

**DATES:** The meeting will be held on May 5–6, 2003.

**ADDRESSES:** The meeting will be held at NMFS Alaska Region, 709 W. 9th Street, Room 150, Juneau, AK.

*Council address:* North Pacific Fishery Management Council, 605 W. 4th Ave., Suite 306, Anchorage, AK 99501–2252.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Cathy Coon, Council staff, telephone: 907–271–2809.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The Committee will meet from noon to 6 p.m. on Monday, May 5, and from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Tuesday, May 6. The Committee will continue working on a process for identifying and evaluating potential habitat areas of particular concern. Committee recommendations will be presented to the North Pacific Fishery Management Council in June.

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**

This meeting is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Gail Bendixen at 907–271–2809 at least 7 working days prior to the meeting date.

Dated: April 15, 2003.

**Matteo J. Milazzo,**

*Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.*  
[FR Doc. 03–9793 Filed 4–18–03; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3510–22–S**

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

[I.D. 041403G]

**South Atlantic Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting**

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

**ACTION:** Notice of public meeting.

**SUMMARY:** The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) will

hold a meeting of its Information and Education Committee and a joint meeting of the Committee and Information and Education Advisory Panel in Charleston, SC.

**DATES:** The meeting will be held on May 13–15, 2003. SEE SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION for specific dates and times.

**ADDRESSES:** The meeting will be held at the Town & Country Inn, 2008 Savannah Highway, Charleston, SC 29407; telephone: (843) 571–1000; fax: (843) 766–9444.

*Council address:* South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, One Southpark Circle, Suite 306, Charleston, SC 29407.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Kim Iverson, Public Information Officer,; phone: (843) 571–4366 or toll free: (866) SAFMC–10; fax: (843) 769–4520.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The Information and Education Committee will meet from 10 a.m. until 12 noon on May 13, 2003. The Committee will meet jointly with the Information and Education Advisory Panel from 1:30 p.m. until 5 p.m. on May 13, 2003, from 8:30 a.m. until 5 p.m. on May 14, 2003, and from 8:30 a.m. until 12 noon on May 15, 2003.

The Information and Education Committee will meet to review and discuss issues to be addressed during the joint meeting relative to outreach and public affairs. During the joint meeting, the Advisory Panel will receive an overview of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's current Information and Education program. The Advisory Panel will review and make recommendations regarding a draft strategic management plan for the program. In addition, members will review and make recommendations concerning the Council's Information and Education program including outreach efforts, working with the media, networking with state and federal partners and program evaluation. The Advisory Panel and Committee will develop a list of recommendations and priorities for the Council to consider.

**Special Accommodations**

These meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to the council office (see **ADDRESSES**) by May 12, 2003.

Dated: April 15, 2003.

**Matteo J. Milazzo,**

*Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.*  
[FR Doc. 03–9795 Filed 4–18–03; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3510–22–S**

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

[I.D. 041403E]

**Western Pacific Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting**

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

**ACTION:** Notice of public meeting.

**SUMMARY:** The 83rd meeting of the Western Pacific Fishery Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) will convene in Honolulu, HI.

**DATES:** The meeting will be held on May 6–8, 2003. The SSC meeting will be held from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on May 6, 2003 and from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. on May 7–8 2003.

**ADDRESSES:** The 83rd SSC meeting will be held at the Council office conference room, 1164 Bishop St., Suite 1400, Honolulu, HI; telephone: (808–522–8220).

*Council address:* Western Pacific Fishery Management Council, 1164 Bishop St., Suite 1400, Honolulu, HI 96813.

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

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The SSC will discuss and may make recommendations to the Council on the agenda items below. The order in which agenda items will be addressed can change.

*Tuesday, May 6, 2003, 9 a.m.*

1. Bottomfish
  - a. 2002 Annual Report
  - b. Overfishing/Maximum Sustainable Yield
    - i. Status of the stocks based on new control rule
    - ii. Genetic research
    - iii. Main Hawaiian Islands (MHI) area closure monitoring
    - iv. Rebuilding options for stocks
  - c. Guam offshore fishery management
  - d. Plan Team report
2. Protected Species
  - a. Status of Sea Turtle Recovery Team and Recovery Plans

- b. Report on Monk Seal Recovery Team Meeting (15–17 April, 2003)
3. Crustaceans Fisheries
- Status of the fishery
  - Report on Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI) lobster research
    - Report on MULTIFAN-CL stock assessment analyses
    - Report on slipper lobster tagging research
    - Report on analyses of outstanding lobster cruise data
  - NMFS annual lobster research cruise plan
  - MHI lobster stock assessment
  - Plan Team report
4. Precious Corals
- Plan Team report
- Wednesday, May 7, 2003, 8:30 a.m.*
5. Quantitative assessment of capacity in Hawaii's fisheries.
6. Pelagic Fisheries
- 2002 Annual Report
  - Report on American Samoa scientific data collection program
  - Report on phase two of chute trials for Seabird conservation
  - Turtle/Fishery conservation alternatives
  - Marlin management
  - Status of Environmental Impact Statements (EISs)
    - Supplemental Pelagic EIS
    - MHI Turtle EIS
    - International Meetings and Issues
      - Food & Agriculture Organization Committee on Fisheries (COFI) meeting
      - NMFS Turtle bycatch meeting
      - 23rd Turtle symposium
  - Plan Team report
- Thursday, May 8, 2003, 8:30 a.m.*
7. Taape (blue lined snapper) interactions with reef fish
8. Ecosystem and Habitat
- NOS NWHI Reserve Science Workshop
  - NMFS/Council NWHI Symposium
  - Report from Council Marine Protected Area Working Group
  - Report on Secretariat of the Pacific Community Coastal Fishery Management Meeting
  - Report on Plan Team meeting
9. Other Business

Report from the Social Science Research Committee 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

This meeting is 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 meeting date.

Dated: April 15, 2003.

**Matteo J. Milazzo,**

*Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.*  
[FR Doc. 03-9792 Filed 4-18-03; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3510-22-S**

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[ID. 040703E]

#### Fisheries Off West Coast States and in the Western Pacific; Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery; Application for an Exempted Fishing Permit

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

**ACTION:** Notice of receipt of an exempted fishing permit application; request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS announces the receipt of an exempted fishing permit (EFP) application for a cooperative project between the Oregon State Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), and the NMFS Northwest Fishery Science Center. If awarded, this EFP would allow qualifying vessels to harvest and retain federally managed groundfish in closed rockfish conservation areas and to retain federally managed groundfish species in excess of cumulative trip limits. These activities are otherwise prohibited. Vessels fishing under these EFPs will be required to carry a Federal fisheries observer while conducting EFP fishing. This EFP proposal is intended to promote the objectives of the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) by assessing the effectiveness of a fishing gear configuration that was designed to harvest flatfish stocks while reducing the incidental catch of low abundance rockfish species.

**DATES:** Comments must be received by May 6, 2003.

**ADDRESSES:** Copies of the EFP application are available from Becky Renko Northwest Region, NMFS, 7600 Sand Point Way N.E., Bldg. 1, Seattle, WA 98115-0070.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Becky Renko (206)526-6110 or Carrie Nordeen (206) 526-6144.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** This action is authorized by the FMP and implementing regulations at 50 CFR 600.745 and 50 CFR 660.350.

Dover sole, petrale sole, English sole, rex sole, and arrowtooth flounder are abundant and important flatfish species in the Pacific Coast groundfish fishery. These flatfish species have historically been caught by vessels using trawl gear in depths of 50–150 fathoms (91–274 meters). Beginning in 2003, many of the areas where these flatfish species have historically been harvested are within the Trawl Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA) where fishing with bottom trawl gear is prohibited. Rockfish conservation areas are gear-specific, large-scale depth-related areas where low abundance (overfished) rockfish species are commonly found. It was necessary to define these areas to restrict fishing so the 2003 optimum yield (OY) levels for the overfished rockfish species are not exceeded.

The purpose of the exempted fishing activity is to measure the rate at which un-targeted species, particularly canary, darkblotched, yelloweye and widow rockfish, are taken by commercial fishers using an experimental trawl net. This experimental net was specifically designed to be more selective in the harvest of flatfish species than the trawl net configurations that are currently used in the fishery.

In 2001 and 2002, ODFW chartered commercial fishing vessels to develop and test new trawl net designs. Testing was conducted to compare the new net design with trawl net configurations that are typically used in the fishery. During the initial testing, significant reductions in the catch of overfished rockfish species relative to flatfish catch were observed. ODFW believes that this gear design, which meets the requirements of small footrope bottom trawl gear as defined by regulations at 50 CFR 660, could become an effective way for fishery participants to reduce rockfish bycatch in the flatfish fishery.

To encourage fishers to use this gear, increased trip limits for flatfish would be available to vessels that are willing to modify their existing gear or purchase new gear that is consistent with the design requirements, as defined by