

will be located 300 ft (91 m) from the most western tip of Castro Rocks. This exclusion zone will be restricted as a controlled access area and will be marked off with buoys and warning signs for the entire year.

Monitoring

NMFS will require CALTRANS to monitor the impact of seismic retrofit construction activities on harbor seals at Castro Rocks. Monitoring will be conducted by one or more NMFS-approved monitors. CALTRANS is to monitor at least one additional harbor seal haulout within San Francisco Bay to evaluate whether harbor seals use alternative hauling-out areas as a result of seismic retrofit disturbance at Castro Rocks.

The monitoring protocol will be divided into the Work Period Phase (August 1 through February 14) and the Closure Period Phase (February 15 through July 31). During the Work Period Phase and Closure Period Phase, the monitor(s) will conduct observations of seal behavior at least 3 days/week for approximately one tidal cycle each day at Castro Rocks. The following data will be recorded: (1) Number of seals on site; (2) date; (3) time; (4) tidal height; (5) number of adults, subadults, and pups; (6) number of individuals with red pelage; (7) number of females and males; (8) number of molting seals; and (9) details of any observed disturbances. Concurrently, the monitor(s) will record general construction activity, location, duration, and noise levels. At least 2 nights/week, the monitor will conduct a harbor seal census after midnight at Castro Rocks. In addition, during the Work Period Phase and prior to any construction between piers 52 and 57, inclusive, the monitor(s) will conduct baseline observations of seal behavior once a day for a period of 5 consecutive days immediately before the initiation of construction in the area to establish pre-construction behavioral patterns. During the Work Period and Closure Period Phases, the monitor(s) will conduct observations of seal behavior at the alternative San Francisco Bay harbor seal haulout at least 3 days/week (Work Period) and 2 days/week (Closure Period), during a low tide.

In addition, NMFS proposes to require that, immediately following the completion of the seismic retrofit construction of the Bridge, the monitor(s) will conduct observations of seal behavior at least 5 days/week for approximately 1 tidal cycle (high tide to high tide) each day, for one week/month during the months of April, July, October, and January. At least 2 nights/week, the monitor will conduct an

additional harbor seal census after midnight.

Reporting

NMFS proposes to require CALTRANS to provide weekly reports to the Southwest Regional Administrator, NMFS, including a summary of the previous week's monitoring activities and an estimate of the number of harbor seals that may have been disturbed as a result of seismic retrofit construction activities. These reports will provide dates, time, tidal height, maximum number of harbor seals ashore, number of adults and sub-adults, number of females/males, number of redcoats, and any observed disturbances. A description of retrofit activities at the time of observation and any sound pressure levels measurements made at the haulout will also be provided.

A draft final report must be submitted to the Southwest Regional Administrator no less than 90 days before the expiration of the CALTRANS IHA. A final report must be submitted to the Southwest Regional Administrator within 30 days after receiving comments from the Regional Administrator on the draft final report.

CALTRANS will provide NMFS with a follow-up report on the post-construction monitoring activities within 18 months of project completion in order to evaluate whether haul-out patterns are similar to the pre-retrofit haul-out patterns at Castro Rocks.

National Environmental Policy Act

NMFS prepared an EA in 1997 that concluded that the impacts of CALTRANS' seismic retrofit construction of the Bridge will not have a significant impact on the human environment. A copy of that EA is available upon request (see ADDRESSES).

Conclusions

NMFS has preliminarily determined that the short-term impact of a seismic retrofit construction of the Bridge will result, at worst, in a temporary modification in behavior by harbor seals and possibly by some California sea lions. While behavioral modifications, including temporarily vacating the haulout, may be made by these species to avoid the resultant noise, this action is expected to have a negligible impact on the animals. In addition, no take by injury and/or death is anticipated, and takes will be at the lowest level practicable due to incorporation of the mitigation measures mentioned earlier in this document.

Proposed Authorization

NMFS proposes to issue an incidental harassment authorization to CALTRANS for the possible harassment of small numbers of harbor seals and California sea lions incidental to seismic retrofit construction of the Bridge, provided the above mentioned mitigation, monitoring, and reporting requirements are incorporated. NMFS has preliminarily determined that the proposed activities would result in the harassment of only small numbers of harbor seals and possibly California sea lions and will have no more than a negligible impact on these marine mammal stocks.

Information Solicited

NMFS requests interested persons to submit comments, information, and suggestions concerning this request (see ADDRESSES).

Dated: February 9, 1999.

P. Michael Payne,

Acting Deputy Director, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.
[FR Doc. 99-3681 Filed 2-12-99; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 020999C]

Caribbean Fishery Management Council; Public Meetings

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

ACTION: Notice of public meetings.

SUMMARY: The Caribbean Fishery Management Council's Advisory Panel (AP) and Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) will hold meetings.

DATES: The AP meeting will be held on March 2, 1999, and the SSC meeting will be held on March 3, 1999.

ADDRESSES: The AP meeting will be held at the Colony Hotel in Isla Verde, Carolina, PR. The SSC meeting will be held at the Villa Parguera Hotel, 304 St., Km. 3.3, La Parguera, Lajas, PR.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Caribbean Fishery Management Council, 268 Munoz Rivera Avenue, Suite 1108, San Juan, PR 00918-2577, telephone: (787) 766-5926.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The AP and the SSC will meet to discuss the items contained in the following agenda:

Conflict of Interest Presentation**Essential Fish Habitat**

Habitat Mapping Efforts

Sustainable Fisheries Act Fishery Management Plan (FMP)**Reef Fish FMP**

Overfishing Definition based on Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY)
Stock Assessment Needs

Queen Conch FMP Update

Monitoring Efforts

Coral FMP Update

Marine Conservation District
Monitoring Efforts
Report of SSC Meeting

Reef Fish FMP

Update
Overfishing Definition based on MSY

Other Issues

Trap Reduction Program
Seasonal Closure for Spiny Lobster Banning SCUBA (Reef fish)
The AP will convene on Tuesday March 2, 1999, from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The SSC will convene on March 3, 1999, from 10:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. The meetings are open to the public, and will be conducted in English. However, simultaneous interpretation (Spanish-English) will be available during the AP meeting (March 2, 1999). Fishers and other interested persons are invited to attend and participate with oral or written statements regarding agenda issues.

Although other issues not contained in this agenda may come before these groups 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. Action will be restricted to those issues specifically listed in this notice.

Special Accommodations

These meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. For more information or request for sign language interpretation and/or other auxiliary aids, please contact Mr. Miguel A. Rolon, Executive Director, Caribbean Fishery Management Council, 268 Munoz Rivera Avenue, Suite 1108, San Juan, PR 00918-2577, telephone: (787) 766-5926, at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.

Dated: February 9, 1999.

Bruce C. Morehead,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.
[FR Doc. 99-3683 Filed 2-12-99; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

[I.D. 020899D]

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council; Public Meetings

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

ACTION: Notice of public meetings.

SUMMARY: The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) will hold meetings of its Advisory Panel (AP) Selection, Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) Selection, Administrative Policy, Personnel, Reef Fish Management, Marine Reserves, and Vessel Monitoring Committees; and a Council Session.

DATES: The meetings will be held from March 1-4, 1999. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for specific dates and times.

ADDRESSES: The meetings will be held at the Baton Rouge Hilton, 5500 Hilton Avenue, Baton Rouge, LA; telephone: 225-924-5000.

Council address: Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, 3018 U.S. Highway 301 North, Suite 1000, Tampa, FL 33619.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Wayne E. Swingle, Executive Director, Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council; telephone: (813) 228-2815.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**Council Meeting Dates**

March 3, 1999, 1:00 p.m.—Council will convene.

March 3, 1999, 1:15 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.—Receive public testimony on the Draft Gag Regulatory Amendment Options Paper. The Gag Amendment includes alternatives for specification of a total allowable catch (TAC) for gag; minimum size limit increase for gag and black grouper from 20 to 24 inches total length; a two-fish recreational bag limit for gag as part of the existing five aggregate grouper bag limit; a zero bag limit of gag for the captain and crew of for-hire vessels; a commercial trip limit for gag; a closed season during peak gag spawning; and area closures at gag spawning aggregation locations.

March 3, 1999, 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.—Receive a report from the Reef Fish Management Committee.

March 4, 1999, 8:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.—(closed sessions)—Receive reports from the AP Selection, SSC Selection, and the Personnel Committees.

March 4, 1999, 10:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.—Receive a Council Report for the AP Selection, SSC Selection, and the Personnel Committees.

March 4, 1999, 10:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.—Receive a report from the Vessel Monitoring Committee.

March 4, 1999, 1:00 a.m. - 11:15 a.m.—Receive a report from the

Administrative Policy Committee.

March 4, 1999, 11:15 a.m. - 11:40 a.m.—Receive a report from the Marine Reserves Committee.

March 4, 1999, 11:30 a.m. - 11:50 a.m.—Receive the NMFS/Council policy meeting report.

11:50 a.m. - 12:00 noon—Receive the NOAA Strategic Planning Workshop report.

March 4, 1999, 2:00 noon - 12:15 p.m.—Receive a report on the NMFS/ Highly Migratory Species and Billfish AP meetings.

March 4, 1999, 12:15 p.m. - 12:30 p.m.—Receive enforcement reports.

March 4, 1999, 12:30 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.—Receive Director's reports.

March 4, 1999, 1:00 p.m.—Other Business: The Council may discuss a letter from the NMFS partially disapproving the Essential Fish Habitat plan amendment.

Committee Meeting Dates

March 1, 1999, 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon—(closed session)—Convene the AP Selection Committee to appoint AP members.

March 1, 1999, 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.—(closed session)—Convene the SSC Selection Committee to appoint SSC members.

March 1, 1999, 4:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.—Convene the Administrative Policy Committee to approve the revised Statement of Organization Practices and Procedures (SOPPS).

March 2, 1999, 8:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.—Convene the Reef Fish Management Committee to review the draft Gag Regulatory Amendment Options Paper and develop recommendations to the Council for final action. The recommendations will be considered by the Council on Wednesday, March 3, 1999. The Committee will also hear a status report on the red snapper regulatory amendment and may take action.

March 2, 1999, 12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.—Convene the Marine Reserves Committee to review a draft scoping document on marine reserves.

March 2, 1999, 2:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.—(closed session)—Convene the Personnel Committee to discuss selection of a fishery biologist.

March 3, 1999, 8:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.—Convene the Vessel Monitoring