

Dated: August 30, 2023.

**Rey Israel Marquez,**

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

[FR Doc. 2023-19097 Filed 9-1-23; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3510-22-P**

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

[RTID 0648-XD314]

**New England Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting**

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

**ACTION:** Notice of public meeting.

**SUMMARY:** The New England Fishery Management Council (Council) is scheduling a hybrid meeting of its Scallop Committee to consider actions affecting New England fisheries in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ). Recommendations from this group will be brought to the full Council for formal consideration and action, if appropriate.

**DATES:** This meeting will be held on Thursday, September 21, 2023, at 9 a.m.

**ADDRESSES:**

*Meeting address:* This meeting will be held at the Radisson Airport Hotel, 2081 Post Road, Warwick, RI 02886; telephone: (401) 298-2294.

*Webinar registration URL information:* <https://attendeegotowebinar.com/register/4549480481976411992>.

*Council address:* New England Fishery Management Council, 50 Water Street, Mill 2, Newburyport, MA 01950.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Cate O'Keefe, Ph.D., Executive Director, New England Fishery Management Council; telephone: (978) 465-0492.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

**Agenda**

The Committee will discuss Framework 38—Review results of 2023 scallop surveys, and preliminary projections. The primary focus of this meeting will be to develop input on the range of potential specification alternatives for FY 2024 and FY 2025. The action will set ABC/ACLs, days-at-sea, access area allocations, total allowable landings for the Northern Gulf of Maine (NGOM) management area, targets for General Category incidental catch, General Category access area trips and trip accounting, and set-asides for the observer and research programs for

fishing year 2024 and default specifications for fishing year 2025. They also plan to discuss the Northern Edge Action—Review work in response to tasking. Discuss possible measures for development in a Northern Edge Habitat Scallop Framework. Also on the agenda is work priorities (Advisory Panel and Committee Only)—Receive updates on the progress toward 2023 work priorities and Committee tasking. Provide input on the range of possible 2024 scallop work priorities. Other business will be discussed, if necessary.

Although non-emergency issues not contained on the agenda may come before this Council for discussion, those issues may not be the subject of formal action during this meeting. Council 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 Act, provided the public has been notified of the Council's intent to take final action to address the emergency. The public also should be aware that the meeting will be recorded. Consistent with 16 U.S.C. 1852, a copy of the recording is available upon request.

**Special Accommodations**

This meeting is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Cate O'Keefe, Ph.D., Executive Director, at (978) 465-0492, at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.

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

Dated: August 30, 2023.

**Rey Israel Marquez,**

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

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**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

[RTID 0648-XD308]

**Gulf of Mexico 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 Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) will hold a one-day in-person meeting of its Ecosystem Technical Committee (ETC).

**DATES:** The meeting will be held Thursday, September 21, 2023; 8:30 a.m.—4:30 p.m., EDT.

**ADDRESSES:** The meeting will take place at the Gulf Council office. Registration information will be available on the Council's website by visiting [www.gulfcouncil.org](http://www.gulfcouncil.org) and clicking on the "meeting tab".

*Council address:* Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, 4107 W. Spruce Street, Suite 200, Tampa, FL 33607; telephone: (813) 348-1630.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Dr. Natasha Mendez, Fishery Biologist, Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council; email: [natasha.mendez@gulfcouncil.org](mailto:natasha.mendez@gulfcouncil.org); telephone: (813) 348-1630.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

**Thursday, September 21, 2023; 8:30 a.m.—4:30 p.m., EDT**

The meeting will begin with Introductions and Adoption of Agenda, Approval of Minutes and Meeting Summary from the April 19–20, 2023 meeting and a review of the Scope of Work. The ETC will discuss the development of the Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP) for the Gulf of Mexico, review the draft updates to the Fishery Ecosystem Issue (FEI) Loop, and provide recommendations.

Following, the ETC will discuss the assignment to develop a method to prioritize FEIs and provide recommendations. The ETC will also revisit the initially identified potential list of FEIs for the Council to consider.

Lastly, the ETC will receive public comment at the end of the day, and discuss any items under Other Business.—Meeting Adjourns

The meeting will also be broadcast via webinar. You may register for the webinar by visiting [www.gulfcouncil.org](http://www.gulfcouncil.org) and clicking on the Technical meeting on the calendar.

The Agenda is subject to change, and the latest version along with other meeting materials will be posted on [www.gulfcouncil.org](http://www.gulfcouncil.org) as they become available.

Although other non-emergency issues not on the agenda may come before the Committee for discussion, in accordance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, those issues may not be the subject of formal action during this meeting. Actions of the Committee will be restricted to those issues specifically identified in the agenda 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 action to address the emergency.

### Special Accommodations

The meeting is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aid should be directed to Kathy Pereira, (813) 348-1630, at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.

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

Dated: August 29, 2023.

### Rey Israel Marquez,

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

[FR Doc. 2023-19002 Filed 9-1-23; 8:45 am]

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### Patent and Trademark Office

[Docket No. PTO-T-2023-0037]

### Requiring Identity Verification for Attorney-Sponsored Accounts

**AGENCY:** United States Patent and Trademark Office, U.S. Department of Commerce.

**ACTION:** Notice.

**SUMMARY:** The United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) announces that beginning on January 20, 2024, all existing and new attorney support staff with an attorney-sponsored *USPTO.gov* account will be required to verify their identity to access trademark filing systems. The USPTO is making this change after discovering that some U.S.-licensed attorneys have sponsored accounts for individuals who are not directly supervised attorney support staff, and that many of these sponsored accounts appear to be shared by multiple foreign agents and attorneys. These actions violate the Trademark Verified *USPTO.gov* Account Agreement (Agreement).

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Robert Lavache, Office of the Deputy Commissioner for Trademark Examination Policy, USPTO, at 571-272-5881. You can also send inquiries to [TMFRNotices@uspto.gov](mailto:TMFRNotices@uspto.gov).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** In late 2019, as part of the USPTO's continuing efforts to protect the integrity of the U.S. trademark register, and to better protect its customers from scams and other fraudulent activities related to the trademark register, the USPTO began requiring customers to create a *USPTO.gov* account to access and submit electronic trademark forms. This enabled the USPTO to monitor trademark filing behavior and aided in

enforcing the USPTO Trademark Rules of Practice regarding submissions in trademark matters. On August 6, 2022, the USPTO began requiring existing and new account holders who occupy one of the appropriate user roles, including owner, U.S.-licensed attorney, Canadian attorney, or Canadian agent, to verify their identity. *See* Trademarks *USPTO.gov* Account ID Verification Program (87 FR 41114). The USPTO also offered a user role for sponsored attorney support staff to establish *USPTO.gov* accounts when sponsored by a supervising U.S.-licensed (or a reciprocally recognized Canadian) attorney, and at the time did not require identity verification for sponsored support staff accounts. *See* 87 FR 41114.

Since establishing the sponsored staff user roles, the USPTO has discovered that some U.S.-licensed attorneys have sponsored accounts for individuals who are not directly supervised attorney support staff, which violates the Agreement that applies to all *USPTO.gov* account holders. Many of these sponsored accounts appear to be used by multiple foreign agents and attorneys who file thousands of trademark applications involving violations of the USPTO's Trademark Rules of Practice, including the rules on signatures and certifications. Because the sponsored account user role has been subject to abuse that has undermined the integrity of the trademark register and such abuse can be significantly curtailed by requiring identity verification of sponsored account holders, the USPTO will now require all existing and new attorney support staff who are *USPTO.gov* account holders to verify their identity. On October 14, 2023, the USPTO will make identity verification available to attorney support staff account holders. It will become mandatory for such account holders on January 20, 2024. Requiring identity verification of sponsored accounts will help enforce the "one person, one account" rule, better enable the USPTO to restrict non-attorneys from submitting trademark filings, and prevent rule violations by filing entities and other unauthorized users. It will also allow the USPTO to better track and eliminate the use of sponsored accounts created for unsupervised use by non-attorney entities.

Trademark applicants and registrants, or their attorneys and support staff, must register for and use a *USPTO.gov* account to access and submit trademark application and maintenance filings with the USPTO. Users of a *USPTO.gov* account and any other USPTO web page or system are required to comply with

the Terms of Use for USPTO web pages. Further, to file trademark documents electronically, users must have their identities verified, and are further bound by the Agreement. A verified account can only be connected to one *USPTO.gov* trademark account.

Once qualified U.S.-licensed attorneys have a trademark verified *USPTO.gov* account, they may sponsor the *USPTO.gov* accounts of directly supervised support staff. Attorneys who abuse the terms of sponsorship may have their sponsorship privileges—and potentially their own verified accounts—revoked. However, under the current system, support staff can simply create new accounts using unverified information and seek attorney sponsorship again, sometimes by the same attorney. Requiring identity verification of sponsored accounts will allow the USPTO to consistently enforce the Agreement and ensure that a user of a sponsored account cannot create multiple accounts or create a new account and again be sponsored.

The following examples demonstrate the impact of the problems caused by the inappropriate use of sponsored accounts. In one instance of abuse, an attorney sponsored more than 30 different accounts used by individuals not under their direct supervision, and perhaps not even personally known to the attorney. In another example, an attorney sponsored multiple accounts for use by non-attorney trademark preparation or filing entities, which are not authorized to practice law, file submissions for clients, or represent parties before the USPTO in trademark matters. Several of these accounts have also been connected to known scams that have defrauded many trademark applicants. Each of these behaviors violates the terms of the Agreement to which each of these attorneys consented. In addition, some law firms are creating institutional accounts that appear to be intended for use by multiple people under generic names such as "Admin Support." This practice impedes the ability of the USPTO to maintain an accurate filing history and violates the Agreement, even if no improper activities are intended.

Under the revised procedures, both existing and new sponsored attorney support staff *USPTO.gov* account holders will need to verify their identity, using either the electronic or paper process, to access the Trademark Electronic Application System (TEAS). Identity verification will become available on October 14, 2023, for attorney support staff account holders to verify their identities. Existing unverified sponsored attorney support