

Dated: December 16, 2011.

**Gwellnar Banks,**

*Management Analyst, Office of the Chief Information Officer.*

[FR Doc. 2011-32588 Filed 12-20-11; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3510-NK-P**

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### Submission for OMB Review; Comment Request

The Department of Commerce will submit to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for clearance the following proposal for collection of information under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act (44 U.S.C. chapter 35).

*Agency:* National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

*Title:* Alaska Recreational Charter Vessel Guide and Owner Data Collection.

*OMB Control Number:* None.

*Form Number(s):* NA.

*Type of Request:* Regular submission (request for a new information collection).

*Number of Respondents:* 643.

*Average Hours Per Response:* Complete survey, 90 minutes; follow-up/non-response survey, 6 minutes.

*Burden Hours:* 519.

*Needs and Uses:* Numerous management measures have recently been proposed or implemented that affect recreational charter boat fishing for Pacific halibut off Alaska. On January 5, 2010, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) issued a final rule establishing a limited entry permit system for charter vessels in the guided halibut sport fishery in International Pacific Halibut Commission Areas 2C (Southeast Alaska) and 3A (Central Gulf of Alaska) (75FR554). This permit system is intended to address concerns about the growth of fishing capacity in this fishery sector, which accounts for a substantial portion of the overall recreational halibut catch in Alaska. On March 16, 2011, a size limit on Pacific halibut caught while charter boat fishing for the 2011 fishing season was established (76FR14300). In addition, on July 22, 2011, a Halibut Catch Sharing Plan (76FR44156) was proposed that would alter the way Pacific halibut is allocated between the guided sport (*i.e.*, the charter sector) and the commercial halibut fishery.

To assess the effect of regulatory restrictions (currently in place or potential) on charter operator and owner behavior and welfare, it is necessary to obtain a better general understanding of the Alaska recreational charter boat

industry. Some information useful for this purpose is already collected from existing sources, such as charter vessel logbooks administered by Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G). However, information on vessel and crew characteristics, services offered to clients, spatial and temporal aspects of their operations and fishing behavior, and costs and earnings information are generally not available from these existing data sources and thus must be collected directly from the industry through voluntary survey efforts.

In order to address this information gap, NMFS' Alaska Fisheries Science Center proposes to conduct a survey of charter vessel owners to collect annual cost and earnings data that will supplement logbook data collected by ADF&G. The proposed data collection will provide basic economic information about the charter sector, including revenues produced from different products and services provided to clients, fixed and variable operating costs and locations of purchases. These data will support improved analysis and of the effects of fisheries regulations on the charter fishing industry, information that is increasingly needed by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council and NMFS to deal with ongoing halibut resource issues and other fishery management issues involving the charter industry.

*Affected Public:* Business or other for-profit organizations.

*Frequency:* Annually.

*Respondent's Obligation:* Voluntary.

*OMB Desk Officer:* OIRA\_Submission@omb.eop.gov.

Copies of the above information collection proposal can be obtained by calling or writing Diana Hynek, Departmental Paperwork Clearance Officer, (202) 482-0266, Department of Commerce, Room 6616, 14th and Constitution Avenue NW., Washington, DC 20230 (or via the Internet at dHynek@doc.gov).

Written comments and recommendations for the proposed information collection should be sent within 30 days of publication of this notice to OIRA\_Submission@omb.eop.gov.

Dated: December 16, 2011.

**Gwellnar Banks,**

*Management Analyst, Office of the Chief Information Officer.*

[FR Doc. 2011-32599 Filed 12-20-11; 8:45 am]

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

**RIN 0648-BB69**

### New England Fishery Management Council; Notice of Intent To Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS); Northeast Multispecies Fishery; Notice of Public Scoping Meetings

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

**ACTION:** Notice of Intent To Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement; notice of public scoping meetings; requests for comments.

**SUMMARY:** The New England Fishery Management Council (Council) announces its intention to prepare, in cooperation with NMFS, an EIS in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act to assess potential effects on the human environment of alternative measures to address management and conservation measures for the Northeast (NE) multispecies fishery. This action is necessary to provide analytical support for an amendment to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan (FMP) examining potential rules to reduce the likelihood that groundfish permit holders will acquire or control excessive shares of fishing privileges in the fishery and that over-consolidation will occur within the fleet.

This notice announces a public process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed, and for identifying the significant issues related to fleet diversity and the implementation of accumulation limits for this fishery. This notice is to alert the interested public of the scoping process, the development of the Draft EIS, and to provide for public participation in that process.

**DATES:** Written comments must be received on or before 5 p.m., EST, on March 1, 2012. Eleven public scoping meetings will be held during this comment period. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** section for dates, times, and locations.

**ADDRESSES:** Written comments may be sent by any of the following methods:

- *Email to the following address:* Groundfish.Amendment18@noaa.gov;
- Mail or hand deliver to Mr. Paul Howard, New England Fishery Management Council, 50 Water St., Mill 2, Newburyport, MA 01950. Mark the outside of the envelope "Groundfish Amendment 18 Scoping Comments"; or

- Fax to (978) 465–3116.

The scoping document may also be obtained from the Council office at the previously provided address, by request to the Council by telephone (978) 465–0492, or via the Internet at <http://www.nefmc.org>.

Comments may also be provided orally at any of the 11 public scoping meetings. See the **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** section for dates, times, and locations.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Mr. Paul Howard, New England Fishery Management Council, 50 Water St., Mill 2, Newburyport, MA 01950, (telephone (978) 465–0492).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The NE multispecies fishery targets cod, haddock, white hake, pollock, Acadian redfish, yellowtail flounder, winter flounder, witch flounder, American plaice, windowpane flounder, Atlantic halibut, ocean pout, and Atlantic wolffish. These species are managed as 20 individual stocks and are termed “regulated species”. The Council has managed these species as a unit under the NE Multispecies FMP since 1985. (The NE Multispecies FMP also manages silver hake, red hake and offshore hake, which are called “small mesh species,” and which would not be directly affected by Amendment 18.) Many of these stocks are overfished and/or overfishing is occurring. As a result, strict regulations have been adopted to control catch and promote stock rebuilding. Management measures include limited and open-access permit categories, limits on fishing time through days-at-sea (DAS) allocations, gear requirements, closed areas,

retention limits, and sector allocation. These measures have been adopted through a series of amendments and adjustments to the original FMP. The most recent amendment (Amendment 16, implemented on May 1, 2010) expands the use of sectors to manage the fishery. Sectors are voluntary, self-selected groups of fishermen that are allocated a portion of the available catch. Amendment 16 also implements annual catch limits (ACLs); exceeding these limits triggers additional management actions called accountability measures (AMs).

At the request of the Council, NMFS published a control date of March 7, 2011. The control date is intended to alert the fishing industry and the public that any present or future accumulation of fishing privileges may be limited or may not be allowed after or prior to the published control date. It also is intended to discourage speculative behavior in the market for fishing privileges while the Council considers whether and how such limitations on accumulation of fishing privileges should be developed. However, in establishing this date, the Council is not obligated to take any further action. No limits or restrictions have been imposed on the groundfish fishery by establishing this control date. However, fishermen are encouraged to preserve any documents relating to their ownership or control of fishing privileges in the event that the Council does decide to take a future action.

In the most recent specification process (Framework Adjustment 44 to the NE Multispecies FMP), catch limits for many multispecies stocks were set at

very low levels, and these restrictions are anticipated to remain for the near future. Currently, there are no specific controls on the excessive accumulation or control of fishing privileges in the multispecies fishery. There is concern that the low catch limits, in conjunction with expanded sector management, will lead to excessive consolidation and lack of diversity in the groundfish fleet. Likewise, there is concern regarding consolidation and diversity in the groundfish fleet as stocks rebuild and acceptable biological catches (ABCs) increase.

Because of these concerns and in light of the National Standards and other requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Act related to maintaining the diverse makeup of the fleet, as well as an interest in keeping active and thriving fishing ports throughout New England, the Council is considering measures that may limit or cap the amount or type of fishing privileges that individuals or groups of individuals may acquire or control. The Council may also create other incentives for maintaining diversity and fishery infrastructure. The Council has identified two objectives for an amendment to achieve these objectives:

1. To consider the establishment of accumulation caps for the groundfish fishery; and
2. To consider issues associated with fleet diversity in the multispecies fishery.

#### Meetings

Eleven scoping meetings to facilitate public comment will be held on the following dates and locations:

City and date	Location
Ellsworth, Maine Tuesday, January 17, 2012 6–8 p.m .....	Ellsworth City Hall, 1 City Plaza, Ellsworth, ME, Phone: (207) 667–2563.
Portland, Maine Wednesday, January 18, 2012 5–7 p.m .....	Holiday Inn by the Bay, 88 Spring Street, Portland, ME, Phone: (207) 775–2311.
Fairhaven, Massachusetts Friday, January 20, 2012 12 a.m.–2 p.m .....	Seaport Inn, 110 Middle Street, Fairhaven, MA, Phone: (508) 997–1281.
So. Kingstown, Rhode Island Friday, January 20, 2012 5–7 p.m .....	Holiday Inn, 3009 Tower Hill Road, So. Kingstown, RI, Phone: (401) 789–1051.
Riverhead, New York Monday, January 23, 2012 7–9 p.m .....	Hotel Indigo East End, 1830 Route 25, Riverhead, NY, Phone: (631) 369–2200.
Manahawkin, New Jersey Tuesday, January 24, 2012 12 a.m.–2 p.m ..	Holiday Inn, 151 Route 72 East, Manahawkin, NJ, Phone: (732) 571–4000.
Hyannis, Massachusetts Thursday, January 26, 2012 1–3 p.m .....	Holiday Inn, Hyannis, 1127 Route 132, Hyannis, MA, Phone (508) 775–1153.
Plymouth, Massachusetts Thursday, January 26, 2012 5–7 p.m .....	Radisson Plymouth, 180 Water Street, Plymouth, MA, Phone: (508) 747–4900.
Gloucester, Massachusetts Monday, January 30, 2012 6–8 p.m .....	MA DMF Annisquam River Station, 30 Emerson Avenue, Gloucester, MA, Phone: (978) 828–0308.
Portsmouth, New Hampshire Tuesday, January 31, 2012 6–8 p.m .....	Sheraton Harborside, 250 Market Street, Portsmouth, NH, Phone: (603) 431–2000.

### Issues Identified for Discussion Under This Amendment

This action will consider measures that require changes to the NE multispecies FMP. Measures may be developed and adopted in a future action. The Council may consider several types of management measures, including, but not limited to:

- No action; no additional measures would be adopted;
- Establishing individual accumulation caps, or sector accumulation caps, on a stock-specific or fishery-wide level;
- Establishing limits or caps of fishing privileges limit measures fleet-wide or separately for inshore and offshore fleets;
- Establishing usage caps for vessels fishing on a NE multispecies permit;
- Other measures to promote diversity within the fleet; and,
- Establishing performance indicators relating to the two objectives identified for the amendment (in addition to or instead of limits or caps).

The Council may deviate from these examples and develop additional approaches, consistent with their description in the Magnuson-Stevens Act and National Standard Guidelines. The above issues under consideration are described in greater detail in the scoping document itself; copies may be obtained from the Council (see **ADDRESSES**) or via the Internet at <http://www.nefmc.org/>.

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

Dated: December 16, 2011.

**Steven Thur,**

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

[FR Doc. 2011-32694 Filed 12-20-11; 8:45 am]

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

**RIN 0648-XA875**

#### International Affairs; Identification of Nations Whose Fishing Vessels Are Engaged in Fishing in Waters Beyond Any National Jurisdiction That Target or Incidentally Catch Sharks

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

**ACTION:** Notice.

**SUMMARY:** On March 24, 2011, NMFS published a notice and requested information regarding nations whose

vessels are engaged in fishing in waters beyond any national jurisdiction that target or incidentally catch sharks.

However, upon further reflection and review of the statute, NMFS proposes to begin the process of making identifications by January 4, 2012, and publish the first identifications in the January 2013 Biennial Report to Congress, coincident with the next identification process under the IUU fishing and bycatch provisions of the Moratorium Protection Act.

**DATES:** Effective December 21, 2011.

#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Cheri McCarty, NMFS Office of International Affairs. (301) 427-8369.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

#### Background

The Shark Conservation Act of 2010 (S.850) amended the Moratorium Protection Act (16 U.S.C. 1826d-k) to require actions be taken by the United States to strengthen shark conservation. Specifically, these amendments to the Moratorium Protection Act require the Secretary of Commerce to identify: (1) Nations whose fishing vessels are engaged, or have been engaged during the preceding calendar year, in fishing activities or practices in waters beyond any national jurisdiction that target or incidentally catch sharks; and (2) nations that have not adopted a regulatory program to provide for the conservation of sharks, including measures to prohibit removal of any of the fins of a shark (including the tail) and discarding the carcass of the shark at sea, that is comparable to that of the United States, taking into account different conditions. The Secretary is required to begin making identifications not later than January 4, 2012.

NMFS solicited information from the public on activities of fishing vessels from foreign nations engaged in shark catch beyond any national jurisdiction on March 24, 2011 (76 FR 16616), and indicated that it anticipated making the first identifications under this statute by January 4, 2012. However, upon further reflection and review of the statute, NMFS proposes to begin the process of making identifications by January 4, 2012, and publish the first identifications in the January 2013 Biennial Report to Congress, coincident with the next identification process under the IUU fishing and bycatch provisions of the Moratorium Protection Act. This approach is consistent with the statute and will treat all identified nations equally. If identifications were made in January 2012, it would provide potentially-affected foreign nations only one year to become familiar with the

new shark provisions before identification decisions were made and only one year to take the necessary actions to receive a positive certification. NMFS has already started collecting and analyzing information that could help the agency determine which nations may have vessels engaging in fishing activities or practices on the high seas that target or incidentally catch sharks.

Dated: December 15, 2011.

**Rebecca Lent,**

*Director, Office of International Affairs, National Marine Fisheries Service.*

[FR Doc. 2011-32690 Filed 12-20-11; 8:45 am]

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

**RIN 0648-XA880**

#### Marine Mammals; Issuance of Permits

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

**ACTION:** Notice; issuance of permits.

**SUMMARY:** Notice is hereby given that individuals and institutions have been issued Letters of Confirmation for activities conducted under the General Authorization for Scientific Research on marine mammals. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for a list of names and address of recipients.

**ADDRESSES:** The Letters of Confirmation and related documents are available for review upon written request or by appointment in the following office: Permits and Conservation Division, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13705, Silver Spring, MD 20910; phone (301) 427-8401; fax (301) 713-0376.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Office of Protected Resources, Permits Division, (301) 427-8401.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The requested Letters of Confirmation have been issued under the authority of the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*), and the regulations governing the taking and importing of marine mammals (50 CFR part 216). The General Authorization allows for bona fide scientific research that may result only in taking by level B harassment of marine mammals. The following Letters of Confirmation (LOC) were issued in Fiscal Year 2011.

*File No. 15683:* Issued to Dr. David Mann, University of South Florida, St.