

DATES: Comments on the draft Plan must be received by close of business on July 29, 2008.

ADDRESSES: Send comments by any one of the following methods.

(1) Electronic Submissions: Submit all electronic comments via e-mail to: seaturtle@fws.gov. Include in the subject line of the e-mail the following identifier: Comments on Northwest Atlantic Loggerhead Recovery Plan. Attachments to electronic comments will be accepted in Microsoft Word, Excel, WordPerfect, or Adobe PDF file formats only.

(2) Mail: NMFS National Sea Turtle Coordinator, Attn: Draft Loggerhead Recovery Plan, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13657, Silver Spring, MD 20910 or USFWS National Sea Turtle Coordinator, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 6620 Southpoint Drive South, Suite 310, Jacksonville, FL 32216.

(3) Fax: 301-713-0376, Attn: NMFS National Sea Turtle Coordinator.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Barbara Schroeder (ph. 301-713-1401, fax 301-713-0376) or Sandy MacPherson (ph. 904-232-2580).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Availability of the Draft Recovery Plan

Interested persons may obtain the Plan for review on the Internet at <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/recovery/plans.htm> or <http://www.fws.gov/northflorida/SeaTurtles/loggerhead-recovery/default-loggerhead.htm> or by contacting Barbara Schroeder or Sandy MacPherson [see **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**].

Background

The Endangered Species Act of 1973 (15 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*) requires that NMFS and USFWS develop and implement recovery plans for the conservation and survival of threatened and endangered species under their jurisdiction, unless it is determined that such plans would not promote the conservation of the species. This Plan discusses the natural history, current status, and the known and potential threats to the loggerhead turtle in the Northwest Atlantic. The Plan lays out a recovery strategy to address the potential threats based on the best available science and includes recovery goals and criteria. The Plan is not a regulatory action, but presents guidance for use by agencies and interested parties to assist in the recovery of loggerhead turtles. The Plan identifies substantive actions needed to achieve recovery by addressing the threats to the

species. Recovery of loggerhead turtles in the Northwest Atlantic is a long-term effort and will require cooperation and coordination of Federal, state, and local government agencies, and the community, as well as international cooperation. NMFS and USFWS will consider all substantive comments and information presented during the public comment period in the course of finalizing this Plan.

Dated: May 20, 2008.

James H. Lecky,

Director, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Service.

Dated: May 9, 2008.

Franklin J. Arnold III,

Acting Regional Director, Southeast Region, Fish and Wildlife Service.

[FR Doc. E8-12132 Filed 5-29-08; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-S

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XI11

Pacific Fishery Management Council; Notice of Intent

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

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS); request for comments; preliminary notice of public scoping meetings.

SUMMARY: NMFS and the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Pacific Council) announce their intent to prepare an EIS in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 to analyze fishing conducted under the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan.

DATES: Public scoping will be conducted through regular meetings of the Pacific Fishery Management Council and its advisory bodies. The Pacific Fishery Management Council is scheduled to consider actions and alternatives that are the subject of this proposed action at their June 8-13, 2008, meeting. The details of this and any other meetings related to this action will be announced in the **Federal Register**. Written comments will be accepted at the Pacific Council office through June 3, 2008.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments, on issues and alternatives, identified by RIN: 0648-XI11 by any of the following methods:

- E-mail: 0910.EIS@noaa.gov. Include 0648-XI11 and enter "Scoping Comments" in the subject line of the message.

- Fax: 503-820-2299.

- Mail: Dr. Donald McIsaac, Pacific Fishery Management Council, 7700 NE Ambassador Pl., Suite 101, Portland, OR 97220.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. John DeVore, Pacific Fishery Management Council, phone: 503-820-2280, fax: 503-820-2299 and email: john.devore@noaa.gov; or Kathe Hawe, NMFS Northwest Region NEPA Coordinator; phone: 206-526-6161 and email: Kathe.Hawe@noaa.gov.

Electronic Access

This **Federal Register** document is available on the Government Printing Office's Web site at:

www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/index/html.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background and Need for Agency Action

There are more than 90 species managed under the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (groundfish FMP), seven of which have been declared overfished. The groundfish stocks support an array of commercial, recreational, and Indian tribal fishing interests in state and federal waters off the coasts of Washington, Oregon, and California. In addition, groundfish are also harvested incidentally in non-groundfish fisheries, most notably, the trawl fisheries for pink shrimp, ridgeback prawns, California halibut, and sea cucumber.

The proposed action is needed to establish commercial and recreational harvests levels in 2009-2010 that will ensure groundfish stocks are maintained at, or restored to, sizes and structures that will produce the highest net benefit to the nation, while balancing environmental and social values.

The Proposed Action

The proposed action is to implement management measures consistent with the requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) that constrain total fishing mortality during 2009-2010 within limits that maintain fish stocks at, or rebuild them to, a level capable of producing maximum sustained yield (MSY), or to a stock size less than this if such stock size results in long-term net benefit to the nation.

These fishing mortality limits are harvest specifications that include acceptable biological catches (ABCs) and optimum yields (OYs) for

groundfish species or species groups in need of particular protection; OYs may be represented by harvest guidelines or quotas for species that need individual management. Separate sets of ABCs and OYs will be specified for 2009 and 2010 as part of the multi-year management cycle for groundfish. The allocation of commercial OYs between the open access and limited entry segments of the fishery is also part of the proposed action.

The FMP, as amended by Amendment 17, requires that the groundfish specifications be evaluated and revised as necessary every two years, with separate ABCs and OYs established for each of the two years in the biennial period. Management measures designed to achieve the OYs will be established for each year and, as in the past, may vary from period to period within any one year. These specifications and management measures will be published in the **Federal Register** and made effective by January 1 of the first fishing year in the biennium (2009). The Magnuson-Stevens Act and the groundfish FMP also require that NMFS implement actions to prevent overfishing and to rebuild overfished stocks. These specifications include fish caught in state ocean waters (zero to three nautical miles [nm] offshore) as well as fish caught in the U.S. exclusive economic zone (3 to 200 nm offshore).

Alternatives

NEPA requires that agencies evaluate reasonable alternatives to the proposed action in an EIS. The purpose and need for agency action determines the range of reasonable alternatives. A preliminary set of alternatives was developed during the November 4–9, 2007, Council meeting. Alternatives are structured around a range of ABCs/OYs for assessed groundfish species. This range of ABCs/OYs is based on stock assessments, including new assessments for 16 of the groundfish species managed under the FMP.

Seven groundfish species are currently declared overfished and subject to rebuilding plans previously adopted by the Council. Based on new stock assessments and rebuilding analyses, three of these stocks have a markedly different target year for rebuilding than previously estimated, if the current harvest rates are maintained. Rebuilding plans for these species may have to be revised in order to meet the statutory requirement to rebuild in as short a time as possible, taking into account the appropriate factors.

For some species, ABC/OY ranges that would be used to develop alternatives may be based on consultations by the

Council with state and federal agencies, Indian tribes, and the affected public on the allocation of harvest opportunity between sectors. Allocation decisions can affect OYs because different sectors may catch fish of different species and ages, allowing different sustainable harvest levels.

Based on a range of ABCs/OYs alternatives adopted at the November 2007 Council meeting, the Council chose a preliminary preferred ABCs/OYs alternative at their April 2008 meeting; a range of alternative management measures was also identified that will constrain total harvest mortality (across all fisheries intercepting groundfish) to within the preferred OYs. The Council is then scheduled to take final action to choose a preferred alternative that includes ABCs/OYs and associated management measures at their June 2008 meeting.

Restrictive management measures intended to rebuild overfished species have been adopted and implemented over the past several years for most commercial and recreational fishing sectors. Management measures intended to control the rate at which different groundfish species or species groups are taken in the fisheries include trip limits, bag limits, size limits, time/area closures, and gear restrictions. Large area closures, called Groundfish Conservation Areas (GCAs) or Rockfish Conservation Areas (RCAs), intended to reduce bycatch of overfished species, were first implemented in late 2002. A second important type of measure used to manage groundfish is the cumulative landing limit. Cumulative landing limits restrict the total weight of fish by species or species group that any one vessel may land during the limit period, which is normally two months. Different cumulative landing limits are established for areas north and south of 40° 10' N. lat. (near Cape Mendocino, California) and for limited entry trawl, limited entry fixed gear, and open access fishery participants.

Preliminary Identification of Environmental Issues

A principal objective of the scoping and public input process is to identify potentially significant impacts to the human environment that should be analyzed in depth in the EIS. NMFS staff conducted internal scoping to determine the likely impacts of the proposed action on the human environment and identify potentially significant impacts. Based on this internal scoping, the following environmental components have been identified for impact evaluation: overfished groundfish, groundfish at

precautionary and healthy levels, no-groundfish species, listed salmonids, the marine ecosystem and fish habitat, community and economic impacts, and cumulative impacts.

Public Scoping Process

Public scoping has already occurred as part of the Council's decision-making process and will continue through Council final action in June 2008. All decisions during the Council process benefit from written and oral public comments delivered prior to or during the Council meeting. These public comments are considered integral to scoping for developing this EIS. The Council chose the preliminary preferred ABCs/OYs alternative and refined the range of management measures at their April 5–12, 2008, meeting in Seattle, Washington at the Seattle Marriott Hotel-Sea Tac, 3201 S 176th Street, 98188–4094, 206–241–2000 or 800–314–0925. The Council is scheduled to finalize their preferred alternative at their June 8–13, 2008, meeting at the Crowne Plaza Mid Peninsula, 1221 Chess Drive, Foster City, California, 94404, 800–227–6963 or 650–570–5700. Public comment may be made under the agenda items when the Council will consider these proposed actions. The agendas for these meetings will be available from the Council website or by request from the Council office in advance of the meeting (see **ADDRESSES**). Written comments on the scope of issues and alternatives may also be submitted as described under **ADDRESSES**.

NMFS invites comments and suggestions on the scope of the analysis to be included in the draft EIS (DEIS). The scope includes the range of alternatives to be considered and potentially significant impacts to the human environment that should be evaluated in the NEPA document. In addition, NMFS is notifying the public that, in conjunction with the Council, it is beginning a full environmental analysis and decision-making process for this proposal, so interested or affected people may know how they can participate in the environmental analysis and contribute to the final decision.

A DEIS will be prepared for comment after Council final action. The comment period on the DEIS will be 45 days from the date the Environmental Protection Agency's notice of availability appears in the **Federal Register**. It is very important that those interested in this proposed action participate at that time. To be most helpful, comments on the NEPA document should be as specific as possible and may address the

adequacy of the statement or merits of the alternatives discussed. It is also helpful if comments refer to specific pages or chapters of the NEPA document. Comments may also address the adequacy of the NEPA document or the merits of the alternatives formulated and discussed in the NEPA document. (Reviewers may wish to refer to the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA CFR 1503.3 in addressing these points.) Comments received, including the names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposal and will be available for public inspection.

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

Dated: May 22, 2008.

Emily H. Menashes,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.
[FR Doc. E8-12129 Filed 5-29-08; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN: 0648-XI18

Fisheries of the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico; Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review (SEDAR); SEDAR 16 King Mackerel Assessment Panel; Public Meeting

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

ACTION: Notice of SEDAR 16 South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico King Mackerel Post-Assessment Workshop Conference Call.

SUMMARY: The SEDAR 16 Assessment Panel will meet via conference call to review assessment model results and discuss future documentation needs. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION**.

DATES: The SEDAR 16 Assessment Workshop Panel will meet on Tuesday, June 17, 2008, from 12 p.m. to 3 p.m. (EST).

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held via conference call. Listening stations are available at the following locations: South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, 4055 Faber Place Drive 1201, North Charleston, SC 29405; and the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, 2203 North Lois Avenue, Suite 1100, Tampa, FL 33607.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Julie A. Neer, SEDAR Coordinator, SAFMC,

4055 Faber Place, Suite 201, North Charleston, SC 29405; telephone: (843) 571-4366 or toll free: (866) SAFMC-10; fax: (843) 769-4520.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The South Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, and Caribbean Fishery Management Councils; in conjunction with NOAA Fisheries, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, and the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission; implemented the Southeast Data, Assessment and Review (SEDAR) process, a multi-step method for determining the status of fish stocks. SEDAR 16 is developing an assessment of the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico King Mackerel stock.

During this conference call the SEDAR 16 King Mackerel Assessment Panel will follow-up on activities from its May 5-9, 2008 meeting by reviewing the assessment model results, and discussing future documentation needs.

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 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 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 the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council office (see **ADDRESSES**) at least 10 business days prior to the meeting.

Dated: May 27, 2008.

Tracey L. Thompson,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.
[FR Doc. E8-12045 Filed 5-29-08; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN: 0648-XI20

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council; Public Hearings

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

ACTION: Notice of public hearings.

SUMMARY: The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council will hold public hearings to allow for input on Amendment 10 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish Fishery (FMP).

DATES: Written comments will be accepted until 23 June 2008. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for dates, times and location of hearings.

ADDRESSES: Send comments to: Daniel T. Furlong, Executive Director of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Suite 2115 Federal Building, 300 South New Street, Dover, DE 19904.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Daniel T. Furlong, Executive Director of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Room 2115 Federal Building, 300 South New Street, Dover, DE 19904; telephone: (302) 674-2331.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: There are four proposed management actions in this Amendment. To reduce general discards and to allow the butterfish stock to rebuild to BMSY and protect the long-term health and stability of the rebuilt butterfish stock, the proposed management actions could:

1. Develop a butterfish mortality cap program for the Loligo fishery;
2. Increase the Loligo minimum codend mesh size;
3. Eliminate exemptions for Illex vessels from Loligo minimum codend mesh requirements; and
4. Establish seasonal gear restricted areas (GRAs).

Public hearings: The scheduled public hearings are as follows:

June 9 - Sheraton Convention Center Hotel, Two Miss America Way, Atlantic City, NJ 08401; telephone: (609) 344-3535;

June 17 - Hilton Garden Inn, Providence Airport Warwick, 1 Thurber Street/Jefferson Boulevard, Warwick, RI 02886; telephone: (401) 734-9600; and
June 18 - Holiday Inn Express Hotel & Suites East End, 1707 Old Country Road, Route 58, Riverhead, NY 11901; telephone: (631) 548-1000.

All hearings begin at 7 p.m. and will be tape recorded with the tapes filed as the official transcript of the hearing.

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 these hearings. 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,