

for the NEG Port operations this activity. A Biological Opinion was issued on November 21, 2014, and concluded that the action may adversely affect but is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of ESA-listed right, humpback, fin, and sei whales.

NMFS' Permits and Conservation Division has determined that the activities described in here are the same as those analyzed in the November 21, 2014, Biological Opinion. Therefore, a new consultation is not required for issuance of this IHA.

### National Environmental Policy Act

MARAD and the USCG released a Final EIS/Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the proposed NEG Port and Pipeline Lateral. NMFS was a cooperating agency (as defined by the Council on Environmental Quality (40 CFR 1501.6)) in the preparation of the Draft and Final EISs. NMFS reviewed the Final EIS and adopted it on May 4, 2007. NMFS issued a separate Record of Decision for issuance of authorizations pursuant to section 101(a)(5) of the MMPA for the construction and operation of the NEG Port Facility in Massachusetts Bay.

We have reviewed the NEG's application for a renewed IHA for ongoing activities for 2015–16 and the 2014–15 monitoring report. Based on that review, we have determined that the action is very similar to that considered in the previous IHA. In addition, no significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns have been identified. Thus, we have determined that the preparation of a new or supplemental NEPA document is not necessary.

### Authorization

As a result of these determinations, NMFS has issued an IHA to Northeast Gateway and Algonquin for activities associated with Northeast Gateway's NEG Port and Algonquin's Pipeline Lateral operations and maintenance and repair activities in the Massachusetts Bay, which also includes the mitigation, monitoring, and reporting requirements described in this Notice.

Dated: December 28, 2016.

**Donna Wieting,**

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

[FR Doc. 2016–31948 Filed 1–5–17; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3510–22–P**

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

**RIN 0648–XF134**

### New England Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

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

**ACTION:** Notice; public meeting.

**SUMMARY:** The New England Fishery Management Council (Council) is scheduling a public meeting of its Recreational Advisory Panel to consider actions affecting New England fisheries in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ). Recommendations from this group will be brought to the full Council for formal consideration and action, if appropriate.

**DATES:** This meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 18, 2017, from 1:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.

**ADDRESSES:** The meeting will be held at the Hilton Garden Inn, 5 Park Street, Freeport, ME 04032; telephone: (207) 865–1433.

*Council address:* New England Fishery Management Council, 50 Water Street, Mill 2, Newburyport, MA 01950.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Thomas A. Nies, Executive Director, New England Fishery Management Council; telephone: (978) 465–0492.

### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

#### Agenda

The Recreational Advisory Panel plans to discuss Fishing Year (FY) 2017 Recreational Measures for Gulf of Maine cod and haddock. They will also receive an overview of recent recreational catch and effort data. The Panel will also discuss results from the bioeconomic model to evaluate options for management measures. They will make recommendations to the Groundfish Committee on FY 2017 recreational measures for Gulf of Maine cod and haddock. The Panel also plans to receive an overview and discuss the Council's 2017 Groundfish Priorities and make recommendations to the Groundfish Committee, as appropriate. Other business will be discussed as necessary.

Although non-emergency issues not contained in this agenda may come before this group for discussion, those issues may not be the subject of formal action during this meeting. Action will be restricted to those issues specifically listed in this notice and any issues arising after publication of this notice

that require emergency action under section 305(c) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, provided the public has been notified of the Council's intent to take final action to address the emergency.

### Special Accommodations

This meeting is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Thomas A. Nies, Executive Director, at (978) 465–0492, at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.

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

Dated: January 3, 2017.

**Jeffrey N. Lonergan,**

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

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

**RIN 0648–XF125**

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

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

**ACTION:** Notice; public meeting.

**SUMMARY:** The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's (MAFMC's) Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Monitoring Committee (MC) will hold a public meeting.

**DATES:** The meeting will be held on Thursday, January 26, 2017, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. For agenda details, see **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION.**

**ADDRESSES:** The meeting will be held at the Royal Sonesta Harbor Court, 550 Light St, Baltimore, MD 21202; telephone: (410) 234–0550.

*Council address:* Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, 800 N. State Street, Suite 201, Dover, DE 19901; telephone: (302) 674–2331 or on their Web site at [www.mafmc.org](http://www.mafmc.org).

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Christopher M. Moore, Ph.D., Executive Director, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, telephone: (302) 526–5255.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Monitoring Committee will meet to develop recommendations for commercial and recreational Annual Catch Limits (ACLs) and Annual Catch Targets (ACTs) for black sea bass for

2017–19. The Monitoring Committee will also develop recommendations for recreational management measures for black sea bass in 2017. Meeting materials will be posted to <http://www.mafinc.org/> prior to the meeting.

The meeting is 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.

Dated: January 3, 2017.

**Jeffrey N. Lonergan,**

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

[FR Doc. 2017–00059 Filed 1–5–17; 8:45 am]

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

**RIN 0648–XF115**

#### Fisheries of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic; Snapper-Grouper Fishery Off the South Atlantic States; Amendment 43

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

**ACTION:** Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare a draft environmental impact statement (DEIS); request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** The NMFS Southeast Region, in collaboration with the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council), intends to prepare a DEIS to describe and analyze a range of alternatives for management actions to be included in Amendment 43 to the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region (Amendment 43). The purpose of Amendment 43 is to respond to the most recent stock assessment for red snapper in the South Atlantic, reduce discards of red snapper, and improve the quantity and quality of data collected from private recreational fishermen. This NOI is to solicit public comments on the scope of issues to be addressed in the DEIS.

**DATES:** Written comments on the scope of issues to be addressed in the DEIS will be accepted until February 6, 2017.

**ADDRESSES:** You may submit comments, identified by NOAA–NMFS–2016–0157, by either of the following methods:

- **Electronic submission:** Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal. Go to [www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=NOAA-NMFS-2016-0157](http://www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=NOAA-NMFS-2016-0157), click the “Comment Now!” icon, complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments.

- **Mail:** Submit written comments to Frank Helies, NMFS Southeast Regional Office, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701.

**Instructions:** Comments sent by any other method, to any other address or individual, or received after the end of the comment period, may not be considered by NMFS. All comments received are a part of the public record and will generally be posted for public viewing on [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov) without change. All personal identifying information (e.g., name, address, etc.), confidential business information, or otherwise sensitive information submitted voluntarily by the sender will be publicly accessible. NMFS will accept anonymous comments (enter “N/A” in the required fields if you wish to remain anonymous).

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Frank Helies, NMFS Southeast Regional Office, telephone: 727–824–5305; or email: [frank.helies@noaa.gov](mailto:frank.helies@noaa.gov).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** South Atlantic red snapper were determined to be overfished and undergoing overfishing in the 2009 Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review (SEDAR) stock assessment (SEDAR 15). In response to SEDAR 15, the Council recommended and NMFS subsequently implemented a prohibition on all harvest or possession of South Atlantic red snapper through Amendment 17A to the FMP (75 FR 76874, December 9, 2010). Through management measures implemented in Amendment 28 to the FMP, limited seasons for the harvest of red snapper occurred in the 2012, 2013, and 2014 fishing years (78 FR 44461, July 24, 2013). However, red snapper removals (total landings and dead discards) in the 2014 and 2015 fishing years exceeded the acceptable biological catch (ABC) and subsequent seasons’ annual catch limits (ACLs) were set to zero and harvest and possession of red snapper was not allowed in the 2015 or 2016 fishing years.

According to the most recent stock assessment, the red snapper stock in the South Atlantic is undergoing overfishing and is overfished (SEDAR 41 2016). The Council’s Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) reviewed SEDAR 41 in May 2016 and considered

the assessment to be best scientific information available. In response to SEDAR 41 and the SSC’s recommendation, the Council is considering changes to the ACLs, the recreational annual catch target, and management reference points.

Discard mortality, particularly from the recreational sector, continues to be a significant source of overall mortality for red snapper. Therefore, the Council is considering methods to reduce discard mortality in Amendment 43 including spatial and temporal closures (where harvest of all snapper-grouper species would be prohibited), changes to allowable fishing gear types (e.g., circle hooks), and requiring the use of descending devices and/or venting tools for released fish.

Finally, the Council is evaluating ways to improve the quantity and quality of data collected from private recreational fishermen. The goal is to improve the data that are used to assess and manage the red snapper stock in the South Atlantic. The Council is considering a Federal permit requirement for private recreational fishermen to fish for or possess snapper-grouper species and a requirement for private recreational fishermen to complete electronic logbooks.

NMFS, in collaboration with the Council, will develop a DEIS for Amendment 43 to describe and analyze alternatives to address the management needs described above, including the “no action” alternative. In accordance with the regulations issued by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA; 40 CFR parts 1500–1508), NMFS, in collaboration with the Council, has identified preliminary environmental issues as a means to initiate discussion for scoping purposes only. These preliminary issues may not represent the full range of issues that eventually will be evaluated in the DEIS. A copy of the Amendment 43 draft options paper is available at: [http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable\\_fisheries/s\\_atl/sq/index.html](http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/s_atl/sq/index.html).

Comments on the scope of the DEIS may be submitted in writing to NMFS (see **ADDRESSES**) during the 30-day scoping period. After the scoping period and throughout the development of Amendment 43, the Council will accept written comments on the action, and oral comments may be made during upcoming public scoping meetings. The upcoming scoping meetings will be held at locations and times listed in Table 1.