

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE****National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

RIN 0648–XD949

**Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act Provisions; General Provisions for Domestic Fisheries; Application for Exempted Fishing Permits**

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

**ACTION:** Notice; request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** The NMFS Assistant Regional Administrator for Sustainable Fisheries, Greater Atlantic Region, has made a preliminary determination that an Exempted Fishing Permit application contains all of the required information and warrants further consideration. This Exempted Fishing Permit would allow commercial lobster vessels to participate in a lobster growth and abundance study, under the direction of Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries in state and Federal waters off the coast of Massachusetts.

Regulations under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act and the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act require publication of this notification to provide interested parties the opportunity to comment on Exempted Fishing Permit applications.

**DATES:** Comments must be received on or before May 2, 2017.

**ADDRESSES:** You may submit written comments by any of the following methods:

- *Email:* NMFS.GAR.EFP@noaa.gov. Include in the subject line “Comments on MA DMF Lobster Study EFP.”

- *Mail:* John K. Bullard, Regional Administrator, NMFS, Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office, 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930. Mark the outside of the envelope “Comments on MA DMF Lobster Study EFP.”

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Sustainable Fisheries Division, 978–281–9315.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (MA DMF) submitted a complete application for an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) to conduct a two-year lobster abundance survey with modified lobster gear that Federal regulations would otherwise restrict. The purpose of this lobster study is to provide fishery-independent data on

lobster abundance in Massachusetts state waters of statistical area 514, from Ipswich Bay south to Cape Cod Bay; and state and Federal waters of Buzzards Bay, Vineyard Sound, and nearshore portions of Rhode Island Sound, in statistical areas 537 and 538. Currently, lobster abundance and distribution studies are primarily conducted through fishery-independent, random-stratified bottom-trawl surveys. MA DMF has stated that trawl surveys lack the capability to efficiently target areas with rocky bottom where lobsters also reside, and is seeking an EFP to use fixed lobster gear to sample such areas.

The EFP would authorize commercial lobster vessels to set, haul, and retain on board lobster traps without escape vents during sampling activity. Following a soak time ranging from 3 to 5 days, these lobster traps would be hauled twice per month on dedicated sampling trips, with at least one scientist from MA DMF on board during sampling activity. During sampling trips, no catch will be retained for sale.

MA DMF requests exemption from lobster gear regulations to allow for traps without escape vents in order to catch lobsters of all sizes. MA DMF is also requesting exemption from lobster trap limits. This would allow participating vessels to retain on-board survey lobster traps that may cause vessels to exceed their permitted allocation for Lobster Management Area (LMA) 1 (800 trap limit) or LMA 2 (historical qualification up to 800 trap limit). Federal lobster regulations require each active lobster trap to have a commercial trap tag permanently affixed. MA DMF is requesting exemption from this requirement because survey traps will be tagged with “MA DMF Research Trap.”

MA DMF is also requesting exemption from the management area designation requirement to allow one Federal lobster permit holder to fish experimental traps in LMA 2 while having an LMA 3 designation on his Federal permit. This exemption would allow the vessel to set survey traps in an area not designated on his permit. This exemption would not allow him to commercially fish and/or land lobsters caught with traps in LMA 2.

Site selection would be based on a random stratified sampling design, consistent with standardized methodology used to perform lobster surveys. All catch during dedicated research trips would be retained on-board for a short period of time to allow MA DMF staff to record the following information: Number of lobsters caught; number of traps hauled; set-over days; trap and bait type; lobster carapace

length; sex; shell hardness; culls and other shell damage; external gross pathology including symptoms of shell disease; mortality; and ovigerous status. MA DMF is requesting exemption from management measures of LMA 1 and 2 for lobster size restrictions, v-notch possession, and egg-bearing lobster possession. MA DMF plans on retaining a small amount of lobsters for growth and maturity research purposes.

If approved, MA DMF may request minor modifications and extensions to the EFP throughout the study. EFP modifications and extensions may be granted without further notice if they are deemed essential to facilitate completion of the proposed research and have minimal impacts that do not change the scope or impact of the initially approved EFP request. Any fishing activity conducted outside the scope of the exempted fishing activity would be prohibited.

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

Dated: April 11, 2017.

**Karen H. Abrams,**

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

[FR Doc. 2017–07713 Filed 4–14–17; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3510–22–P**

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE****National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

RIN 0648–XF365

**North Pacific Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting**

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

**ACTION:** Notice of public meeting.

**SUMMARY:** The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) Bering Sea Fishery Ecosystem Plan Team (BS FEP) will meet in April, in Homer, AK.

**DATES:** The meeting will be held on Monday, April 24, 2017, through Wednesday, April 26, 2017. The meeting will be held from 1 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Monday, from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, and from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Wednesday.

**ADDRESSES:** The meeting will be held at the Alaska Islands and Ocean Visitor Center, 95 Sterling Hwy, Homer, AK 99603.

*Council address:* North Pacific Fishery Management Council, 605 W. 4th Ave., Suite 306, Anchorage, AK 99501–2252; telephone (907) 271–2809.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Diana Evans, Council staff; telephone: (907) 271-2809.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

**Agenda**

*Monday, April 24, 2017, Through Wednesday, April 26, 2017*

The BS FEP agenda will include an overview of Council feedback, a discussion of goals and objectives, a joint session with the Aleutian and Bering Sea Islands LLC, discussion of the outreach plan, breakout work sessions on developing the core FEP chapters, and synthesis and next steps. The Agenda is subject to change, and the latest version will be posted at <http://www.npfmc.org/>.

**Special Accommodations**

These meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Shannon Gleason at (907) 271-2809 at least 7 working days prior to the meeting date.

Dated: April 12, 2017.

**Jeffrey N. Lonergan,**

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

[FR Doc. 2017-07716 Filed 4-14-17; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3510-22-P**

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

**RIN 0648-XF363**

**Fisheries of the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic; Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review (SEDAR); Public Meeting**

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

**ACTION:** Notice of SEDAR 54 assessment webinar I for HMS Sandbar Shark.

**SUMMARY:** The SEDAR 54 assessment of the HMS Sandbar will consist of a series of assessment webinars. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION.**

**DATES:** The SEDAR 54 assessment webinar I will be held from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. on May 15, 2017.

**ADDRESSES:** The meeting will be held via webinar. The webinar is open to members of the public. Those interested in participating should contact Julie A. Neer at SEDAR (see **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**) to request an invitation providing webinar access information. Please request webinar

invitations at least 24 hours in advance of each webinar.

**SEDAR address:** 4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201, North Charleston, SC 29405.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Julie A. Neer, SEDAR Coordinator; (843) 571-4366; email: [Julie.neer@safmc.net](mailto:Julie.neer@safmc.net).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, and Caribbean Fishery Management Councils, in conjunction with NOAA Fisheries and the Atlantic and Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commissions have implemented the Southeast Data, Assessment and Review (SEDAR) process, a multi-step method for determining the status of fish stocks in the Southeast Region. SEDAR is a multi-step process, including: (1) Data Workshop; (2) Assessment Process utilizing webinars; and (3) Review Workshop. The product of the Data Workshop is a data report that compiles and evaluates potential datasets and recommends which datasets are appropriate for assessment analyses. The product of the Assessment Process is a stock assessment report that describes the fisheries, evaluates the status of the stock, estimates biological benchmarks, projects future population conditions, and recommends research and monitoring needs. The assessment is independently peer reviewed at the Review Workshop. The product of the Review Workshop is a Summary documenting panel opinions regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the stock assessment and input data. Participants for SEDAR Workshops are appointed by the Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, and Caribbean Fishery Management Councils and NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office, HMS Management Division, and Southeast Fisheries Science Center. Participants include data collectors and database managers; stock assessment scientists, biologists, and researchers; constituency representatives including fishermen, environmentalists, and NGO's; International experts; and staff of Councils, Commissions, and state and federal agencies.

The items of discussion in the Assessment Process webinars are as follows:

1. Using datasets and initial assessment analysis recommended from the Data Webinar, panelists will employ assessment models to evaluate stock status, estimate population benchmarks and management criteria, and project future conditions.

2. Participants will recommend the most appropriate methods and configurations for determining stock

status and estimating population parameters.

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 identified in this notice and any issues arising after publication of this notice that require emergency action under section 305(c) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, provided the public has been notified of the intent to take final action to address the emergency.

**Special Accommodations**

The meeting is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to the Council office (see **ADDRESSES**) at least 10 business days prior to each workshop.

**Note:** The times and sequence specified in this agenda are subject to change.

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

Dated: April 12, 2017.

**Jeffrey N. Lonergan,**

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

[FR Doc. 2017-07714 Filed 4-14-17; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3510-22-P**

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

**Submission for OMB Review; Comment Request**

The Department of Commerce will submit to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for clearance the following proposal for collection of information under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act (44 U.S.C. Chapter 35).

**Agency:** National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

**Title:** Alaska Pacific Halibut Fisheries: Charter Recordkeeping.

**OMB Control Number:** 0648-0575.

**Form Number(s):** None.

**Type of Request:** Regular (extension of a currently approved information collection).

**Number of Respondents:** 1,086.

**Average Hours per Response:**

**Burden Hours:**

**Needs and Uses:**

**Affected Public:** Business or other for-profit organizations.

**Frequency:** On occasion.

**Respondent's Obligation:** Mandatory.