

and found that RCP2.6 would result in approximately the same amount of additional warming and bleaching by 2100 that has occurred over the last century, and that implementation of the Paris Agreement (*i.e.*, RCP4.5) would lead to severe consequences for coral reefs (Hughes *et al.*, 2017b), despite the fact that RCP6.0 and RCP8.5 would be even worse. Another analysis regarding responses of coral reefs if global warming is limited to 1.5°C, 2.0°C, or 3°C (roughly equivalent to RCP4.5, RCP6.0, and RCP8.5) found that estimated levels of thermal stress would be approximately seven, 11, and 23 times, respectively, the level of thermal stress that these reefs have already experienced since 1878, and approximately two, three, and six times the level of thermal stress experienced in 2016 (Lough *et al.*, 2018).

All five analyses considered the impacts of one or both of the IPCC's lower emissions pathways (RCP2.6 and RCP4.5), and each analysis reached the same conclusion: Even these lower emissions pathways are likely to have more severe impacts to reef corals in the future than have been observed in recent years (Hoegh-Guldberg *et al.*, 2017; Hughes *et al.*, 2017b; Lough *et al.*, 2018; Maynard *et al.*, 2015; van Hooijdonk *et al.*, 2016), partially because the GHG emissions that have already occurred have irreversibly locked in a certain amount of warming due to "commitment," as described above. Indo-Pacific reef corals would likely be even more severely impacted by warming-induced bleaching events resulting from ocean warming under the other two pathways in the future, especially RCP8.5, as shown by two analyses (Hoegh-Guldberg *et al.*, 2017b; van Hooijdonk *et al.*, 2016). Although *P. meandrina* has several life history characteristics that may buffer some of the effects of ocean warming (refer back to the Habitat, Range, and Life History section of this finding), based on the effects of warming-induced bleaching to date on *P. meandrina* and its relatively high susceptibility to warming, the information in the petition and other readily available information in our files suggests this species may be severely affected across its range in the future by ocean warming projected under RCP8.5.

Ocean Warming Summary. From the above analysis of ocean warming and its effects on *P. meandrina* and the coral reef community of which *P. meandrina* is a part, we find four key points to be relevant: (1) Substantial ocean warming, including in the tropical/subtropical Indo-Pacific, has already occurred and continues to occur; (2) ocean warming, including in the tropical/subtropical

Indo-Pacific, is projected to continue at an accelerated rate in the future; (3) substantial warming-induced mass bleaching of Indo-Pacific reef coral communities, including *P. meandrina*, has already occurred and continues to occur; and (4) warming-induced mass bleaching of Indo-Pacific reef coral communities, including *P. meandrina*, is projected to steadily increase in frequency, intensity, and magnitude in the future. In short, ocean warming is expected to continue to affect *P. meandrina* throughout its range in the future.

Petition Finding

After reviewing the information presented in the petition and other readily available information in our files, we find that listing *P. meandrina* across its range may be warranted based on the threat of ocean warming alone. Therefore, in accordance with section 4(b)(3)(B) of the ESA and NMFS' implementing regulations (50 CFR 424.14), we will commence a status review of this species. During the status review, we will determine whether *P. meandrina* is in danger of extinction (endangered) or likely to become so (threatened) throughout all or a significant portion of its range. If listing is warranted, we will publish a proposed rule and solicit public comments before developing and publishing a final rule. If we determine that the species is in danger of extinction or likely to become so in the foreseeable future throughout all of its range, we will list the species as endangered or threatened, and it will be unnecessary to determine if Hawaii constitutes a significant portion of the species' range. If *P. meandrina* is not proposed for listing as endangered or threatened throughout all of its range, we will then determine if Hawaii constitutes a significant portion of the species' range. If so, we will determine the status of *P. meandrina* in Hawaii, and proceed accordingly (79 FR 37578; July 1, 2014).

Information Solicited

To ensure that the status review is based on the best available scientific and commercial data, we are soliciting information on whether *P. meandrina* is endangered or threatened. Specifically, we are soliciting information in the following areas:

- (1) Historical and current distribution and abundance of *P. meandrina* throughout its range;
- (2) Historical and current condition of *P. meandrina* and its habitat;
- (3) Population density and trends of *P. meandrina*;

(4) The effects of climate change, including ocean warming and acidification, on the distribution and condition of *P. meandrina* and other organisms in coral reef ecosystems over the short- and long-term;

(5) The effects of other threats including dredging; coastal development; land-based sources of pollution, including coastal point source pollution, and agricultural and land use practices; disease, predation, the trophic effects of fishing, the aquarium trade, physical damage from boats and anchors, marine debris, aquatic invasive species on the distribution and abundance of *P. meandrina* over the short- and long-term; and the inadequacy of regulatory mechanisms; and

(6) Management programs for conservation of *P. meandrina*, including mitigation measures related to any of the threats listed under (5) above.

We request that all information be accompanied by (1) supporting documentation such as maps, bibliographic references, or reprints of pertinent publications; and (2) the submitter's name, address, and any association, institution, or business that the person represents.

References Cited

A complete list of references upon request from Lance Smith, NOAA IRC, NMFS/PIRO/PRD, 1845 Wasp Blvd., Bldg. 176, Honolulu, HI 96818.

Authority

The authority for this action is the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).

Dated: September 17, 2018.

Samuel D. Rauch III,

Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 635

[Docket No. 180212159–8159–01]

RIN 0648–BH75

Atlantic Highly Migratory Species; Shortfin Mako Shark Management Measures; Proposed Amendment 11; Comment Period Extension

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and

Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Proposed rule; extension of comment period.

SUMMARY: NMFS previously published, on July 27, 2018, a proposed rule to amend the 2006 Consolidated Atlantic Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Fishery Management Plan (FMP) based on the results of the 2017 stock assessment and a subsequent binding recommendation by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) for North Atlantic shortfin mako sharks. The comment period on the proposed rule ends on October 1, 2018. In this extension of comment period, NMFS is extending the comment period to October 8, 2018, to provide an opportunity for the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) to be briefed, and to provide additional opportunities for the Council and other interested parties to comment on the proposed rule.

DATES: The deadline for receipt of comments on the proposed rule published on July 27, 2018 (83 FR 35637) is extended from October 1, 2018 to October 8, 2018.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments on the referenced proposed rule published on July 27, 2018 (83 FR 35637), identified by NOAA–NMFS–2018–0011, by any one of the following methods:

- **Electronic Submission:** Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal. Go to www.regulations.gov/#!/docketDetail;D=NOAA-NMFS-2018-0011, click the “Comment Now” icon, complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments.

- **Mail:** Submit written comments to Guý DuBeck, NMFS/SF1, 1315 East-West Highway, National Marine Fisheries Service, SSMC3, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

Instructions: Please include the identifier NOAA–NMFS–2018–0011 when submitting comments. Comments sent by any other method, to any other address or individual, or received after the close of the comment period, may not be considered by NMFS. All comments received are a part of the public record and generally will be posted for public viewing on www.regulations.gov without change. All personal identifying information (e.g., name, address), confidential business information, or otherwise sensitive information submitted voluntarily by the sender will be publicly accessible. NMFS will accept anonymous comments (enter “N/A” in the required fields if you wish to remain anonymous).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Guý DuBeck or Karyl Brewster-Geisz at (301) 427–8503.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The North Atlantic shortfin mako stock is managed primarily under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Act and also under the Atlantic Tunas Convention Act (ATCA). The 2006 Consolidated HMS FMP and its amendments are implemented by regulations at 50 CFR part 635.

On July 27, 2018 (83 FR 35637), NMFS published a proposed rule that announced NMFS’ intent to amend the 2006 Consolidated Atlantic HMS FMP based on the results of the 2017 stock assessment and a subsequent binding recommendation by the International Commission for the Conservation of

Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) for North Atlantic shortfin mako sharks. The North Atlantic shortfin mako shark stock is overfished and is experiencing overfishing. Consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) and the Atlantic Tunas Convention Act (ATCA), NMFS is proposing management measures that would reduce fishing mortality on shortfin mako sharks and establish a foundation for rebuilding the shortfin mako shark population consistent with legal requirements. In the proposed rule, the end of the comment period was announced as October 1, 2018. However, due to Hurricane Florence, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council postponed its previously scheduled meeting by several weeks. Without an extension of the comment period, the Council would be unable to receive the same briefing provided to other Councils prior to providing comments on Amendment 11. As such, NMFS is extending the comment period to provide an opportunity to be briefed and an additional opportunity for the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council and other interested parties to comment on the proposed rule. Therefore, the comment period for the proposed rule is extended to October 8, 2018.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 971 *et seq.*; 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: September 17, 2018.

Samuel D. Rauch III,

Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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