

markets. Companies can choose the stops they wish to visit. However, preference will be given to participants selecting two or more stops.

II. Mission Objective

This U.S. Department of Commerce trade mission is the ideal way for small and mid-sized companies to evaluate these markets and make important business contacts.

During the trade mission participants will receive:

- (A) Briefings on local medical markets;
- (B) Introductions to potential distributors, facility administrators, and purchasing managers through group events;
- (C) Hospital and other site visits, if applicable;
- (D) One-on-one meetings tailored to each firm's interests; and
- (E) Meetings with local business representatives and government officials, as suitable.

The precise schedule will depend on the availability of local government and business officials, specific goals of mission participants, and air travel schedules.

Applications for this Mission are available, and may be obtained by contacting: Lisa Huot, USDOC/CS—Room 2118, 1401 Constitution Ave., NW., Washington, DC 20230. Tel: 202-482-2796; Fax 202-482-0115. E-mail: lisa.huot@mail.doc.gov.

Lisa Huot,

International Trade Specialist, Global Trade Programs.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 022307A]

Endangered and Threatened Species; Initiation of a Status Review under the Endangered Species Act for Cusk

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

ACTION: Notice of initiation of a status review under the Endangered Species Act (ESA); request for information.

SUMMARY: We, NMFS, announce the initiation of a status review for the cusk and solicit information on the status of, and threats to, the species.

DATES: Information regarding the status of, and threats to, the cusk must be received by April 1, 2007.

ADDRESSES: You may submit information by any one of the following methods:

- Fax: 978-281-9394, Attention: Kim Damon-Randall-Damon
- Mail: Information on paper, disk, or CD-ROM should be addressed to the Assistant Regional Administrator for Protected Resources, NMFS, Protected Resources Division, One Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930.
- E-mail: cuskinfo@noaa.gov. Include in the subject line the following identifier: cusk status review.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Kim Damon-Randall, NMFS Northeast Region, 978-281-9300 ext. 6535; or Marta Nammack, NMFS-HQ, Office of Protected Resources, 301-713-1401 ext. 180.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Because of concern over declines in abundance, we identified cusk (*Brosme brosme*) as a species of concern on April 15, 2004 (69 FR 19975). In May 2003, the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) completed a status report for cusk in Canada and assessed the species status as threatened. In April 2006, the Minister of the Environment referred the assessment back to COSEWIC for further information and consideration. It is, therefore, unclear whether cusk will be listed in Canada under the Species at Risk Act.

Our Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) autumn bottom trawl survey biomass index for cusk has fluctuated considerably, but a declining trend has been evident since the late 1960s, with all indices remaining at or close to record-low levels from 1985 through 2002 (Sosebee and Cadrin, 2006). The 1998 biomass index is near zero and is the record low. Cusk have been found to be distributed primarily in deeper waters in the central portion of the Gulf of Maine where a declining trend is also apparent on the distribution maps, and where very few fish were caught in 1993-1997 and 1998-2002 (Sosebee and Cadrin, 2006). Mean length has also declined from 24 inches (62 cm) during 1964 to 1987 to 19 inches (50 cm) during the period of 1988 to 1998. In the early 1970s, individual fish weight averaged 3 kg but was reduced by 50 percent to 1.5 kg in the late 1990s. Landings and survey indices have dropped considerably from 1984 to 2004 (NMFS, 2004). The ratio of landings to survey biomass estimates

has been increasing since 1986, which implies increased exploitation over that time period.

In the United States, the cusk fishery is not presently managed. Fishing was unrestricted in Canada until 1999 when limitations were established for landings in the Scotia-Fundy region. Despite these limitations, fishing continues to be a source of mortality. Fishing mortality is one of the prime factors for the observed decline. This appears to be a transboundary species, and, as such, conservation measures may be needed both in the United States and Canada.

Our notice establishing the species of concern list states that as resources permit, we intend to conduct status reviews, collect documentation, and make appropriate amendments relevant to species on the list (69 FR 19975; April 15, 2004). As such, we are initiating a status review for cusk. We will use the status review report and any other information that we obtain during this process to determine if listing this species under the ESA is warranted or if this species should be retained or removed from the species of concern list.

Request for Information

To support this status review, we are soliciting information relevant to the status of and threats to the species, including, but not limited to, information on the following topics: (1) Historical and current abundance and distribution of the species; (2) potential factors for the species' decline throughout its range; (3) rates of capture and release of the species from both recreational and commercial fisheries; (4) post-release mortality; (5) life history information (size/age at maturity, growth rates, fecundity, reproductive rate/success, etc.); (6) morphological and molecular information to assist in determining stock structure; (7) threats to the species, particularly: (a) Present or threatened destruction, modification, or curtailment of habitat or range; (b) over-utilization for commercial, recreational, scientific, or educational purposes; (c) disease or predation; (d) inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms; or (e) other natural or manmade factors affecting its continued existence; and (8) any ongoing conservation efforts for the species. See **DATES** and **ADDRESSES** for guidance on and deadlines for submitting information.

Dated: March 5, 2007.

James H. Lecky,

*Director, Office of Protected Resources,
National Marine Fisheries Service.*

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 030107G]

Fisheries in the Western Pacific; Western Pacific Pelagic Fisheries; American Samoa Longline Limited Entry Program

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

ACTION: Notice; availability of permit upgrades.

SUMMARY: NMFS is soliciting applications for American Samoa longline limited entry permit upgrades. Fourteen (14) permit upgrades will be available in 2007 for Class A vessel permit holders to upgrade to larger vessel size classes (B-1, C-1, or D-1) in the American Samoa pelagic longline fishery. The permit upgrades are available only to Class A permit holders who participated in the fishery before March 22, 2002, and the highest priority for receiving a permit upgrade will be given to the person with the earliest date of documented participation.

DATES: Completed permit upgrade applications must be received by NMFS by May 8, 2007.

ADDRESSES: Applicants should send completed applications to NMFS Pacific Islands Region (PIR), ATTN: ASLE Permit Upgrade, 1601 Kapiolani Blvd., Suite 1110, Honolulu, HI 96814-4700.

Application forms may be obtained from NMFS PIR, ATTN: ASLE Permit Upgrade, 1601 Kapiolani Blvd., Suite 1110, Honolulu, HI 96814-4700, or from the NMFS PIR Web site: <http://www.fpir.noaa.gov>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Walter Ikehara, NMFS PIR (808)944-2275.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On May 25, 2005, NMFS published a final rule (70 FR 29646) that established a limited entry program for the pelagic longline fishery based in American Samoa, under Amendment 11 to the Fishery Management Plan for Pelagic Fisheries in the Western Pacific Region. American Samoa longline limited entry permits

were established for four vessel size classes, based on length:

- Class A: less than or equal to 40 ft (12.2 m),
- Class B and B-1: over 40 ft (12.2 m) to 50 ft (15.2 m) inclusive,
- Class C and C-1: over 50 ft (15.2 m) to 70 ft (21.3 m) inclusive, and
- Class D and D-1: over 70 ft (21.3 m).

A total of 60 initial American Samoa longline limited entry permits were issued, 22 in Class A, five in Class B, 12 in Class C, and 21 in Class D. These numbers are the vessel size class limits on the number of allowed American Samoa longline limited entry permits, as defined by the regulations setting the maximum limit on permits under the limited entry program.

The limited entry program allows for a total of 26 permit upgrades to be made available for the exclusive use of permit holders in Class A, distributed over a four-year period following the issuance of initial limited entry permits. In 2006, eight permit upgrades were available (four in Class B-1, two in Class C-1, and two in Class D-1), but only one Class B-1 upgrade and one Class D-1 upgrade were issued, leaving six unissued. In 2007, 14 permit upgrades will be available (four new and three unissued in Class B-1, two new and two unissued in Class C-1, and two new and one unissued in Class D-1). The Regional Administrator may initially issue Class B-1, C-1 and D-1 permit upgrades only to persons who hold a Class A permit and who participated in the American Samoa pelagic longline fishery before March 22, 2002. The highest priority will be given to those with the earliest date of documented participation. Those receiving upgraded permits must surrender their Class A permits and the surrendered permits are deducted from the allowed Class A permit total.

This notice announces the availability of permit upgrades and solicits applications for the upgrades. Complete applications must include the completed and signed application form (available from NMFS), legible copies of documents supporting historical participation in the American Samoa pelagic longline fishery, and payment for the non-refundable application processing fee. Documents supporting fishery participation should show that fishing was conducted using longline gear. Properly completed applications must be received by NMFS (see **ADDRESSES**) by May 8, 2007 to be considered for eligibility for the 2007 permit upgrades.

Authoritative additional information on the American Samoa longline limited

entry program may be found at 50 CFR part 665.

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

Dated: March 5, 2007.

James P. Burgess,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 030507F]

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC); Public Meeting

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

ACTION: Notice of a public meeting.

SUMMARY: The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee will hold a Population Dynamics Sub-group public meeting.

DATES: The meeting will be held on Friday, March 30, 2007, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held at the Courtyard by Marriott, Baltimore-Washington Airport, 1671 Nursery Rd., Linthicum, MD 21090; telephone: (410) 859-8855.

Council address: Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council; 300 S. New Street, Room 2115, Dover, DE 19904; telephone: (302) 674-2331.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Daniel T. Furlong, Executive Director, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council; 300 S. New Street, Room 2115, Dover, DE 19904; telephone: (302) 674-2331, extension 19.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The purpose of this meeting is to address issues related to recruitment dynamics and stock rebuilding for the Atlantic butterfish stock. Additional technical issues concerning standards defining best available scientific data may also be discussed.

Special Accommodations

The meeting is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to M. Jan Bryan at the Mid-Atlantic Council Office, (302) 674-2331 extension 18, at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.