

FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT below) to request an invitation providing webinar access information. Please request webinar invitations at least 24 hours in advance of each webinar.

SEDAR address: 4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201, North Charleston, SC 29405.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Julie A. Neer, SEDAR Coordinator; (843) 571-4366; email: Julie.neer@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 multi-step process including: (1) Data Workshop, (2) a series of assessment webinars, and (3) A Review Workshop. The product of the Data Workshop is a report that compiles and evaluates potential datasets and recommends which datasets are appropriate for assessment analyses. The assessment webinars produce a report that describes the fisheries, evaluates the status of the stock, estimates biological benchmarks, projects future population conditions, and recommends research and monitoring needs. The product of the Review Workshop is an Assessment 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, HMS 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 NGO's; International experts; and staff of Councils, Commissions, and state and federal agencies.

The items of discussion during the webinar are as follows:

Panelists will review and discuss initial assessment modeling to date.

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

The meeting is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to the Council office (see **ADDRESSES**) at least 5 business days prior to each workshop.

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

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

Dated: March 15, 2024.

Rey Israel Marquez,

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

[FR Doc. 2024-05875 Filed 3-19-24; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Patent and Trademark Office

[Docket No. PTO-P-2023-0045]

Resources for Examining Means-Plus-Function and Step-Plus-Function Claim Limitations

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

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) issued a memorandum to the patent examining corps to assist patent examiners in addressing means-plus-function and step-plus-function claim limitations, and to create a clearer record for the applicant, the public, and the courts. The issued memorandum will help ensure consistent analysis by USPTO employees in addressing means-plus-function and step-plus-function limitations and will result in clearer communications to applicants from the USPTO as to the interpretation of means-plus-function and step-plus-function limitations and any related deficiencies. Clearer USPTO communications provide both the applicant and the public with notice as to the claim interpretation used by the patent examiner during prosecution, and if the applicant intends a different claim interpretation, the issue can be clarified early in prosecution.

DATES: Comment Deadline: Written comments must be received on or before June 18, 2024, to ensure consideration.

ADDRESSES: Comments must be submitted through the Federal

eRulemaking Portal at www.regulations.gov. To submit comments via the portal, enter docket number PTO-P-2023-0045 on the homepage and select "Search." The site will provide a search results page listing all documents associated with this docket. Find a reference to this document and select the "Comment" icon, complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments. Attachments to electronic comments will be accepted in Adobe® portable document format (PDF) or Microsoft Word® format. Because comments will be made available for public inspection, information that the submitter does not desire to make public, such as an address or phone number, should not be included in the comments.

Visit the Federal eRulemaking Portal for additional instructions on providing comments via the portal. If electronic submission of comments is not feasible due to a lack of access to a computer and/or the internet, please contact the USPTO using the contact information below for special instructions.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Carolyn Kosowski, Senior Legal Advisor, Office of Patent Legal Administration, Office of the Deputy Commissioner for Patents, at Carolyn.Kosowski@uspto.gov or 571-272-7755; or Brannon Smith, Legal Advisor, Office of Patent Legal Administration, Office of the Deputy Commissioner for Patents, at Brannon.Smith@uspto.gov or 571-270-1601.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On March 18, 2024, the USPTO issued a memorandum to the patent examining corps titled "Resources for Examining Means-Plus-Function and Step-Plus-Function Claim Limitations (35 U.S.C. 112(f))" (memorandum). The memorandum is available at www.uspto.gov/patents/laws/examination-policy/memoranda-examining-corps.

As background, means-plus-function limitations appear in many claims across a wide variety of technologies, while step-plus-function limitations appear less frequently. It is critical to proper examination that patent examiners appreciate the unique statutory construction of means-plus-function and step-plus-function limitations and make the record clear as to the same. It is also incumbent upon patent examiners to make the prosecution history record clear for applicants, the public, and the courts (and for the USPTO for any post-grant determinations) when claims are examined under a means-plus-function

or step-plus-function construction, as the invocation of 35 U.S.C. 112(f) affects claim scope. Drafting claims with limitations that comply with 35 U.S.C. 112(f) can be beneficial to applicants by allowing them to recite a function in a claim and rely on the specification for the corresponding structure, material, or acts that perform the function and equivalents to the disclosed structure, material, or acts. This technique permits the claim drafter to avoid specific identification of the means or step for performing a claimed function in the claim itself by offering a shorthand that can point to a more robust description of the means or step in the specification.

When a patent examiner determines that, under the broadest reasonable interpretation of a claim, a limitation invokes 35 U.S.C. 112(f), the limitation must be limited to the structure, material, or acts described in the specification as performing the entire claimed function and equivalents to the disclosed structure, material, or acts. As a result, 35 U.S.C. 112(f) limitations will, in some cases, be afforded a narrower interpretation than a limitation that is not crafted in means-plus-function format. This is an important distinction when searching for and applying prior art. The memorandum highlights the special considerations for the examination of claims with 35 U.S.C. 112(f) limitations.

The memorandum also reminds patent examiners that the Manual of Patent Examining Procedure (MPEP) (9th Edition, Rev. 07.2022, February 2023) includes the latest examination guidance concerning 35 U.S.C. 112(f) in sections 2181–2187. The memorandum to patent examiners provides a summary of important points related to examining claims having 35 U.S.C. 112(f) limitations and provides the specific MPEP sections noted for more thorough information on each topic. The memorandum addresses: (1) the applicability of 35 U.S.C. 112(f); (2) claim interpretation and the importance of a clear record; and (3) adequate support, specifically to satisfy the requirements of definiteness, written description, and enablement.

Additionally, the memorandum explains that refresher training on 35 U.S.C. 112(f) is available to patent examiners. Training is also available to the public at www.uspto.gov/patents/laws/examination-policy/examination-guidance-and-training-materials.

Feedback on 35 U.S.C. 112(f) guidance is welcome. Instructions for

submitting feedback are provided in the **ADDRESSES** section of this notice.

Katherine K. Vidal,

Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property and Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office.

[FR Doc. 2024–05798 Filed 3–19–24; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–16–P

COMMODITY FUTURES TRADING COMMISSION

Agricultural Advisory Committee

AGENCY: Commodity Futures Trading Commission.

ACTION: Notice of meeting.

SUMMARY: The Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) announces that on April 11, 2024, from 9:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. (Central Daylight Time), the Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC or Committee) will hold an in-person public meeting at the Sheraton Overland Park Hotel in Overland Park, KS, with options for the public to attend virtually. At this meeting, the AAC will discuss topics related to the agricultural economy and recent developments in the agricultural derivatives markets.

DATES: The meeting will be held on April 11, 2024, from 9:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. (Central Daylight Time). Members of the public who wish to submit written statements in connection with the meeting should submit them by April 18, 2024.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will take place at the Sheraton Overland Park Hotel, 6100 College Blvd., Overland Park, KS. You may submit public comments, identified by “Agricultural Advisory Committee,” through the CFTC website at <https://comments.cftc.gov>. Follow the instructions for submitting comments through the Comments Online process on the website. If you are unable to submit comments online, contact Swati Shah, Designated Federal Officer, via the contact information listed below to discuss alternate means of submitting your comments. Any statements submitted in connection with the committee meeting will be made available to the public, including publication on the CFTC website, <https://www.cftc.gov>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Swati Shah, AAC Designated Federal Officer, Commodity Futures Trading Commission, Three Lafayette Centre, 1155 21st Street NW, Washington, DC; (202) 418–5042; or aac@cftc.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The meeting will be open to the public with seating on a first-come, first-served

basis. Members of the public may also listen to the meeting by telephone by calling a domestic or international toll or toll-free number to connect to a live, listen-only audio feed. Call-in participants should be prepared to provide their first name, last name, and affiliation.

Domestic Toll-Free Numbers: 833–568–8864 or 833–435–1820.

Domestic Toll Numbers: 1–669–254–5252 or 1–646–964 1167 or 1–646–828–7666 or 1–669–216–1590 or 1–415–449–4000 or 1–551–285–1373.

International Toll- and Toll-Free Numbers: Will be posted on the CFTC’s website, <https://www.cftc.gov>, on the page for the meeting, under Related Links.

Call-In/Webinar ID: 160 831 3224.

Pass Code/Pin Code: 031806.

Members of the public may also view a live webcast of the meeting via the <http://www.cftc.gov/> website. The meeting agenda may change to accommodate other Committee priorities. For agenda updates, please visit <https://www.cftc.gov/About/AdvisoryCommittees/AAC>.

After the meeting, a transcript of the meeting will be published through a link on the CFTC’s website, <http://www.cftc.gov>. Persons requiring special accommodations to attend the meeting because of a disability should notify the contact person above.

(Authority: 5 U.S.C. 1009(a)(2).)

Dated: March 14, 2024.

Robert Sidman,

Deputy Secretary of the Commission.

[FR Doc. 2024–05819 Filed 3–19–24; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6351–01–P

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Presidential Advisory Commission on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Black Americans

AGENCY: White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Black Americans, Office of the Secretary, Department of Education.

ACTION: Announcement of an open meeting.

SUMMARY: This notice sets forth the agenda for the April 4–5, 2024, open meeting of the Presidential Advisory Commission on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Black Americans (PAC) and provides information to members of the public about how to attend the meeting and submit written comments related to the work of the PAC.