

this 6-month extension, NMFS will assess more complete versions of these plans, work with the states to resolve scientific disagreements surrounding the adequacy of the plans, and seek a scientific basis for determining whether these conservation measures will substantially reduce the risks faced by one or both of these coho salmon ESUs proposed for listing.

Determination

The scientific disagreements about data and information identified above are substantial and may alter NMFS' assessment of the status of the Oregon Coast and Southern Oregon/Northern California Coast coho salmon ESUs. In light of these disagreements and the fact that more data are forthcoming on conservation planning and risk assessment, NMFS extends the final determination deadline on the Oregon Coast and Southern Oregon/Northern California Coast ESUs of coastal coho salmon for 6 additional months, until April 25, 1997. During this period, NMFS will collect and analyze new information aimed at resolving these disagreements. If new information or analyses indicate that listing of one or more ESUs of west coast coho salmon is not warranted, NMFS will withdraw or modify the proposed rule accordingly.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*

Dated: October 24, 1996.

Gary C. Matlock,

*Acting Assistant Administrator for Fisheries,
National Marine Fisheries Service.*

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50 CFR Part 648

[I.D. 102296A]

New England Fishery Management Council; 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 2-day public meeting to consider actions affecting New England fisheries in the exclusive economic zone. There will also be a discussion of applications received for permits for two separate experimental scallop fisheries.

DATES: The meeting will be held on Wednesday, November 6, 1996, at 10 a.m., and on Thursday, November 7, 1996, at 8:30 a.m.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held at the Radisson Eastland Hotel, 157 High Street, Portland, ME 04101; telephone (207) 775-5411. Requests for special accommodations should be addressed to the New England Fishery Management Council, 5 Broadway, Saugus, MA 01906-1097; telephone (617) 231-0422.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Christopher B. Kellogg, Acting Executive Director, New England Fishery Management Council, (617) 231-0422.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

November 6, 1996

After introductions, the November 6 session will begin with issues related to sea scallop management. The Council will discuss and provide policy guidance to the Scallop Oversight Committee on the use of separable and transferable units of fishing effort. A framework adjustment to the Atlantic Sea Scallop Fishery Management Plan (Sea Scallop FMP) also will be considered. Monkfish management issues will be addressed on Wednesday afternoon. The Monkfish Committee will ask the Council to finalize a range of proposed management measures. An accompanying draft public hearing document will be reviewed and modified.

Background Information for Abbreviated Rulemaking—Atlantic Sea Scallops

The Council will consider initial action on Framework Adjustment 9 to the Sea Scallop FMP under the framework for abbreviated rulemaking procedure contained in 50 CFR 648.90. The action would extend the state waters exemption to include the 400 lb (181.44 kg) trip limit for general category scallop permit holders. Currently, scallopers holding this type of permit are prohibited from landing more than 400 lb (188.44 kg) per trip, even when fishing strictly within state waters.

November 7, 1996

On November 7 the meeting will start with reports from the Council Chairman, Acting Executive Director, NMFS Regional Administrator, Northeast Fisheries Science Center, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council liaisons, and representatives of the U.S. Coast Guard and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC). The Groundfish Oversight Committee will discuss, but will not request final action on two framework adjustments to the Northeast Multispecies FMP. The first action would modify the Amendment 7 effort

reduction measures for gillnet vessels and the second would establish an alternative to the current haddock possession limit. Final action may be taken on a third framework adjustment concerning general permit category scallop fishermen who are affected by the Amendment 7 groundfish regulations. The Council also will discuss ASMFC's winter flounder management strategy. In the afternoon, the Council will consider a herring and mackerel joint venture application by World Wide Trading, Inc., and the appointment of advisors to the Responsible Fishing Committee. Changes in Council operations brought about by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Public Law 94-265) will be addressed at the end of the day along with any other outstanding business.

Background Information for Abbreviated Rulemaking—Northeast Multispecies

The Council will consider final action on Framework Adjustment 21 to the Northeast Multispecies FMP under the framework for abbreviated rulemaking procedure contained in 50 CFR 648.90. The modification would allow general category scallop permit holders to fish with small dredges for scallops only (no regulated species bycatch). The current groundfish regulations prohibit the use of dredges because they have not demonstrated a less than 5 percent bycatch of regulated species by weight.

The Council will consider public comments at a minimum of two Council meetings prior to making any final recommendations to the Regional Administrator under the provisions for abbreviated rulemaking cited above. If the Regional Administrator concurs, the measures will be published as a final rule in the Federal Register.

Announcement of Experimental Fishery Applications

There will be a discussion and opportunity for the public to comment on two experimental scallop fisheries proposed in conjunction with two Saltonstall/Kennedy (S/K) Grant awards. The Regional Administrator is considering issuing experimental fishing permits (EFPs) to vessels involved in each project. The Westport Scallop Corporation received an S/K Grant to demonstrate bottom seeding and off-bottom grow-out of Atlantic sea scallops in an offshore commercial setting. The proposed experimental fishery would involve collection and landing of in-shell scallops with less than 3.5 inch (89 mm) shell height to study behavior, disease, growth and

mortality related to various holding and tagging strategies. EFPs are necessary to exempt participating vessels from the prohibition on landing in-shell scallops smaller than the minimum shell height of 3.5 inches (89 mm). The results of the experimental fishing studies would be used to maximize the success of the S/K Grant funded offshore grow-out systems.

SER Enterprises received an S/K Grant to investigate finfish bycatch reduction. One commercial fishing vessel would be chartered to conduct the experiments for the project. The

proposed experimental fishery would involve testing finfish excluder devices installed on commercial scallop dredge gear. An EFP is necessary to exempt the participating vessel from the days-at-sea and crew size restrictions of the scallop regulations and gear restrictions of the Northeast multispecies regulations.

Following the conclusion of the public meeting, the Council will hold a closed session for the purpose of discussing the now vacant Executive Director position.

Special Accommodations

This meeting is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Christopher B. Kellogg (see **ADDRESSES**) at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.

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

Dated: October 25, 1996.

Bruce Morehead,

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

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