

manner so that OCRM has an opportunity to address them.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The DEIS discloses the environmental consequences associated with OCRM's review of amendments to the State of Washington's federally-approved coastal management program (CMP). OCRM's approval of Washington's request to incorporate changes into the Washington CMP would allow the State to continue its certification as a federally-approved CMP, receive Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) funds to implement the revised program, and conduct State and federal consistency reviews based on the revised program policy. Incorporation of the revised Washington Shoreline Management Act Guidelines (SMA) will result in the following changes:

- Revise state guidelines requiring local governments located in the designated coastal zone to revise their Shoreline Master Programs to be consistent with the standards contained in the new Washington SMA;
- Achieve improved water quality, scenic beauty, safer development and a number of other new objectives consistent with the policies of the SMA;
- Make improvements to the existing shoreline environments as part of mitigation and restoration requirements;
- Give designated "critical" areas special attention where future development may result in negative impacts; and
- Ensure that activities that do not normally require a shoreline development permit still help achieve SMA policy goals.

The purpose and need for OCRM's review of the amendments is reviewed in the DEIS. All reasonable and prudent alternatives are being considered, including the no-action alternative.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Helen Farr, Environmental Protection Specialist, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, OCRM/CPD, N/ORM3, Station 11209, 1305 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910 or Helen.Farr@noaa.gov. Ms. Farr may be contacted during business hours at (301) 713-3155, extension 175 (telephone) and 301-713-4367 (fax).

The comments period will close on April 14, 2008.

Dated: March 4, 2008.

David M. Kennedy,

Director, Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management, National Ocean Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Federal Domestic Assistance Catalog 11.419 Coastal Zone, Management Program Administration.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XF69

Magnuson-Stevens Act Provisions; General Provisions for Domestic Fisheries; Application for Exempted Fishing Permit

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

ACTION: Notice; request for comments.

SUMMARY: The Administrator, Northeast Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator) has made a preliminary determination that the subject Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) application from the Gulf of Maine Research Institute (GMRI) that would exempt Atlantic herring (herring) vessels from the Management Area 1A (Area 1A) herring trawl gear restriction period contains all the required information and warrants further consideration. The Regional Administrator has also made a preliminary determination that the activities authorized under the EFP would be consistent with the goals and objectives of the Atlantic Herring Fishery Management Plan (FMP). However, further review and consultation may be necessary before a final determination is made.

DATES: Comments on this document must be received on or before March 25, 2008.

ADDRESSES: Comments may be submitted by e-mail. The mailbox address for providing e-mail comments is herring.efp@noaa.gov. Include in the subject line of the e-mail comment the following document identifier: "Comments on GMRI herring EFP." Written comments should be sent to Patricia A. Kurkul, Regional Administrator, NMFS, Northeast Regional Office, 1 Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930. Mark the outside of the envelope, "Comments on GMRI herring EFP." Comments may also be sent via facsimile (fax) to (978) 281-9135.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Ryan Silva, Cooperative Research Program Specialist, phone: 978-281-9326, fax: 978-281-9135.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Pending final approval by NOAA's Grants Management Division, the Science Director for NMFS's Northeast Fisheries Science Center has preliminarily selected an Atlantic Herring Research Set Aside (RSA) proposal submitted by GMRI to conduct a study entitled: "Effects of Fishing on Herring Aggregations," which would assess the effects of midwater trawling on herring aggregations. GMRI proposes to survey a herring aggregation using acoustic sonar prior to, during, and following trawl fishing pressure. Due to concern that other fishing vessels, particularly other herring midwater trawl vessels, fishing in the study area could interfere with the survey, GMRI submitted an EFP application to conduct its research during the herring midwater trawl gear restriction period, as specified at 50 CFR 648.202(a) and detailed below, thereby ensuring midwater trawl vessels will not be fishing in the study area.

Amendment 1 to the FMP implemented a provision that vessels fishing for herring may not use, deploy, or fish with midwater trawl gear in Area 1A from June 1 through September 30. This measure was implemented due to concern about the potential impacts of midwater trawl fishing on the inshore Gulf of Maine (GOM) herring resource and other bycatch species. These concerns relate primarily to the importance of herring as a forage species for other fish, marine mammals, and seabirds, and the localized impact that midwater trawl fishing effort may have on schools of herring in nearshore areas. Additional concern was expressed by purse seine and weir fishers that midwater trawl gear may disperse herring schools and prevent herring schools from coming inshore, thereby limiting fishing opportunities for these respective gear types. Finally, data suggest there may be differences in the species composition of bycatch and mortality of bycatch between purse seine and midwater trawl gear. Therefore, restricting midwater trawl gear in Area 1A from June through October is intended to: (1) increase herring availability as forage for various fish, marine mammal, and seabird species; (2) improve fishing opportunities for purse seine and weir fishers; and (3) reduce bycatch and bycatch mortality resulting from midwater trawling in Area 1A. Technical reviewers and panelists for

the 2008/2009 Herring RSA Program noted that the proposed research would provide important information that would improve the understanding of midwater trawling effects on herring aggregations.

GMRI requests that a single vessel or paired vessels perform, under sonar surveillance, midwater trawling for up to four nights using standard midwater trawl gear in Area 1A between June 1 and September 30, 2008. Vessels would conduct five or fewer tows per night, with each tow lasting 2 to 4 hr. All trawling operations would be monitored by GMRI staff. All herring caught during the survey would be deducted from GMRI's Area 1A Herring RSA Program compensation allocation of 1,350 mt. Vessels conducting the survey would not be allowed to exceed their Area 1A compensation allocation while fishing under the EFP. Project investigators propose that sonar data prior to, during, and following trawl fishing pressure will illuminate the effect of midwater trawling on herring aggregations.

Regulations under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act require publication of this notification to provide interested parties the opportunity to comment on applications for proposed EFPs. The applicant may place requests for minor modifications and extensions to the EFP throughout the year. EFP modifications and extensions may be granted without further notice if they are deemed essential to facilitate completion of the proposed research and minimal so as not to change the scope or impact of the initially approved EFP request.

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

Dated: March 5, 2008.

Emily H. Menashes

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

[FR Doc. E8-4645 Filed 3-7-08; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XF83

Advisory Committee to the U.S. Section to the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT); Spring Species Working Group Meeting

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

ACTION: Notice of public meeting.

SUMMARY: The Advisory Committee (Committee) to the U.S. Section to the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) announces its spring meeting with its Species Working Group Technical Advisors on March 27–28, 2008. The Committee will meet to discuss matters relating to ICCAT, including the 2007 Commission meeting results; research and management activities; global and domestic initiatives related to ICCAT; consultations required under section 971d(c)(6) of the Atlantic Tunas Convention Act; the results of the meetings of the Committee's Species Working Groups; and other matters relating to the international management of ICCAT species.

DATES: The open sessions of the Committee meeting will be held on March 27, 2008, from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., and on March 28, 2008, from 9 a.m. to 9:15 a.m. and from 11 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Closed sessions will be held on March 27, 2008, from 2:45 p.m. to approximately 6 p.m. and on March 28, 2008, from 9:15 a.m. to 11 a.m.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held at the Hilton Hotel Washington-Silver Spring, 8727 Colesville Road, Silver Spring, MD 20910, telephone: 301-589-5200.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ryan Wulff at (301) 713-2276.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Advisory Committee to the U.S. Section to ICCAT will meet in open session to receive and discuss information on: (1) the 2007 ICCAT meeting results and U.S. implementation of ICCAT decisions; (2) 2008 ICCAT and NMFS research and monitoring activities; (3) 2008 ICCAT activities; (4) global and domestic initiatives related to ICCAT; (5) consultations required under section 971d(c)(6) of the Atlantic Tunas Convention Act; (6) the results of the meetings of the Committee's Species Working Groups; and (7) other matters relating to the international management of ICCAT species. The public will have access to the open sessions of the meeting, but there will be no opportunity for public comment during the session.

The Committee will meet in its Species Working Groups for a portion of the afternoon of March 27, 2008, and of the morning of March 28, 2008. These sessions are not open to the public, but the results of the species working group discussions will be reported to the full Advisory Committee during the Committee's morning and afternoon open session on March 28, 2008. The Committee may also go into executive session on the afternoon of March 28,

2008, to discuss sensitive information relating to upcoming intersessional meetings of ICCAT. This session would also be closed to the public.

Special Accommodations

The meeting location is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Ryan Wulff at (301) 713-2276 at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.

Dated: March 5, 2008.

Rebecca J. Lent,

Director, Office of International Affairs, National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. E8-4698 Filed 3-7-08; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-S

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN: 0648-XG14

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council; Public Meetings

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

ACTION: Notice of a public meeting.

SUMMARY: The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council to convene its Socioeconomic Panel (SEP) via conference call.

DATES: The conference call will be held March 25, 2008, at 1 p.m. EDT.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held via conference call and listening stations will be available. For specific locations see **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION**.

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

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Assane Diagne, Economist, Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council; telephone: (813) 348-1630.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The conference call will begin at 1 p.m. EDT and conclude no later than 3 p.m. EDT. Listening stations are available at the following locations: