

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration****50 CFR Part 648****[I.D. 102599D]****New England Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting**

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

ACTION: Public meeting.

SUMMARY: The New England Fishery Management Council (Council) will hold a 3-day public meeting on November 16, 17, and 18, 1999, to consider actions affecting New England fisheries in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

DATES: The meeting will be held on Tuesday, November 16, 1999, at 9:00 a.m., and Wednesday and Thursday, November 17 and 18, at 8:30 a.m.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held at the Tavern on the Harbor, 30 Western Avenue, Gloucester, Massachusetts 01930; telephone (978) 283-4200. Requests for special accommodations or copies of documents related to framework adjustment actions should be addressed to the New England Fishery Management Council, 5 Broadway, Saugus, Massachusetts 01906-1036; telephone: (781) 231-0422.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Paul J. Howard, Executive Director, New England Fishery Management Council (781) 231-0422.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**Tuesday, November 16, 1999**

After introductions, the meeting will begin with several presentations associated with the Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) Report for the groundfish resource. Elements of the report include the annual Multispecies Monitoring Committee Report, economic and social baseline data and industry proposals for the yearly adjustment of management measures in the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan (FMP). The Science and Statistical Committee Chairman and Social Sciences Advisory Committee Chairman will each present committee evaluations of the SAFE Report. Following these presentations, the Council will consider approval of initial action on the yearly adjustment to management measures in the Northeast Multispecies FMP for the 2000 fishing year (May 1, 2000–April

30, 2001). This will entail identification of options for analysis and inclusion in the final framework adjustment document and action on committee recommendations concerning exemptions to groundfish closed area gear restrictions. Gears and fisheries under discussion include recreational and party/charter vessels, raised footrope trawls, scallop dredge vessels, and fishing gear currently listed as “exempted” in the Northeast Multispecies FMP.

Wednesday, November 17, 1999

The Chairman of the Capacity Committee will begin this session of the meeting by reviewing recent committee meeting discussions, including the committee's purpose and objectives. During the Sea Scallop Committee Report to follow, the Social Sciences Advisory Committee will present its evaluation of the social and economic information and analyses contained in the Sea Scallop SAFE Report. The Council will then address issues related to possible approval of Framework Adjustment 12 to the Sea Scallop FMP. The adjustment will focus on two major management actions: (1) The yearly adjustment of days-at-sea available to fish for the 2000 fishing year (March 1, 2000–February 28, 2001); and (2) options for access to one or more of the three Georges Bank groundfish closed areas by scallop dredge vessels. Access to the closed areas may involve, but not be limited to the following elements: separate scallop Total Allowable Catches (TACs) for Closed I, Closed Area II, and the Nantucket Lightship Area; trip allocations for each area; a days-at-sea offset or tradeoff for fishing inside vs. outside the closed areas; trip limits with a trip declaration and notice of landing requirements; area restrictions on scallop fishing within the three closed areas to address bycatch, gear conflicts, habitat, and enforcement issues; external buffer zones or internal no fishing zones within the closed areas; gear restrictions to reduce bycatch; a TAC set-aside to fund observer coverage and research activities; and an adjustment to the 300-pound (136.1-kg) regulated species possession limit to reduce discards. The Council will consider the recommendations of the Groundfish, Habitat, Gear Conflict, and Enforcement Committees before making a decision on Framework Adjustment 12.

Thursday, November 18, 1999

The day will begin with reports on recent activities from the Council Chairman, Executive Director, the NMFS Regional Administrator,

Northeast Fisheries Science Center and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council liaisons, and representatives of the Coast Guard and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. Following reports, the Council will consider whether to submit a request to the Secretary of Commerce asking for authority to manage deep sea red crab (*Geryon quinquedens*). A number of other committee reports will follow this agenda item. The Herring Committee will provide a briefing on their progress to develop a scoping document that would serve to notify the public and collect information about the possible implementation of a controlled access program in the herring fishery. The Whiting Committee will ask the Council to consider approval of final action on Framework Adjustment 32 (whiting management measures) to the Northeast Multispecies FMP. The action calls for changes to the whiting mesh size/possession limit call-in enrollment system and options for the use of a net strengthener with 2.5-inch (6.35-cm) mesh. The committee also will review issues to be addressed in a new Small Mesh Species FMP, including alternatives for a limited access program for whiting, red hake, offshore hake, and ocean pout. The Social Sciences Advisory Committee will present their recommendations for improving the use of social and economic information in fisheries management. The Habitat Committee will report on ongoing committee activities, including consideration of designating a habitat research area and a structured process for designating habitat areas of particular concern. The Spiny Dogfish Committee will ask the Council to consider approval of annual specifications for spiny dogfish for the 2000 fishing year (May 1, 2000–April 30, 2001). Measures could include a hard Total Allowable Catch (TAC), quotas, trip limits, and/or any other measures specified in the Spiny Dogfish FMP. The Council may also consider approval of an alternative female biomass rebuilding target. The meeting will adjourn after the Council addresses any other outstanding business.

Although other non-emergency issues not contained in this agenda may come before this Council for discussion, those issues may not be the subject of formal action during this meeting. Council 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.

Documents pertaining to framework adjustment actions are available for public review 7 days prior to a final vote by the Council. Copies of the documents may be obtained from the Council (see ADDRESSES).

Special Accommodations

This meeting is 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 date.

Dated: October 26, 1999.

Bruce Morehead,

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