

ADDRESSES: You may submit written comments by any of the following methods:

- *Email:* NMFS.GAR.EFP@noaa.gov. Include in the subject line "Comments on CFF Extended Link Apron EFP."
- *Mail:* John K. Bullard, Regional Administrator, NMFS, NE Regional Office, 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930. Mark the outside of the envelope "Comments on CFF Extended Link Apron EFP."

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Alyson Pitts, Fishery Management Specialist, 978-281-9352, *alyson.pitts@noaa.gov*.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Coonamessett Farm Foundation (CFF) submitted a complete application for an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) on March 30, 2017, to conduct commercial fishing activities that the regulations would otherwise restrict. The EFP would authorize four vessels to test the efficacy of an extended link scallop dredge apron at reducing the capture of yellowtail and windowpane flounder and small scallops over the duration of four directed research cruises. The EFP would support research associated with a project titled "Development of an Extended Link Apron: A Broad Range Tool for Bycatch Reduction," that has been funded under the 2017 Atlantic Sea Scallop Research Set-Aside (RSA) Program.

CFF is requesting exemptions that would exempt four commercial fishing vessels from the following regulations:

- Atlantic sea scallop days-at-sea (DAS) allocations at 50 CFR 648.53(b)
- Crew size restrictions at § 648.51(c)
- Atlantic sea scallop observer program requirements at § 648.11(g)
- Access area program requirements at § 648.59(a)(1)–(3), (b)(2), (b)(4)
- Rotational closed area exemptions for Closed Area I Access Area at § 648.60(c), Closed Area II Access Area at § 648.60(d), Closed Area II Extension Scallop Rotational Area at § 648.60(e) and Nantucket Lightship Scallop Rotational Area at § 648.60(f)
- Possession limits and minimum size requirements specified in 50 CFR part 648, subsections B and D through O, to allow temporary possession for biological sampling. Any fishing activity conducted outside the scope of the exempted fishing activity would be prohibited.

Four vessels would conduct scallop dredging in July 1, 2017–January 31, 2018, on a total of four 7-day trips, for a total of 28 DAS. Each trip would complete approximately 15 tows per DAS for an overall total of 420 tows for the project. In addition to open areas, tows could occur in Closed Area I and II Scallop Access Areas, Closed Area II Extension Scallop Rotational Area, and Nantucket Lightship Scallop Rotational Area. Trips would be centralized around

areas with high yellowtail and winter flounder bycatch and in areas with a mixed abundance of harvestable size and pre-recruit scallops.

The four trips would fish two 15-foot (4.57-m) Turtle Deflector Dredges, towed for a maximum duration of 30 minutes with a tow speed of 4.8–5.1 knots. One dredge would be rigged with a standard linked bag while the other would be rigged with a uni-directional extended link apron. Standard linking is defined as a single link between ring spaces, and the extended link is defined as two links linked together between rings. Both dredges would use 4-inch (10.16-cm) rings and a 10-inch (25.40-cm) twine top.

For all tows, the sea scallop catch would be counted into baskets and weighed. One basket from each dredge would be randomly selected and the scallops would be measured in 5-mm increments to determine size selectivity. Finfish catch would be sorted by species and then counted, weighed, and measured in 1-mm increments. Depending on the volume of scallops and finfish captured, the catch would be subsampled as necessary. No catch would be retained for longer than needed to conduct sampling and no finfish or scallop catch would be landed for sale. Table 1, below contains an estimate of the finfish catch anticipated for the project.

TABLE 1—CFF EXTENDED LINK APRON PROJECT CATCH ESTIMATES

Species	Scientific name	Number	Weight (lbs)	Weight (kg)
NE Skate Complex (excluding barndoor skate)	<i>Rajidae</i> Species	56,250	100,000	45,359
Barndoor Skate	<i>Dipturus laevis</i>	375	500	226
Summer Flounder	<i>Paralichthys dentatus</i>	75	150	68
Winter Flounder	<i>Pseudopleuronectes americanus</i>	225	500	226
Yellowtail Flounder	<i>Limanda ferruginea</i>	1,500	1,500	680
Windowpane Flounder	<i>Scophthalmus aquosus</i>	1,500	1,500	680
Monkfish	<i>Lophius americanus</i>	1,750	3,500	1,587

CFF needs these exemptions to allow them to conduct experimental dredge towing without being charged DAS, and to deploy gear in closed access areas where concentrations of primary bycatch species are sufficiently high to provide statistically robust results. Participating vessels need crew size waivers to accommodate science personnel, and possession waivers will enable researchers to conduct finfish sampling activities. The project would be exempt from the sea scallop observer program requirements because activities conducted on the trip are not consistent with normal fishing operations.

If approved, the applicant may request 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 have minimal impacts that do not change the scope or impact of the initially approved EFP request. Any fishing activity conducted outside the scope of the exempted fishing activity would be prohibited.

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

Dated: May 3, 2017.

Karen H. Abrams,

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

[FR Doc. 2017-09280 Filed 5-5-17; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XF359

Fisheries of the South Atlantic; Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review (SEDAR); Public Meeting

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

ACTION: Notice of SEDAR 50 Assessment Workshop for Atlantic blueline tilefish.

SUMMARY: The SEDAR 50 assessment of the Atlantic stock of blueline tilefish

will consist of a series of workshops and webinars: Stock ID Work Group Meeting; Data Workshop; Assessment Workshop and Webinars; and a Review Workshop. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION**.

DATES: The SEDAR 50 Assessment Workshop will be held on May 23–25, 2017, from 8:30 a.m. until 6 p.m. and May 26, 2017, from 8:30 a.m. until 1 p.m. The established times may be adjusted as necessary to accommodate the timeline completion of discussion relevant to the assessment process. Such adjustments may result in the meeting be extended from, or completed prior to the time established by this notice. Additional Assessment Webinars and the Review Workshop dates and times will publish in a subsequent issue in the **Federal Register**.

ADDRESSES:

Meeting address: The SEDAR 50 Assessment Workshop will be held at the Doubletree by Hilton Atlantic Beach Oceanfront Hotel, 2712 West Fort Macon Road, Atlantic Beach, NC 28512; phone: (252) 240–1155.

SEDAR address: South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, 4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201, N. Charleston, SC 29405; www.sedarweb.org.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Julia Byrd, SEDAR Coordinator, 4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201, North Charleston, SC 29405; phone: (843) 571–4366; email: julia.byrd@safmc.net.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, and Caribbean Fishery Management Councils, in conjunction with NOAA Fisheries and the Atlantic and Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commissions, have implemented the Southeast Data, Assessment and Review (SEDAR) process, a multi-step method for determining the status of fish stocks in the Southeast Region. SEDAR is a three-step process including: (1) Data Workshop; (2) Assessment Process utilizing a workshop and/or webinars; and (3) Review Workshop. The product of the Data Workshop is a data report which compiles and evaluates potential datasets and recommends which datasets are appropriate for assessment analyses. The product of the Assessment Process is a stock assessment report which describes the fisheries, evaluates the status of the stock, estimates biological benchmarks, projects future population conditions, and recommends research and monitoring needs. The assessment is independently peer reviewed at the Review Workshop. The product of the Review Workshop is a

summary documenting panel opinions regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the stock assessment and input data. Participants for SEDAR Workshops are appointed by the Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, and Caribbean Fishery Management Councils and NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office, Highly Migratory Species Management Division, and Southeast Fisheries Science Center. Participants include: Data collectors and database managers; stock assessment scientists, biologists, and researchers; constituency representatives including fishermen, environmentalists, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs); international experts; and staff of Councils, Commissions, and state and federal agencies.

The items of discussion at the Assessment Workshop are as follows:

1. Participants will use datasets provided by the Data Workshop to develop population models to evaluate stock status, estimate population benchmarks and Sustainable Fisheries Act criteria, and project future conditions, as specified in the Terms of Reference.

2. Participants will recommend the most appropriate methods and configurations for determining stock status and estimating population parameters.

3. Participants will prepare a workshop report, compare and contrast various assessment approaches, and determine whether the assessments are adequate for submission to the review panel.

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 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, provided the public has been notified of the intent to take final action to address the emergency.

Special Accommodations

This meeting is accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for auxiliary aids should be directed to the SAFMC office (see **ADDRESSES**) at least 10 business days prior to the meeting.

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

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

Dated: May 3, 2017.

Tracey L. Thompson,

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

[FR Doc. 2017–09222 Filed 5–5–17; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648–XF379

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

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

ACTION: Notice; request for comments.

SUMMARY: The Assistant Regional Administrator for Sustainable Fisheries, Greater Atlantic Region, NMFS, has made a preliminary determination that an Exempted Fishing Permit application from the University of Rhode Island to conduct flatfish bycatch reduction in the limited access general category scallop fishery contains all of the required information and warrants further consideration.

Regulations under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act require publication of this notice intended to provide interested parties the opportunity to comment on applications for proposed Exempted Fishing Permits.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before May 23, 2017.

ADDRESSES: You may submit written comments by any of the following methods:

- *Email:* nmfs.gar.efp@noaa.gov. Include in the subject line “URI Gear Research EFP.”
- *Mail:* John K. Bullard, Regional Administrator, NMFS, Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office, 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930. Mark the outside of the envelope “Comments on URI Gear Research EFP.”

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Shannah Jaburek, Fisheries Management Specialist, 978–282–8456.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The University of Rhode Island submitted a complete application for an EFP on February 23, 2017, in support of research associated with a 2016 Bycatch Reduction Engineering Program grant titled “The Flatfish Deflector Bar: Excluding Flatfish from Scallop Dredges