

submits that we have already provided interested parties sufficient time to prepare responses to the comments on the *Sixth FNPRM* and that an additional 60 days would constitute an unwarranted delay. It states that expedited decision making on the initial DTV Table of Allotments will facilitate the introduction of DTV services to the public and clarify the status of the broadcast television spectrum and its availability for reallocation. Motorola also submits that while it can appreciate the Group Owners' concerns regarding the permissible transmitting powers provided for their DTV stations, the ramifications of "service replication" have been apparent since the release of the *Sixth FNPRM* in mid-August. It therefore argues that a further delay of two months to address DTV planning factors is unnecessary. Motorola further states that it would not, however, be adverse to a more modest extension of perhaps 15 days, given the intervening holiday season and the large number of comments received in this proceeding.

5. On January 7, 1997, the Association of Federal Communications Consulting Engineers (AFCCE) requested that we extend the date for filing reply comments for at least six weeks. The AFCCE expressed a similar request for extension of time in its comments responding to the *Sixth FNPRM*. The AFCCE states that its objective is not to unduly delay this proceeding, but to request that sufficient time be allotted to the study of major technical issues prior to the adoption of technical standards for the allotment of DTV channels by the Commission. It also submits that it is reviewing the filings of other entities and plans to respond to technical comments where it deems appropriate.

6. In its comments responding to the *Sixth FNPRM*, the engineering consulting firm of du Treil, Lundin and Rackley (DLR) also expresses concerns regarding the significantly higher power that would be authorized for the DTV operations of existing VHF stations that would operate in the UHF band. DLR submits that it is not practical to try to replicate superior VHF propagation characteristics with brute force UHF power. To address this concern, it submits an alternative transition plan that would provide existing stations with DTV facilities that would replicate their existing Grade A contours and would return stations to their existing channels for permanent DTV operation after the transition. DLR requests that we consider a further extension of the date for filing reply comments of not less than 45 days in view of the complexity of these issues and the intervening holiday season. It further

states that, due to the extraordinary nature of this proceeding, we should designate a formal period in which to file comments responding to reply comments.

7. We agree with MSTV and Motorola that it is in the public interest to complete this proceeding and license DTV stations without unnecessary delay. At the same time, we believe that it is desirable to provide some additional time for the Group Owners, the AFCCE, DLR, and other interested parties to address in more detail the issues they have raised. We do not believe the approach suggested by MSTV that we accept late-filed comments for up to four weeks beyond the current date for filing reply comments is advisable. Rather, we believe that a two-week additional extension of the date for filing reply comments would provide an adequate period of time for broadcasters to submit additional information addressing the issues discussed in the Group Owners' and AFCCE's extension requests and DLR's comments without delaying our decision in this matter. This two week period will allow the development of a complete record on the matter of channel allotments for operation of digital TV service. We therefore are extending the date for filing reply comments to January 24, 1997. We also agree with MSTV that providing an additional period for parties to respond to reply comments would create unnecessary delay and therefore will not provide for acceptance of replies to reply comments, as requested by DLR.

8. Accordingly, it is ordered that the requests for extension of the time for filing reply comments submitted by the Group Owners, the AFCCE, and DLR ARE GRANTED to the extent indicated herein and that the date for filing reply comments relating to the *Sixth FNPRM* IS EXTENDED to January 24, 1997. This action is taken pursuant to authority provided in Sections 4(i) and 303(r) of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended, 47 U.S.C. §§154(i) and 303(r), and Sections 0.31, 0.241 and 1.46 of the Commission's rules, 47 CFR §§0.31, 0.241 and 1.46.

Federal Communications Commission.

William F. Caton,

Acting Secretary.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 678

[I.D. 010897B]

Atlantic Shark Fisheries

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

ACTION: Public hearings; extension of comment period.

SUMMARY: NMFS will hold public hearings to receive comments from fishery participants and other members of the public on a proposed rule that was published in the Federal Register on December 20, 1996. NMFS is also extending the comment period for the proposed rule.

DATES: Written comments must be received on or before January 24, 1997. All hearings will begin at 7 p.m., as follows:

1. January 22, 1997, in Tampa, FL.
2. January 22, 1997, in Fort Lauderdale, FL.
3. January 23, 1997, in Manteo, NC.
4. January 23, 1997, in Key West, FL.

ADDRESSES: Written comments and requests for special accommodation should be sent to William T. Hogarth, Chief, Highly Migratory Species Management Division (F/SF1), Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 14853, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

The hearings will be held at the following locations:

1. Tampa—Radisson Bay Harbor Inn (Chart Room), 7700 Courtenay Campbell Causeway, Tampa, FL 33607.
2. Fort Lauderdale—Holiday Inn Beach Galleria (Coral Ballroom), 999 North Atlantic Blvd., Fort Lauderdale, FL 33304.
3. Manteo—North Carolina Aquarium (Auditorium), Airport Road, Manteo, NC 27954.
4. Key West—Holiday Inn La Concha (The Top Room), 430 Duval Street, Key West, FL 33040.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: C. Michael Bailey or John Kelly, 301-713-2347; fax 301-713-1917.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NMFS has determined that it is necessary to conduct public hearings and that commenters have additional time to submit their comments on the proposed rule (61 FR 67295, December 20, 1996). Therefore, NMFS is extending the

comment period on Atlantic sharks from January 21, 1997 to January 24, 1997.

The proposed rule, as published, would reduce commercial quotas and recreational bag limits; establish a quota for small coastal sharks; prohibit the directed commercial fishing for, and landing or sale of, five species of sharks; establish a recreational tag-and-release only fishery for white sharks; prohibit filleting of sharks at sea; and restate the requirement for species-specific identification by all owners or operators, dealers, and tournament operators of all sharks landed.

This meeting is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to William T. Hogarth (see **ADDRESSES**) at least 4 days prior to the hearing date.

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

Dated: January 8, 1997.

Bruce Morehead,

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

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