

Recommendation #3

Diversity of habitat with emphasis on high relief habitat should be the primary siting criterion. The RAWG should be maintained to support NOAA GRNMS in consideration of these various criteria (e.g., habitat, size, existing research and monitoring sites, bottom fishing data) in developing proposed options for a draft environmental impact statement.

Recommendation #4

Minimizing impacts to user communities including fishing, diving, research, and resource management should be a priority under the research area concept. Non-bottom impinging activities should not be viewed as conflicting with the primary objectives of a proposed research area. Based on the recommendations of the Advisory Council, NOAA has concluded that the research area concept should be further explored through a public review process. In the upcoming DEIS, NOAA will likely develop a range of alternatives for the creation of a research area, including a no-action alternative. If this action results in the creation of a research area in the GRNMS, a companion management plan for the research area will serve as a supplement to the 2006 GRNMS Final Management Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement.

By this notice, NOAA announces the initiation of scoping for the proposed research area in Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary. Scoping is the initial process intended to solicit information and comments on the range and significance of issues related to the proposed action. The results of this scoping process will assist NOAA in formulating alternatives for a draft environmental impact statement for the proposed research area.

NOAA encourages the public and interested parties to submit (via mail, e-mail, or fax) comments and to attend the public scoping meetings in March.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1431 *et seq.*
(Federal Domestic Assistance Catalog
Number 11.429 Marine Sanctuary Program)

Dated: February 26, 2008.

John H. Dunnigan,

*Assistant Administrator, Ocean Services and
Coastal Zone Management, National Oceanic
and Atmospheric Administration.*

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

RIN: 0648-XG05

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council; Public Meetings

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

ACTION: Notice of public meeting.

SUMMARY: The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council will convene a public meeting of the Ad Hoc Recreational Red Snapper Advisory Panel (AP).

DATES: The meeting will convene at 9 a.m. on Tuesday, March 25, 2008 and conclude no later than 5 p.m. on Wednesday, March 26, 2008.

ADDRESSES: This meeting will be held at the Renaissance Riverview Plaza Hotel, 64 S. Water St., Mobile, AL 36602; telephone: (251) 438-4000.

Council address: Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, 2203 North Lois Avenue, Suite 1100, Tampa, FL 33607.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Steven Atran, Population Dynamics Statistician; Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council; telephone: (813) 348-1630.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: At this meeting, the AP will prioritize the goals and objectives for the recreational red snapper fishery that were developed in earlier meetings as well as the list of ideas for managing the recreational red snapper fishery that was previously developed. The AP will select ideas from its list for further development, and will begin the initial work of developing those ideas into possible management action. The AP will also discuss the possible formation of working groups for the task of developing discussion papers on the ideas to be developed. In addition, the AP will receive several presentations providing an overview on marine protected areas, a review of party boat and charter boat catch data, a discussion of educational materials on proper venting and dehooking, and clarification on referendum requirements pertaining to possible changes in the red snapper allocation.

Although other issues not on the agenda may come before the panel for discussion, in accordance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, those issues may not be the subject of

formal panel action during this meeting. Panel action will be restricted to those issues specifically identified in the agenda listed as available by this notice.

A copy of the agenda can be obtained by calling 813-348-1630.

Special Accommodations

This meeting is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Tina Trezza at the Council (see **ADDRESSES**) at least 5 working days prior to the meeting.

Dated: February 29, 2008.

Tracey L. Thompson,

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

[FR Doc. E8-4181 Filed 3-4-08; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

RIN: 0648-XG06

New England Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

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

ACTION: Notice of a public meeting.

SUMMARY: The New England Fishery Management Council's (Council) Herring Oversight Committee will meet to consider actions affecting New England fisheries in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

DATES: The meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 26, 2008, at 9:30 a.m.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held at the Holiday Inn by the Bay, 88 Spring Street, Portland, ME 04101; telephone: (207) 775-2311.

Council address: New England Fishery Management Council, 50 Water Street, Mill 2, Newburyport, MA 01950.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Paul J. Howard, Executive Director, New England Fishery Management Council; telephone: (978) 465-0492.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The items of discussion in the committee's agenda are as follows:

1. Review Council actions for 2008 priority-setting and discuss issues to be addressed in Amendment 4 to the Atlantic Herring Fishery Management Plan (FMP).

2. Identify goals and objectives for Amendment 4 to the Herring FMP

3. Review and approve draft scoping document for Amendment 4.

4. Review and discuss timeline for Amendment 4 and upcoming fishery specifications.

5. Provide opportunity for public comment on Amendment 4 scoping document.

6. Identify priority tasks for Herring Plan Development Team.

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 Paul J. Howard (see **ADDRESSES**) at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.

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

Dated: February 29, 2008.

Tracey L. Thompson,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.
[FR Doc. E8-4182 Filed 3-4-08; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XG02

New England Fishery Management Council; Atlantic Sea Scallop; Scoping Process

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

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) and notice of re-initiation of scoping process; request for comments.

SUMMARY: The New England Fishery Management Council (Council) announces its intent to prepare an amendment to the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Atlantic Sea scallops (*Placopecten magellanicus* (Gmelin)) and to prepare an EIS to analyze the impacts of any proposed management

measures. The Council is also formally re-initiating a public process to determine the scope of alternatives to be addressed in the amendment and EIS. The purpose of this notification is to alert the interested public of the re-commencement of the scoping process and to provide for public participation in compliance with environmental documentation requirements.

DATES: The Council will discuss and take scoping comments at public meetings in April 2008. For specific dates and times of the scoping meetings, see **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION**.

Written scoping comments must be received on or before 5 p.m. EST, April 4, 2008.

ADDRESSES: The Council will take scoping comments at public meetings in Virginia, New Jersey, Maine and Massachusetts. For specific locations, see **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION**.

Written comments on Amendment 15 may be sent by any of the following methods:

- E-mail to the following address scallop.fifteen@noaa.gov;
- Mail to Patricia A. Kurkul, Regional Administrator, NMFS, Northeast Regional Office, One Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930. Mark the outside of the envelope "Comments on Scallop Amendment 15"; or
- Fax to Patricia A. Kurkul, 978-281-9135.

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, Mill 2, Newburyport, MA 01950, telephone (978) 465-0492. The scoping document is accessible electronically via the Internet at <http://www.nefmc.org>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Paul J. Howard, Executive Director, New England Fishery Management Council (978) 465-0492.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The U.S. Atlantic Sea scallop fishery is managed as one stock complex along the east coast from Maine to Cape Hatteras, North Carolina. The Federal Atlantic Sea Scallop Fishery Management Plan (FMP) became effective on May 15, 1982. The FMP has been amended a number of times since then. In 1994 Amendment 4 began a limited access program for the directed scallop fleet with day-at-sea (DAS) limits and other measures to manage the scallop resource more effectively. Limited access vessels were assigned to different DAS permit categories (full-

time, part-time or occasional) according to their 1985-1990 fishing activity. A "general category" permit was created for vessels that did not qualify for limited access. These vessels could apply for a general category permit and land up to 400 pounds of scallops a day.

In 2004 Amendment 10 introduced rotational area management and changed the way that the FMP allocates fishing effort for the limited access fishery. Rather than an annual pool of DAS, vessels are now allocated a certain number of trips in controlled access areas as well as a specific number of open area DAS. Numerous other actions have been implemented over the years, including modifications to gear and other input controls to further reduce effort and impacts on essential fish habitat (EFH) and bycatch. More recently, the Council approved an action to control capacity in the general category fishery (Amendment 11), which was approved by the Council in June 2007 and is currently under review by NMFS. If approved, Amendment 11 would allocate a specific portion of the projected scallop catch to the general category fishery and includes a limited access program for this permit type with an individual fishing quota (IFQ) program, as well as other measures.

Additional measures for the Atlantic Sea Scallop FMP are being considered for several primary reasons: 1) the Magnuson-Stevens Reauthorization Act of 2007 (MSRA) includes new requirements for annual catch limits (ACLs) and accountability measures (AMs) to be in place for all FMPs that are not subject to overfishing by 2011; 2) there is excess capacity in the limited access scallop fishery and rationalization of this fishery would reduce costs, increase profits, and increase overall economic efficiency in the fishery; and 3) the current overfishing definition does not protect the stock from growth overfishing and consideration of a more area-based approach is justified since this resource is primarily managed by area rotation. Other issues under consideration are adjustments to various alternatives developed under Amendment 11, measures to address EFH areas closed to the scallop fishery if Phase II of the EFH Omnibus Amendment is delayed, alternatives to improve the scallop research set-aside program, and moving the fishing year from March 1 to May 1.

Measures Under Consideration

The Council may consider a host of management measures to address the three primary issues including, but not limited to, the following: identification of ACLs and AMs for various