

—Agenda Development for December 2003 ISPAB Meeting
 —Wrap-Up

Note that agenda items may change without notice because of possible unexpected schedule conflicts of presenters.

Public Participation: The Board agenda will include a period of time, not to exceed thirty minutes, for oral comments and questions from the public. Each speaker will be limited to five minutes. Members of the public who are interested in speaking are asked to contact the Board Secretariat at the telephone number indicated below. In addition, written statements are invited and may be submitted to the Board at any time. Written statements should be directed to the ISPAB Secretariat, Information Technology Laboratory, 100 Bureau Drive, Stop 8930, National Institute of Standards and Technology, Gaithersburg, MD 20899–8930. It would be appreciated if 35 copies of written material were submitted for distribution to the Board and attendees no later than September 9, 2003. Approximately 15 seats will be available for the public and media.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ms. Joan Hash, Board Secretariat, Information Technology Laboratory, National Institute of Standards and Technology, 100 Bureau Drive, Stop 8930, Gaithersburg, MD 20899–8930, telephone: (301) 975–3357.

Dated: August 21, 2003.

Hratch G. Semerjian,

Acting Deputy Director.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 082003C]

Atlantic Highly Migratory Species; Advisory Panels

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

ACTION: Notice; Highly Migratory Species and Billfish Advisory Panel Meetings; Request for nominations.

SUMMARY: NMFS will hold a Highly Migratory Species Advisory Panel (HMS AP) meeting September 30, 2003, for Atlantic Shark management in Silver Spring, MD. Also, a joint meeting of the Atlantic HMS AP and the Atlantic Billfish Advisory Panel (Billfish AP)

will be held February 9 through 11, 2004, in Silver Spring, MD. Additionally, NMFS solicits nominations for the HMS AP and the Billfish AP. The intent of these Advisory Panel meetings is to consider alternatives for the conservation and management of highly migratory species.

DATES: The HMS AP Shark management meeting will be held from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on September 30, 2003. The joint HMS-Billfish AP meeting will be held from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. on Monday, February 9, 2004, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Tuesday, February 10, 2004, and from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Wednesday, February 11, 2004.

Nominations must be submitted on or before October 10, 2003.

ADDRESSES: The AP meetings will be held at the Holiday Inn, 8777 Georgia Avenue (Rt. 97), Silver Spring, MD 20910. Phone: (301) 589–0800.

Nominations and requests for the AP Statement of Organization, Practices, and Procedures should be submitted in writing to Christopher Rogers, Chief, Highly Migratory Species Management Division, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD, 20910. Nominations may be submitted by fax; (301) 713–1917.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Othel Freeman or Carol Douglas (301) 713–2347.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Introduction

In accordance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, (Magnuson-Stevens Act), 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*, as amended by the Sustainable Fisheries Act, Public Law 104–297, Advisory Panels (AP) have been established to consult with NMFS in the collection and evaluation of information relevant to the HMS FMP (April 1999) and the Billfish FMP Amendment (April 1999). Nominations are being sought to fill one-third of the posts of the HMS AP for 3-year appointments, and one-half of the posts of the Billfish AP for 2-year appointments. The nomination process and appointments are required by the Statement of Organization, Practices, and Procedures for each AP. The purpose of the HMS AP is to advise and assist the Secretary of Commerce (Secretary) in the collection and evaluation of information relevant to any amendment to the HMS FMP. The HMS AP evaluates future management options for Atlantic tunas, swordfish, and sharks under the requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

The purpose of the Billfish AP is to advise and assist the Secretary in the collection and evaluation of information relevant to any amendment to the Billfish FMP. The Billfish AP evaluates future management options for Atlantic billfish under the requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

Procedures and Guidelines

A. Procedures for Appointing the Advisory Panels

Individuals with definable interests in the recreational and commercial fishing and related industries, environmental community, academia, governmental entities, and non-governmental organizations will be considered for membership in the AP.

Nominations are invited from all individuals and constituent groups. The nomination should include:

1. The name of the applicant or nominee and a description of their interest in highly migratory species (HMS) or one species in particular from among sharks, swordfish, tunas, and billfish;
2. A statement of background and/or qualifications;
3. The AP to which the applicant seeks appointment;
4. A written commitment that the applicant or nominee shall actively participate in good faith in the tasks of the AP; and
5. Outreach Resources.

Tenure for the HMS AP:

Member tenure will be for 3 years, with one-third of the members' terms expiring on the last day of each calendar year. All appointments will be for 3 years (36 months).

Tenure for the Billfish AP:

Member tenure will be for 2 years, with one-half of the terms expiring on the last day of each calendar year. All appointments will be for 2 years (24 months).

B. Participants

The HMS AP consists of not less than 23 members who are knowledgeable about the fisheries for all Atlantic HMS species. The Billfish AP consists of not less than nine members who are knowledgeable about the fisheries for all Atlantic billfish species. Nominations for each AP will be accepted to allow representation from recreational and commercial fishing interests, the conservation community, and the scientific community.

NMFS does not believe that each potentially affected organization or individual must necessarily have its own representative, but each area of interest must be adequately represented. The intent is to have a group that, as a

whole, reflects an appropriate and equitable balance and mix of interests given the responsibilities of each AP. Criteria for membership include one or more of the following: (a) experience in the recreational fishing industry involved in catching swordfish, tunas, billfish, or sharks; (b) experience in the commercial fishing industry for HMS; (c) experience in fishery-related industries (marinas, bait and tackle shops); (d) experience in the scientific community working with HMS; (e) representation of a private, non-governmental, regional, (non-Federal) state, national, or international organization representing marine fisheries, environmental, governmental or academic interests dealing with HMS.

Five additional members of the AP include one voting representative each of the New England Fishery Management Council, the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, and the Caribbean Fishery Management Council. The AP also includes 22 *ex-officio* participants: 20 representatives of the constituent states and two representatives of the constituent interstate commissions: the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission.

NMFS will provide the necessary administrative support, including technical assistance, for the AP. However, NMFS will not compensate participants with monetary support of any kind. Depending on availability of funds, members may be reimbursed for travel costs related to the AP meetings.

C. Meeting Schedule

Meetings of each AP will be held as frequently as necessary but are routinely held once each year in the Spring. Often the meetings are held jointly, and may be held in conjunction with other advisory panel meetings or public hearings.

The HMS AP meeting on September 30, 2003, will focus on Atlantic shark management. NMFS published a proposed rule and notice of availability of Draft Amendment 1 to the HMS FMP on August 1, 2003 (68 FR 45196). The 60-day comment period ends on September 30, 2003. Since the alternatives presented in Draft Amendment 1 apply only to management measures for Atlantic sharks, the HMS AP discussion will be limited to Atlantic shark management. There will be time for the public to comment on shark management at the end of the meeting.

The joint HMS-Billfish AP meeting in February 2004 will focus on management alternatives for Atlantic tunas, swordfish, sharks, and billfish. On July 9, 2003, NMFS published a notice of intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for Amendment 2 to the HMS FMP and Amendment 2 to the Billfish FMP (68 FR 40907). Amendment 2 to the HMS FMP is intended to address issues regarding quota allocation of Atlantic bluefin tuna, swordfish, and sharks among and within domestic fishing categories, examine management alternatives to improve and streamline the current HMS limited access permit program, conduct a 5-year review of HMS essential fish habitat (EFH) identifications, and address exempted fishing and scientific research permitting issues consistent with rebuilding plans, the Magnuson-Stevens Act, Atlantic Tunas Convention Act (ATCA), and other relevant Federal laws. Amendment 2 to the Billfish FMP is intended to conduct a 5-year review of Atlantic billfish EFH identifications and address other issues as appropriate, consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Act, ATCA, and other relevant Federal laws.

Special Accommodations

These meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Othel Freeman or Carol Douglas (see **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**) at least 7 days prior to the meeting.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 971 *et seq.* and 1801 *et seq.*

Date: August 21, 2003.

Bruce C. Morehead,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 060903A]

Notice of Availability of Draft Stock Assessment Reports

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

ACTION: Notice of availability; request for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS revised the Alaska, Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico, and Pacific marine mammal stock assessment reports (SARs) in accordance with the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA). Draft 2003 reports are available for public review and comment.

DATES: Comments must be received by November 25, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Send comments or requests for copies of reports to: Chief, Marine Mammal Conservation Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910-3226, Attn: Stock Assessments. Comments may also be sent via facsimile (fax) to 301-713-0376. NMFS will not accept comments submitted via e-mail or Internet.

Copies of the Alaska Regional SARs may be requested from Robyn Angliss, Alaska Fisheries Science Center, NMFS, 7600 Sand Point Way, NE BIN 15700, Seattle, WA 98115-0070.

Copies of the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Regional SARs may be requested from Janeen Quintal, Northeast Fisheries Science Center, 166 Water St., Woods Hole, MA 02543 or Steven Swartz, Southeast Fisheries Science Center, 75 Virginia Beach Dr., Miami, FL 33149.

Copies of the Pacific Regional SARs may be requested from Cathy Campbell, Southwest Regional Office, NMFS, 501 West Ocean Boulevard, Long Beach, CA 90802-4213.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Tom Eagle, Office of Protected Resources, 301-713-2322, ext. 105, e-mail Tom.Eagle@noaa.gov; Robyn Angliss 206-526-4032, e-mail Robyn.Angliss@noaa.gov, regarding Alaska regional stock assessments; Janeen Quintal, 508-495-2252, e-mail Janeen.Quintal@noaa.gov, regarding Northwest Atlantic regional stock assessments; Steven Swartz, 305-361-4487, e-mail Steven.Swartz@noaa.gov, regarding Mid-Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico regional stock assessments; or Cathy Campbell, 562-280-4060, e-mail Cathy.E.Campbell@noaa.gov, regarding Pacific regional stock assessments.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Electronic Access

All stock assessment reports and the guidelines for preparing them are available via the Internet at http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/prot_res/PR2/Stock_Assessment_Program/sars.html.