

Changes From the Proposed Rule

There was one comment received in support of the proposed rule, and there are no substantive changes to the proposed rule. Additional language was added to the final rule, to clarify that scallop dredge vessels that land an incidental catch of monkfish within these new scallop exemptions, who do not currently possess a monkfish permit, must obtain a monkfish open access Incidental Catch permit.

Classification

NMFS has determined that this final rule is consistent with the FMP and has determined that it is consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act and other applicable laws.

This final rule has been determined to be not significant for purposes of Executive Order 12866.

The Chief Counsel for Regulation of the Department of Commerce certified to the Chief Counsel for Advocacy of the Small Business Administration during the proposed rule stage that this action would not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities. The factual basis for the certification was published in the proposed rule and is not repeated here. No comments were received regarding this certification. As a result, a regulatory flexibility analysis was not required and none was prepared. There are no Federal rules that duplicate, overlap, or conflict with the final rule. This action creates three scallop exemptions for General Category scallop vessels, or limited access scallop vessels not fishing on a DAS allocation, identical to the current scallop exemptions, with the addition of an incidental catch of monkfish. This action was categorically excluded under the National Environmental Policy Act, as an action that includes minor technical additions, corrections, or changes to an FMP.

The economic impacts of the action are expected to be minimal and positive. This action allows the General Category scallop fleet, while fishing under a scallop exemption, to land up to 50 lb (23 kg) tail weight or 166 lb (75 kg) whole weight of monkfish per trip, in addition to scallops. This allows the fleet to utilize these resources in a manner consistent with the bycatch and mortality objectives of the FMP. This action allows a small incidental catch of monkfish, and as such is expected to minimally increase revenues for scallop dredge vessels fishing under the General Category permit provisions.

Small Entity Compliance Guide

Section 212 of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act of 1996 states that, for each rule or group of related rules for which an agency is required to prepare a FRFA, the agency shall publish one or more guides to assist small entities in complying with the rule, and shall designate such publications as "small entity compliance guides." The agency shall explain the action a small entity is required to take to comply with a rule or group of rules. As part of this rulemaking process, a small entity compliance guide was prepared. Copies of the guide will be sent to all holders of commercial Federal scallop permits. The guide will also be available on the internet at <http://www.nero.noaa.gov>. Copies of the guide can also be obtained from the Regional Administrator (see ADDRESSES).

Reporting and Recordkeeping Requirements

This action does not contain an additional collection-of-information requirement subject to review by the Office of Management and Budget under the Paperwork Reduction Act.

List of Subjects in 50 CFR Part 648

Fisheries, Fishing, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements.

Dated: June 11, 2008.

James W. Balsiger,

Acting Assistant Administrator For Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.

■ For the reasons stated in the preamble, 50 CFR part 648 is amended as follows:

PART 648—FISHERIES OF THE NORTHEASTERN UNITED STATES

1. The authority citation for part 648 continues to read as follows:

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

■ 2. In § 648.80, paragraphs (a)(8)(iv) introductory text, (a)(11)(i)(A), (a)(18)(ii)(A), and (b)(11)(ii)(A) are revised to read as follows:

§ 648.80 NE Multispecies regulated mesh areas and restrictions on gear and methods of fishing.

* * * * *

(a) * * *

(8) * * *

(iv) Unless otherwise specified within the exempted fisheries authorized under this paragraph (a)(8), incidental catch is restricted, at a minimum, to the following:

* * * * *

(11) * * *

(i) * * *

(A) A vessel fishing in the GOM Scallop Dredge Fishery Exemption Area

specified in this paragraph (a)(11) may not fish for, possess on board, or land any species of fish other than Atlantic sea scallops and up to 50 lb (23 kg) tail weight or 166 lb (75 kg) whole weight of monkfish per trip.

* * * * *

(18) * * *

(ii) * * *

(A) A vessel fishing in the Great South Channel Scallop Dredge Exemption Area specified in this paragraph (a)(18) may not fish for, possess on board, or land any species of fish other than Atlantic sea scallops and up to 50 lb (23 kg) tail weight or 166 lb (75 kg) whole weight of monkfish per trip.

* * * * *

(b) * * *

(11) * * *

(ii) * * *

(A) A vessel fishing in the SNE Scallop Dredge Exemption Area may not fish for, possess on board, or land any species of fish other than Atlantic sea scallops and up to 50 lb (23 kg) tail weight or 166 lb (75 kg) whole weight of monkfish per trip.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 648

[Docket No. 071030625-7696-02]

RIN 0648-X140

Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Scup Fishery; Commercial Quota Harvested for 2008 Summer Period

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

ACTION: Temporary rule; closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces the closure of the scup commercial coastwide fishery from Maine through North Carolina for the Summer Period. Regulations governing the scup fishery require publication of this notification to advise the coastal states from Maine through North Carolina that this quota has been harvested and to advise Federal vessel permit holders and Federal dealer permit holders that no commercial quota is available for landing scup in these states. Federally permitted commercial vessels may not land scup in these states for the

remainder of the 2008 Summer quota period (through October 31, 2008).

DATES: Effective June 16, 2008, through October 31, 2008.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Emily Bryant, Fishery Management Specialist, (978) 281-9244.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Regulations governing the scup fishery are found at 50 CFR part 648. The regulations at § 648.121 require the Regional Administrator to monitor the commercial scup quota for each quota period and, based upon dealer reports, state data, and other available information, to determine when the commercial quota for a period has been harvested. NMFS is required to publish a notification in the **Federal Register** advising and notifying commercial vessels and dealer permit holders that, effective upon a specific date, the scup commercial quota has been harvested and no commercial quota is available for landing scup for the remainder of the Summer Period. Based upon recent projections, the Regional Administrator has determined that the Federal commercial quota of 1,437,588 lb (652 mt) for the 2008 Summer Period will be fully harvested by or before October 31, 2008. To maintain the integrity of the 2009 Summer Period quota by avoiding or minimizing quota overages, the commercial scup fishery will close for the remainder of the Summer Period (through October 31, 2008) in Federal waters, effective as of the date specified above (see **DATES**).

Section 648.4(b) provides that Federal scup moratorium permit holders agree, as a condition of the permit, not to land scup in any state after NMFS has published a notification in the **Federal Register** stating that the commercial quota for the period has been harvested and that no commercial quota for scup is available. Therefore, effective 0001 hours, June 16, 2008, further landings of scup by vessels holding Federal scup moratorium permits are prohibited through October 31, 2008. Effective 0001 hours, June 16, 2008, federally permitted dealers are also advised that they may not purchase scup from federally permitted vessels that land in coastal states from Maine through North Carolina for the remainder of the Summer Period (through October 31, 2008). The Winter II Period for commercial scup harvest will open on November 1, 2008.

Classification

This action is required by 50 CFR part 648 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

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

Dated: June 10, 2008.

Emily H. Menashes,

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

[FR Doc. 08-1357 Filed 6-11-08; 3:23 pm]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 680

RIN 0648-AW37

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands King and Tanner Crabs

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

ACTION: Final rule; agency decision.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces the approval of Amendment 24 to the Fishery Management Plan for Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands King and Tanner Crabs (FMP). Amendment 24 specifies a five-tier system for determining the status of the crab stocks managed under the FMP, establishes a process for annually assigning each crab stock to a tier and for setting the overfishing and overfished levels, and reduces the number of crab stocks managed under the FMP. Amendment 24 is necessary to establish new overfishing definitions that contain objective and measurable criteria for determining whether each managed stock is overfished or whether overfishing is occurring and to remove from the FMP several crab stocks managed by the State of Alaska. This action is intended to promote the goals and objectives of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, the FMP, and other applicable laws.

DATES: This agency decision is effective June 6, 2008.

ADDRESSES: Copies of Amendment 24 and the Environmental Assessment (EA) for this action may be obtained from the NMFS Alaska Region at the address above or from the Alaska Region website at <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/sustainablefisheries.htm>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Gretchen Harrington, 907-586-7228.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) requires that each regional fishery management

council submit any Fishery Management Plan (FMP) amendment it prepares to NMFS for review and approval, disapproval, or partial approval by the Secretary of Commerce. The Magnuson-Stevens Act also requires that NMFS, upon receiving an FMP amendment, immediately publish a notice in the **Federal Register** announcing that the amendment is available for public review and comment.

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) submitted Amendment 24 to the FMP to NMFS on March 6, 2008. The notice of availability for Amendment 24 was published in the **Federal Register** on March 19, 2008 (73 FR 14766). The public comment period closed on May 19, 2008. NMFS received 1 public comment and considered this comment in determining whether to approve this FMP amendment. NMFS has summarized and responded to the public comment received in this notice under Public Comments, below.

In December 2007, the Council unanimously recommended Amendment 24. Amendment 24 satisfies the Magnuson-Stevens Act requirement that FMPs contain objective and measurable criteria for determining whether a stock is overfished, whether overfishing is occurring, and for rebuilding overfished stocks. Section 301(a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act establishes national standards for fishery conservation and management, and requires that all FMPs create management measures consistent with those standards. National Standard 1 requires that conservation and management measures shall prevent overfishing while achieving, on a continuing basis, the optimum yield from fisheries in federal waters.

The Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC) reviewed the proposed overfishing definitions in Amendment 24 and supporting environmental assessment for compliance with guidelines provided for National Standards 1 and 2 in 50 CFR part 600. During this review, the AFSC recommended modifications to the amendment text to clarify the Council's intent and comply with the Magnuson-Stevens Act. At its February 2008 meeting, the Council adopted the FMP text for Amendment 24 which included the AFSC's recommendations. On February 14, 2008, the AFSC certified that the proposed definitions (1) have sufficient scientific merit, (2) are likely to result in effective Council action to protect a managed stock from closely approaching or reaching an overfished status, (3) provide a basis for objective