

201–205, 215, 218, 220, 229, 254 and 410 that *notice is hereby given* of proposed amendments to Part 32 of the Commission's rules, 47 CFR part 32, as described in this *notice of proposed rulemaking*.

#### List of Subjects in 47 CFR Part 32

Uniform System of Accounts.

Federal Communications Commission.

**Magalie Roman Salas,**

*Secretary.*

[FR Doc. 97–32223 Filed 12–9–97; 8:45 am]

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

#### 50 CFR Parts 600 and 648

[I.D. 112897A]

#### Magnuson-Stevens Act Provisions; General Provisions for Domestic Fisheries; Applications for Experimental Fishing Permits (EFPs)

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

**ACTION:** Notification of experimental fishery proposal; request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS issues this notice to announce that the Regional Administrator, Northeast Region, NMFS is considering approval of an experimental fishing proposal that would allow vessels to conduct operations otherwise restricted by regulations governing the Fisheries of the Northeastern United States. The experimental fishery would involve fishing for, retention, and limited landing of Atlantic sea scallops with a modified sea scallop dredge in Southern New England and Mid-Atlantic Regulated Mesh Areas. Regulations under the Magnuson-Stevens Act provisions require publication of this notice to provide interested parties the opportunity to comment on the proposed experimental fishery.

**DATES:** Comments on this notice must be received by December 29, 1997.

**ADDRESSES:** Comments should be sent to Andrew A. Rosenberg, Ph. D., Regional Administrator, NMFS, Northeast Regional Office, 1 Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930. Mark on the outside of the envelope "Comments on Proposed Experimental Fishery."

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Peter Christopher, Fishery Management Specialist, 978–281–9288.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The Virginia Institute of Marine Science submitted an application for an EFP on October 17, 1997, to investigate summer flounder bycatch by Atlantic sea scallop dredges. An experimental dredge would be modified with large mesh on the upper portion of the dredge to allow for summer flounder escapement. Fishing activity would target a limited amount of Atlantic sea scallops in the Southern New England and Mid-Atlantic Regulated Mesh Areas.

The Virginia Institute of Marine Science would conduct experimental fishing activities on chartered fishing vessels. EFPs are required to exempt vessels from possession limits, gear restrictions, and days-at-sea restrictions of the Atlantic Sea Scallop Fishery Management Plan.

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

Dated: December 4, 1997.

**Gary C. Matlock,**

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

[FR Doc. 97–32337 Filed 12–9–97; 8:45 am]

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

#### 50 CFR Parts 600 and 648

[I.D. 112897B]

#### Magnuson-Stevens Act Provisions; General Provisions for Domestic Fisheries; Applications for Experimental Fishing Permits (EFPs)

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

**ACTION:** Notification of experimental fishery proposal; request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS issues this notice to announce that the Regional Administrator, Northeast Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), is considering approval of an experimental fishing proposal that would permit vessels to conduct operations otherwise restricted by regulations governing the Fisheries of the Northeastern United States. The experimental fishery would involve the possession and retention of *Crangon* shrimp (brown shrimp), including the possible capture and release of regulated multispecies, in the Gulf of Maine/ Georges Bank Regulated Mesh Area. Regulations under the Magnuson-Stevens Act provisions require publication of this notice to provide

interested parties the opportunity to comment on the proposed experimental fishery.

**DATES:** Comments on this notice must be received on or before December 29, 1997.

**ADDRESSES:** Comments should be sent to Andrew A. Rosenberg, Ph.D., Regional Administrator, NMFS, Northeast Regional Office, 1 Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930. Mark on the outside of the envelope "Comments on Proposed Experimental Fisheries."

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Bonnie VanPelt, Fishery Management Specialist, (978) 281–9244.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The Maine Department of Marine Resources (MEDMR) has been approved for a Saltonstall/Kennedy (S/K) Grant to investigate the feasibility of developing a 3-month winter *Crangon septemspinatus* shrimp (brown shrimp) fishery between Frenchman's Bay and Casco Bay, Maine, in nearshore and estuarine waters. The two main objectives of the proposed project are the use of gear technology to address regulatory species bycatch and the development of a sustainable fishery that will ease financial hardship by absorbing displaced groundfishing effort. New gears and fishing methods will be employed based on technology of a similar *Crangon* shrimp fishery that exists in Europe, as well as on a modification of the gear technology currently used in the northern shrimp fishery.

The MEDMR submitted an application for an EFP to conduct the proposed project on October 14, 1997. The experimental trawl surveys are proposed for January through June 1998. The proposed experiment will allow approximately three commercial fishing vessels to conduct gear trials using a *Crangon* otter trawl, an otter trawl of European design, and two beam trawl nets with mesh sizes of 20 mm. One otter trawl will be assembled with a Nordmore grate (physical separator) and the other with a bycatch reduction device known as a false upper (behavioral separator), while the beam trawl nets will contain a finfish excluder device called a sieve. Bar spacing of the Nordmore grate will be 1/2 inch (1.27 cm), smaller than the 1 inch (2.54 cm) now being used in the northern shrimp fishery. All trawl gear is designed to enable finfish to escape through a hole in the lower panel of the net. Experimental gear performance will be tested with control otter trawl nets of 20 mm stretched mesh with 1/4 inch (0.635 cm) mesh liners and 20 mm beam trawl nets. Trawl effectiveness will be

compared using a random block design and analysis of variance techniques. Five survey tows at each of the six designated sample areas will be conducted once a month from January through March and extended until June, if necessary. Sample stations will be limited to depths of less than 35 fathoms (19.13 m) within the project sample area. Finfish bycatch during the proposed winter sampling period is expected to be low as determined by previous finfish sampling surveys. Smelt, winter flounder, and sticklebacks are the species most likely to concentrate in the nearshore areas. Finfish bycatch will be documented and then discarded after some commercial finfish species stomach samples are taken. Although the survey tows are expected to collect limited numbers of regulated species, some level of entrapment may help assess the effectiveness of bycatch reduction devices and gear modifications. The survey will also help to determine population densities of both juvenile and commercially harvested adult *Crangon*, percent distribution within samples areas, and seasonal distribution patterns. All catches of *Crangon* will be frozen and saved for processing trials. Commercial sized *Crangon* will be processed by facilities in Maine that will handle the peeling, packaging, cooking, and presentation of product samples to foreign buyers to compare with European *Crangon* market products.

EFPs would be issued to the participating vessels to exempt them from the mesh size, minimum fish size, and days-at-sea restrictions of the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan.

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

Dated: December 4, 1997.

**Gary C. Matlock,**

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

[FR Doc. 97-32338 Filed 12-9-97; 8:45 am]

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

#### 50 CFR Part 622

[Docket No. ; I.D. 120497C]

RIN 0648-AK28

#### Fisheries of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic; Reef Fish Fishery of the Gulf of Mexico; Red Snapper Minimum Size Limit

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

**ACTION:** Proposed rule, request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS issues this proposed rule to implement the provisions of a regulatory amendment prepared by the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) in accordance with framework procedures for adjusting management measures of the Fishery Management Plan for the Reef Fish Resources of the Gulf of Mexico (FMP). This proposed rule would maintain the current minimum size limit for red snapper of 15 inches (38.1 cm), total length (TL). Under the present regulations, the minimum size limit would increase to 16 inches (40.6 cm), TL, on January 1, 1998. The intended effect of this proposed rule is to maximize the economic benefits from the red snapper resource within the constraints of the rebuilding program for this overfished resource.

**DATES:** Written comments must be received on or before December 29, 1997.

**ADDRESSES:** Comments on the proposed rule must be sent to Peter Eldridge, Southeast Regional Office, NMFS, 9721 Executive Center Drive N., St. Petersburg, FL 33702.

Requests for copies of the framework regulatory amendment, which includes an environmental assessment and a regulatory impact review (RIR) should be sent to the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, 3018 U.S. Highway 301 North, Suite 1000, Tampa, FL 33619-2266; Phone: 813-228-2815; Fax: 813-225-7015.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Peter Eldridge, 813-570-5305.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The reef fish fishery in the Exclusive Economic Zone of the Gulf of Mexico is managed under the FMP. The FMP was prepared by the Council and is implemented under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and

Management Act by regulations at 50 CFR part 622.

The Council has proposed an adjusted management measure (a regulatory amendment) for the Gulf red snapper fishery for NMFS' review, approval, and implementation. This measure was developed and submitted to NMFS under the terms of the FMP's framework procedure for annual adjustments in total allowable catch and related measures for the red snapper fishery (framework procedure). The proposed rule would implement the measure contained in the Council's regulatory amendment.

#### Red Snapper Minimum Size Limit

The red snapper resource in the Gulf of Mexico is overfished and is currently under a management program to restore the stock to a threshold level of 20-percent spawning potential (SPR) by the year 2019. Amendment 5 to the FMP established a gradual increase in the recreational and commercial minimum size limit for red snapper, from 13 inches (33.0 cm), TL, to 14 inches (35.6 cm), TL, in 1994, 15 inches (38.1 cm), TL, in 1996, and 16 inches (40.6 cm), TL, in 1998. Amendment 5 noted that this action would increase the yield-per-recruit obtained from the fishery provided that the potential gains were not negated from additional release mortality of undersized fish.

The 1997 red snapper stock assessment evaluated the impact of increases in the minimum size through a series of simulations. The assessment concluded that under the constant catch scenario, as presently implemented, an increase in minimum size limit from 15 inches (38.1 cm) to 16 inches (40.6 cm), TL, would have little, if any, effect on the SPR value in the year 2019 because of the associated discard mortality. Therefore, it would not contribute to rebuilding the resource. The assessment indicated that as minimum size increases, the portion of the stock that is available to contribute to the yield decreases. Consequently, in these simulations, fishermen would have to fish harder to produce the same yield. This simulated increase in effort in turn would result in more fish being released and, thus, subject to release mortality. The Reef Fish Stock Assessment Panel reviewed the 1997 assessment and concurred with the conclusion that increasing the minimum size from 15 inches (38.1 cm) to 16 inches (40.6 cm), TL, would not be expected to result in biological benefits.

Testimony, to date, from recreational and commercial fishermen has indicated serious concern about additional discard mortality if the