

§ 622.37 Size limits.

All size limits in this section are minimum size limits unless specified otherwise. Except for undersized king and Spanish mackerel allowed in paragraphs (c)(2) and (c)(3) of this section, a fish not in compliance with its size limit, as specified in this section, in or from the Caribbean, Gulf, South Atlantic, and/or Mid-Atlantic EEZ, as appropriate, may not be possessed, sold, or purchased. A fish not in compliance with its size limit must be released immediately with a minimum of harm. The operator of a vessel that fishes in the EEZ is responsible for ensuring that fish on board are in compliance with the size limits specified in this section.

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(d) *Gulf reef fish*—(1) *Snapper*. (i) Lane snapper—8 inches (20.3 cm), TL.

(ii) Vermilion snapper—10 inches (25.4 cm), TL.

(iii) Cubera, dog, gray, mahogany, and yellowtail snappers and schoolmaster—12 inches (30.5 cm), TL.

(iv) Red snapper—15 inches (38.1 cm), TL.

(v) Mutton snapper—16 inches (40.6 cm), TL.

(2) *Grouper*. (i) Scamp—16 inches (40.6 cm), TL.

(ii) Black, red, and yellowfin groupers and gag—20 inches, (50.8 cm), TL.

(3) *Other Gulf reef fish species*. (i) Gray triggerfish—12 inches (30.5 cm), TL.

(ii) Hogfish—12 inches (30.5 cm), fork length.

(iii) Banded rudderfish and lesser amberjack—14 inches (35.6 cm), fork length (minimum size); 22 inches (55.9 cm), fork length (maximum size).

(iv) Greater amberjack—28 inches (71.1 cm), fork length, for a fish taken by a person subject to the bag limit specified in § 622.39(b)(1)(i); and 36 inches (91.4 cm), fork length, for a fish taken by a person not subject to the bag limit.

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4. In § 622.39, the second and third sentences of paragraph (a)(1), and paragraphs (b)(1)(ii), (b)(1)(v), and (b)(2) are revised; and paragraphs (b)(1)(vii) and (b)(1)(viii) are added to read as follows:

§ 622.39 Bag and possession limits.

(a) * * *

(1) * * * Unless specified otherwise, bag limits apply to a person on a daily basis, regardless of the number of trips in a day. Unless specified otherwise, possession limits apply to a person on a trip after the first 24 hours of that trip.

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(b) * * *

(1) * * *

(ii) Groupers, combined, excluding jewfish and Nassau grouper—5 per person per day, but not to exceed 1 speckled hind and 1 Warsaw grouper per vessel per day.

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(v) Gulf reef fish, combined, excluding those specified in paragraphs (b)(1)(i) through (b)(1)(iv) and paragraphs (b)(1)(vi) through (b)(1)(viii) of this section and excluding dwarf sand perch and sand perch—20.

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(vii) Banded rudderfish and lesser amberjack, combined—5.

(viii) Hogfish—5.

(2) *Possession limits*. A person, or a vessel in the case of speckled hind or Warsaw grouper, on a trip that spans more than 24 hours may possess no more than two daily bag limits, provided such trip is on a vessel that is operating as a charter vessel or headboat, the vessel has two licensed operators aboard, and each passenger is issued and has in possession a receipt issued on behalf of the vessel that verifies the length of the trip.

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Table 3 of Appendix A to Part 622 [Amended]

5. In Table 3 of Appendix A to Part 622, the entry, “Queen triggerfish, *Balistes vetula*”, is removed.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration****50 CFR Part 648**

[I.D. 062199A]

New England Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

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

ACTION: Public meeting.

SUMMARY: The New England Fishery Management Council (Council) will hold a 3-day public meeting on July 13-15, 1999, to consider actions affecting New England fisheries in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

DATES: The meeting will be held on Tuesday, July 13, 1999, at 9:30 a.m. and on Wednesday and Thursday, July 14-15, 1999, at 9 a.m.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held at the Holiday Inn by the Bay, 88 Spring Street, Portland, ME 04101; telephone (207) 775-2331. Requests for special accommodations should be addressed to the New England Fishery Management Council, 5 Broadway, Saugus, MA 01906-1036; telephone: (781) 231-0422.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Paul J. Howard, Executive Director, New England Fishery Management Council (781) 231-0422.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**Tuesday, July 13, 1999**

At the start of the meeting the Council Chairman and Executive Director will ask The Council for approval to form a Research Steering and Experimental Fisheries Committee. This group would identify and prioritize fishery management research needs in the Northeast region, including the one-percent TAC set-aside earmarked for sea scallop fishery research. A presentation of the Interspecies Committee Report will follow and will review discussions about: Managing fishing harvest capacity, including NMFS initiatives; strawman proposals for controlling latent effort; possible changes to the fishing year for Council fishery management plans; and outstanding issues for small vessel upgrading provisions. The morning session will conclude with a presentation of the annual Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation Report for the herring fishery.

In the afternoon, the Council will discuss Atlantic herring management and will consider the following actions: Approval of specifications for the 2000 fishing year, approval of an adjustment to the U.S. at-sea processing specification for the 1999 fishing year, and approval to develop a framework adjustment to the proposed Herring Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for the 2000 fishing year. The framework adjustment would change the FMP to include a possible adjustment to the timing of the fishing year, changes to reporting requirements for large domestic at-sea processing vessels, a modification to allow the specification of U.S. at-sea processing allocation by management area, and possible changes to other measures contained in the FMP. The Council will also discuss and may approve a control date for the herring fishery and development of a controlled access system.

Wednesday, July 14, 1999

The Council will continue to discuss herring agenda items until noon. An update on whiting management will

follow. This update will include review, and possible approval, of written comments concerning NMFS' proposed disapproval of the limited access program submitted in Amendment 12 to the Northeast Multispecies FMP (whiting management program). The Council will also consider the following actions relating to small-mesh fisheries: Development of a New England Council Small Mesh Species FMP to include the management of whiting, red hake, and offshore hake; inclusion of a proposed whiting framework adjustment to modify the mesh size/possession limit program and to allow the use of net strengtheners in this FMP; and inclusion of northern shrimp management in the EEZ in the Small Mesh Species FMP. The Council will conclude the July 14 meeting with the Habitat Committee Report. The committee chairman will discuss the committee's recommendations concerning the designation of additional habitat areas of particular concern, measures to protect essential fish habitat (EFH), and modifications to existing EFH designations.

Thursday, July 15, 1999

The meeting will begin with reports from the Council Chairman; Executive Director; the Administrator, Northeast Region, NMFS; Northeast Fisheries Science Center and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council liaisons; and representatives of the U.S. Coast Guard, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Next, the Groundfish Committee will review the development of Framework Adjustment 31 to the Northeast Multispecies FMP.

Although the Council will not take final action on the framework adjustment, they will discuss incorporating the Framework 31 proposals into the annual adjustment to the Northeast Multispecies FMP, an action that would not be formally considered by the Council until late fall 1999. The measures proposed for Framework 31 would have replaced the Georges Bank cod trip limit that would take effect on August 15 under Framework Adjustment 30 once it is implemented. Measures in Framework 31 would require vessels fishing in the Gulf of Maine (GOM) Trip Limit Exemption Program to stop fishing for a 30-day block of time each quarter, reduce the amount of gear fished by hook and gillnet vessels, and eliminate the "running clock" feature of the GOM cod trip limit. The "running clock" is a mechanism in the regulations that was developed to reduce discards by allowing vessels to land their GOM cod trip limit overages. Under the running clock provision, vessels with landings that exceed the trip limit must remain at the dock until the days-at-sea for that trip equate to the amount of cod landed. The Council will also consider development of a framework adjustment to the Northeast Multispecies FMP that would implement mid-season changes to the GOM cod fishery management program. Formal action on this issue would be scheduled for the August and September 1999 Council meetings.

During the afternoon portion of the meeting, the Mid-Atlantic Plans Committee will ask the Council to consider forwarding written comments to the Mid-Atlantic Fishery

Management Council on the following issues: Proposals for the Tilefish FMP, mackerel fishery limited entry measures, coordinating the Atlantic Herring and Mackerel FMPs, and the status of the summer flounder rebuilding program. The Enforcement Committee will review progress on the development of enforcement guidelines for Council use during the development of management measures. The meeting will adjourn after the Council addresses any outstanding business.

Although other issues not contained in the agenda may come before the Council, the Council may not take final action on them without public notice or within 14 days prior to the meeting date, unless the purpose of taking final action on an issue not contained in the agenda is to address an emergency under section 305(c) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. In that case, public notice will be deemed to have been met by announcing the emergency action to the public in attendance at the Council meeting.

Special Accommodations

This meeting is accessible to people with physical disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Paul J. Howard (see ADDRESSES) at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.

Dated: June 29, 1999.

George H. Darcy,

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