

managed fisheries to have ACLs and AMs by 2011. The Council is developing, but has not yet completed, Amendment 19 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan, which would establish ACLs and AMs for the small-mesh multispecies fishery, and does not anticipate Amendment 19 to be submitted to NMFS until May 2012, which means it will not be effective until October 2012. The small-mesh multispecies fishery consists of silver hake, red hake, and offshore hake, often collectively known as “whiting.” There are two stocks each of silver and red hake (northern and southern) and one stock of offshore hake.

The Council has not completed Amendment 19 for a number of reasons, including postponing work on the amendment until after the November 2010 stock assessment review for the three small-mesh species. However, the Council is expected to set the acceptable biological catch (ABC) limits based on recommendations from its Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), at its September 2011 meeting. The SSC has recommended separate ABCs by stock or stock group: Northern red hake, southern red hake, northern silver hake, and a combined southern “whiting” ABC for the southern stock of silver hake and offshore hake. The Whiting Advisory Panel (AP) and the Oversight Committee will be recommending management alternatives at the Council’s September meeting as well. NMFS intends to use the Council’s ABC and a subset of the Advisory Panel and Committee’s recommendations in the Secretarial Amendment.

After the public hearings are completed, NMFS will make a decision regarding the management measures to include in the Secretarial Amendment and will publish a proposed rule and a notice of availability for the amendment. After the 60-day proposed rule/notice of availability comment period, NMFS will publish a final rule. The final rule will remain in effect until the Council’s Amendment 19, if approved, is implemented.

Public Comments

To help determine the scope of issues to be addressed and to identify significant issues related to this action, NMFS is soliciting written comments on this ANPR and will hold public meetings in four locations. All of the public meetings will take place from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m., at the locations listed below. The public is encouraged to submit comments related to the specific ideas mentioned in this ANPR. All written comments received by the due

date will be considered in drafting the proposed rule.

- Monday, October 3, 2011, from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m., at the New York Department of Environmental Conservation Marine Resources Headquarters, 205 Belle Mead Road, Suite 1, East Setauket, NY.
- Tuesday, October 4, 2011, from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m., at the Ocean County Administration Building, Room 119, 101 Hooper Avenue, Toms River, NJ.
- Tuesday, October 11, 2011, from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m., at the Northeast Regional Office, 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA.
- Wednesday, October 12, 2011, from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m., at Narragansett Town Hall, 25 Fifth Avenue, Narragansett, RI.

Issues Under Consideration

Based on information from prior Whiting Advisory Panel and Oversight Committee meetings, NMFS is considering several options for the Secretarial Amendment. NMFS will seek public comment on the scope of this ANPR and requests public input on the following options. For each option, NMFS will propose setting an ACL for the same four stocks or stock groups as the SSC’s recommendations. Annual catch targets (ACTs) would be used to account for management uncertainty, and would be set at a proportion of the ACL (75 percent, for example). Discards would be deducted from the ACT to establish the total allowable landings (TAL). The differences among the options would be the allocation of the TALs.

1. ACLs, ACTs, TALs by stock: This option would establish ACLs, ACTs, and TALs for each of the four stocks or stock grouping for which the Council’s SSC set an ABC. The Whiting AP recently recommended this approach for the southern TALs (southern red hake and the southern combined whiting TAL), but not for the northern TALs (northern red hake and northern silver hake).

2. Northern TALs subdivided by area according to historic landings proportion: The Whiting AP suggested this approach at a recent meeting. The ACLs, ACTs, and TALs would be set as in Option 1, but the northern area TALs would be further subdivided into three TALs: Cultivator Shoal Exemption Area TAL, Other Exemption Areas TAL, and an incidental TAL. The “Other Exemption Areas” would consist of the Gulf of Maine Grate Raised Footrope Trawl Area, Small Mesh Areas I and II, and the Raised Footrope Trawl Areas near Cape Cod. The allocation would be made by historic landing proportion so that each area is given the opportunity

to land proportionally the same amount of the overall catch limit as it has in recent years. The AP recommended using fishing years 2004–2010 to determine the appropriate proportions.

3. TALs subdivided equally by exemption area: The ACLs, ACTs, and TALs would be set as in Option 2, but the northern area TALs would be further subdivided by equally across the three areas.

4. AMs: NMFS is considering a combination of “proactive” and “reactive” accountability measures. The proactive AMs would be the use of ACTs and in-season closure authority when a TAL is projected to be reached. The reactive AM would be ACL and TAL specific pound-for-pound pay back of any overage above the catch limit or target.

5. NMFS is suggesting that no other management measures be introduced or modified through the Secretarial Amendment, in order to keep the measures as simple as possible while meeting the action’s objectives.

Special Accommodations

The public meeting will be accessible to people with physical disabilities. Request for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Debra Lambert (301–713–2341), at least 7 days prior to the meeting.

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

Dated: September 13, 2011.

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 660

RIN 0648–BA55

Fisheries Off West Coast States; West Coast Salmon Fisheries; Notice of Availability for Amendment 16 to the Salmon Fishery Management Plan

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

ACTION: Availability of amendment to a fishery management plan; request for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces that the Pacific Fishery Management Council

(Council) has submitted Amendment 16 to the Pacific Coast Salmon Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Secretarial review. Amendment 16 would modify the FMP to implement National Standard 1 Guidelines (NS1Gs) adopted by NMFS under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Reauthorization Act (MSRA). These guidelines are intended to prevent and end overfishing and rebuild fisheries through implementation of status determination criteria, overfishing limits, annual catch limits, and accountability measures. Amendment 16 would also set new conservation objectives and *de minimis* fishing rate provisions.

DATES: Comments on Amendment 16 must be received on or before November 18, 2011.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments, identified by NOAA–NMFS–2011–0227, by any one of the following methods:

- *Electronic Submissions:* Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal <http://www.regulations.gov>. To submit comments via the e-Rulemaking Portal, first click the “Submit a Comment” icon, then enter NOAA–NMFS–2011–0227 in the keyword search. Locate the document you wish to comment on from the resulting list and click on the “Submit a Comment” icon on the right of that line.

- *Mail:* William W. Stelle, Jr., Regional Administrator, Northwest Region, NMFS, 7600 Sand Point Way, NE., Seattle, WA 98115–0070 or to Rod McInnis, Regional Administrator, Southwest Region, NMFS, 501 West Ocean Boulevard, Suite 4200, Long Beach, CA 90802–4213.

- *Fax:* 206–526–6736 Attn: Peggy Busby, or 562–980–4047 Attn: Heidi Taylor.

Instructions: Comments must be submitted by one of the above methods to ensure that the comments are received, documented, and considered by NMFS. Comments sent by any other method, to any other address or individual, or received after the end of the comment period, may not be considered. All comments received are a part of the public record and will

generally be posted for public viewing on <http://www.regulations.gov> without change. All personal identifying information (*e.g.*, name, address, *etc.*) submitted voluntarily by the sender will be publicly accessible. Do not submit confidential business information or otherwise sensitive or protected information. NMFS will accept anonymous comments (enter N/A in the required fields if you wish to remain anonymous). Attachments to electronic comments will be accepted in Microsoft Word, Excel, WordPerfect, or Adobe PDF file formats only.

Electronic copies of the amendment may be obtained from the Council Web site at <http://pcouncil.org>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Peggy Busby at 206–526–4323, or Heidi Taylor at 562–980–4039.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The ocean salmon fisheries in the exclusive economic zone off Washington, Oregon, and California are managed under a “framework” fishery management plan entitled the Pacific Coast Salmon Fishery Management Plan (FMP). The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Reauthorization Act of 2006 (MSRA) requires that each regional fishery management council submit any FMP or plan amendment it prepares to NMFS for review and approval, disapproval, or partial approval. The MSRA also requires that NMFS, upon receiving an FMP or amendment, immediately publish a notice that the FMP or amendment is available for public review and comment. NMFS will consider the public comments received during the comment period described above in determining whether to approve Amendment 16 to the FMP.

On January 16, 2009 (74 FR 3178), NMFS adopted revisions to its guidelines implementing MSRA National Standard 1 (NS1Gs) to prevent and end overfishing and rebuild fisheries. In particular, the revised guidelines provide guidance on implementation of the new statutory requirement for annual catch limits (ACLs). The revised guidelines also include new requirements for accountability measures (AMs) and

other provisions regarding preventing and ending overfishing and rebuilding fisheries. To comply with the statute and these new guidelines, Amendment 16 to the Salmon FMP would reorganize and classify stocks in the FMP to conform with requirements of the NS1Gs, to establish status determination criteria, establish a framework for defining reference points related to overfishing limits (OFL), acceptable biological catch (ABC), and annual catch limits (ACLs), and establish appropriate accountability measures (AM) necessary to prevent the ACLs from being exceeded, and to mitigate any overages that may occur. Amendment 16 would also set new conservation objectives for Klamath River fall Chinook salmon and Sacramento River fall Chinook salmon, and would specify *de minimis* fishing rate provisions to address management in years of low abundance. Other conservation objectives would also be revised and updated as needed to conform with the best available science.

NMFS welcomes comments on the proposed FMP amendment through the end of the comment period. A proposed rule to implement Amendment 16 has been submitted for Secretarial review and approval. NMFS expects to publish and request public review and comment on proposed regulations to implement Amendment 16 in the near future. Public comments on the proposed rule must be received by the end of the comment period on the amendment to be considered in the approval/disapproval decision on the amendment. All comments received by the end of the comment period for the amendment, whether specifically directed to the amendment or the proposed rule, will be considered in the approval/disapproval decision.

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

Dated: September 14, 2011.

Steven Thur,

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

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