

practical alternative. This approach will achieve species-specific conservation objectives if gillnets are not selective and if they take species in proportion to their abundance. Evidence to date supports this assumption.

Comment 66: A new SAR should have been produced for Hawaiian Monk Seals.

Response: The MMPA requires that new information be reviewed every year for all strategic stocks, but it only requires a new report if such a review indicates that the status of the stock has changed or can be more accurately determined. The review by NMFS (in collaboration with the Pacific Scientific Review Group, PSRG) indicated that the new information available in 1997 did not warrant a revision at that time. A new SAR for monk seals was reviewed at the Fall 1998 meeting of the PSRG and will be available soon for public comment.

Comment 67: The effects of the recent El Nino should be included in the reports for the Oregon and Washington coast and inland Washington stocks of Harbor seal, and the San Miguel Island stock of northern fur seal.

Response: The 1998 SARs include data only through the first half of 1997; therefore, no attempt is made to assess the impact of the 1997-98 El Nino. This information will be included in future revisions.

Comment 68: Regarding the inland Washington stock of harbor seal, NMFS should re-establish an observer program for treaty gillnet boats.

Response: Takes from the Northern Washington marine set gillnet fishery (treaty) and most segments of the Washington Puget Sound salmon set/drift gillnet fishery (treaty and non-treaty) are included in Table 1 and used to calculate the mortality for the stock. Also included in the table are additional data for the Washington Puget Sound salmon set/drift gillnet fishery, from fisher self-reports. Since the observer data are considered more reliable than the fisher self-reported data, the observer data was used in the mortality calculation.

Dated: February 12, 1999.

Hilda Diaz-Soltero,

*Director, Office of Protected Resources,
National Marine Fisheries Service.*

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 020999A]

Advisory Committee to the U.S. Section to the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT); Spring Species Working Group Meeting

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

ACTION: Notice of public meeting.

SUMMARY: The Advisory Committee to the U.S. Section to ICCAT announces its spring meeting with its Species Working Groups on March 9 and 10, 1999.

DATES: The open sessions of the Committee meeting will be held on March 9, 1999, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., and on March 10, 1999, from 8:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m., and from 11:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Closed sessions will be held on March 9, 1999, from 1 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., and on March 10, 1999, from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held at the Washington Hilton and Towers, 1919 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Washington, DC.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Kim Blankenbeker at (301) 713-2276.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Advisory Committee to the U.S. Section to ICCAT will meet in open session to receive and to discuss information on (1) 1998 ICCAT meeting results and U.S. implementation of ICCAT decisions, (2) NMFS and ICCAT research and monitoring activities, (3) the Precautionary Approach, (4) the upcoming meeting of ICCAT's Working Group on Allocation Criteria, (5) Advisory Committee operational issues, (6) the U.S. requirement to identify countries that are diminishing the effectiveness of ICCAT, (7) the results of the Committee's Species Working Groups meetings, and (8) other matters relating to the international management of ICCAT species. The public will have access to the open sessions of the meeting, but there will be no opportunity for public comment.

Sessions of the Advisory Committee's Species Working Groups will not be open to the public, but the results of the working group discussions will be reported to the full Advisory Committee during the Committee's afternoon open session on March 10.

Special Accommodations

The meeting locations are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Kim Blankenbeker at (301) 713-2276 at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.

Dated: Feb 12, 1999.

Gary Matlock,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 021299D]

New England 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 New England Fishery Management Council (Council) is scheduling a number of public meetings of its oversight committees and advisory panels in March, 1999 to consider actions affecting New England fisheries in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ). Recommendations from these groups will be brought to the full Council for formal consideration and action, if appropriate.

DATES: The meetings will be held between March 9 and March 26, 1999. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for specific dates and times.

ADDRESSES: Meetings will be held in Peabody, MA, and Mansfield, MA. See **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Paul J. Howard, Executive Director, New England Fishery Management Council; (781) 231-0422. Requests for special accommodations should be addressed to the New England Fishery Management Council, 5 Broadway, Saugus, MA 01906-1036; telephone: (781) 231-0422.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Meeting Dates and Agendas

Tuesday, March 9, 1999, 9:30 a.m.— Joint meeting of the Habitat Oversight Committee and Advisors

Location: Holiday Inn, One Newbury Street (Rt. 1 North), Peabody, MA 01960, Phone: (978) 535-4600; Fax: (978) 535-8238.

The committee and advisors will discuss and review habitat-related