

The Commission was also concerned that NMFS had not explicitly identified that a 1 year renewal IHA was a one-time opportunity in our **Federal Register** notices nor on our website. NMFS has since identified in **Federal Register** notices and on our website that a renewal IHA is one time opportunity.

Preliminary Determinations

The survey activities proposed by Atlantic Shores are identical to (and a subset of) those analyzed in the initial IHA, as are the method of taking and the effects of the action. The mitigation measures and monitoring and reporting requirements as described above are also identical to the initial IHA. The planned number of days of activity will be reduced given the completion of a small portion of the originally planned work. Therefore, the amount of take proposed is equal to or less than that authorized in the initial IHA. The potential effect of Atlantic Shores' activities remains limited to Level B harassment in the form of behavioral disturbance. In analyzing the effects of the activities in the initial IHA, NMFS determined that Atlantic Shores' activities would have a negligible impact on the affected species or stocks and that the authorized take numbers of each species or stock were small relative to the relevant stocks (*e.g.*, less than one-third of the abundance of all stocks).

NMFS has preliminarily concluded that there is no new information suggesting that our analysis or findings should change from those reached for the initial IHA. Based on the information and analysis contained here and in the referenced documents, NMFS has determined the following: (1) The required mitigation measures will effect the least practicable impact on marine mammal species or stocks and their habitat; (2) the authorized takes will have a negligible impact on the affected marine mammal species or stocks; (3) the authorized takes represent small numbers of marine mammals relative to the affected stock abundances; (4) Atlantic Shore's activities will not have an unmitigable adverse impact on taking for subsistence purposes as no relevant subsistence uses of marine mammals are implicated by this action, and; (5) appropriate monitoring and reporting requirements are included.

Endangered Species Act

Section 7(a)(2) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA; 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*) requires that each Federal agency insure that any action it authorizes, funds, or carries out is not likely to jeopardize the continued

existence of any endangered or threatened species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of designated critical habitat. To ensure ESA compliance for the issuance of IHAs, NMFS consults internally, in this case with the NMFS Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO), whenever we propose to authorize take for endangered or threatened species.

The NMFS Office of Protected Resources is proposing to authorize the incidental take of four species of marine mammals which are listed under the ESA: The North Atlantic right, fin, sei, and sperm whale. The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers consulted with NMFS Greater Atlantic Regional Office (GARFO) under section 7 of the ESA on commercial wind lease issuance and site assessment activities on the Atlantic Outer Continental Shelf in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New York and New Jersey Wind Energy Areas. The resulting Biological Opinion, issued on April 10, 2013, concluded the proposed action may adversely affect but is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the four aforementioned species.

On April 13, 2020, GARFO determined that the 2013 Biological Opinion remained valid for issuance of Atlantic Shores' initial IHA and that the proposed MMPA authorization provides no new information about the effects of the action, nor does it change the extent of effects of the action, or any other basis to require reinitiation of the Opinion. Similarly, on March 3, 2021, GARFO concluded the same for issuance of the Renewal IHA to Atlantic Shores. Therefore, the 2013 Biological Opinion meets the requirements of section 7(a)(2) of the ESA and implementing regulations at 50 CFR 402 for our proposed action to issue an IHA under the MMPA, and no further consultation is required.

The 2013 Biological Opinion and amended ITS can be found at www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/marine-mammal-protection/incidental-take-authorizations-other-energy-activities-renewable.

Proposed Renewal IHA and Request for Public Comment

As a result of these preliminary determinations, NMFS proposes to issue a renewal IHA to Atlantic Shores for conducting marine site characterization surveys off New York and New Jersey, effective from April 20, 2021 through April 19, 2022, provided the previously described mitigation, monitoring, and reporting requirements are incorporated. A draft of the proposed and initial IHA

can be found at <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/permit/incidental-take-authorizations-under-marine-mammal-protection-act>. We request comment on our analyses, the proposed Renewal IHA, and any other aspect of this Notice. Please include with your comments any supporting data or literature citations to help inform our final decision on the request for MMPA authorization.

Dated: March 24, 2021.

Donna S. Wieting,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648-XA963]

International Affairs; U.S. Fishing Opportunities in the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization Regulatory Area

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

ACTION: Notification of U.S. fishing opportunities.

SUMMARY: We are announcing a fishing opportunity in the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization Regulatory Area for shrimp in Division 3M. This action is necessary to make fishing privileges in the Regulatory Area available on an equitable basis to the extent possible. Fishing privileges for all other stocks for which the United States has access were previously allocated for 2020–2024. The intended effect of this notice is to alert U.S. fishing vessels of these fishing opportunities, to relay the available quotas available to U.S. participants, and to outline the process and requirements for vessels to apply to participate in this fishery.

DATES: Effective April 13, 2021 through December 31, 2024. Expressions of interest regarding fishing opportunities in the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) will be accepted through April 13, 2021.

ADDRESSES: Expressions of interest regarding U.S. fishing opportunities in NAFO should be made in writing to Michael Pentony, U.S. Commissioner to NAFO, NMFS Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office, by emailing Moira Kelly, Senior Fishery Program Specialist, at Moira.Kelly@noaa.gov.

Information relating to chartering vessels of another NAFO Contracting Party, transferring NAFO fishing opportunities to or from another NAFO Contracting Party, or general U.S. participation in NAFO is available from Patrick E. Moran, NMFS Office of International Affairs and Seafood Inspection, email: Pat.Moran@noaa.gov.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:
Moir Kelly, (978) 281-9218.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

General NAFO Background

The United States is a Contracting Party to NAFO. NAFO is an intergovernmental fisheries science and management body whose convention applies to most fishery resources in international waters of the Northwest Atlantic, except salmon, tunas/marlins, whales, and sedentary species such as shellfish.

As a Contracting Party within NAFO, the United States may be allocated catch quotas or effort allocations for certain species in specific areas within the NAFO Regulatory Area and may participate in fisheries for other species for which we have not received a specific quota. For most stocks for which the United States does not receive a specific allocation, an open allocation, known as the "Others" allocation under the Convention, is shared access between all NAFO Contracting Parties.

Additional information on NAFO can be found online at <https://www.nafo.int/About-us>. The NAFO Conservation and Enforcement Measures (CEM) that specify the fishery regulations, total allowable catches (TAC, quotas), and other information about the fishery program is available online at: <https://www.nafo.int/Fisheries/Conservation>. NAFO updates the CEM annually.

This notice announces the fishing opportunity available to U.S. vessels in NAFO regulatory waters specific to shrimp in Division 3M. This notice also outlines the application process and other requirements for U.S. vessels that wish to participate in the 3M shrimp fishery. Allocation of all other U.S. fishing opportunities were finalized in 2020, as described in the previous notice of fishing opportunities (85 FR 45198; July 27, 2020). Additional information is available in that notice and is not repeated here.

NAFO Fishing Opportunity Available to U.S. Fishing Vessels

Shrimp in Division 3M was made available for fishing at the 2019 Annual Meeting after a multi-year moratorium on fishing. (additional information is

available online at <https://www.nafo.int/Library/Commission/Meeting-Proceedings-of-the-Commission>.) Prior to the moratorium, fishing was conducted using a days-at-sea system that allocated a certain number of days to Contracting Parties, rather than the now-standard quota (in weight) approach. NAFO was in discussions to shift the allocation scheme to a quota system when the moratorium became necessary to protect the stock. This effort was suspended because of the moratorium and is currently being renewed.

At the 2019 Annual Meeting of NAFO, the Commission decided to open the fishery using the previous days-at-sea program while pursuing a new quota-based management system. Due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, no progress was made in 2020 on this issue.

In our prior announcement, we explained that we would allocate 3M shrimp for only 2020 while the Commission considered a new management approach. Because no progress has been made to date, we are announcing the opportunity for this stock for 2021 through 2024, or until a new management scheme is adopted by the Commission. As such, applicants should note that the Commission might adopt a new allocation scheme before 2024, and that if it does, NOAA may terminate this potential permit before 2024 and publicly re-solicit interest through 2024. The holder of the rescinded permit would be invited to re-apply.

Authorization to fish for NAFO species will include permit-related conditions or restrictions, including but not limited to, minimum size requirements, bycatch-related measures, and catch limits. Any such conditions or restrictions will be designed to ensure the optimum utilization, long-term sustainability, and rational management and conservation of fishery resources in the NAFO Regulatory Area, consistent with the Convention on Future Multilateral Cooperation in the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries as well as the Amendment to the Convention on Future Multilateral Cooperation in the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries, which has been adopted by all NAFO Contracting Parties.

Applying for These Fishing Opportunities

Expressions of interest to fish for the 2021-2024 U.S. fishing opportunity for 3M shrimp, described above, will be considered from all U.S. fishing interests (e.g., vessel owners, processors, agents, others). Applicants are urged to

carefully review and thoroughly address the application requirements and selection criteria as detailed below. Expressions of interest should be directed in writing to Regional Administrator Michael Pentony (see **ADDRESSES**).

Information Required in an Application Letter

Expressions of interest should include a detailed description of anticipated fishing operations for the full five years. Descriptions should include, at a minimum:

- Intended target species;
- Proposed dates of fishing operations;
- Vessel(s) to be used to harvest fish, including the name, registration, and home port of the intended harvesting vessel(s);
- The number of fishing personnel and their nationality involved in vessel operations;
- Intended landing port or ports; including for ports outside of the United States, whether or not the product will be shipped to the United States for processing;
- Processing facilities to be used;
- Target market for harvested fish; and,
- Evidence demonstrating the ability of the applicant to successfully prosecute fishing operations in the NAFO Regulatory Area, in accordance with NAFO management measures. This may include descriptions of previously successful NAFO or domestic fisheries participation.

Note that applicant U.S. vessels must possess or be eligible to receive a valid High Seas Fishing Compliance Act (HSFCA) permit. HSFCA permits are available from the NMFS Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office. Information regarding other requirements for fishing in the NAFO Regulatory Area is detailed below and is also available from the NMFS Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (see **ADDRESSES**).

U.S. applicants wishing to harvest U.S. allocations using a vessel from another NAFO Contracting Party, or hoping to enter a chartering arrangement with a vessel from another NAFO Contracting Party, should see below for details on U.S. and NAFO requirements for such activities. If you have further questions regarding what information is required in an expression of interest, please contact Patrick Moran (see **ADDRESSES**).

Criteria Used in Identifying Successful Applicants

Applicants demonstrating the greatest benefits to the United States through their intended operations will be most successful. Such benefits may include:

- The use of U.S. vessels and crew to harvest fish in the NAFO Regulatory Area;
- Detailed, positive impacts on U.S. employment as a result of the fishing, transport, or processing operations;
- Use of U.S. processing facilities;
- Transport, marketing, and sales of product within the United States;
- Other ancillary, demonstrable benefits to U.S. businesses as a result of the fishing operation; and
- Documentation of the physical characteristics and economics of the fishery for future use by the U.S. fishing industry.

Other factors we may consider include but are not limited to: A documented history of successful fishing operations in NAFO or other similar fisheries; the history of compliance by the vessel with the NAFO CEM or other domestic and international regulatory requirements, including potential disqualification of an applicant with repeated compliance issues; and, for those applicants without NAFO or other international fishery history, a description of demonstrated harvest, processing, marketing, and regulatory compliance within domestic fisheries.

To ensure equitable access by U.S. fishing interests, we may provide additional guidance or procedures, or we may issue regulations designed to allocate fishing interests to one or more U.S. applicants from among qualified applicants. These regulatory changes may result in NOAA altering or amending quota the NOAA grants an applicant through this process. NOAA will, however, notify any approved applicant of NOAA's proposed regulatory changes in advance of making the changes. After reviewing all requests for allocations submitted, we may also decide not to grant any allocations if it is determined that no requests adequately meet the criteria described in this notice.

Notification of Selected Vessels for NAFO Fisheries

We will provide written responses to all applicants notifying them of their application status and, as needed for successful applicants, allocation awards will be made as quickly as possible so that we may notify NAFO and take other necessary actions to facilitate operations in the regulatory area by U.S. fishing

interests. Successful applicants will receive additional information from us on permit conditions and applicable regulations before starting fishing operations.

Mid-Term Allocation Adjustments

In the event that an approved U.S. entity does not, is not able to, or is not expected to fish an allocation, or part thereof, awarded to them, NMFS may reallocate to other approved U.S. entities. If requested, approved U.S. entities must provide updated fishing plans and/or schedules. A U.S. entity may not consolidate or transfer allocations without prior approval from NMFS. In the event that other approved U.S. entities are unable to fish additional allocation, NMFS may solicit further interest by notice in the **Federal Register**.

Chartering a Vessel To Fish Available U.S. Allocations

For 3M shrimp, the United States may enter into a chartering arrangement with a vessel from any other NAFO Contracting Party. Additionally, any U.S. vessel or fishing operation may enter into a chartering arrangement with any other vessel or business from a NAFO Contracting Party. The United States and the other Contracting Party involved in a chartering arrangement must agree to the charter, and the NAFO Executive Secretary must be advised of the chartering arrangement before the commencement of any charter fishing operations. Any U.S. vessel or fishing operation interested in making use of the chartering provisions of NAFO must provide at least the following information: The name and registration number of the U.S. vessel; a copy of the charter agreement; a detailed fishing plan; a written letter of consent from the applicable NAFO Contracting Party; the date from which the vessel is authorized to commence fishing; and the duration of the charter (not to exceed six months).

Expressions of interest using another NAFO Contracting Party vessel under charter should be accompanied by a detailed description of anticipated benefits to the United States, as described above. Additional detail on chartering arrangements can be found in Article 26 of the CEM (<https://www.nafo.int/Fisheries/Conservation>).

Any vessel from another Contracting Party wishing to enter into a chartering arrangement with the United States must be in full current compliance with the requirements outlined in the NAFO Convention and CEM. These requirements include, but are not limited to, submission of the following

reports to the NAFO Executive Secretary:

- Notification that the vessel is authorized by its flag state to fish within the NAFO Regulatory Area during the applicable fishing year;
- Provisional monthly catch reports for all vessels of that NAFO Contracting Party operating in the NAFO Regulatory Area;
- Daily catch reports for each day fished by the subject vessel within the Regulatory Area;
- Observer reports within 30 days following the completion of a fishing trip; and
- An annual statement of actions taken by its flag state to comply with the NAFO Convention.

The United States may also consider the vessel's previous compliance with NAFO bycatch, reporting, and other provisions, as outlined in the NAFO CEM, before authorizing the chartering arrangement.

Fishing in the NAFO Regulatory Area

U.S. applicant vessels must be in possession of, or obtain, a valid HSFCA permit, which is available from the NMFS Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office. All permitted vessels must comply with any conditions of this permit and all applicable provisions of the Convention on Future Multilateral Cooperation in the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries and the CEM. We reserve the right to impose additional permit conditions that ensure compliance with the NAFO Convention and the CEM, the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, and any other applicable law.

Further details regarding U.S. and NAFO requirements are available from the NMFS Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office, and can be found in the NAFO CEM on the internet (<https://www.nafo.int/Fisheries/Conservation>).

Dated: March 24, 2021.

Jennifer M. Wallace,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

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South Atlantic Fishery Management Council; Public Meetings

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