

any new regulations that may affect harbor porpoise or the implementation of the HPTRP and evaluate whether management measures need to be changed at that time. NMFS intends to reconvene the TRTs semiannually during the first year of plan implementation in order to track the HPTRP's progress toward the 6-month MMPA PBR goal.

This action is exempt from review under E.O. 12866.

Dated December 30, 1998.

**Andrew A. Rosenberg,**

*Deputy Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.*

[FR Doc. 99-138 Filed 1-4-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-F

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

#### 50 CFR Part 648

[I.D. 122498C]

RIN 0648-AL31

#### **Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Amendment 9 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan (FMP) Amendments to Address the Sustainable Fisheries Act Requirements and Other Measures**

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

**ACTION:** Notice of availability of an amendment to a fishery management plan; request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS announces that the New England Fishery Management Council has submitted Amendment 9 to the Northeast (NE) Multispecies Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Secretarial review and is requesting comments from the public. Amendment 9 addresses new Sustainable Fisheries Act requirements for NE multispecies, among other measures.

**DATES:** Comments must be received on or before March 8, 1999.

**ADDRESSES:** Comments on this proposed rule should be sent to Jon C. Rittgers, Acting Regional Administrator, 1 Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930. Mark the outside of the envelope, "Comments on Proposed Rule for Amendment 9 to the NE Multispecies FMP."

Copies of Amendment 9, the regulatory impact review, and the environmental assessment are available from Paul J. Howard, Executive Director, New England Fishery Management Council, 5 Broadway, Saugus, MA 01906-1036.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Susan A. Murphy, Fishery Policy Analyst, 978-281-9252.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** If approved, Amendment 9 would: (1) Include Atlantic halibut in the NE Multispecies FMP; (2) Establish new or revised overfishing definitions for cod, haddock, pollock, redfish, white hake, yellowtail flounder, windowpane flounder, winter flounder, American

plaice, witch flounder, Atlantic halibut, and ocean pout; (3) revise specifications of optimum yield; (4) add a framework process to allow for aquaculture projects and modifications to the overfishing definitions; (5) postpone the Vessel Monitoring System beyond May 1999; (6) prohibit brush-sweep trawl gear when fishing for multispecies; (7) increase the winter flounder minimum fish size to 13 inches; and (8) implement a one-fish halibut possession limit of 36 inches or greater.

A proposed rule that would implement Amendment 9 may be published in the **Federal Register** for public comment, following NMFS' evaluation of the proposed rule under the procedures of the Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Conservation and Management Act. Public comments on the proposed rule must be received by the end of the comment period on Amendment 9 in order to be considered in the approval/disapproval decision on the FMP amendment. All comments received by March 8, 1999, whether specifically directed to the FMP amendment or the proposed rule, will be considered in the approval/disapproval decision. Comments received after that date will not be considered in the approval/disapproval decision on the FMP amendment.

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

Dated: December 29, 1998.

**Gary C. Matlock,**

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

[FR Doc. 98-34833 Filed 12-30-98; 3:06 pm]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-F