

Northeast Multispecies FMP. On Wednesday, January 14, the Committee will discuss Framework 40. The Committee will develop recommended objectives and alternatives for this framework, which will be considered by the full Council at its January 27–29, 2004 meeting. It is tentatively planned that this framework will identify opportunities and restrictions for the use of Category B days-at-sea (DAS). Category B DAS are identified in Amendment 13 and, if this amendment is approved, will be allocated on May 1, 2004. Some possible uses for Category B DAS include Special Access Programs, experimental fisheries, or to target healthy stocks subject to additional restrictions that will be specified in Framework 40. The Committee may also consider other issues for this framework that have been raised during the review of Amendment 13, such as, but not limited to, issues related to steaming time. On Thursday, January 15, the Committee will discuss Framework 39. This framework will specify the requirements and restrictions for scallop vessels that are fishing in groundfish closed areas. This framework is necessary to implement the area management system proposed in Scallop Amendment 10. If the proposed rule implementing Amendment 13 is published prior to the Committee meeting, the Committee may also review the proposed rule in order to develop recommendations for comments by the Council.

Thursday, January 15, 2004 at 6:30 p.m.—Scallop Advisory Panel Meeting.

The Scallop Advisory Panel will develop recommendations on draft alternatives in Framework Adjustment 16/39, including measures to manage scallop fishery access in the groundfish closed areas during 2004B07. Implementation of Amendment 10 and interim/emergency action may also be discussed. Advisors may want to arrive early to attend a Groundfish Oversight Committee meeting in the morning and afternoon that will discuss Framework Adjustment 39 alternatives.

Friday, January 16, 2004 at 9 a.m.—Scallop Oversight Committee Meeting.

The Committee will review advice from the Scallop Advisory Panel and Scallop Plan Development Team to guide development of measures to manage scallop fishery access in the groundfish closed areas during 2004–07 (Framework Adjustment 16/39). They may identify recommendations for a preferred alternative. Implementation of Amendment 10 and interim/emergency action may also be discussed.

Although non-emergency issues not contained in this agenda may come

before these groups for discussion, those issues may not be the subject of formal action during these 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

These meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Paul J. Howard (see ADDRESSES) at least 5 days prior to the meeting dates.

Dated: December 23, 2003.

Richard W. Surdi,

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

[FR Doc. E3–00660 Filed 12–29–03; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 121903E]

New England Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

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

ACTION: Public meeting.

SUMMARY: The New England Fishery Management Council (Council) will hold a 3–day Council meeting on January 27–29, 2004, to consider actions affecting New England fisheries in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

DATES: The meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 27, 2004, beginning at 9:00 a.m. and on Wednesday and Thursday, January 28 and 29, beginning at 8:30 a.m.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held at the Viking Hotel, One Bellevue Avenue, Newport, RI, 02840; telephone (401) 847–3300. Requests for special accommodations should be addressed to the New England Fishery Management Council, 50 Water Street, Mill 2, Newburyport, MA 01950; telephone (978) 465–0492.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Paul J. Howard, Executive Director, New England Fishery Management Council, (978) 465–0492.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Tuesday, January 27, 2004

Following introductions, the Council will receive reports on recent activities from the Council Chairman and Executive Director, the NMFS Regional Administrator, Northeast Fisheries Science Center and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council liaisons, NOAA General Counsel and representatives of the U.S. Coast Guard, NMFS Enforcement and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. During her report, the Regional Administrator will brief the Council on a national commercial fisheries employment survey to be conducted by NOAA Fisheries early next year. There also will be a short presentation on the status of species reviewed at the 38th Northeast Regional Stock Assessment Workshop. Species will include ocean quahogs and butterfish. During the Tuesday afternoon session the Council will discuss and set Council work priorities for 2004. A Scallop Committee report will follow and focus on a request for emergency action. If approved, the emergency would likely remain in effect until NMFS publishes a final rule for Amendment 10 the Atlantic Sea Scallop Fishery Management Plan (FMP). Measures could include, but are not limited to closure of the Hudson Canyon and Elephant Trunk Areas. The areas contain a high abundance of small scallops that would be subject to harvesting without the protection specified in Amendment 10 or the emergency action. Late in the day, the Groundfish Committee will begin its report to the Council with guidance provided by the Transboundary Management Guidance Committee on U.S./Canada issues. This will include Total Allowable Catch recommendations for eastern Georges Bank cod, haddock and yellowtail flounder.

Wednesday, January 28, 2004

The Groundfish Committee will continue its report on Wednesday. It will propose initial action on Framework Adjustment 40 to the Northeast Multispecies FMP. At this meeting the Council intends to identify the objectives of the action as well as the alternatives that will specify the restrictions on the use of “B” days-at-sea. B days are among the effort controls included in Amendment 13 to the FMP. The Council also will likely prepare comments on the proposed rule implementing Amendment 13. Additionally, it may consider recommendations from the Groundfish Committee concerning the issues of steaming time and future access to the

fishery by former participants who may be precluded from fishing under Amendment 13. If necessary, the Council also could discuss issues related to Congressional action as it affects NMFS funding in 2004.

Thursday, January 29, 2004

The Research Steering Committee will report to the Council on refinements to its policy on incorporating the results of cooperative research results into the management process and activities planned for 2004. The Council is then scheduled to review and approve its draft Statement of Organization, Practices and Procedures. The Habitat/Marine Protected Area Committee will ask for approval of its recommendations concerning the timing and scope of Essential Fish Habitat Amendment 2. There will also be a discussion of the committee's rationale to prohibit clam dredges from habitat closed areas designated in Amendment 13 to the Northeast Multispecies FMP. The afternoon session will include a report by the NOAA Fisheries Statistics Office on a proposed rule implementing mandatory dealer electronic reporting and scheduled for publication in 2004. The meeting will conclude with a briefing on NOAA Fisheries National Bycatch Strategy and regional implementation of a plan. Any other Council business that was postponed until the close of the meeting will also be addressed at this time.

Although other non-emergency issues not contained in this agenda may come before this Council for discussion, those issues may not be the subjects of formal action during this meeting. Council 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 that 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 Paul J. Howard (see **ADDRESSES**) at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.

Dated: December 22, 2003.

Bruce Morehead,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.
[FR Doc. 03-32073 Filed 12-29-03; 8:45 am]
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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 120302A]

Magnuson-Stevens Act Provisions; Atlantic Highly Migratory Species; Exempted Fishing and Scientific Research Permits

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

ACTION: Reopening of comment period.

SUMMARY: Due to public request for an extension of the public comment period, NMFS is reopening the comment period for the notice of intent to issue Exempted Fishing Permits (EFPs) and Scientific Research Permits (SRPs) for the collection of Atlantic highly migratory species (HMS), previously published in the **Federal Register** on December 9, 2003.

DATES: The deadline of written comments on research and fishing activities is January 26, 2004.

ADDRESSES: Send comments to Christopher Rogers, Chief, Highly Migratory Species Management Division (F/SF1), NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910. The EFP/SRP applications and copies of the regulations under which EFPs/SRPs are issued may also be requested from this address. Comments also may be sent via facsimile (fax) to (301)713-1917. Comments will not be accepted if submitted via e-mail or Internet.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Heather Stirratt or Sari Kiraly, 301-713-2347; fax: 301-713-1917.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: EFPs and SRPs are requested and issued under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*) and/or the Atlantic Tunas Convention Act (16 U.S.C. 971 *et seq.*). Regulations at 50 CFR 600.745 and 50 CFR 635.32 govern scientific research activity, exempted fishing, and exempted educational activity with respect to Atlantic HMS.

On December 9, 2003 (68 FR 68595), NMFS published a notice of intent to issue EFPs and SRPs for 2004. Due to public request, NMFS is reopening the comment period to January 26, 2004. Information regarding the issuance of EFPs and SRPs is contained in the previous notice and is not repeated here.

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

Dated: December 23, 2003.

John H. Dunnigan,

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

[FR Doc. 03-32072 Filed 12-29-03; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Patent and Trademark Office

[Docket No. 2003-C-031]

Request For Comments and Notice of Round Table Meeting Regarding The Equities of Inter Partes Reexamination Proceedings

AGENCY: United States Patent and Trademark Office, Commerce.

ACTION: Request for comments and notice of round table meeting.

SUMMARY: The United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) seeks comments from former, current and prospective participants and other interested parties on whether *inter partes* reexamination proceedings are believed to be inequitable to any of the parties in interest and, if so, what changes are suggested to remove such inequities. As a part of this effort, USPTO announces the scheduling of a round table meeting to receive views on the effectiveness and possible improvement of *inter partes* reexamination proceedings.

DATES: Comments must be received by February 20, 2004, to ensure consideration. Requests to participate in the round table meeting must be received by January 28, 2004. The USPTO will make reasonable efforts to balance the interests represented at the round table meeting. If it becomes necessary to limit the number of participants, preference will be given to first-in-time requests to participate. The round table meeting is tentatively scheduled for February 17, 2004, at USPTO offices in Arlington, Virginia.

ADDRESSES: Written comments and requests to participate in the round table meeting should be (a) addressed to the United States Patent and Trademark Office, Office of Congressional Relations, Room 902, 2121 Crystal Drive, Arlington, VA 22202, ATTN: Angie Reilly, Inter Partes Reexam; (b) faxed to Angie Reilly's attention at (703) 305-8885; or (c) sent via electronic mail to interpartesreexam@uspto.gov. The specific time and location for the round table meeting will be communicated to participants and posted on USPTO's Web site at www.uspto.gov. That notice also will