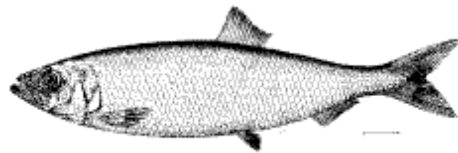


SCOPING DOCUMENT
for
Amendment 4
to the
Atlantic Herring
Fishery Management Plan



Prepared by the
New England Fishery Management Council

Schedule of Herring Amendment 4 Scoping Meetings

The Council will discuss and take scoping comments at herring-related public meetings in May and June 2008. **There also will be time allotted for scoping comments prior to the June New England Council meeting and during the June Mid-Atlantic Council meeting.**

<u>Date and Time</u>	<u>Location</u>
Wednesday, April 30, 2008 10:00 a.m.	Holiday Inn One Newbury Street Peabody, MA 01960 (978) 535-4600
Thursday, May 22, 2008 9:00 a.m.	Clarion Hotel Portland 1230 Congress Street Portland, ME 04102 (207) 774-5611
Monday, June 2, 2008 5:00 p.m.	Holiday Inn By The Bay 88 Spring Street Portland, ME 04101 (207) 775-2311
Tuesday, June 10, 2008 6:00 p.m.	Sheraton Atlantic City Convention Center Hotel 2 Miss America Way Atlantic City, NJ 08401 (609) 344-3535

In addition to providing information and comments at any of the herring scoping meetings, you may submit written comments by mail or fax to the National Marine Fisheries Service any time prior to **June 30, 2008** at the following address/number:

Patricia Kurkul, Regional Administrator
National Marine Fisheries Service
One Blackburn Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930
Fax: (978) 281-9135

Please indicate on your correspondence, “Herring Amendment 4 Scoping Comments.”

Scoping comments may be submitted via email to
HerringAmendment4@noaa.gov.

NEW ENGLAND FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
SEEKS YOUR COMMENTS ON THE MANAGEMENT OF THE
ATLANTIC HERRING FISHERY

***Your
comments are
invited***

The New England Fishery Management Council (Council) is initiating the development of an amendment to the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Atlantic herring (*Clupea harengus*) under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (M-S Act). In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Council also intends to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that will analyze the impacts of this amendment on both the physical and human environment.

This document is to inform you of the Council's intent to gather information necessary for the preparation of the EIS and ask for your suggestions and information on the range of issues that should be addressed in this amendment to the Herring FMP. This Scoping Document, including the management issues and questions identified for consideration, was developed through a series of public meetings and a substantial amount of input from the public, industry, and interested stakeholders.

***Why is the
Council
proposing to
take action?***

What actions have already been taken?

The Herring FMP became effective on January 10, 2001 and included administrative and management measures intended to ensure effective and sustainable management of the herring resource. The FMP established Total Allowable Catches (TACs) for each of four management areas as the primary control on fishing mortality and created a fishery specification process to set Allowable Biological Catch, Optimum Yield, as well as TACs and related specifications. Other elements of the Federal Herring FMP include requirements for vessel, dealer, and processor permits as well as reporting requirements and restrictions on the size of vessels that can take, catch, or harvest herring. Framework Adjustment 1 to the Council's Herring FMP was implemented for the 2002 fishing year (January 1, 2002 – December 31, 2002). Framework 1 split the TAC for Area 1A (inshore Gulf of Maine/GOM) into two seasonal components in an attempt to prevent an early closure of the fishery in 1A when the TAC is reached.

Amendment 1 to the Atlantic Herring FMP was developed by the Council and became effective on June 1, 2007. It established a limited access program for the Atlantic herring fishery and a seasonal purse seine and fixed gear-only area in the inshore Gulf of Maine (June – September). Several additional management were also included that primarily addressed issues related to the herring fishery specifications, management area boundaries, fixed gear fisheries for herring, and the regulatory definition of midwater trawl gear.

Why is the Council proposing to take action?

Amendment 2 to the Atlantic Herring FMP was part of an omnibus amendment to all FMPS developed by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to ensure that all FMPs of the Northeast Region comply with the Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology (SBRM) requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. The purpose of the SBRM amendment was to: (1) explain the methods and processes by which bycatch is currently monitored and assessed for Northeast Region fisheries; (2) determine whether these methods and processes need to be modified and/or supplemented; (3) establish standards of precision for bycatch estimation for all Northeast Region fisheries; and (4) document the SBRMs established for all fisheries managed through the FMPs of the Northeast Region.

Amendment 3 to the Herring FMP is currently under development by the Council and represents an omnibus amendment to all Council FMPs to address Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Reauthorization Act of 2007. The amendment will redefine, refine or update the identification and description of all EFH for those species of finfish and mollusks managed by the Council, and identify and implement mechanisms to minimize to the extent practicable the adverse effects of fishing on the EFH.

In 2006, the Council developed and NMFS approved three-year specifications (2007- 2009) that specify Allowable Biological Catch (ABC) of 194,000 mt and established an OY value of 145,000 mt for the U.S. Atlantic herring fishery. Based on data and analysis presented in the most recent stock assessment and the 2006 Transboundary Resource Assessment Committee (TRAC) Meeting, the Area 1A TAC was reduced from 60,000 mt to 50,000 mt for 2007, and 45,000 mt for 2008 and 2009. The Area 3 TAC was set at 55,000 mt in 2007, and increases to 60,000 mt in 2008 and 2009. The Area 1B and 2 TACs were set at 10,000 mt and 30,000 mt, respectively, and remain constant during the three-year specification period.

Why are additional measures being considered?

The original Herring FMP and Amendment 1 represent important milestones in the Council's efforts to maintain a sustainably-managed Atlantic herring fishery throughout New England. Recently, concerns about the fishery have led the Council to determine that additional action is needed to further address issues related to the health of the herring resource throughout its range, how the resource is harvested, how catch/bycatch are accounted for, and the important role of herring as a forage fish in the Northeast region. These concerns are reflected in the unprecedented level of interest in managing this fishery by New England's commercial and recreational fishermen, eco-tourism and shoreside businesses, and the general public.

Furthermore, a sector allocation process for the Atlantic herring fishery was developed but ultimately rejected by the Council as a management alternative in Amendment 1 to the Herring FMP. The Council rejected this measure in Amendment 1 because it determined that the most appropriate course of action for the herring fishery at that time would be to implement a limited access program in all management areas and address quota allocations in the future through a separate action. Therefore, when the Council determined that Amendment 4 would be a

Why is the Council proposing to take action?

management priority during 2008, it identified a sector allocation process as one management alternative to consider in this action.

Management measures are also being considered in this amendment to address the new applicable provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Reauthorization Act of 2006 (MSRA). The MSRA reflects an update of the original Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA) and retains key provisions of the Sustainable Fisheries Act (1996) while making adjustments to the legislation designed to improve national compliance with the Act. One specific focus of this amendment will be the MSRA requirements that NMFS and the Councils establish Annual Catch Limits (ACLs) such that overfishing does not occur in the fishery, and Accountability Measures (AMs) for the overages of harvest levels. The MSRA directs the Councils to follow the recommendations of its Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) in setting catch limits for every federally-managed fishery that is not subject to overfishing by the year 2011.

In addition to alternatives for a group or sector allocation program for the herring fishery, the Council may consider establishing individual or other quota allocation programs in this amendment. Some of the allocation programs that may be considered in Amendment 4 may represent Limited Access Privilege Programs (LAPPs) according to the standards in the MSRA. The MSRA establishes National Guidelines for LAPPs, should the Council choose to implement them in any federally-managed fishery. LAPPs include Individual Fishing Quotas (IFQs) which are expanded to allow for allocation of harvesting privileges to fishing communities or regional fishery associations. All LAPPs would be developed by the Councils and be subject to review by the Secretary of Commerce. The Council may consider developing a LAPP for the herring fishery in this amendment and is seeking public comment on this issue.

While the issues identified above will likely be the focus of specific management measures considered in this amendment, other new requirements of the MSRA, including provisions for improving data collection and increasing the role of science in the decision-making process will be addressed as well during the development of this management action.

What action is the Council considering?

What specific issues will be addressed in this amendment?

The goals and objectives of the Atlantic herring fishery management program were specified in Amendment 1 to the Herring FMP and will continue to frame the long-term management of the resource and fishery. The goals and objectives of Amendment 4, provided below, were recommended by the Council's Herring Committee at its March 25, 2008 meeting and approved by the Council as part of this Scoping Document. They are specific to Amendment 4; they acknowledge the primary issues to address and form the basis of the management alternatives that will be developed for consideration and analysis in the EIS and public hearing document for Amendment 4.

What action is the Council considering? At this time, it is intended that the management measures considered in this amendment will address one or more of the following:

GOAL

To develop an amendment to the Herring FMP to improve catch monitoring and ensure compliance with the Magnuson-Stevens Reauthorization Act of 2006

OBJECTIVES

1. To implement measures to improve the long-term monitoring of catch (landings and bycatch) in the herring fishery;
2. To implement Annual Catch Limits (ACLs) and Accountability Measures (AMs) consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Reauthorization Act (MSRA);
3. To implement other management measures as necessary to ensure compliance with the new provisions of the MSRA;
4. To develop a sector allocation process or other Limited Access Privilege Program (LAPP) for the Atlantic herring fishery; and
5. In the context of Objectives 1 -4 (above), to consider the health of the herring resource and the important role of herring as a forage fish and a predator fish throughout its range.

What action is the Council considering? The Council will develop conservation and management measures to address the issues and meet the goals/objectives identified above. Any conservation and management measures developed in this amendment must comply with all applicable laws. The following discussion provides background information regarding the issues that may be addressed in this amendment and poses questions for the public to consider when providing scoping comments to the Council.

CATCH MONITORING PROGRAM

Amendment 2 to the Atlantic Herring FMP was developed by NMFS to ensure that all FMPs of the Northeast Region comply with the Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology (SBRM) requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. The purpose of the SBRM amendment was to: (1) explain the methods and processes by which bycatch is currently monitored and assessed for Northeast Region fisheries; (2) determine whether these methods and processes need to be modified and/or supplemented; (3) establish standards of precision for bycatch estimation for all Northeast Region fisheries; and (4) document the SBRMs established for all fisheries managed through the FMPs of the Northeast Region.

Generally, a SBRM can be viewed as a combination of sampling design, data collection procedures, and analyses used to estimate bycatch. The Northeast Region SBRM amendment provides a structured approach for evaluating the effectiveness of the allocation of fisheries observer effort across multiple fisheries to monitor a

What action is the Council considering?

large number of species. Both precision and accuracy are addressed in analyses conducted using observer data and to determine the appropriateness of the data for use in stock assessments and by fishery managers. A coefficient of variation (CV) of thirty percent (30%) was selected as a standard level of precision based upon the recommendation of the National Working Group on Bycatch.

The SBRM amendment, therefore, establishes a baseline and target levels of observer coverage for accurately monitoring bycatch across the Northeast Region's federally-managed fisheries. However, the Council acknowledges that recent developments in the herring fishery have contributed to the need for improved monitoring of catch in the fishery (landings and discards). For instance, increased concerns about the status of river herring and some groundfish stocks, as well as uncertainty regarding the nature and extent of river herring and groundfish bycatch in the Atlantic herring fishery illustrate the need for more and better bycatch information. Seasonal and annual TAC overages in some management areas, inconsistent and inadequate levels of observer coverage, and the emergence of U.S. at-sea processing operations also argue for a more thorough and accurate catch monitoring program in the fishery. For these reasons, the Council is considering management measures in this amendment to supplement the baseline established in the SBRM and enhance the collection of bycatch information in the Atlantic herring fishery.

Guidance from the Council in late 2007 specified that this amendment will focus on improving and expanding the existing catch monitoring program to address uncertainties in the existing data on effort, catch/bycatch, and landings. Various modifications to the existing at-sea observer program and other components of a comprehensive monitoring program may be developed in this amendment. For example, the Council may consider modifications to the sampling protocol for NMFS observers, options for full retention of catch by herring vessels, or alternatives to establish an industry-funded observer program. The Council is seeking your comments on these kinds of measures as well as suggestions for other measures that should be considered in this amendment to improve the catch monitoring program for the Atlantic herring fishery.

Questions to Consider

- What specific management measures should the Council consider in this amendment to improve the collection of catch/bycatch information in the Atlantic herring fishery? What specific measures should be considered to improve both at-sea monitoring and shoreside monitoring?
- Should the Council consider alternatives for an industry-funded observer program in this amendment? Should the Council consider alternatives for third-party contributions to observer coverage in this amendment?
- Should management measures be considered in this amendment to improve observer working conditions and data collection by the Northeast Fisheries Science Center Sea Sampling Program? Should changes to the observer sampling protocol be considered?

What action is the Council considering?

- Should electronic monitoring systems, including video-based electronic monitoring, be considered for the Atlantic herring fishery?
- Should full or maximized retention be considered for the herring fishery? If so, how will it be verified? What are the impediments to requiring full retention?
- What measures should be considered in this amendment to address observer coverage and protocols for U.S. At-Sea Processing (USAP) vessels?
- Should the Council consider management measures to improve the real-time monitoring of TACs in the herring fishery?
- Should a shoreside monitoring program be established for this fishery? What modifications should be made to dealer and processor requirements to improve the accuracy and completeness of landings information?
- What special considerations should be included to address the unique nature of the herring fishery with regards to volume and fish-pump transfer of codend contents?

ANNUAL CATCH LIMITS/ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES

ACLs and AMs

The M-S Act was reauthorized in 2007 and one new requirement is to establish annual catch limits (ACLs) and accountability measures (AMs) in order to end and/or prevent overfishing in all FMPs. Section 302 (h)(6) states: (Each Council shall) develop annual catch limits for each of its managed fisheries that may not exceed the fishing level recommendations of its Scientific and Statistical Committee or the peer review process established. Section 303 (a)(15) states: (Any FMP shall) establish a mechanism for specifying annual catch limits in the plan (including a multiyear plan), implementing regulations, or annual specifications, at a level such that overfishing does not occur in the fishery, including measures to ensure accountability.

NMFS has provided some informal input on what these new requirements may entail, but official guidance on how Councils must comply with these new requirements is not expected until May 2008. The Herring FMP is required to be in compliance with these new regulations by 2011 because the Atlantic herring fishery is not subject to overfishing at this time.

The Atlantic herring fishery has been managed using hard TACs since the 2000 fishing year. The TACs are developed through the fishery specification process and are based on an Allowable Biological Catch (ABC) that has been reduced to an Optimum Yield (OY) based on biological, economic, ecological, and other considerations. The Herring FMP, therefore, has already laid the foundation for complying with the ACL and AM requirements of the MSRA. The related measures considered in this amendment are likely to be refinements to the fishery specification process, measures to ensure the effectiveness of the TACs, and/or measures to address TAC overages.

What action is the Council considering? ***Questions to Consider***

- What specific management measures should the Council consider in this amendment to address new MSRA requirements?
- Do you feel that the current fishery specification process, including TACs divided by management area, is adequate to meet the ACL requirements of the MSRA?
- Aside from the ACLs themselves (Hard TACs), what accountability measures should be considered to ensure that the ACLs are not exceeded (for example, pay back provisions in which overages would be reduced from the ACL in the following year)?
- How could the Council better account for the importance of herring as forage for predators in setting ACLs?
- In terms of setting ACLs, how could the Council better incorporate the concepts of ecosystem management as it relates to herring as a forage and as a predator species?
- How should the Council account for discards in setting and implementation of ACLs?

Management Measures to Address Bycatch (Herring/Mackerel)

Coupled with the establishment of ACLs and AMs, the Council is considering measures in this amendment to address concerns about the potential bycatch of Atlantic herring in the directed Atlantic mackerel fishery. The concerns relate to vessels that may be directing on mackerel without a limited access permit for herring, and consequently without the ability to retain an adequate amount of herring they may catch incidentally when targeting mackerel.

The Amendment 1 limited access permit program established two tiers of limited access permits: (1) a limited access directed fishery permit that allows access either to all management areas or to Areas 2/3 only with no possession limit; and (2) a limited access incidental catch permit that allows access to all management areas with a possession limit of 25 mt and a restriction of one landing per calendar day. The limited access incidental catch permit was developed primarily to address the incidental catch of herring by mackerel vessels that do not qualify for a limited access directed fishery permit. Qualification criteria for the limited access incidental catch permit were less restrictive and spanned a longer qualifying time period (15 mt in any calendar year from 1988 – 2003). Amendment 1 also established an open access incidental catch permit for vessels that do not qualify for either of the limited access permits. The possession limit associated with the open access incidental catch permit is 3 mt per trip with a restriction of one landing per calendar day.

Since the implementation of Amendment 1, concerns have been raised about vessels participating in the mackerel fishery that do not qualify for any of the limited access herring permits, either because they do not have adequate herring landings history between 1988 and 2003, or because they are new to the mackerel fishery. These vessels are currently required to fish with the open access incidental catch permit to

What action is the Council considering?

retain any herring, and they may encounter herring in amounts larger than 3 mt on some fishing trips. Without a permit that allows them to retain an adequate amount of herring, these vessels may be forced to discard any herring they catch incidentally. The Council acknowledges this concern and may consider measures to address the incidental catch of herring in the mackerel fishery. The TAC in Areas 2 and 3 is not fully utilized at this time, so it may be appropriate to provide vessels in these areas an opportunity to retain the herring they may catch when fishing for mackerel. This may help to better achieve OY for the fishery while minimizing bycatch to the extent practicable at this time.

Questions to Consider

- Is the bycatch of herring on non-permitted mackerel vessels a significant concern in the southern New England and Mid-Atlantic areas?
- Should the Council consider measures to address concerns about potential bycatch of herring by non-limited access vessels participating in the mackerel fishery? If so, what specific management measures should be considered to address concerns about herring bycatch in the mackerel fishery?

QUOTA ALLOCATIONS (GROUP/SECTOR/INDIVIDUAL) AND LIMITED ACCESS PRIVILEGE PROGRAMS

In the herring fishery, there is a core fleet consisting of a small number of vessels that catch a very large proportion of the herring resource. These vessels were incorporated into the limited access program implemented in Amendment 1 to the Herring FMP. Developing Amendment 4 now provides the opportunity to evaluate management approaches for the limited access fishery while considering important biological and economic factors.

The Council is considering management measures to establish a group/sector allocation program for the Atlantic herring fishery, or some form of limited access privilege program (LAPP) like an Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ). Amendment 13 to the Multispecies (Groundfish) FMP recently implemented a sector allocation program, which apportions part of the ground fish fishery resource to a “self-selecting sector.” Sectors may be formed around common fishing practices, gear type, common homeport or landing port, common fishing area, common marketing arrangements, etc. How the sector chooses to harvest its allocation could include a wide range of arrangements, including, but not limited to, a plan that simply subdivides the TAC or a measure of effort among the vessels.

The purpose of establishing a group or individual allocation program for the herring fishery would be to allow greater opportunities for fishery participants to proactively engage in resource governance, to provide greater flexibility for participants, to guide the appropriate development of capacity, and, last, to create outcomes that are more socially and economically-relevant for fishery participants within the biological limitations of the fishery (TACs). In addition, vessels may want to join a sector or participate in a LAPP to manage the incidental catch of herring in their

What action is the Council considering?

fishery.

The Council developed and considered an alternative for sector allocation in Amendment 1 to the Herring FMP, but ultimately rejected it while stating an interest in revisiting the issue in subsequent FMP actions. This amendment will revisit the sector allocation alternative developed in Amendment 1 and will continue to refine that alternative for further consideration by the Council. The amendment also may explore alternatives for individual or other quota allocation programs and is seeking public comment on this and other forms of LAPPs that may be appropriate to consider in the Atlantic herring fishery.

If the Council develops an IFQ program in this amendment, the MSRA includes a specific requirement for a referendum to implement such a program in New England. According to the MSRA, the New England Fishery Management Council may not submit, and the Secretary may not approve or implement, a fishery management plan or amendment that creates an individual fishing quota program, including a Secretarial plan, unless that system has been approved by more than 2/3 of those voting in a referendum among eligible permit holders or other eligible persons. If an individual fishing quota program fails to be approved by the requisite number of those voting, it may be revised and submitted for approval in a subsequent referendum. These provisions must be considered if the Council develops an IFQ program for the herring fishery in Amendment 4.

Questions to Consider

- Should the Council consider an individual or group allocation process in this amendment? If so, what kinds of programs should be considered?
- Should a sector allocation process for the herring fishery mirror that which is under consideration for the groundfish fishery?
- While it is unclear at this time whether a group or individual allocation program would apply to all management areas in the herring fishery, the Council recognizes that significant changes in the Area 1A fishery occurred during the 2007 fishing year with the implementation of Amendment 1, including a limited access program and a seasonal purse seine/fixed gear only area. Consequently, fishing patterns for many vessels that historically fished in Area 1A have been affected recently, and some vessels lost access to this fishery during the most important time of the year. Because of the impacts of Amendment 1 on some of the major vessels in the fishery, the Council believes that it may not be appropriate to utilize fishing history from Area 1A from the 2007 fishing year forward to establish baselines for the allocation of TAC under a sector or other LAPP.

If the Council establishes a group or individual allocation program that requires area-specific landings history to make allocations, the Council is considering a requirement that any allocation of herring utilizing landings history from Area 1A be based on a time period ending December 31, 2006. The Council is seeking public comment on this proposed end date for allocations based on Area 1A history.

What action is the Council considering?

- Should group or individual allocation programs be structured by management area or for the herring fishery as a whole? Similarly, should group or individual allocation programs be considered for all herring management areas or just the areas where the TAC is consistently fully utilized (Area 1A)?
 - What are the pros/cons of using an allocation time period for history from Area 1A that ends on December 31, 2006?
 - Should other baseline time periods be considered to determine group or individual allocations in Area 1A and/or in other management areas? If so, which ones would you recommend?
 - Should initial allocations be based solely on fishing history/landings for the management area in question, or for all management areas? (i.e., should an Area 1A allocation be based only on Area 1A landings or landings from all management areas?)
 - If group or individual allocation programs are developed for all management areas, how should the program address and allocate un-utilized TAC in Areas 2 and 3?
- The MSRA states that the New England Council may not submit an amendment that creates an IFQ program unless the system has been approved by more than 2/3 of those voting in a referendum among eligible permit holders. Does the herring industry support consideration of an IFQ program in this amendment? Do you think that a referendum vote would likely receive 2/3 support among eligible permit holders?
 - How should bycatch be accounted for in a group or individual allocation programs?
 - Should the FMP include safeguards that prevent too much consolidation? Why or why not? If so, what type of limits would be appropriate?
 - What reporting and monitoring requirements (for landings and discards) should accompany group or individual allocation programs?
 - Would the use of a group or individual allocation program change the makeup of the herring fishery? How would it impact fishing communities?

What is the amendment process?

The Council and its Atlantic Herring Oversight Committee have held preliminary public discussions on the issues to be addressed in Amendment 4 to the Herring FMP. The publication of this scoping document and an announcement in the *Federal Register* of the Council's intent to prepare this amendment is the first part of the formal process.

After gathering information during this scoping period (now through June 30, 2008), the Council will identify a range of alternatives to be considered and analyzed in a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and public hearing document. The Council is scheduled to approve the range of alternatives for development in the DEIS in October/November 2008 or early 2009. Once the DEIS is prepared, the

Council will distribute it as well as an abbreviated public hearing document for public review. A 45-day public hearing and comment period, tentatively scheduled for late spring/summer 2009, will allow you to comment on any aspects of the DEIS, including the alternatives under consideration and the analyses of the impacts prepared by the Council's Herring Plan Development Team (PDT).

Following a review of all public comments and input from the Herring Advisory Panel and Herring Committee, the Council will choose the measures for submission to the Secretary of Commerce as Amendment 4 to the Herring FMP. The Council is scheduled to select the final measures for Amendment 4 during the fall of 2009. If no delays are encountered during the development process, Amendment 4 is scheduled to become effective no later than the start of the 2011 fishing year (January 1, 2011).

Why should I comment?

This is the best opportunity for members of the public to raise issues and concerns for the Council to consider during the development of this amendment. The Council needs your input both to identify management issues and develop alternatives that meet the objectives identified by the Council. Your comments early in the amendment development process will help us address issues of concern to you in a thorough and appropriate manner.

How do I comment?

The Council will discuss and take scoping comments at herring-related public meetings in May and June 2008. There also will be time allotted for scoping comments prior to the June 2008 New England Council meeting and during the June 2008 Mid-Atlantic Council meeting. Advanced notice of all of these meetings will be provided to the public through publication in the Federal Register, meeting notices distributed by the Council, and announcements on the Council's website.

For the purposes of scoping, you may attend any of the meetings mentioned above to provide oral comments (**see cover page of this document for schedule of scoping meetings**), or you may submit written comments **by June 30, 2008** to:

Patricia Kurkul, Regional Administrator
National Marine Fisheries Service
One Blackburn Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930
Fax: (978) 281-9135

Please note on your correspondence; "Atlantic Herring Amendment 4 Scoping Comments." Comments may also be accepted via fax at the above fax number.

Scoping comments may be submitted via email to HerringAmendment4@noaa.gov.

If you wish to be on the mailing list for future meetings of the Herring Committee, please contact the Council office at (978) 465-0492.