

Special Accommodations

The meeting is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for auxiliary aids should be directed to the Council office (see **ADDRESSES**) 5 days prior to the meeting.

Note: The times and sequence specified in this agenda are subject to change.

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

Dated: December 21, 2021.

Tracey L. Thompson,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648-XB673]

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council); Public Meetings

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

ACTION: Notice of scoping meetings and open public comment.

SUMMARY: The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) will hold a series of scoping meetings via webinar pertaining to Amendments 51, 52, and 53 to the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for the Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region. The amendments adjust catch levels for snowy grouper, golden tilefish, and gag based on results of the latest stock assessments for those species, respectively, and consider adjusting management measures where needed. In addition, Amendment 52 considers changes to recreational accountability and management measures for blueline tilefish. The Council is also soliciting input on ways to reduce the number of released fish and improve the survival of released fish by the snapper grouper fishery in the South Atlantic region. The Council intends to develop a Release Mortality Reduction Framework Amendment to address this issue across the fishery and revise red snapper catch levels.

DATES: The scoping meetings for Amendments 51, 52, and 53 will be held via webinar on February 1, 2 and 3, 2022. Comments on approaches to curb release mortality are being solicited online only at this time to assist the Council in narrowing down options that can be explored further. Scoping

hearings for the resulting amendment will be held later in 2022.

ADDRESSES: *Council address:* South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, 4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201, N Charleston, SC 29405.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Kim Iverson, Public Information Officer, SAFMC; phone: (843) 571-4366 or toll free: (866) SAFMC-10; fax: (843) 769-4520; email: kim.iverson@safmc.net.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The scoping meetings for Amendments 51, 52, and 53 will be conducted via webinar. The scoping meetings will begin at 6 p.m. Registration for the webinars is required. Registration information, a summary of the issues to be scoped, an online public comment form and any additional information will be posted on the Council's website at <https://safmc.net/safmc-meetings/public-hearings-scoping-meetings/> by January 18, 2022.

An online public comment form to gather input on approaches to reduce release mortality in the snapper grouper fishery will be posted on the Council's website at: <https://safmc.net/safmc-meetings/public-hearings-scoping-meetings/>. Public comments on all the topics must be received by 5 p.m. on February 4, 2022.

Amendment 51 to the Snapper Grouper FMP

The Council must adjust catch levels for snowy grouper in response to the most recent stock assessment for the species in the region conducted through the Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review (SEDAR) stock assessment process, SEDAR 36 Update (2020). The assessment indicated the stock continues to be overfished and is undergoing overfishing. A rebuilding plan is already in place for snowy grouper; however, catch levels must be adjusted based on the new acceptable biological catch recommended by the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC). In addition, the Council is considering modifications to annual catch limits, sector allocations, accountability measures, and management measures.

Amendment 52 to the Snapper Grouper FMP

The stock of golden tilefish in the South Atlantic was most recently assessed through SEDAR 66 (2020), which indicated the stock is not overfished nor undergoing overfishing but is near the overfishing threshold. The Council must adjust catch levels based on the new recommended acceptable biological catch, review

sector allocations, and consider whether other modifications to the management of golden tilefish are needed at this time. In the same amendment, the Council is also considering revising recreational management measures and accountability measures for blueline tilefish.

Amendment 53 to the Snapper Grouper FMP

Results of SEDAR 71 (2021) indicated the gag stock in the South Atlantic is overfished and undergoing overfishing. A rebuilding plan is being considered in this amendment to rebuild the stock and adjust fishing mortality to end overfishing. In addition to adjusting catch levels and sector allocations, the Council is exploring modifications to management measures and accountability measures. During the scoping meetings, Council staff will present an overview of the issues and will be available to answer questions via webinar. Members of the public will have an opportunity to go on record to provide their comments for consideration by the Council.

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

Dated: December 21, 2021.

Tracey L. Thompson,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648-XB664]

Takes of Marine Mammals Incidental to Specified Activities; Taking Marine Mammals Incidental to the U.S. Coast Guard's Base Los Angeles/Long Beach Wharf Expansion Project, Los Angeles, California

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

ACTION: Notice; issuance of incidental harassment authorization.

SUMMARY: NMFS has received a request from the U.S. Coast Guard (Coast Guard) for the re-issuance of a previously issued incidental harassment authorization (IHA) with the only change being effective dates. The initial IHA authorized take of five species of marine mammals, by Level A and Level B harassment, incidental to construction associated with the Base Los Angeles/Long Beach Wharf Expansion Project in Los Angeles, California. The project has been delayed and none of the work covered in the initial IHA has been conducted. The Coast Guard has requested re-issuance with new effective dates of February 1, 2022 through January 31, 2023. The scope of the activities and anticipated effects remain the same, authorized take numbers are not changed, and the required mitigation, monitoring, and reporting remains the same as included in the initial IHA. NMFS is, therefore, issuing a second identical IHA to cover the incidental take analyzed and authorized in the initial IHA.

DATES: This authorization is effective from February 1, 2022 through January 31, 2023.

ADDRESSES: An electronic copy of the final 2021 IHA previously issued to the Coast Guard, the re-issued IHA, the original application, and the **Federal Register** notices proposing and issuing the initial IHA may be obtained by visiting <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/action/incidental-take-authorization-us-coast-guard-base-los-angeles-wharf-expansion-ca>. In case of problems accessing these documents, please call the contact listed below (see **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dwayne Meadows, Ph.D., Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, (301) 427-8401.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Sections 101(a)(5)(A) and (D) of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA; 16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*) direct the Secretary of Commerce (as delegated to NMFS) to allow, upon request, the incidental, but not intentional, taking of small numbers of marine mammals by U.S. citizens who engage in a specified activity (other than commercial fishing) within a specified geographical region if certain findings are made and either regulations are issued or, if the taking is limited to harassment, a notice of a proposed authorization is provided to the public for review.

An authorization for incidental takings shall be granted if NMFS finds that the taking will have a negligible

impact on the species or stock(s), will not have an unmitigable adverse impact on the availability of the species or stock(s) for subsistence uses (where relevant), and if the permissible methods of taking and requirements pertaining to the mitigation, monitoring and reporting of such takings are set forth.

NMFS has defined “negligible impact” in 50 CFR 216.103 as an impact resulting from the specified activity that cannot be reasonably expected to, and is not reasonably likely to, adversely affect the species or stock through effects on annual rates of recruitment or survival.

The MMPA states that the term “take” means to harass, hunt, capture, kill or attempt to harass, hunt, capture, or kill any marine mammal.

Except with respect to certain activities not pertinent here, the MMPA defines “harassment” as any act of pursuit, torment, or annoyance which (i) has the potential to injure a marine mammal or marine mammal stock in the wild (Level A harassment); or (ii) has the potential to disturb a marine mammal or marine mammal stock in the wild by causing disruption of behavioral patterns, including, but not limited to, migration, breathing, nursing, breeding, feeding, or sheltering (Level B harassment).

Summary of Request

On December 11, 2020, NMFS published final notice of our issuance of an IHA authorizing take of marine mammals incidental to the Base Los Angeles/Long Beach Wharf Expansion Project (85 FR 80044). The effective dates of that IHA were February 1, 2021, through January 31, 2022. On March 16, 2021, the Coast Guard informed NMFS that the project was delayed. None of the work identified in the initial IHA (e.g., pile driving) has occurred. The Coast Guard submitted a request for a new identical IHA that would be effective from February 1, 2022 through January 31, 2023, in order to conduct the construction work that was analyzed and authorized through the previously issued IHA. Therefore, re-issuance of the IHA is appropriate.

Summary of Specified Activity and Anticipated Impacts

The planned activities (including mitigation, monitoring, and reporting), authorized incidental take, and anticipated impacts on the affected stocks are the same as those analyzed and authorized through the previously issued IHA.

The purpose of the Coast Guard’s construction project is to expand the existing wharf and other base

infrastructure for hosting two additional offshore patrol cutters. The location, timing, and nature of the activities, including the types of equipment planned for use, are identical those described in the initial IHA. The mitigation and monitoring are also as prescribed in the initial IHA.

Species that are expected to be taken by the planned activity include harbor seals (*Phoca vitulina*), California sea lions (*Zalophus californianus*), Bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*), Short-beaked common dolphin (*Delphinus delphis*), and gray whales (*Eschrichtius robustus*). A description of the methods and inputs used to estimate take anticipated to occur and, ultimately, the take that was authorized is found in the previous documents referenced above. The data inputs and methods of estimating take are identical to those used in the initial IHA. NMFS has reviewed recent Stock Assessment Reports, information on relevant Unusual Mortality Events, and recent scientific literature, and determined that no new information affects our original analysis of impacts or take estimate under the initial IHA.

We refer to the documents related to the previously issued IHA, which include the **Federal Register** notice of the issuance of the initial 2021 IHA for the Coast Guard’s construction work (85 FR 80044), the Coast Guard’s application, the **Federal Register** notice of the proposed IHA (85 FR 66939; October 21, 2020), and all associated references and documents.

Determinations

The Coast Guard will conduct activities as analyzed in the initial 2021 IHA. As described above, the number of authorized takes of the same species and stocks of marine mammals are identical to the numbers that were found to meet the negligible impact and small numbers standards and authorized under the initial IHA and no new information has emerged that would change those findings. The re-issued IHA includes identical required mitigation, monitoring, and reporting measures as the initial IHA, and there is no new information suggesting that our analysis or findings should change.

Based on the information contained here and in the referenced documents, NMFS has determined the following: (1) The required mitigation measures will effect the least practicable impact on marine mammal species or stocks and their habitat; (2) the authorized takes will have a negligible impact on the affected marine mammal species or stocks; (3) the authorized takes represent small numbers of marine

mammals relative to the affected stock abundances; and (4) GCHS' activities will not have an unmitigable adverse impact on taking for subsistence purposes as subsistence harvest of harbor seals and other marine mammals is rare in the area and local subsistence users have not expressed concern about this project.

National Environmental Policy Act

To comply with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA; 42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*) and NOAA Administrative Order (NAO) 216-6A, NMFS must review our proposed action with respect to environmental consequences on the human environment.

Accordingly, NMFS has determined that the issuance of the IHA qualifies to be categorically excluded from further NEPA review. This action is consistent with categories of activities identified in CE B4 of the Companion Manual for NOAA Administrative Order 216-6A, which do not individually or cumulatively have the potential for significant impacts on the quality of the human environment and for which we have not identified any extraordinary circumstances that would preclude this categorical exclusion.

Endangered Species Act (ESA)

Section 7(a)(2) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA; 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*) requires that each Federal agency insure that any action it authorizes, funds, or carries out is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any endangered or threatened species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of designated critical habitat.

No incidental take of ESA-listed species is authorized or expected to result from this activity. Therefore, NMFS has determined that formal consultation under section 7 of the ESA is not required for this action.

Authorization

NMFS has issued an IHA to the Coast Guard for in-water construction activities associated with the specified activity from February 1, 2022 through January 31, 2023. All previously described mitigation, monitoring, and reporting requirements from the initial 2021 IHA are incorporated.

Dated: December 21, 2021.

Kimberly Damon-Randall,

*Director, Office of Protected Resources,
National Marine Fisheries Service.*

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648-XB680]

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

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

ACTION: Notice of hybrid meeting.

SUMMARY: The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) will hold a four-day meeting to consider actions affecting the Gulf of Mexico fisheries in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ). The meeting is open to the public offering both in-person and virtual options for participation.

DATES: The meeting will convene Monday, January 24 through Wednesday, January 26, 2022, from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., CST and on Thursday, January 27, 2022, from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., CST.

ADDRESSES:

Meeting address: The meeting will take place at Hilton Baton Rouge Capitol Center, located at 201 Lafayette Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70801. Please note, in-person meeting attendees will be expected to follow any current COVID-19 safety protocols as determined by the Council, hotel and the City of Baton Rouge. Such precautions may include masks, room capacity restrictions, and/or social distancing. If you prefer to "listen in", you may access the log-on information by visiting our website at www.gulfcouncil.org.

Council address: Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, 4107 W. Spruce Street, Suite 200, Tampa, FL 33607; telephone: (813) 348-1630.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. Carrie Simmons, Executive Director, Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council; telephone: (813) 348-1630.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Monday, January 24, 2022; 8 a.m.–5:30 p.m., CST

The meeting will begin open to the public in a Full Council Session to hold an Election of Council Vice-Chair, and review and adoption of the revised Council Committee Assignments for October 2021 through August 2022.

Committee sessions will begin approximately 8:15 a.m. with the Habitat Protection and Restoration Committee receiving a presentation from the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) on Wind Energy

Development in the Gulf of Mexico, review of Essential Fish Habitat Generic Amendment and Draft Response Letter to NOAA Request for Comments on the Area-Based Management Goals Related to Executive Order 14008.

The Outreach and Education Committee will receive a presentation on 2021 Communications Analytics and Updated 2021 Communications Improvement Plan, draft Social Media Guidelines, draft Public Comment Guidelines, draft Press Release Guidelines, and the 2022 Communications Improvement Plan. The Committee will discuss remaining items from the Outreach and Education Technical Committee and receive a presentation on Summary of Discard and Barotrauma Reduction Efforts Across the Region.

The Shrimp Committee will review National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) Evaluation of Draft Approval Specifications for Reinstating Historical cELB Program, Updated Draft Framework Action: Modification of the Vessel Position Data Collection Program for the Gulf of Mexico Shrimp Fishery, and summary of the Shrimp Advisory Panel Meeting.

The Mackerel Committee will review and discuss Coastal Migratory Pelagics Landings, Draft Amendment 33: Modifications to the Gulf of Mexico Migratory Group King Mackerel Catch Limits and Sector Allocations, and Draft Amendment 34: Atlantic Migratory Group King Mackerel Catch Levels and Atlantic King and Spanish Mackerel Management Measures.

Tuesday, January 25, 2022; 8 a.m.–5:30 p.m., CST

The Reef Fish Committee will convene to review Reef Fish Landings and Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) Landings and Final Action: Framework Action: Modification of Vermillion Snapper Catch Limits. Following, the Committee will receive presentations on SEDAR 70: Greater Amberjack Stock Assessment Report and SEDAR 72: Gag Grouper Stock Assessment Report, and discuss SSC Recommendations and Reef Fish Advisory Panel Feedback for both. The Committee will also discuss the Council Request for State Reef Fish Survey (SRFS) Integration and Update Assessment for SEDAR 72: Gag Grouper.

The Committee will review Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) Programs, Focus Group Formation and next steps and Public Hearing Draft: Reef Fish Amendment 36B. The Committee will receive an update on Draft Snapper Grouper Amendment 44 and Reef Fish Amendment 55: Modifications to Southeastern U.S. Yellowtail Snapper