

Dated: March 20, 2000.

Bruce C. Morehead,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 032000E]

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 public meetings of its Groundfish, Research Steering and Herring Committees in April, 2000. 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 April 11, 2000 and April 27, 2000. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for specific dates and times.

ADDRESSES: The meetings will be held in Mansfield and Danvers, MA. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for specific locations.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Paul J. Howard, Executive Director, New England Fishery Management Council; (978) 465-0492.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Meeting Dates and Agendas

Tuesday, April 11, 2000 at 9:30 a.m.— Groundfish Committee Meeting
Location: Holiday Inn, 31 Hampshire Street, Mansfield, MA 02048; telephone: (508) 339-2200.

The committee will continue development of management options for Amendment 13 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan (FMP). Agenda items include discussion of guidance received from the full Council concerning overfishing definitions and control rules. Current overfishing definitions and control rules for the multispecies complex will be reviewed and the assumptions and policy decisions in those rules examined. The committee will determine the biological goals of the amendment in light of these discussions. The committee also will

organize into subcommittees that will be tasked to develop specific management options for consideration by the full committee. These tasks will be based on broad approaches to management selected by the committee.

Tuesday, April 12, 2000, 9 a.m.— Research Steering Committee Meeting
Location: Sheraton Ferncroft Hotel, 50 Ferncroft Road, Danvers, MA 01923; telephone: (978) 777-2500.

The committee will discuss and establish a method to score concept papers received in response to a Request for Information (RFI) distributed by NMFS. The RFI was developed as part of a program to fund collaborative research projects developed by fishermen and scientists to investigate scientific and management questions related to groundfish management in the Northeast. The committee also will develop a procedure to evaluate scallop research proposals to be funded through the Total Allowable Catch set-aside approved by the Council in Framework 13 to the Atlantic Sea Scallop FMP. Additionally, if it is determined to be appropriate and time allows, the committee may begin review of the concept papers received in response to the RFI.

Tuesday, April 25, 2000, 9:00 a.m. and Wednesday, April 26, 2000, 8:30 a.m.— Research Steering Committee Meeting

Location: Sheraton Ferncroft Hotel, 50 Ferncroft Road, Danvers, MA 01923; telephone: (978) 777-2500.

The committee will review and evaluate concept papers submitted to NMFS in response to a Request for Information distributed by NMFS in early March. The RFI was developed as part of a program to fund collaborative research projects developed by fishermen and scientists to investigate scientific and management questions related to groundfish management in the Northeast. Results of this meeting will be discussed at the next full Council scheduled for May 3-4, 2000.

Thursday, April 27, 2000, 10:00 a.m.— Joint New England Fishery Management Council and Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) Herring Section Meeting
Location: Sheraton Ferncroft Hotel, 50 Ferncroft Road, Danvers, MA 01923; telephone: (978) 777-2500.

The two committees will review the comments received from the public during the scoping process for a limited entry or controlled access system for the Atlantic herring fishery. Based on this review, the committees will decide how to proceed in the development of such a system, and will develop a schedule for and provide initial direction to the

Plan Development Team (PDT) should they choose to continue development of a limited entry or controlled access system. The committees will discuss options for the protection of spawning herring and will decide whether to make any revisions to the spawning restrictions contained in the ASMFC management plan, and whether to recommend spawning restrictions for the Council's Atlantic Herring FMP. The committees will discuss the impact of the total allowable catch on industry sectors and will determine what action, if any, should be taken to insure the fixed gear sector has access to the fishery. The committees may also discuss the annual specification process and may provide direction to the PDT on how that process should proceed.

Although non-emergency issues not contained in this agenda may come before this Council for discussion, those issues may not be the subject of formal Council 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.

Special Accommodations

This meeting is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Paul J. Howard (see **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**) at least 5 days prior to the meeting dates.

Dated: March 21, 2000.

Bruce C. Morehead,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 032100A]

National Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks

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

ACTION: Notice of revised timeframe.

SUMMARY: On September 30, 1999, NMFS announced its intention to

develop a National Plan of Action (NPOA) pursuant to the endorsement of the International Plan of Action (IPOA) for the Conservation and Management of Sharks by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Committee on Fisheries (COFI) Ministerial Meeting in March 1999. Noting the increased concern about the expanding catches of sharks and their potential negative impacts on shark populations, this IPOA calls on COFI member states to develop voluntarily national plans to ensure the conservation and management of sharks for their long-term sustainable use. The United States has committed to reporting on the implementation of the NPOA to COFI, no later than the 25th COFI session in February 2001. This document provides a revised time frame for the completion of this NPOA.

ADDRESSES: Written comments should be sent to Karyl Brewster-Geisz, NOAA Fisheries / SF1, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Karyl Brewster-Geisz, Margo Schulze-Haugen, or Steve Meyers, 301-713-2347, or fax 301-713-1917.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The IPOA for the conservation and management of sharks was endorsed in principle at the 23rd FAO COFI session in February 1999 and also at the Fisheries Ministerial Meeting in March 1999. As with the two other IPOAs for seabirds and fishing capacity, the IPOA for sharks calls on members to develop voluntarily an NPOA on this issue.

On September 30, 1999, NMFS announced that the NPOA was currently under development, with a draft NPOA for sharks tentatively due for publication in the **Federal Register** in December, 1999, and full completion by February, 2000 (64 FR 52772). Unforeseen circumstances require NMFS to change the schedule on the availability of the draft and final NPOA. NMFS now tentatively expects to have a draft NPOA for sharks available for public review in June, 2000, and a final NPOA available in September, 2000.

Dated: March 21, 2000.

Gary C. Matlock,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 032000F]

North Pacific Fishery Management Council; Public Meetings

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

ACTION: Notice of public meetings of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council and its advisory committees.

SUMMARY: The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) and its advisory committees will hold public meetings.

DATES: The Council and its advisory committees will meet in Anchorage, AK the week of April 10, 2000. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for specific dates and times.

ADDRESSES: All meetings through Saturday, April 15, will be held at the Hilton Hotel, 500 W. Third Avenue, Anchorage, AK. On Sunday and Monday, April 16-17, the Council will meet at the Fourth Avenue Theater, 630 W. Fourth Avenue, in Anchorage.

Council address: North Pacific Fishery Management Council, 605 W. 4th Ave., Suite 306, Anchorage, AK 99501-2252.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Council staff, Phone: 907-271-2809.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Meeting Dates and Times

The Advisory Panel meeting will begin at 8:00 a.m., April 10, and continue through Thursday, April 13.

The Scientific Committee will begin at 9:00 a.m. on Monday, April 10, and continue through Tuesday, April 11.

The Council will begin their plenary session at 8:00 a.m. on Wednesday, April 12, continuing through Monday, April 17.

All meetings are open to the public except Executive Sessions which may be held during the week to discuss litigation and/or personnel matters.

Council:

The agenda for the Council's plenary session will include the following issues:

The Council may take appropriate action on any of the issues identified.

1. Reports
 - (a) Executive Director's Report.
 - (b) State Fisheries Report by Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game.
 - (c) NMFS Management Report.

(d) Enforcement and Surveillance reports by NMFS and the Coast Guard.

(e) Seabird Bycatch Report.

(f) Report on March meeting of the Alaska Board of Fisheries.

(g) Gulf of Alaska Ecosystems Management Report.

2. Halibut Charterboat Guideline Harvest Level/Individual Fishing Quotas (IFQ): Receive committee report on preliminary elements and options for potential IFQ system.

(a) Observer Program:

(b) Observer Committee report.

(c) Review of six regulatory amendments recommended by NMFS.

(d) Report on experimental fishing project for observer sampling methods.

3. Pacific cod license limitation endorsements: Final action.

4. Steller Sea Lions:

(a) Status reports on litigation, implementation of sea lion protective measures, and biological opinion number three.

(b) Extend emergency rule for sea lion protection measures.

5. American Fisheries Act:

(a) Action to extend emergency rules for 180 days.

(b) Status report on development of Environmental Impact Statement.

6. Halibut Subsistence: initial review of amendment.

7. Habitat Areas of Particular Concern: Final action on protection of invertebrates.

8. Groundfish Management:

(a) Review groundfish fishery management plan updates and review Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) scoping document.

(b) Status report on the groundfish specification process.

(c) Review Experimental Fishing Permit for halibut excluders.

9. Crab Management:

(a) Initial review of rebuilding plans for St. Matthew blue and Opilio crabs.

(b) Updates on crab cooperatives and permit buyback program.

Advisory Meetings:

Advisory Panel: With the exception of the reports listed under Item 1, the agenda for the Advisory Panel will mirror that of the Council listed above.

Scientific and Statistical Committee: The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) will address the following items on the Council agenda:

1. Observer Program issues.
2. Progress on the Groundfish SEIS.
3. Pacific cod license limitation endorsements.
4. Habitat areas of particular concern.
5. Crab rebuilding plans.
6. Review Experimental Fishing Permit for halibut excluders.