

possession of catch in excess of the cumulative limits is otherwise prohibited by regulations at 50 CFR 660.306(a)(10). In addition, the EFPs will include an allowance for first receivers to use hopper type scales to derive an accurate total catch weight prior to sorting. Regulations pertaining to sorting at § 660.370(h)(6) and prohibitions at § 660.306(a)(7) require vessels to sort the catch before weighing.

Issuance of these EFPs will allow for the collection of information on the catch of salmon, non-whiting groundfish, and other non-groundfish species incidentally taken with Pacific whiting. These data are needed to monitor the attainment of the shore-based whiting allocation while assuring that the fishery specifications (bycatch limits, species allocations, OYs, and biological opinion thresholds) are not exceeded. Because whiting flesh deteriorates rapidly once the fish are caught, whiting must be minimally handled and immediately chilled to maintain the flesh quality. Allowing Pacific whiting shoreside vessels to retain unsorted catch will also enable whiting quality to be maintained.

At the June 2007 Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) meeting, the PFMC recommended that NMFS implement a maximized retention program in Federal regulations that would allow full retention of Pacific whiting catch by the vessels and delivered to first receivers on shore. NMFS Northwest Region is in the process of transitioning the Pacific whiting shoreside fishery from a maximized retention and monitoring program conducted under a state-run EFP to a Federal regulatory program. Though it was expected that the program would be in place at the start of the 2008 fishing season, it will not be possible given the complexity of the rulemaking and other workload priorities. The EFP, as proposed, would be used to investigate the new components of the overall monitoring program before regulatory implementation. The EFP would be in effect until the effective date of the new Federal maximized retention and monitoring program, later in 2008.

Proposed Federal regulations for a maximized retention and monitoring program would require Pacific whiting shoreside vessels to dump unsorted catch directly below deck and would allow unsorted catch to be landed, providing that an electronic monitoring system (EMS) is used on all fishing trips to verify retention of catch at sea. The EMS is an effective tool for accurately monitoring catch retention and

identifying the time and location of discard events. The EFP would include provisions for EMS, paid for by the vessels, similar to the 2007 EFP and similar to the proposed Federal regulatory program.

Proposed Federal regulations for a maximized retention and monitoring program would also require first receivers to have on shore monitoring conducted by catch monitors. Catch monitors would be third party employees, paid for by industry, and trained to NMFS standards. The EFP would include provisions for third party catch monitors from a NMFS specified provider. Like the proposed Federal regulatory program, catch monitors used under the EFP would be trained in techniques that would be used for the verification of fish ticket data and in species identification. Catch monitor duties would include overseeing the sorting, weighing, and recordkeeping process, as well as gathering information on incidentally caught salmon. Catch monitors would verify the accuracy of electronic fish ticket data used to manage the Pacific whiting shoreside fishery such that inaccurate or delayed information does not result in any fishery specifications (bycatch limits, species allocations, OYs, and biological opinion thresholds) being exceeded.

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

Dated: March 25, 2008.

Alan D. Risenhoover

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

[FR Doc. E8-6430 Filed 3-27-08; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-S

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN: 0648-XG68

New England Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

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

ACTION: Notice; public meeting.

SUMMARY: The New England Fishery Management Council (Council) is scheduling a public meeting of its Monkfish Oversight Committee in April, 2008, to consider actions affecting New England fisheries in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ). Recommendations from this group will

be brought to the full Council for formal consideration and action, if appropriate.

DATES: This meeting will be held on Tuesday, April 15, 2008, at 5:30 p.m.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held at the Providence Biltmore Hotel, 11 Dorrance Street, Providence, RI 02903; telephone: (401) 421-0700; fax: (401) 455-3040.

Council address: New England Fishery Management Council, 50 Water Street, Mill 2, Newburyport, MA 01950.

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

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Committee will recommend final action on Framework Adjustment 6 to the Monkfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) following a review of the draft Framework Adjustment 6 document and the decision of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (which will have voted on Framework 6 at their Council meeting on April 9). Based on the recent stock assessment and change in stock status, the Councils are considering eliminating the backstop measure adopted in Framework Adjustment 4, an action that would reduce or eliminate monkfish days-at-sea in fishing year 2009 if landings exceed the catch targets in either or both of the two management areas during this current fishing year.

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 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

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, Executive Director, at (978) 465-0492, at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.

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

Dated: March 25, 2008.

William D. Chappell,

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

[FR Doc. E8-6438 Filed 3-27-08; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-S