

for scoping purposes only. These preliminary issues may not represent the full range of issues that eventually will be evaluated in the EIS.

Copies of an information packet will be available from NMFS (*see ADDRESSES*).

Following publication of this NOI, the Council will conduct public scoping meetings to determine the range of issues to be addressed in the draft EIS (DEIS) and the associated Amendment 5. After the DEIS associated with Amendment 5 is completed, it will be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The EPA will publish a notice of availability of the DEIS for public comment in the **Federal Register**. The DEIS 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's Administrative Order 216–6 regarding NOAA's compliance with NEPA and the CEQ regulations.

The Council will consider public comments received on the DEIS in developing the final environmental impact statement (FEIS), and before voting to submit the final amendment to NMFS for Secretarial review, approval, and implementation. NMFS will announce in the **Federal Register** the availability of the final amendment and FEIS for public review during the Secretarial review period, and will consider all public comments prior to final agency action to approve, disapprove, or partially approve the final amendment.

#### Scoping Meetings, Times, and Locations

All meetings will begin at 3 p.m. In addition to Amendment 5, the Council intends to scope additional amendments at this series of meetings. Separate NOIs will be prepared for each amendment. The meetings will be physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for information packets or for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to the Council (*see FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT*).

Monday, January 24, 2011—Hilton New Bern/Riverfront, 100 Middle Street, New Bern, NC 28560; phone 252–638–3585.

Wednesday, January 26, 2011—Crowne Plaza Charleston Airport, 4831 Tanger Outlet Boulevard, North Charleston, SC 29418; phone 843–744–4422.

Thursday, January 27, 2011—Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum, 175 Bourne Avenue, Pooler, GA 31322; phone 912–748–8888.

Monday, January 31, 2011—Jacksonville Marriott, 4670 Salisbury Road, Jacksonville, FL 32256; phone 904–296–2222.

Tuesday, February 1, 2011—International Palms Resort, 1300 N. Atlantic Avenue, Cocoa Beach, FL 32931; phone 321–783–2271.

Thursday, February 3, 2011—Key Largo Grande Resort, 97000 Overseas Resort, Key Largo, FL 33037; phone 305–852–5553.

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

Dated: December 28, 2010.

**Emily H. Menashes,**

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

[FR Doc. 2010–33099 Filed 12–30–10; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3210–22–P**

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

**RIN 0648–BA52**

#### Fisheries of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic; Amendment 24 to the Fishery Management Plan for Snapper Grouper Resources of the South Atlantic

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

**ACTION:** Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS); notice of scoping meetings; request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS, Southeast Region, in collaboration with the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council), intends to prepare an EIS to describe and analyze a range of alternatives for management actions to be included in an amendment to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region (FMP). These alternatives will consider measures to establish a rebuilding plan for the red grouper stock, while setting annual catch limits (ACLs), accountability measures (AMs), allocations, maximum sustainable yield (MSY), and optimum yield (OY) for red grouper. The purpose of this NOI is to solicit public comments on the scope of issues to be addressed in the EIS.

**DATES:** Written comments on the scope of issues to be addressed in the EIS will be accepted from January 12 to February 14, 5 p.m., eastern time.

**ADDRESSES:** You may submit comments, identified by RIN 0648–BA52, by any one of the following methods:

- **Electronic Submissions:** Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal <http://www.regulations.gov>.

- **Mail:** Rick DeVictor, Southeast Regional Office, NMFS, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701.

**Instructions:** No comments will be posted for public viewing until after the comment period is over. All comments received are a part of the public record and will generally be posted to <http://www.regulations.gov> without change. All Personal Identifying Information (for example, name, address, *etc.*) voluntarily submitted by the commenter may be publicly accessible. Do not submit Confidential Business Information or otherwise sensitive or protected information.

To submit comments through the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>, enter “NOAA–NMFS–2010–0263” in the keyword search, then select “Send a Comment or Submission.” NMFS will accept anonymous comments (enter N/A in the required fields if you wish to remain anonymous). You may submit attachments to electronic comments in Microsoft Word, Excel, WordPerfect, or Adobe PDF file formats only.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Kim Iverson; phone: (843) 571–4366.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The red grouper stock in the south Atlantic was assessed through the Southeast, Data, Assessment, and Review (SEDAR) process in 2010. The assessment indicates that the stock is experiencing overfishing and is overfished. Overfishing is a condition when fishing pressure is beyond the allowable level. Overfishing may lead to an overfished condition. A stock is overfished when the biomass is below an identified minimum stock size threshold. Due to low biomass levels, an overfished stock has increased vulnerability to environmental variables and cannot produce the MSY.

As directed by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act), the Council and NMFS must implement a rebuilding plan, through an FMP Amendment or proposed regulations, which ends overfishing immediately and provides for rebuilding the fishery. The intent of a rebuilding plan is to increase biomass of overfished stocks to a sustainable level within a specified period of time. A plan should achieve conservation goals, while minimizing to the extent practicable adverse socioeconomic impacts. NMFS notified the Council of the stock status on June 9, 2010; the Magnuson-Stevens Act

specifies that measures to end overfishing and rebuild the stock must be implemented within two years of notification.

A reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Act in 2007 introduced new tools that, when implemented, would end and prevent overfishing in order to achieve the OY from a fishery. The requirements are referred to as ACLs and AMs. An ACL is the level of annual catch of a stock that, if met or exceeded, triggers some corrective action. AMs are management controls to prevent ACLs from being exceeded and to correct overages of ACLs if they occur. Two examples of AMs include an in-season closure if catch approaches the ACL and reducing the ACL by an overage that occurred the previous fishing year. The EIS will include alternatives that would establish ACLs and AMs for red grouper in the South Atlantic region.

The Council and NMFS are also considering a division of the red grouper ACL into sector-ACLs based upon allocation decisions. A "sector" means a distinct user group to which separate management strategies and separate catch quotas apply. Examples of sectors include commercial and recreational; the recreational sector may also be divided into for-hire and private recreational groups. The Council and NMFS have determined that sector-ACLs and sector-AMs are important components of red grouper management as each sector differs in scientific and management uncertainty. A range of options will be evaluated in the EIS, including those that base allocation decisions on historical landings.

NMFS, in collaboration with the Council, will develop an EIS to describe and analyze alternatives to address the management needs described above. Those alternatives will include a "no action" alternative for each action.

In accordance with NOAA's Administrative Order 216-6, Section 5.02(c), Scoping Process, NMFS, in collaboration with the Council, has identified preliminary environmental issues as a means to initiate discussion for scoping purposes only. These preliminary issues may not represent the full range of issues that eventually will be evaluated in the EIS.

Copies of an information packet will be available from NMFS (*see ADDRESSES*).

After the draft EIS (DEIS) associated with Amendment 24 is completed, it will be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The EPA will publish a notice of availability of the DEIS for public comment in the **Federal Register**. The draft EIS 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's Administrative Order 216-6 regarding NOAA's compliance with NEPA and the CEQ regulations.

Following publication of this NOI, the Council will conduct public scoping meetings to determine the range of issues to be addressed in the DEIS and the associated Amendment 24. A **Federal Register** notice will announce the availability of the DEIS associated with this amendment, as well as a 45-day public comment period. The Council will consider public comments received on the DEIS in developing the final environmental impact statement (FEIS), and before voting to submit the final amendment to NMFS for Secretarial review, approval, and implementation. NMFS will announce in the **Federal Register** the availability of the final amendment and FEIS for public review during the Secretarial review period, and will consider all public comments prior to final agency action to approve, disapprove, or partially approve the final amendment.

#### Scoping Meetings, Times, and Locations

All meetings will begin at 3 p.m. In addition to Amendment 24, the Council intends to scope additional amendments at this series of meetings. Separate NOIs will be prepared for each amendment. The meetings will be physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for information packets or for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to the Council (*see FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT*).

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Resort, Key Largo, FL 33037; phone 305-852-5553.

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

Dated: December 28, 2010.

**Emily H. Menashes,**

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

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

**RIN 0648-BA59**

#### Fisheries of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic; Amendment 21 to the Snapper-Grouper Fishery Management Plan of the South Atlantic

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

**ACTION:** Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS); request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS, Southeast Region, in collaboration with the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council), intends to prepare an EIS to describe and analyze a range of alternatives for management actions to be included in Amendment 21 to the Snapper-Grouper Fishery Management Plan for the South Atlantic Region (Amendment 21). These alternatives will consider several management approaches for limiting effort in the snapper-grouper fishery, including: trip limits, endorsements, cooperatives, catch shares, regional quotas, and State-by-State quotas. The purpose of this amendment is to rationalize effort in the commercial snapper-grouper fishery in order to achieve and maintain optimum yield (OY), prevent overfishing, and rebuild overfished stocks. Rationalizing effort is expected to mitigate some of the problems resulting from derby fishing conditions or at least prevent the condition from becoming more severe. The purpose of this NOI is to solicit public comments on the scope of issues to be addressed in the EIS.

**DATES:** Written comments on the scope of issues to be addressed in the EIS will be accepted from January 12 to February 14, 5 p.m., Eastern time.

**ADDRESSES:** You may submit comments, identified by RIN 0648-BA59, by any one of the following methods:

- *Electronic Submissions:* Submit all electronic public comments via the