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IV. Request for Comments

Comments are invited on: (a) Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information shall have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden (including hours and cost) of the proposed collection of information; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on respondents, including through the use of automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

Comments submitted in response to this notice will be summarized and/or included in the request for OMB approval of this information collection; they also will become a matter of public record.

Dated: March 20, 2015.

Glenna Mickelson,

Management Analyst, Office of the Chief Information Officer.

[FR Doc. 2015-06883 Filed 3-25-15; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-07-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XD855

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC); Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Scoping Process

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

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS); notice of initiation of scoping process; notice of public scoping meetings; request for comments.

SUMMARY: The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council announces its intent to prepare, in cooperation with NMFS, an amendment to the Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish, and to potentially prepare an EIS in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act to analyze the impacts of any proposed management measures. The current

focus of the amendment is to consider alternatives to reduce the capacities of the longfin squid and *Illex* squid fleets as defined by vessels with limited access permits. This notice announces a public process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed, for identifying concerns and potential alternatives related to capacity in the squid fisheries, and for determining the appropriate level of environmental analysis. This notice alerts the interested public of the scoping process, the potential development of a Draft EIS, and provides for public participation in that process. The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council will hold six scoping hearings in April 2015 for this amendment. At the scoping hearings the Council will also take any general comments on mackerel, squid, and butterfish fisheries management, which could inform future Council actions not including this amendment.

DATES: The meetings will be held over several weeks between April 6, 2015 and April 21, 2015. Written comments must be received on or before 11:59 p.m., EST, on May 11, 2015.

ADDRESSES: There will be six scoping meetings listed under the heading Dates, Times, and Locations.

Council address: Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, 800 N. State St., Suite 201, Dover, DE 19901; telephone: (302) 674-2331.

Comment addresses: Written comments may be sent by any of the following methods:

- Email to the following address: jdidden@mafmc.org; Include "Squid Amendment Scoping Comments" in the subject line (recommended);
- Mail or hand deliver to Dr. Christopher M. Moore, Executive Director, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, 800 North State Street, Suite 201, Dover, Delaware 19901. Mark the outside of the envelope "Squid Amendment Scoping Comments"; or
- Fax to (302) 674-5399.
- Comments may also be provided verbally at any of the public scoping meetings.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Christopher M. Moore, Ph.D. Executive Director, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council; telephone: (302) 526-5255. The Council's Web site, www.mafmc.org also has details on the meeting locations, webinar access, and background materials. Please contact Jason Didden by April 19, 2015 at jdidden@mafmc.org or (302) 526-5254 if you would like to confirm that your

computer is set up to access the webinar.

A scoping document will be posted to the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council Web site.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Dates, Times and Locations

1. Monday April 6, 2015, 4 p.m. Superior Trawl, 55 State Street, Narragansett, RI 02882. Telephone: (401) 782-1171.

2. Tuesday April 7, 2015, 5 p.m. Montauk Library, 871 Montauk Highway, Montauk, NY 11954. Telephone: (631) 668-3377.

3. Wednesday April 8, 2015, 5 p.m. Fairfield Inn, 185 MacArthur Dr, New Bedford, MA 02740. Telephone: (774) 634-2000.

4. Monday April 13, 2015, 6 p.m. Congress Hall Hotel, 251 Beach Ave, Cape May, NJ 08204. Telephone: (888) 944-1816.

5. Wednesday April 15, 2015, 5 p.m. Ocean Place Resort. 1 Ocean Blvd., Long Branch, NJ, 07740. Telephone: 732-571-4000.

6. Tuesday April 21, 2015, 6 p.m. This April 21, 2015 meeting will be conducted via webinar accessible via the internet from the Council's Web site, www.mafmc.org. The Virginia Marine Resources Commission will also provide in-person access to the webinar at its office at: 2600 Washington Avenue, 4th Floor, Newport News, VA 23607; (757) 247-2200. Members of the public may also attend in-person at the Council office address (see below) for this webinar meeting, if they contact the Council by April 19, 2015.

Background

In the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's (Council) 2015 Implementation Plan (available at <http://www.mafmc.org/strategic-plan/>), the Council decided to initiate an action on a "Squid Capacity Amendment." There is considerable latent capacity in both the longfin squid and *Illex* squid fisheries; a small portion of vessels with limited access squid permits account for most landings in most years. The Council is concerned that activation of this latent capacity could cause problems in the fishery such as racing to fish and increased incidental catch of non-target species. Accordingly, the Amendment is likely to consider a variety of approaches for reducing capacity in the squid fisheries. Such approaches could include, but would not be limited to: A requalification of limited access permits; a tiered limited access system; and/or a limited access privilege program (LAPP), which is more commonly referred to as an

“individual quota” or “catch share system.” The Council has recently updated control dates for both squid fisheries—May 16, 2013 for longfin squid: (<http://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/nr/2013/May/13smblongfinbutterfishcontroldatephl.pdf>) and August 2, 2013 for *Illex* squid: (<http://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/nr/2013/August/13smbillexcontroldatephl.pdf>).

The Council may (or may not) use the current or previous control dates as reference points as it considers whether, and/or how, to further limit the number of participants in the squid fisheries (see preceding links for additional details on the control dates). The Council will first gather information during the scoping period. This is the first and best opportunity for members of the public to raise concerns related to the scope of issues that will be considered in the Amendment. The Council needs your input both to identify management issues and develop effective alternatives. Your comments early in the amendment development process will help us address issues of public concern in a thorough and appropriate manner. Comment topics could include the scope of issues in the amendment, concerns and potential alternatives related to capacity in the squid fisheries, and the appropriate level of environmental analysis. Comments can be made during the scoping hearings as detailed above or in writing. If the Council decides to move forward with the Amendment, the Council will develop a range of management alternatives to be considered and prepare a draft EIS and/or other appropriate environmental analyses. These analyses will consider the impacts of the management alternatives being considered, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act. Following a review of any comments on the draft analyses, the Council will then choose preferred management measures for submission with a Final EIS or Environmental Assessment to the Secretary of Commerce for publishing of a proposed and then final rule, both of which have additional comment periods.

While the Council is conducting these scoping hearings, the Council will also accept general comments on the MSB fisheries. These general comments could inform Council decision making for upcoming annual specifications or other actions.

Special Accommodations

These meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language

interpretation or other auxiliary aid should be directed to M. Jan Saunders, (302) 526–5251, at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.

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

Dated: March 23, 2015.

Emily H. Menashes,

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

[FR Doc. 2015–06944 Filed 3–25–15; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648–XD824

Marine Mammals; File No. 18890

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

ACTION: Notice; receipt of application.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) [Responsible Party: Robert Small, Ph.D., 1255 West 8th Street, Juneau, Alaska 99811–5526] has applied in due form for a permit to conduct research on bowhead (*Balaena mysticetus*), gray (*Eschrichtius robustus*), humpback (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) and beluga (*Delphinapterus leucas*) whales.

DATES: Written, telefaxed, or email comments must be received on or before April 27, 2015.

ADDRESSES: The application and related documents are available for review by selecting “Records Open for Public Comment” from the “Features” box on the Applications and Permits for Protected Species (APPS) home page, <https://apps.nmfs.noaa.gov>, and then selecting File No. 18890 from the list of available applications.

These documents are also available upon written request or by appointment in the Permits and Conservation Division, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13705, Silver Spring, MD 20910; phone (301) 427–8401; fax (301) 713–0376.

Written comments on this application should be submitted to the Chief, Permits and Conservation Division, at the address listed above. Comments may also be submitted by facsimile to (301) 713–0376, or by email to NMFS.Pr1Comments@noaa.gov. Please include the File No. in the subject line of the email comment.

Those individuals requesting a public hearing should submit a written request

to the Chief, Permits and Conservation Division at the address listed above. The request should set forth the specific reasons why a hearing on this application would be appropriate.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Courtney Smith or Brendan Hurley, (301) 427–8401.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The subject permit is requested under the authority of the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, as amended (MMPA; 16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*), the regulations governing the taking and importing of marine mammals (50 CFR part 216), and the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA; 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*), the regulations governing the taking, importing, and exporting of endangered and threatened species (50 CFR 222–226).

The applicant proposes to take the above listed species by research activities within the coastal areas and open waters of the Bering, Chukchi, and Beaufort seas adjacent to Alaska and the eastern Beaufort Sea in Canada over a five year period. Research topics include population abundance (beluga), stock structure (bowhead, gray, humpback, and beluga), feeding areas and other important habitats (all species), migration routes (all species), behavior relative to human disturbance (all species), and to genetically identify individuals in order to determine survival and calving intervals (belugas). Takes per year, including incidental harassment, are as follows. For bowhead whales, take includes tagging with biopsy (up to 320), and biopsy only (up to 150). For gray whales take includes tagging with biopsy and photo-id (up to 90 per year) and biopsy with photo-id (up to 160), and photo-id only (up to 350). For humpback whales, take includes tagging with biopsy and photo-id (up to 35), biopsy with photo-id (up to 40), and photo-id (up to 50). For beluga whales the type of take includes aerial survey (up to 4,000), capture for tagging and sample collection (up to 200 takes per stock per year), boat approach for remote biopsy (up to 450 per stock per year). For all species, import and export activities will include biological samples for genetic, health, and dietary studies. Non-target species listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) that may be taken incidentally include up to 10 ringed seals. Other non-target species include annual incidental takes of up to 10 bearded, harbor and spotted seals and up to 10 beluga whales potentially taken during large whale (bowhead, gray and humpback) research.

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42