

engineering and bycatch reduction; (5) process and marketing; and (6) outreach and implementation. Components one and two have been completed.

REDNET investigators were issued an EFP in support of component two, which authorized the use of a 4.5-in (11.4-cm) mesh codend to establish a baseline for target catch and bycatch in a targeted redfish fishery (see the Notice and Request for Comments from March 8, 2011 (76 FR 12716)). This EFP, which would be in support of component three of the project, would enable investigators to evaluate different codend mesh sizes in an effort to identify the optimal mesh size to selectively harvest legal-size redfish, as well as perform catch sampling activities. To execute the study, the participating vessel would need to be exempt from the following FMP regulations: NE multispecies minimum fish size for redfish specified at § 648.83(a); and minimum mesh size of 6.5 in (16.6 cm) for multispecies vessels fishing in the GOM specified at § 648.80(a)(3)(i). In addition, vessels would be exempt from the following regulations for all remaining large-mesh and small-mesh groundfish species, for sampling purposes only: Minimum fish size restrictions; fish possession limits; species quota closures; possession of prohibited groundfish species; and gear-specific fish possession restrictions. All non-compliant fish would be discarded as soon as practicable following data collection. No fish below the minimum size would be landed.

Tows would be made using the trouser trawl method which consists of a regular trawl's front end (including sweep, fishing line and headline) and a trouser section, which leads to two separate side-by-side codends. The applicants propose to assess codend selectivity by testing three codend mesh sizes. The test codend would use mesh sizes of either 4.5 in (11.4 cm), 5.5 in (14.0 cm), or 6.5 in (16.6 cm), and the control codend would use mesh sizes 2 in (5.1 cm) to 2.25 in (5.7 cm). The test and control codends would be switched regularly between port and starboard to reduce possible side effects, rather than keeping the test codend on the same side of the vessel for all tows.

The vessel would conduct sea trials from early November 2012 to April 30, 2013, with a total of 18 sea-days (three 6-day trips including steaming time). The vessel expects to make seven tows on each of the 12 actual fishing days. The research activity would occur in the middle of the GOM, outside of closed areas, on known redfish concentrations, in statistical areas 513, 514, 515, 521, and 522. The trawl net would be towed

at typical fishing speed of approximately 3.2 kts, and the duration of each tow would depend primarily on the amount of fish in the net, rather than time. Acoustic gear monitoring devices would be used during trials to measure the performance of the gear and ensure constant geometry of the trawl's front end.

SMAST/Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) technical staff, students, and/or qualified at-sea monitors contracted by SMAST/DMF would be on board the vessel for each trip and would document all catch and by catch encountered following NE Fishery Observer Program protocols. About 70 to 100 fish per codend per tow would be measured for both redfish and/or other groundfish species. Sampling work would occur during normal fishing operations and the exemptions for this EFP, if authorized, would not be expected to change vessel fishing behavior. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that this EFP would cause any impact to the physical environment/essential fish habitat, non-sampled species, or protected resources. All marine mammal and turtle interactions would be noted and released, and all corals would be noted and samples kept for further identification and assessment. Codend and control catch data would be analyzed using established methods proposed by the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas in their Manual of Methods of Measuring the Selectivity of Towed Fishing Gears.

All catch of stocks allocated to sectors by the vessel would be deducted from the sector's annual catch entitlement for each NE multispecies stock, including redfish. Specifically, NMFS would apply the sector assumed discard rate to fishing trips by the vessel participating under this EFP, whether the recorded discard rates from the experimental fishing are higher or lower than the assumed discard rate of the sector. The participating vessel would be required to comply with all other applicable requirements and restrictions specified at 50 CFR part 648, unless specifically exempted in this EFP.

If approved, the applicants may request minor modifications and extensions to the EFP throughout the course of research. EFP modifications and extensions may be granted without further public notice if they are deemed essential to facilitate completion of the proposed research and result in only a minimal change in the scope or impacts of the initially approved EFP request.

In accordance with NAO Administrative Order 216-6, a Categorical Exclusion or other

appropriate National Environmental Policy Act document would be completed prior to the issuance of the EFP. Further review and consultation may be necessary before a final determination is made to issue the EFP. After publication of this document in the **Federal Register**, the EFP, if approved, may become effective following the public comment period.

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

Dated: October 24, 2012.

**James P. Burgess,**

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

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**BILLING CODE 3510-22-P**

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

**RIN 0648-XC314**

#### North Pacific Fishery Management Council; Public Meetings

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

**ACTION:** Notice of public meetings.

**SUMMARY:** The North Pacific Fishery Management Council's Gulf of Alaska (GOA) and Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands (BSAI) Groundfish Plan Teams will meet in Seattle, WA.

**DATES:** The meetings will be held November 13-16, 2012. The meetings will begin at 9 a.m., November 13, and continue through Friday November 16, 2012.

**ADDRESSES:** The meetings will be held at the Alaska Fisheries Science Center, 7600 Sand Point Way NE., Building 4, Observer Training Room 1055 (GOA Plan Team) and Traynor Room 2076 (BS/AI Plan Team), Seattle, WA.

*Council address:* North Pacific Fishery Management Council, 605 W. 4th Ave., Suite 306, Anchorage, AK 99501-2252.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Jane DiCosimo or Diana Stram, North Pacific Fishery Management Council; telephone: (907) 271-2809.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The Plan Teams will compile and review the annual Groundfish Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) reports, including the Economic Report, the Ecosystems Consideration Chapter, the stock assessments for BSAI and GOA groundfishes, and recommend final groundfish harvest specifications for 2013/14.

The Agenda is subject to change, and the latest version will be posted at <http://www.alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/npfmc/>.

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 meetings. 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

These meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Gail Bendixen, (907) 271-2809, at least 5 working days prior to the meeting date.

Dated: October 24, 2012.

**Tracey L. Thompson,**

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

[FR Doc. 2012-26485 Filed 10-26-12; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3510-22-P**

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XC299

#### Fisheries of the South Atlantic; South Atlantic Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

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

**ACTION:** Notice of a public meeting.

**SUMMARY:** The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) will hold a meeting of its Habitat and Environmental Protection Advisory Panel (AP) in Charleston, SC.

**DATES:** The meeting will take place November 14-15, 2012. See

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for specific dates and times.

**ADDRESSES:** The meeting will be held at the Doubletree by Hilton Guest Suites, 181 Church Street, Charleston, SC 29401; telephone: (800) 222-8733; fax: (843) 577-2697.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Kim Iverson, Public Information Officer,

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, 4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201, N. Charleston, SC 29405; telephone: (843) 571-4366 or toll free: (866) SAFMC-10; fax: (843) 769-4520; email: [kim.iverson@safmc.net](mailto:kim.iverson@safmc.net).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** Members of the Habitat and Environmental Protection AP will meet from 8:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. on November 14, 2012 and from 8:30 a.m. until 12 noon on November 15, 2012. Topics to be addressed at the meeting include: a member workshop on developing the South Atlantic Habitat and Ecosystem Atlas and Digital Dashboard, including the new online Ecospecies System; species research and habitat mapping associated with deepwater marine protected areas; deepwater habitat complexes associated with Coral Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (CHAPC) extension proposals; a review of a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Atlantic Councils on deepwater coral ecosystem conservation; a review of other regional partner activities supporting the regional move to ecosystem-based management; and consideration of updates to essential fish habitat policy statements as needed. The AP will provide recommendations to the Council and address other business as needed.

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

The meeting is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for auxiliary aids should be directed to the Council office (see **ADDRESSES**) 3 days prior to the meeting.

**Note:** The times and sequence specified in this agenda are subject to change.

Dated: October 24, 2012.

**Tracey L. Thompson,**

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

[FR Doc. 2012-26484 Filed 10-26-12; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3510-22-P**

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[Docket No. 121022567-2567-01]

#### Notice To Solicit Applications for the Ocean Exploration Advisory Board

**AGENCY:** National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research.

**ACTION:** Notice.

**SUMMARY:** The Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research publishes this notice to solicit applications and nominations of persons with appropriate education, interest, and/or experience to become a member of the Ocean Exploration Advisory Board. The purpose of the Board is to advise the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere on matters pertaining to ocean exploration including: The identification of priority areas that warrant exploration; the development and enhancement of technologies for exploring the oceans; managing the data and information; and disseminating the results. The Board will also provide advice on the relevance of the program with regard to the NOAA Strategic Plan, the National Ocean Policy Implementation Plan, and other relevant guidance documents.

**DATES:** Application materials should be sent to the address, email, or fax specified and must be received no later than 5:00 p.m., Eastern Time, on December 28, 2012.

**ADDRESSES:** Submit resume and application materials to Yvette Jefferson via mail, fax, or email. Mail: NOAA, 1315 East West Highway, SSMC3 Rm. 10315, Silver Spring, MD 20910; Fax: 301-713-1967; Email: [Yvette.Jefferson@noaa.gov](mailto:Yvette.Jefferson@noaa.gov).

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Yvette Jefferson, NOAA, 1315 East West Highway, SSMC3 Rm. 10315, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910; Fax: 301-713-1967; Email: [Yvette.Jefferson@noaa.gov](mailto:Yvette.Jefferson@noaa.gov); Telephone: 301-734-1002.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** NOAA's Ocean Exploration Program (OE) is part of the NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration and Research. The mission of OE is to increase the Nation's understanding of the world's largely unknown ocean through interdisciplinary expeditions and projects to investigate unknown and poorly known ocean areas and phenomena. Specific goals include:

(1) Mapping and characterizing physical, chemical, and biological ocean