0.96); Nmin changed from 966 to 935; and PBR changed from 9.7 to 9.4.

The abundance estimate for Sowerby's beaked whale, western North Atlantic stock, in the draft 2012 SAR (77 FR 47043, August 7, 2012) has changed from 3,748 (CV = 0.86) to 3,653 (CV = 0.69); Nmin increased from 2,008 to 2,160; and PBR increased from 20 to 22.

The abundance estimate for Risso's dolphin, western North Atlantic stock, in the draft 2012 SAR (77 FR 47043, August 7, 2012) has changed from 17,734 (CV = 0.42) to 15,197 (CV = 0.55); Nmin decreased from 12,630 to 9,857; and PBR changed from 121 to 95.

The abundance estimate for Atlantic white-sided dolphin, western North Atlantic stock, in the draft 2012 SAR (77 FR 47043, August 7, 2012) has changed from 45,592 (CV = 0.54) to 48,819 (CV = 0.61); Nmin increased from 29,806 to 30,403; and PBR increased from 298 to 304. Total annual estimated average fishery-related mortality or serious injury to this stock during 2006–2010 changed from 213 to 212. Average annual estimated fishery-related mortality attributed to the Northeast sink gillnet fishery during 2006–2010 decreased from 39 to 38 white-sided dolphins per year.

The abundance estimate for harbor porpoise, Gulf of Maine/Bay of Fundy stock, in the draft 2012 SAR (77 FR 47043, August 7, 2012) has changed from 61,959 (CV = 0.32) to 79,833 (CV = 0.32); Nmin increased from 47,635 to 61,415; and PBR changed from 548 to 706. The total annual estimated average human-caused mortality changed from 840 to 835 harbor porpoises per year; 791 attributed to U.S. fisheries (changed from 796). The average annual harbor porpoise mortality and serious injury attributed to the Northeast sink gillnet fishery from 2006 to 2010 changed from 515 to 511 (CV = 0.17).

The average annual harbor porpoise mortality and serious injury attributed to the mid-Atlantic gillnet fishery listed in the draft 2012 SAR (77 FR 47043, August 7, 2012) from 2006 to 2010 has changed from 276 to 275 (CV = 0.35).

Dated: January 10, 2013.

Helen M. Golde,

Acting Director, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 2013–00705 Filed 1–15–13; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–22–P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648–XC434

Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish Fisheries; Scoping Process; Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council; Public Hearings

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

ACTION: Notice; request for comments.

SUMMARY: The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Mid-Atlantic Council) announces its intention to prepare, in cooperation with NMFS, an EIS in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act to assess potential effects on the human environment of alternative measures to protect deep-sea corals in the Mid-Atlantic region.

This notice announces a public process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed, and for identifying the significant issues related to deep-sea coral protections in the Mid-Atlantic. This notice is to alert the interested public of the scoping process, the development of the Draft EIS, and to provide for public participation in that process. If, during development of the Draft EIS, it can be determined that the alternatives are not expected to have significant impacts on the human environment, an Environmental Assessment (EA) may be prepared in place of an EIS. This determination will depend on the scope of issues raised and the alternatives developed. Information obtained during the scoping process will be used to develop either an EIS or an EA as appropriate. This action is necessary to provide analytical support for an amendment (Amendment 16) to the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish (MSB), which addresses protections of deep-sea corals from the impacts of fishing gear.

DATES: Written comments must be received on or before 11:59 p.m., EST, on February 15, 2013. Two public scoping meetings will be held during this comment period. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for dates, times, and locations.

ADDRESSES: Written comments may be sent by any of the following methods:

- Email to the following address: *nmfs.ner.msbam16@noaa.gov;*
- Mail or hand deliver to Dr. Christopher M. Moore, Executive Director, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, 800 North State Street, Suite 201, Dover, DE 19901. Mark the outside of the envelope ''Deep Sea Corals Amendment Scoping Comments''; or
- Fax to (302) 674–5399.

The scoping document may also be obtained from the Mid-Atlantic Council office at the previously provided address, or by request to the Mid-Atlantic Council by telephone (302) 674–2331, or via the Internet at *http://www.mafmc.org/fmp/msb.htm.*

Comments may also be provided verbally at either of the two public scoping meetings. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for dates, times, and locations.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. Christopher M. Moore, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, 800 North State Street, Suite 201, Dover, DE 19901, (telephone 302–674–2331).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The Mid-Atlantic Council has initiated this amendment to minimize the impacts of fishing gear on deep-sea corals within the Council's jurisdiction. The Mid-Atlantic Council and the New England Fishery Management Council (New England Council) have developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) identifying areas of consensus and common strategy related to conservation of corals and mitigation of the negative impacts of fishery/coral interactions. The terms of the MOU include defined areas of jurisdiction for deep-sea coral protection measures, aligning with the Mid-Atlantic and New England Council region boundaries as defined in 50 CFR 600.105.

The New England Council began developing alternatives for deep-sea coral protections as part of their Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Omnibus Amendment 2, and at their September 2012 meeting, voted to split the range of alternatives pertaining to deep sea corals into a separate omnibus amendment. The Mid-Atlantic Council will develop alternatives applicable to areas south of the inter-council boundary with the New England Council, with the understanding that the New England Council will implement coral-related measures north of this boundary.

At this time, the Mid-Atlantic Council is expected to consider several types of management measures, including, but not limited to:

- No action; no additional measures would be adopted.
- Designation of deep-sea coral protection zones, under the

discretionary authority described in section 303(b)(2)(B) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA), where fishing may be restricted in order to protect deep-sea corals from physical damage caused by fishing gear. Such zones would be located within the geographical range of the MSB fishery, as described in the FMP. However, management measures may apply to any MSA-regulated fishing activity within this range. Therefore, any measures pursued under this authority would likely apply to all federally managed fisheries within the geographic range of the MSB fisheries. The geographical range of this fishery includes the coastal and EEZ waters of the U.S. East Coast, with a core fishery management area from North Carolina to Maine.

- Designation of deep-sea corals as a component of EFH or as Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPCs).
- Measures to minimize bycatch of deep-sea coral species.
- Special access programs to provide for continued fishing in or near deep-sea coral areas for specific fisheries or gear types.
- Exploratory fishing programs to allow for future development of new fisheries in a way that protects deep-sea corals.

The Mid-Atlantic Council is seeking comments on the scope of alternatives to be considered in this amendment, as well as general comments or concerns relating to deep-sea coral protections in the mid-Atlantic.

Scoping Meetings

Two scoping meetings to facilitate public comment will be held on the following dates and locations:

1. February 5, 2013, 7–9 p.m., via webinar; connection information to be available at *http://www.mafmc.org/meetings/meetings.htm* or by contacting the Mid-Atlantic Council (see **ADDRESSES**);

2. February 13, 2013, 4 p.m., Embassy Suites Hampton Roads, 1700 Coliseum Drive, Hampton, VA 23666.

Special Accommodations

The scoping meetings are accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aid should be directed to M. Jan Saunders (302–674–2331 ext. 18) at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.

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

Dated: January 9, 2013.

Emily H. Menashes,

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

[FR Doc. 2013–00808 Filed 1–15–13; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–22–P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648–XC443

Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee

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

ACTION: Notice of open public meeting.

SUMMARY: This notice sets forth the schedule and proposed agenda of a forthcoming meeting of the Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee (MAFAC). The members will discuss and provide advice on issues outlined in the agenda below.

DATES: The meeting is scheduled for January 30, 2013, 3–4 p.m., Eastern Daylight Time.

ADDRESSES: Conference call. Public access is available at 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mark Holliday, (301) 427–8004; email: *Mark.Holliday@noaa.gov*.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The MAFAC was established by the Secretary of Commerce (Secretary), and, since 1971, advises the Secretary on all living marine resource matters that are the responsibility of the Department of Commerce. The complete charter and other information are located online at *http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/ocs/mafac/*.

Matters To Be Considered

The Committee is convening to recommend a list of new members to participate on the Recreational Fisheries Working Group for submission to the NOAA Fisheries Assistant Administrator. This agenda is subject to change.

Dated: January 10, 2013.

Samuel D. Rauch III,

Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, performing the functions and duties of the Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 2013–00757 Filed 1–15–13; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–22–P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648–XB173

Marine Mammals; File No. 16919

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

ACTION: Notice; issuance of permit.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that a permit has been issued to Eye of the Whale (Olga von Ziegesar, Responsible Party and Principal Investigator), P.O. Box 15191, Fitz Creek, AK 99603 to conduct research on humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*).

ADDRESSES: The permit and related documents are available for review upon written request or by appointment in the following offices:

Permits and Conservation Division, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13705, Silver Spring, MD 20910; phone (301)427–8401; fax (301)713–0376; and

Alaska Region, NMFS, P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802–1668; phone (907)586–7221; fax (907)586–7249.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Amy Hapeman or Carrie Hubard, (301)427–8401.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On May 11, 2012, notice was published in the **Federal Register** (77 FR 27717) that a request for a permit to conduct research on humpback whales had been submitted by the above-named applicant. The requested permit has been issued under the authority of the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*), the regulations governing the taking and importing of marine mammals (50 CFR part 216), the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA; 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*), and the regulations governing the taking, importing, and exporting of endangered and threatened species (50 CFR parts 222–226).

The Permit Holder has been issued a five-year scientific research permit to continue a long-term census of humpback whales in Prince William Sound and adjacent waters of Alaska. Researchers are authorized 200 takes annually to closely approach whales by vessel for counts, photo-identification and behavioral observation. The purpose of the work is to better define whale abundance, distribution, reoccurrence of old individuals vs. new individuals, feeding habits, vital rates, associations between animals, and sex of individual whales.