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Adam Dilts,

*Chief, Oceans and Coasts Section, NOAA
Office of General Counsel.*

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648-XA130]

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

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

ACTION: Notice of initiation of scoping process; notice of public scoping meetings; request for comments.

SUMMARY: The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) will hold two public scoping meetings via webinar and a written comment period to solicit public comments on a developing management action to consider potential changes to the allocation of the black sea bass commercial quota among the states of Maine through North Carolina.

DATES: The webinar scoping hearings will be held on Monday May 11, 2020, from 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m., EDT and on Thursday, May 14, 2020, from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., EDT. Written comments must be received on or before 11:59 p.m. EDT, May 31, 2020. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for more details.

ADDRESSES: Both webinar hearings may be accessed at: <http://mafmc.adobeconnect.com/bsb-com-allocation-scoping/>. Webinar audio will also be accessible by phone by dialing 1-800-832-0736 and entering room number 5068871. A scoping document is available at: <http://www.mafmc.org/actions/bsb-commercial-allocation>. Copies of the scoping document are also available by request from Dr. Chris Moore, Executive Director, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, 800 N State Street, Suite 201, Dover, DE 19901; telephone: (302) 674-2331.

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

- **Email to:** jbeaty@mafmc.org; Include “black sea bass commercial allocation amendment” in the subject line.

- **Via webform at:** <http://www.mafmc.org/comments/bsb-com-allocation-amendment>.

- **Mail to:** Dr. Christopher M. Moore, Executive Director, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, 800 N. State Street, Suite 201, Dover, DE 19901. Mark the outside of the envelope “black sea bass commercial allocation amendment.”

- **Fax to:** (302) 674-5399.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Christopher M. Moore, Ph.D., Executive Director, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, telephone: (302) 526-5255.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) are developing a joint action to consider adjusting the allocations of the black sea bass commercial quota among states. These allocations were loosely based on landings data from 1980–2001. They were first implemented in 2003 and have not been modified since that time. They are currently included only in the Commission’s fishery management plan and are not jointly managed with the Council. This joint action will consider whether modifications to these allocations should be made to account for changes in black sea bass distribution and abundance over time, as well as other considerations. It will also consider whether the allocations should be added to the Council’s Fishery Management Plan and managed jointly by the Council and Commission.

Additional information on this action is available at: <http://www.mafmc.org/actions/bsb-commercial-allocation>.

Special Accommodations

These meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to M. Jan Saunders at the Mid-Atlantic Council office, (302) 526-5251, at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.

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

Dated: April 15, 2020.

Tracey L. Thompson,

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

[FR Doc. 2020-08265 Filed 4-17-20; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648-XW024]

Magnuson-Stevens Act Provisions; General Provisions for Domestic Fisheries; Coastal Pelagic Species Fishery; Application for Exempted Fishing Permits; California Wetfish Producers Association

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

ACTION: Notice; request for comments.

SUMMARY: The Regional Administrator, West Coast Region, NMFS, has made a preliminary determination that an application for an Exempted Fishing Permit warrants further consideration. The application, submitted by the California Wetfish Producers Association, requests an exemption from the prohibition on directed fishing for Pacific sardine during the remainder of the 2019–2020 fishing year and the upcoming 2020–2021 fishing year. The goal of this research is to collect fishery-dependent data for potential use in the 2021 and 2022 Pacific sardine stock assessments. NMFS requests public comment on the application.

DATES: Comments must be received by May 5, 2020.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments on this document, identified by NOAA–NMFS–2020–0060, by the following method:

- **Electronic Submissions:** Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal. Go to www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=NOAA-NMFS-2020-0060, click the “Comment Now!” icon, complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments. The Exempted Fishing Permit application will be available under Relevant Documents through the same link.

- **Instructions:** Comments must be submitted by the above method to ensure that the comments are received, documented, and considered by NMFS. Comments received after the end of the comment period may not be considered. All comments received are a part of the public record and will generally be posted for public viewing on www.regulations.gov without change. All personal identifying information (e.g., name, address, etc.) submitted voluntarily by the sender will be publicly accessible. Do not submit confidential business information, or

otherwise sensitive or protected information. NMFS will accept anonymous comments (enter "N/A" in the required fields if you wish to remain anonymous).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Lynn Massey, West Coast Region, NMFS, (562) 436-2462, lynn.massey@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This action is authorized by the Coastal Pelagic Species (CPS) Fishery Management Plan (FMP) and regulations at 50 CFR 600.745, which allow NMFS Regional Administrators to authorize exempted fishing permits (EFPs) to test fishing activities that would otherwise be prohibited.

On April 6, 2020, the California Wetfish Producers Association (CWPA) submitted an EFP application to NMFS requesting an exemption from the prohibition on directed fishing for Pacific sardine as part of an industry-based scientific collection effort. The CWPA requested to directly harvest up to 640 metric tons (mt) of Pacific sardine during the remainder of the 2019–2020 fishing year, as well as 740 mt during the upcoming 2020–2021 fishing year, which will begin on July 1, 2020. Directed fishing for Pacific sardine, with exceptions for the minor directed fisheries, the live bait fishery, and EFP activities, is currently prohibited off the U.S. West Coast (84 FR 31222; July 1, 2019) and on April 6, 2020, the Pacific Fishery Management Council voted to keep the primary directed fishery closed for the 2020–2021 season as well.

The primary directed fishery for Pacific sardine has been closed since 2015, and consequently, scientists at the Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWFSC) have a limited amount of fishery-dependent data to use in their annual stock assessment. The goal of this EFP project is to provide additional biological data (*i.e.*, age and length data from directed harvest) for potential use in the 2021 and 2022 stock assessments for Pacific sardine. Under this EFP project, six participating vessels would target Pacific sardine off the coasts of southern and central California with the goal of obtaining a minimum of six point sets during mid-May to June 30, 2020. During the 2020–2021 fishing year, the same six vessels would target sardine with the goal of obtaining a minimum of six point sets during July 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020, and a minimum of six point sets during January 1, 2021 to June 30, 2021.

A portion of each point set (*i.e.*, an individual haul of fish captured with a purse seine net) would be retained for biological sampling, and the remainder

would be sold by the participating fishermen and processors to offset research costs and avoid unnecessary discard. EFP landings would be offloaded at ports in Monterey/Moss Landing, California (for central California landings) or Long Beach/San Pedro, California (for southern California landings), and the portion of fish retained for biological sampling would be received by staff at the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

NMFS does not expect any adverse biological impacts from this EFP project. Any harvest under this EFP would count against the annual catch limit (ACL) for Pacific sardine in both fishing years when EFP activities would occur. On July 1, 2019, NMFS published a final rule (84 FR 31222) to implement Pacific sardine harvest specifications for the 2019–2020 fishing year off the U.S. West Coast. This final rule included a 4,514-mt ACL and a prohibition on directed fishing for Pacific sardine with exceptions for the minor directed fisheries, the live bait fishery, and EFP activities. As of March 31, 2020, approximately 3,300 mt of the 4,514-mt ACL for the 2019–2020 fishing year remained unharvested. Based on existing and likely fishing pressure over the next three months, NMFS does not expect landings to approach the ACL. If NMFS does not issue this EFP, then the 640-mt request for EFP catch would be available for harvest by other permissible fishing activities prior to the end of the current fishing year, which ends on June 30, 2020.

After publication of this document in the **Federal Register**, NMFS may approve and issue permits to participating vessels after the close of the public comment period.

NMFS will consider comments submitted in deciding whether to approve the application as requested. NMFS may approve the application in its entirety or may make any alterations needed to achieve the goals of the EFP project.

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

Dated: April 14, 2020.

Hélène M.N. Scalliet,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648–XA136

Western Pacific Fishery Management Council; Public Meetings

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

ACTION: Notice of a public meeting.

SUMMARY: The Western Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) will hold a meeting of the Pacific Pelagics Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP) Plan Team (PT) to discuss fishery management issues and develop recommendations to the Council for future management of pelagic fisheries in the Western Pacific region.

DATES: The Pelagic PT will be held on May 6–8, 2020. For specific times and agendas, see **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION**.

ADDRESSES: The meetings will be held by web conference. Audio and visual portions of the web conference can be accessed at: <https://wprfmc.webex.com/join/info.wpcouncilnoaa.gov>. Web conference access information will also be posted on the Council's website at www.wpcouncil.org. For assistance with the web conference connection, contact the Council office at (808) 522–8220.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Kitty M. Simonds, Executive Director, Western Pacific Fishery Management Council; telephone (808) 522–8220.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Pelagic PT meeting will be held on May 6–8, 2020, and run each day from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. Hawaii Standard Time (HST) (12 p.m. to 4 p.m. Samoa Standard Time (SST); 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on May 7–9, 2020, Chamorro Standard Time (ChST)). Public comment periods will be provided in the agenda. The order in which agenda items are addressed may change. The meetings will run as late as necessary to complete scheduled business.

Agenda for the Pelagic Plan Team Meeting

Wednesday, May 6, 2020, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. HST (12 p.m. to 4 p.m. SST; Thursday, May 7, 2020, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. ChST)

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Approval of Draft Agenda, 2018 Report, and Assignment of Rapporteurs
3. Review 2019 Annual Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) Report Modules
 - A. Fishery Data Modules
 - i. American Samoa
 - ii. CNMI