will receive a presentation of proposed regulatory changes in Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary and take action regarding the proposal.

From 5 p.m. 6 p.m., the Council will receive legal briefing on litigation affecting the Council (CLOSED SESSION).

8. *Council Session: March 7, 2003, 8:30 a.m. until 12 Noon.*