

areas in the U.S. (Alternative C); (4) seek direct light goose population control on breeding grounds in Canada (Alternative D). Our preferred alternative (Alternative B) modifies existing light goose hunting regulations to expand methods of take during normal hunting season frameworks. In addition, we propose to create a conservation order to allow take of light geese outside of normal hunting season frameworks. On October 12, 2001 (66 FR 52077) we published a proposed rule in the **Federal Register** that would implement our preferred alternative. On November 7, 2001 (66 FR 56266) we published a correction in the **Federal Register** that added New Jersey to the list of States eligible to implement special light goose regulations. We inadvertently omitted New Jersey from the list of States contained in the proposed rule.

We have received a request to extend the comment period on the DEIS. The Service invites careful consideration by all parties, and welcomes serious scrutiny from those committed to the long-term conservation of migratory birds. Therefore, to facilitate substantive public review, we are also extending the comment period on the proposed rule from December 11, 2001, to January 25, 2002. Extension of the comment period on the DEIS is made through a separate notice in this issue of the **Federal Register**.

In order to be considered, electronic submission of comments must include your name and postal mailing address; we will not consider anonymous comments. All comments received, including names and addresses, will become part of the public record. The public may inspect comments during normal business hours in Room 634—Arlington Square Building, 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Arlington, Virginia. Requests for such comments will be handled in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act and the Council on Environmental Quality's National Environmental Policy Act regulations [40 CFR 1506.6(f)]. Our practice is to make comments available for public review during regular business hours. Individual respondents may request that we withhold their home address from the record, which we will honor to the extent allowable by law. If a respondent wishes us to withhold his/her name and/or address, this must be stated prominently at the beginning of the comment.

Dated: November 21, 2001.

Joseph E. Doddridge,

Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 648

[I.D. 112701C]

Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Northeast Monkfish Fishery; Scoping Process

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

ACTION: Notification of intent to prepare a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) and notice of scoping process; request for comments.

SUMMARY: The New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils (Councils) announce their intent to prepare Amendment 2 to the Monkfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) and to prepare an SEIS in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to analyze the impacts of any proposed management measures on the human environment. The Councils, with New England Council having the lead authority, jointly manage the fishery. The amendment would be developed pursuant to the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act). The Councils also formally announce the initiation of a public process to determine the scope of issues to be addressed in the environmental impact statement (EIS). The purpose of this notice is to alert the interested public of the scoping process and to provide for public participation in compliance with NEPA.

DATES: The Councils will discuss and take scoping comments at public meetings in January and February 2002. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for specific dates and times. Written scoping comments must be received on or before 5 p.m. local time, February 11, 2002.

ADDRESSES: Written comments and requests for copies of the scoping document and other information should be directed to Paul J. Howard, Executive Director, New England Fishery Management Council, 50 Water Street, Newburyport, MA, 01950, Telephone

(978) 465-0492. Comments may also be submitted via facsimile (fax) to (978) 465-3116. Comments and requests for information should be marked "Monkfish Amendment 2." The Council will not accept unsigned faxes or comments by email.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Contact Paul J. Howard, Executive Director, telephone (978) 465-0492.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The FMP, implemented November 8, 1999 (64 CFR 54732, October 7, 1999), contains management programs for the Northern and Southern Fishery Management Areas (NFMA and SFMA, respectively) based on incremental reductions in fishing mortality rates to stop overfishing and rebuild monkfish stocks by 2009. The FMP calls for elimination of the directed fishery for monkfish in Year 4, starting May 1, 2002, unless a plan review during Year 3 indicates that the Councils should use another management measure. The 31st Northeast Regional stock Assessment Workshop (SAW 31) conducted by NMFS in 2000 concluded that the current proxy-based biological reference points on which the plan is based are unreliable, and that current fishing mortality rates could not be reliably estimated. Based on this assessment, the Councils are considering a 1-year delay in the Year 4 default measures.

A new assessment, scheduled for January, 2002 will address many of the issues raised at SAW 31, and incorporate data collected during a cooperative survey with the monkfish industry in the spring of 2001. The Councils intend to consider this new scientific information and take appropriate action to modify the FMP so that the goal of rebuilding the stocks can be achieved by 2009.

In addition, while the Councils were developing the original Monkfish FMP, a new fishery for monkfish emerged in the waters south of the North Carolina/Virginia border. Some vessels from that area began participating in the fishery shortly after publication of a notice of control date for limited entry into the Atlantic monkfish fishery on February 27, 1995 (60 FR 10574). These vessels did not hold any northeast fishery permits and, therefore, did not receive timely notice of the actions related to the monkfish fishery being considered by the Councils. Although the management unit for the FMP was initially defined as ending at the North Carolina/Virginia border, which would have excluded those vessels from the FMP provisions, the boundary was

shifted southward (to the North Carolina/South Carolina border) during the development of the FMP. Meanwhile, the public hearing document mistakenly retained the original management unit definition with the North Carolina/Virginia boundary as its Southern border. As a result of the circumstances described above, a number of vessels failed to qualify for limited access permits. Because of some confusion regarding the correct southern boundary line, the Councils are considering options for addressing this issue in Amendment 2.

Third, in response to a U.S. District Court Order (*AOC v. Daley*, September 14, 2000), NMFS and the Councils are re-evaluating the essential fish habitat (EFH) components of the FMP. NMFS has already initiated scoping on this matter (66 FR 46979, September 10,

2001) and the Councils will consider scoping comments submitted in that process when preparing Amendment 2. NMFS and the Councils will jointly develop EFH analysis and management alternatives to minimize adverse effects of fishing activities on EFH for consideration in the FMP.

Scoping Process

The public will have an opportunity to provide oral comments at the January meetings of the Councils and may submit written comments through February 11, 2002 [see **DATES** and **ADDRESSES**]. The New England Council meeting is scheduled for January 15-17, 2002 at the Courtyard by Marriott, Portsmouth, NH and the Mid-Atlantic Council meeting for January 29-31 at the Meadowlands Plaza Hotel, Secaucus, NJ. The Councils will notify the public of the specific times on the agendas

where the public scoping comments will be heard when those agendas are finalized.

All persons affected by, or otherwise interested in monkfish fisheries management, are invited and encouraged to participate in this process, and to assist the Councils in developing the scope of issues to be considered and alternatives to be analyzed in the SEIS. The Councils will also use the scoping process to identify and eliminate from consideration issues that are not significant.

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

Dated: December 4, 2001.

Valerie L. Chambers,

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