

March 8, 1999 (64 FR 11124). Rule 15c2-11 governs the publication of quotations for securities in a quotation medium other than a national securities exchange or Nasdaq. The comment period for Release No. 34-41110 is being extended to May 8, 1999.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before May 8, 1999.

ADDRESSES: Comments should be submitted in triplicate to Jonathan G. Katz, Secretary, Securities and Exchange Commission, 450 Fifth Street, NW, Washington, DC 20549-0609. Comments may also be submitted electronically at the following E-mail address: rule-comments@sec.gov. All comment letters should refer to File No. S7-5-99. All comments received will be available for public inspection and copying in the Commission's Public Reference Room, 450 Fifth Street, NW, Washington, DC 20549. Electronically submitted comment letters will be posted on the Commission's Internet website (<http://www.sec.gov>).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Any of the following attorneys in the Division of Market Regulation, Securities and Exchange Commission, 450 Fifth Street, NW, Washington, DC 20549-1001, at (202) 942-0772: James A. Brigagliano, Florence E. Harmon, Jerome J. Roche, or Thomas D. Eidt.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On February 25, 1999, the Commission issued Release No. 34-41110 soliciting comment on repropoed amendments to Rule 15c2-11. Rule 15c2-11 governs the publication of quotations for securities in a quotation medium other than a national securities exchange or Nasdaq. The Commission originally requested that comments on this reproposal be received by April 7, 1999. The Commission has recently received several requests to extend the comment period and believes that extending the comment period is appropriate in order to give the public additional time to comment on the matters addressed by the release. Therefore, the Commission is extending the comment period to May 8, 1999, for Release No. 34-41110 (Publication or Submission of Quotations Without Specified Information).

Dated: April 8, 1999.

By the Commission.

Margaret H. McFarland,

Deputy Secretary.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Parts 600 and 648

[I.D. 040599D]

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

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

ACTION: Notification of experimental fishery proposals; request for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces that the Regional Administrator, Northeast Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), is considering approval of the Gulf of Maine Separator Trawl Whiting Fishery (Separator Trawl Fishery) and proposed supplemental gear testing experiment to enable vessels to conduct operations otherwise restricted by regulations governing the Northeastern Multispecies Fishery. The experimental fisheries would allow commercial vessels to fish for, retain, and land silver hake (whiting) with mesh smaller than currently allowed in a portion of the Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank Regulated Mesh Area. These experiments would continue investigations designed to demonstrate the effectiveness of a bycatch reduction device (separator grate) assembled on small-mesh silver hake (whiting) trawls. It is anticipated that participation level would be dictated by two interrelated factors: Market value of whiting at the dock and the availability of the whiting at sea. Approximately 60 vessels were authorized to participate in last year's experiment from July 1 - November 30, 1998, although enrollment periods fluctuated due to the factors identified here. Regulations implementing the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act require publication of this notification to provide interested parties the opportunity to comment on the proposed experimental fisheries.

DATES: Comments on this notice must be received by April 29, 1999.

ADDRESSES: Comments should be sent to Jon Rittgers, Acting 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) submitted an application to continue the experimental whiting separator trawl fishery (Separator Trawl Fishery) in the Small Mesh Northern Shrimp Area, a portion of the Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank Regulated Mesh Area. This will provide an additional opportunity to collect information on the effectiveness of the separator grate in an effort to show that the separator trawl fishery could be a low bycatch fishery. Although this would be the fifth consecutive year of the experiment, data from previous years are sparse and inclusive, due in part to the fact that the whiting failed to school in the experimental fishery areas and market value of whiting declined. As a result, there was limited activity in the experimental fishery in 1998. Therefore, in order to gather sufficient data on the separator grate's ability to reduce bycatch of regulated species consistent with the requirement of an exempted fishery, as well as to determine whether the fishery as a whole can reach its economic potential, a continuation of the experiment is necessary.

Participants in the Separator Trawl Fishery will be required to elect either a food fishery or bait fishery component designation: Food fishery enrollment includes an allowance for landing whiting at the dock only, while bait fishery enrollment allows for at-sea utilization of whiting and transfer of whiting catch at sea under a special authorization. Program participants may designate only one fishery component at a time for a minimum enrollment of 7 days.

A participants list will be compiled by the MEDMR based on a trends analysis of historical enrollment in recent years. Further limitations on participation may be necessary depending on consistency in reporting or logbook compliance issues identified through the NMFS review process.

As part of the same request, the MEDMR also requested a supplemental gear testing experiment to support the objectives of the Separator Trawl Fishery. Proposed modifications of the current gear include two increased bar spacings on the separator grate and two increased codend mesh sizes along with the addition of a raised footrope configuration on the otter trawl. The gear testing experiment may reveal modifications in trawl gear and grate configuration that would be more effective in reducing bycatch and more

selective in catching the appropriate sized whiting in accordance with whiting resource management strategies.

EFPs would be issued to the participating vessels in both experiments in accordance with the conditions stated therein, and will exempt vessels from the mesh size, days-at-sea, and other gear restrictions of the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan.

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

Dated: April 8, 1999.

Gary C. Matlock,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 622

[I.D. 033199C]

RIN 0648-AM15

Fisheries of the Gulf of Mexico; Amendment 16B to the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for the Reef Fish Resources of the Gulf of Mexico (Amendment 16B)

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

ACTION: Notice of availability of Amendment 16B to the FMP for the reef fish resources of the Gulf of Mexico; request for comments.

SUMMARY: Amendment 16B would authorize size limits for banded rudderfish, lesser amberjack, cubera snapper, dog snapper, mahogany snapper, mutton snapper, schoolmaster, scamp, gray triggerfish, and hogfish; exclude banded rudderfish, lesser amberjack, dwarf sand perch, sand perch, and hogfish from the 20-fish aggregate (combined) reef fish bag limit; authorize new bag limits for hogfish, speckled hind, warsaw grouper, and for banded rudderfish and lesser amberjack combined; remove queen triggerfish from the Reef Fish FMP and authorize removal from the applicable regulations; and eliminate the distinction between species in the management unit and species in the fishery, but not included in the management unit. The intended effect of Amendment 16B is to conserve and manage the reef fish resources of the Gulf of Mexico.

DATES: Written comments must be received on or before June 14, 1999.

ADDRESSES: Comments must be mailed to the Southeast Regional Office, NMFS, 9721 Executive Center Drive N., St. Petersburg, FL 33702. Requests for copies of the FMP, which includes an Environmental Assessment and a Regulatory Impact Review, should be sent to the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council), The Commons at Rivergate, 3018 U.S. Highway 301 North, Suite 1000, Tampa, FL 33619-2266; Phone: 813-228-2815; fax: 813-225-7015.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. Roy E. Crabtree, 727-570-5305, fax 727-570-5583.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act), as amended by the Sustainable Fisheries Act, requires each Regional Fishery Management Council to submit any FMP or amendment to NMFS for review and approval, disapproval, or partial approval. The Magnuson-Stevens Act also requires that NMFS, upon receiving a FMP or amendment, immediately publish a document in the **Federal Register** stating that the FMP or amendment is available for public review and comment.

Amendment 16B would authorize more conservative bag and size limits for several reef fish species and improve consistency with Florida state regulations, thereby improving enforcement. Fish trap phase-out measures that were the subject of public hearings as part of draft Amendment 16, and approved by the Council, were included in Amendment 16A, which was partially approved by NMFS on March 18, 1999.

Minor Amberjack Measures

A 1996 NMFS stock assessment suggests that the number of young greater amberjack has decreased steadily since 1991. In addition, anecdotal information from anglers along Florida's Gulf coast suggests that greater amberjack have decreased in size and abundance in recent years. In response to this information, the Council developed Amendment 12 to the Reef Fish FMP, which established a 1-fish bag limit for greater amberjack, and Amendment 15 to the FMP, which established a seasonal closure of the commercial fishery. Greater amberjack are also subject to minimum size limits of 28 inches (71.1 cm) fork length for the recreational fishery and 36 inches (91.4 cm) for the commercial fishery.

Juvenile greater amberjack, lesser amberjack, and banded rudderfish are difficult to distinguish and are often confused by the public; consequently, misidentified juvenile greater amberjack may be landed as lesser amberjack or banded rudderfish, species that are currently unregulated. Therefore, the Council believes that additional protection for juvenile greater amberjack is warranted. The intent of Amendment 16B is to reduce the harvest of misidentified juvenile greater amberjack by limiting the harvest of these minor amberjack species. The word "minor" used by the Council in Amendment 16B is not intended to reflect on the significance of these measures; instead it refers to the species banded rudderfish and lesser amberjack.

In Reef Fish Amendment 12 the Council proposed to apply an aggregate bag limit and a minimum size limit of 28 inches (71.1 cm) to greater amberjack, lesser amberjack, and banded rudderfish. These proposed actions would have effectively eliminated the recreational harvest of banded rudderfish and lesser amberjack because these species rarely, if ever, reach 28 inches (71.1 cm). The Council did not present this aspect of the measure as a deliberate, direct allocation; however, the effect of the measure would have been to shift the allocation of these species from principally recreational to entirely commercial. Therefore, this aspect of the measure would have operated as the functional equivalent of a direct allocation, and NMFS considered this allocation unfair and inequitable. Accordingly, NMFS disapproved this portion of Amendment 12 based on national standard 4 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, which requires that allocations of fishing privilege be fair and equitable to all fishermen.

Amendment 16B would authorize new bag and size limits that should reduce the harvest of banded rudderfish, lesser amberjack, and misidentified greater amberjack while continuing to allow a limited recreational harvest. Amendment 16B would authorize: (1) Establishment of a "slot limit" of 14 inches (35.6 cm) (minimum) to 22 inches (55.9 cm) (maximum) fork length for the commercial and recreational harvest of banded rudderfish and lesser amberjack; and (2) establishment of a 5-fish aggregate bag limit for banded rudderfish and lesser amberjack and exclude both species from the 20-fish aggregate reef fish bag limit.