

Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) to rebuild overfished stocks in ten years or less except in cases where the biology of the overfished stock, other environmental conditions or international agreements dictate otherwise, and will consider management alternatives to limit harvest to levels consistent with the selected rebuilding plan. The rebuilding period for vermilion snapper will be ten years or less based on Magnuson-Stevens Act guidelines. The DSEIS will consider various alternatives to achieve the rebuilding goal in either seven or ten years based on constant catch strategies, constant fishing mortality rate strategies or stepped strategies that holds harvest constant for three or four year periods consistent with the average of the harvests under a constant fishing mortality strategy. The status of the stock would be reviewed every 3 to 5 years to evaluate the need for additional management measures.

Management alternatives considered by the Council could include, but would not be limited to, seasonal closures, quotas, minimum size limits, bag limits and trip limits.

Written comments on the range of alternatives and scope of issues to be addressed in the DSEIS may be sent to the Council (*see ADDRESSES*).

Once the Council completes the DSEIS associated with the Draft Vermilion snapper Rebuilding Amendment, it will submit the document to NMFS for filing with the EPA. The EPA will publish a Notice of Availability of the DSEIS for public comment in the **Federal Register**. The DSEIS will have a 45-day comment period. This procedure is pursuant to regulations issued by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA; 40 CFR parts 1500–1508) and to NOAA Administrative Order 216–6 regarding NOAA's compliance with NEPA and the CEQ regulations.

The Council will consider public comments received on the DSEIS in developing the final supplemental environmental impact statement (FSEIS) and before adopting final management measures for the Vermilion Snapper Rebuilding Amendment. The Council will submit both the final Amendment, including the supporting FSEIS, to NMFS for Secretarial review, approval, and implementation under the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

NMFS will announce, through a notice published in the **Federal Register**, the availability of the final Vermilion Snapper Rebuilding Amendment for public review during

the Secretarial review period. During Secretarial review, NMFS will also file the FSEIS with the EPA for a final 30-day public comment period. This comment period will be concurrent with the Secretarial review period and will end prior to final agency action to approve, disapprove, or partially approve the final Vermilion Snapper Rebuilding Amendment.

NMFS will announce, through a notice published in the **Federal Register**, all public comment periods on the final Vermilion Snapper Rebuilding Amendment, its proposed implementing regulations, and its associated FSEIS. NMFS will consider all public comments received during the Secretarial review period, whether they are on the final Amendment, the proposed regulations, or the FSEIS, prior to final agency action.

Dated: February 9, 2004.

Bruce C. Morehead,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.
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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 622

[I.D. 012604B]

Fisheries of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic; Draft Generic Amendment to the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for the Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources of the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Region and to the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for the Reef Fish Resources of the Gulf of Mexico; Scoping Meetings

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

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare a draft supplemental environmental impact statement (DSEIS); notice of scoping meetings; and request for comments.

SUMMARY: The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) intends to prepare a DSEIS that describes and analyzes management alternatives associated with limiting access in the king mackerel and reef fish fisheries. The purpose of this notice is to solicit public comments on the scope of issues to be addressed in the DSEIS, which will be submitted to NMFS for filing

with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for publication of a Notice of Availability for public comment.

DATES: Written comments must be received by the Council by 5 p.m. on March 5, 2004 (*see ADDRESSES*). A series of scoping meetings will be held in February and March 2004. *See SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION* for specific dates and times.

ADDRESSES: The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, 3018 North U.S. Highway 301, Suite 1000, Tampa, FL 33619; telephone: (813) 228–2815; fax: (813) 225–7015. Comments may also be sent by e-mail to:

Rick.Leard@gulfcouncil.org.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Rick Leard; phone: (813) 228–2815 ext. 228; fax: (813) 225–7015; e-mail: *Rick.Leard@gulfcouncil.org.*

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: King mackerel and reef fish in the Gulf of Mexico are managed under their respective FMPs. Both fisheries operate under a moratorium on the issuance of new commercial vessel permits. The moratorium on new king mackerel permits was established by Amendment 8 to the Mackerel FMP in March 1998, and was extended with the implementation of Amendment 12 to the Mackerel FMP. It is scheduled to expire on October 15, 2005. The moratorium on the issuance of new commercial reef fish permits was established by Amendment 4 to the Reef Fish FMP in May 1992. The moratorium has been maintained since that time with the implementation of Amendments 9, 11, and 17 to the Reef Fish FMP. It is scheduled to expire on December 31, 2005.

The Council intends to develop a DSEIS that describes and analyzes management alternatives to limit entry in the king mackerel and reef fish fisheries. Those alternatives include, but are not limited to the following: (1) A “no action” alternative regarding each fishery, which would allow the moratoria to expire; (2) An extension of the existing moratoria for a designated time frame; or (3) The establishment of some form of license limitation system for each fishery, including individual fishing quotas. If a license limitation system is chosen, the Council may also consider alternatives for different classes of licenses, initial qualification, initial allocations by license classes, transferability, and appeals regarding eligibility.

In accordance with NOAA Administrative Order 216–6, Section 5.02(c), the Council has identified this

preliminary range of alternatives as a means to initiate discussion for scoping purposes only. This may not represent the full range of alternatives that eventually will be evaluated by the Council. Copies of the scoping document will be available at the meetings and are available prior to the meetings from the Council office (*see ADDRESSES*).

The scoping meetings will be held at the following locations and dates from 6 p.m. followed by hearings on a Generic Marine Aquaculture Amendment (noticed separately) and will conclude by 10 p.m.

1. Tuesday, February 17, 2004, Adams Mark Hotel and Resort, 64 South Water Street, Mobile, AL 36602; telephone: (251) 438-4000;

2. Wednesday, February 18, 2004, J.L. Scott Marine Education Center and Aquarium, 115 Beach Boulevard, Biloxi, MS 39530; telephone: (228) 374-5550;

3. Thursday, February 19, 2004, Larose Regional Park, 2001 East 5th Street, Larose, LA 70373; telephone: (504) 693-7355;

4. Monday, February 23, 2004, Holiday Inn Emerald Beach, 1102 South Shoreline Boulevard, Corpus Christi, TX 78401; telephone: (361) 883-5731;

5. Tuesday, February 24, 2004, Moody Gardens Hotel, 7 Hope Boulevard, Galveston, TX 77554; telephone: (409) 741-8484;

6. Wednesday, February 25, 2004, National Marine Fisheries Service, Panama City Laboratory, 3500 Delwood Beach Road, Panama City, FL 32408; telephone: (850) 234-6541 ext. 201;

7. Thursday, February 26, 2004, Madeira Beach City Hall Auditorium, 300 Municipal Drive, Madeira Beach, FL 33708; telephone: (727) 391-9951; and

8. Monday, March 1, 2004, Holiday Inn Beachside, 3841 North Roosevelt Boulevard, Key West, FL 33040; telephone: (305) 294-2571.

Special Accommodations

The meetings will be physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Trish Kennedy at the Council (*see ADDRESSES*) by February 13, 2004.

Dated: February 9, 2004.

Bruce C. Morehead,

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

[FR Doc. 04-3282 Filed 2-12-04; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 660

[I.D. 102903C]

Fisheries Off West Coast States and in the Western Pacific; Western Pacific Pelagic Fisheries; Public Hearing on Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement

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

ACTION: Notification of public hearing.

SUMMARY: The Pacific Islands Regional Office of NMFS, in coordination with the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council), will hold a public hearing in Honolulu, Hawaii, to receive comments on a draft supplemental environmental impact statement (DSEIS) for proposed management measures under the Fishery Management Plan for the Pelagic Fisheries of the Western Pacific Region, under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery

Conservation and Management Act. The DSEIS describes and assesses the likely environmental impacts of a range of alternative fishery management actions that are focused on the management of the pelagic longline fisheries, particularly with respect to interactions between sea turtles and the Hawaii-based longline fleet.

DATES: The public hearing will be held on February 18, 2004, from 6 to 8 p.m. Hawaii Standard Time.

ADDRESSES: The public hearing will be held in the Ala Moana Hotel (Carnation Room, second floor), 410 Atkinson Drive, Honolulu, Hawaii.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Tom Graham, NMFS, 808-973-2937.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The DSEIS was made available to the public on January 23, 2004, as described in a Notice of Availability published in the *Federal Register* by the Environmental Protection Agency on that date. The public comment period for the DSEIS ends February 23, 2004.

To obtain a copy of the DSEIS or for additional information, contact NMFS (*see FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT*). The DSEIS and related documents are also available on the Internet at <http://swr.nmfs.noaa.gov/pir/> and <http://www.wpcouncil.org>.

Special Accommodations

This hearing is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Tom Graham, (808) 973-2937 (voice) or (808) 973-2941 (fax), by February 17, 2004.

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

Dated: February 10, 2004.

Peter Fricke,

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

[FR Doc. 04-3277 Filed 2-12-04; 8:45 am]

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