

EFP. Therefore, NMFS announces that the Regional Administrator proposes to issue an EFP that would allow general category scallop vessels to conduct fishing operations that are otherwise restricted by the regulations governing the fisheries of the northeastern United States. The EFP would exempt vessels from certain gear restrictions, minimum fish size possession restrictions, and seasonal area restrictions.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before October 11, 2006.

ADDRESSES: Written comments should be submitted by any of the following methods:

Mail: Patricia A. Kurkul, Regional Administrator, NMFS, Northeast Regional Office, One Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930. Mark the outside of the envelope, "Comments on Scallop RSA EFP Proposal;"

Email: 06-SCA-011@noaa.gov, include "Comment on EFP Proposal" in the subject line of the e-mail; or

Fax: (978) 281-9135.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Ryan Silva, Fishery Management Specialist, phone: 978-281-9326, fax: 978-281-9135.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: In response to the Request for Proposals issued to solicit research proposals under the Atlantic Sea Scallop Research Set Aside (RSA) Program, GMRI submitted a proposal on November 18, 2005, entitled, "Testing Bycatch in an Observer-based Experimental Scallop Fishery Outside the Gulf of Maine (GOM) Scallop Dredge Exemption Area and within Statistical Area 521 and 526." The grant was approved on August 4, 2006, as NOAA Award No. NA06NMF4540262. An EFP application was submitted September 7, 2006.

The project would survey the Great South Channel Dredge Exemption Area (GSC) over a 10-month period to quantify catch rates of scallops and finfish bycatch across multiple seasons using the general category regulated 3.2 m (10.5-ft) scallop dredge. From March through June, project investigators would identify the sex and maturity stage of captured yellowtail flounder to improve spawning data. Since portions of the GSC are closed seasonally to protect spawning yellowtail flounder, vessels would require an exemption from regulations at 50 CFR 648.80(a)(18)(ii)(C) and (D).

Vessels would conduct a total of 264 tows over 66 days in the study area. Each trip would be 1 day in length. Approximately four 30-minute tows would be made per day. Tow length and vessel speed, as well as all other gear characteristics, would match the

standards employed by the general category fleet. For each tow, environmental data, including water temperature, wind, sea state, and weather, would be recorded. Total weight of the scallop catch would be obtained. All other species would be identified, weighed, measured, and returned to the sea as quickly as possible to minimize mortality. Since project investigators would retain fish below the minimum fish size to collect data, vessels would require exemption from minimum fish size regulations at § 648.83(a). Only marketable scallops would be retained for sale.

On approximately one third of the total number of tows, vessels would cover the 25-cm (10-inch) mesh twine top to collect dredge selectivity information, thus requiring exemption from gear requirements at § 648.51(b)(2).

Regulations under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act require publication of this notification to provide interested parties the opportunity to comment on applications for proposed EFPs. The applicant may place requests for minor modifications and extensions to the EFP throughout the year. EFP modifications and extensions may be granted without further notice if they are deemed essential to facilitate completion of the proposed research and minimal so as not to change the scope or impact of the initially approved EFP request.

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

Dated: September 20, 2006.

James P. Burgess,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Marine Protected Areas Federal Advisory Committee; Public Meeting

AGENCY: National Ocean Service, NOAA, Department of Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of open meeting.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given of the next meeting of the Marine Protected Areas Federal Advisory Committee (Committee) in Newport, Oregon.

DATES: The meeting will be held Tuesday, October 10, 2006, from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Wednesday, October 11, 2006, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Thursday, October 12, 2006, from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. These times and the agenda topics described below may be subject

to change. Refer to the Web page listed below for the most up-to-date meeting agenda.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held at the Oregon Coast Aquarium, 2820 SE Ferry Slip Road, Newport, Oregon 97365.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Lauren Wenzel, Designated Federal Official, MPA FAC, National Marine Protected Areas Center, 1305 East West Highway, Silver Spring, Maryland, 20910. (Phone: 301-713-3100 x136, Fax: 301-713-3110); e-mail: lauren.wenzel@noaa.gov; or visit the National MPA Center Web site at <http://www.mpa.gov>.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Committee, composed of external, knowledgeable representatives of stakeholder groups, was established by the Department of Commerce to provide advice to the Secretary of Commerce and the Secretary of the Interior on implementation of Section 4 of Executive Order 13158 on MPAs. The meeting will be open to public participation with a one hour time period set aside from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. on Tuesday, October 10, 2006, and one hour set aside from 8:10 a.m. to 9:10 a.m. on Thursday, October 12, 2006, for the Committee to receive verbal comments or questions from the public. In general, each individual or group making a verbal presentation will be limited to a total time of five (5) minutes. Copies of written statements should be submitted to the Designated Federal Official by October 6, 2006.

Matters To Be Considered: On Tuesday, October 10, 2006, the Committee will receive presentations on the draft Framework for Developing a National System of MPAs and on ocean zoning. In addition, the subcommittees will meet. On Wednesday, October 11, 2006, the Committee will hear from speakers on MPAs in Oregon and tribal MPA policies in the Pacific Northwest. The subcommittees will also continue their work. On Thursday, October 12, 2006, the Committee will hear about MPA management on the Pacific coast, and the subcommittees will report on their work to the full Committee. The agenda is subject to change, and the latest version will be posted at <http://www.mpa.gov>.

Dated: September 20, 2006.

Mitchell A. Luxenberg,

Deputy Director, Management and Budget, National Ocean Service.

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