

9. November 4, 1998—Sheraton, 250 Market Street, Portsmouth, NH.

The hearings will be tape recorded with the tapes filed as the official transcript of the hearings.

Special Accommodations

These hearings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Joanna Davis at the Mid-Atlantic Council office at least 5 days prior to the hearing date.

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

Dated: October 7, 1998.

Gary C. Matlock,

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

[FR Doc. 98-27582 Filed 10-14-98; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 648

[I.D. 100698B]

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 2-day public meeting to consider actions affecting New England fisheries in the exclusive economic zone. The full Council meeting will begin at 1:30 p.m., following a meeting of the Council's Herring Committee on October 28.

DATES: The meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 28, 1998, at 9:30 a.m. and on Thursday, October 29, 1998, at 8:30 a.m.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held at the Holiday Inn Hotel and Convention Center, 88 Spring Street, Portland, ME 04101; telephone (207) 775-2311. 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:

Wednesday, October 28, 1998

At 9:30 a.m., the Council will convene a meeting of its Herring Committee to continue discussions and select final management measures for the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for the Atlantic Herring Fishery. Management measures under discussion will include, but not be limited to, restrictions for large domestic processing vessels (such as size limits or sector allocations) and vessel tracking system (VTS) requirements. The full Council meeting will begin in the afternoon at 1:30 p.m. when Council Executive Director Paul Howard presents the details of an annual FMP review and adjustment process for each Council plan and public participation procedures. The Herring Committee Report will follow, during which the committee chairman will ask the Council for approval of the outstanding Herring FMP management measures (including recommended measures for large domestic processing vessels and VTS requirements) after a review of public comments and committee and advisory panel recommendations. The Council is also expected to review and approve FMP documents (description of measures, draft regulatory text and summary of impacts).

Thursday, October 29, 1998

The meeting will begin with reports on recent activities from the Council Chairman, Executive Director, the NMFS Acting Regional Administrator, Northeast Fisheries Science Center and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council liaisons, and representatives of the Coast Guard, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Whiting Committee will ask for approval of measures for Amendment 12 (whiting) to the Northeast Multispecies FMP after a review of the public and advisory panel comments and committee recommendations. Major elements of the management program include new overfishing definitions and the specification of optimum yield as required by the Sustainable Fisheries Act, a moratorium on commercial whiting permits, a Cultivator Shoal season change, management alternatives for the northern, southern, and Cultivator Shoal management areas including minimum mesh sizes and possession limits, restrictions on the transfer of whiting and red hake at sea, and a final essential fish habitat designation for offshore hake. The Groundfish Committee will seek approval of initial action on a framework adjustment to the Northeast

Multispecies FMP (Framework 26) that calls for measures to protect cod prior to May 1, the start of the 1999 fishing year. Measures under consideration include expanding the existing Gulf of Maine groundfish closures in time and area and, possibly, expanding them to waters east of Cape Cod; prohibiting the use of "crucifiers," a device used in the hook fishery to sort fish by size; and prohibiting the landing of overages of the Gulf of Maine cod trip limit (eliminating the "running clock"). The meeting will conclude with a presentation of the Draft Highly Migratory Species FMP. NMFS staff from the Highly Migratory Species Division will summarize the proposed FMP and take questions and comments. Any other outstanding Council business also will be discussed at this time.

Although other issues not contained in this agenda may come before this Council for discussion, in accordance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, those issues may not be the subject of formal Council action during this meeting. Council action will be restricted to those issues specifically listed in this document.

Special Accommodations

This meeting is physically accessible to people with 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.

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

Dated: October 8, 1998.

Bruce C. Morehead,

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

[FR Doc. 98-27581 Filed 10-14-98; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Parts 648 and 649

[I.D. 100798B]

RIN 0648-AL36

Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; American Lobster Fishery; Fishery Management Plan (FMP) Amendments to Achieve Regulatory Consistency on Permit Related Provisions for Vessels Issued Limited Access Federal Fishery Permits

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and

Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of availability of an omnibus amendment to FMPs; request for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces that the Mid-Atlantic and New England Fishery Management Councils have submitted an omnibus amendment that includes Amendment 11 to the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass FMP; Amendment 7 to the Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish FMP; Amendment 11 to the Atlantic Surf Clam and Ocean Quahog FMP; Amendment 8 to the Atlantic Sea Scallop FMP; Amendment 10 to the Northeast Multispecies FMP; and Amendment 7 to the American Lobster FMP. These amendments implement regulations to achieve regulatory consistency on vessel permitting for FMPs that have limited access permits issued by NMFS Northeast Region. The proposed regulations are intended to facilitate transactions such as buying, selling, or upgrading commercial fishing vessels issued limited access permits. Consistency on these regulations is especially important for vessels that have limited access permits in more than one fishery in the Northeast Region.

DATES: Public comments must be received on or before December 14, 1998.

ADDRESSES: Comments on this proposed rule should be sent to Jon C. Rittgers, Acting Regional Administrator, 1 Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930. Mark the outside of the envelope, "Comments on Proposed Rule for Permit Consistency."

Copies of these amendments, the regulatory impact review, and the

environmental assessment are available from Executive Director, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Room 2115 Federal Building, 300 S. New Street, Dover, DE 19904-6790, or from Executive Director, New England Fishery Management Council, 5 Broadway, Saugus, MA 01906-1036.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Richard A. Pearson, Fishery Policy Analyst, 978-281-9279.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: These proposed amendments would implement consistent measures to govern permit-associated activities for all Northeast Region FMPs which have limited access permits. None of the proposed measures would apply retroactively. The measures would (1) allow a one-time vessel upgrade/replacement allowance of 10 percent in size (length overall, gross registered tons, and net tons, or 20 percent in horsepower for all limited access permits except American lobster (an engine horsepower increase may be performed separately from a vessel size increase); (2) require that the fishing and permit history of a vessel and the replacement vessel be owned by the same person when transferring limited access permits to replacement vessels; (3) allow voluntary replacement of vessels, regardless of vessel condition; (4) require that the fishing and permit history of a vessel transfer with the vessel whenever it is bought, sold, or otherwise transferred, unless there is a written agreement between the buyer and seller, or other credible written evidence, verifying that the seller is retaining the vessel's fishing and permit history for purposes of replacing the vessel; (5) set the effective date of these amendments as the vessel baseline specification date for FMPs without

baselines (scup, *Loligo*/butterfish, *Illex*, black sea bass, and mahogany quahog); (6) set the effective date of these amendments as the revised replacement baseline date and the newly established upgrade baseline date for the summer flounder FMP; (7) authorize the permanent voluntary relinquishment of permit eligibility; (8) implement a restriction on permit splitting; and (9) require a one-time Confirmation of Permit History registration, and annual permit renewal. For the American Lobster FMP, the amendments would prohibit permit splitting and require a one-time Confirmation of Permit History registration.

A proposed rule that would implement the FMP amendments may be published in the **Federal Register** for public comment, following NMFS' evaluation of the proposed rule under the procedures of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Public comments on the proposed rule must be received by the end of the comment period on the FMP amendments in order to be considered in the approval/disapproval decision on the FMP amendments. All comments received by December 14, 1998, whether specifically directed to the FMP amendments or the proposed rule, will be considered in the approval/disapproval decision. Comments received after that date will not be considered in the approval/disapproval decision on the FMP amendment.

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

Dated: October 8, 1998.

Bruce C. Morehead,

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