

along the coast line of Alaska. Their traditional subsistence hunts for these whales have been regulated by catch limits and other limitations under the authority of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) since 1977. Alaska Native subsistence hunters, from 11 northern Alaskan communities, take less than one percent of the stock of bowhead whales per year. Since 1977, the number of strikes has ranged between 14 and 72 animals per year, depending in part on changes in IWC management strategy due to higher estimates of bowhead whale abundance in recent years, as well as hunter efficiency. The IWC sets an overall aboriginal subsistence catch limit for this relevant stock, based on the request of Contracting Governments on behalf of the aboriginal hunters. In the case of Alaska Eskimo and Russian Native subsistence hunts, the United States and the Russian Federation make a joint request for subsistence catch limits for bowhead whales to the IWC.

NMFS must annually publish a notice of aboriginal subsistence whale hunting quotas and any other limitations on such hunting in the **Federal Register** (50 CFR 230.6). The subsistence hunt is directly managed by the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission (AEWC), and the quotas are issued through annual amendments to a cooperative agreement between the AEWC and NOAA. In order to comprehensively assess the effects of these annual quotas, NMFS is proposing to set the term of this analysis to extend over a 5-year period, beginning in 2013.

Alternatives

NMFS preliminarily anticipates three alternatives:

Alternative 1 (no action): Do not grant the AEWC any annual quotas.

Alternative 2: Grant the AEWC annual quotas amounting to 255 landed whales over 5 years (2013 through 2017), with an annual strike quota of 67 bowhead whales per year, where no unused strikes are added to the quota for any one year.

Alternative 3: Grant the AEWC annual quotas amounting to 255 landed whales over 5 years (2013 through 2017), with an annual strike quota of 67 bowhead whales per year, where no more than 15 unused strikes are added to the strike quota for any one year. This is the agency's preferred alternative and reflects past IWC action and current management practices.

NOAA prepared an EIS in 2008 that analyzed issuing annual quotas to the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission for a subsistence hunt on Bowhead whales during 2008 through 2012. That analysis concluded that the overall effects of

human activities associated with subsistence whaling results in only minor impacts on the western Arctic bowhead whale stock. In light of the stability of the IWC subsistence harvest allocations and the subsistence bowhead harvests by Alaska Natives over the last ten years, NMFS anticipates that the new EIS can estimate environmental consequences for a 10- to 25-year period, subject to an Environmental Assessment in 2017 (and every five years thereafter) to determine whether any new circumstances would result in significant environmental impacts warranting a new EIS.

Major issues to be addressed in this EIS include: the impact of subsistence removals on the Western Arctic stock of bowhead whales; the impacts of these harvest levels on the traditional and cultural values of Alaska Natives, and the cumulative effects of the action when considered along with climate change and past, present, and future actions potentially affecting bowhead whales.

Public Involvement

We begin this NEPA process by soliciting input from the public and interested parties on the type of impacts to be considered in the EIS, the range of alternatives to be assessed, and any other pertinent information. Specifically, this scoping process is intended to accomplish the following objectives:

1. Invite affected federal, state, and local agencies, Alaska Natives, and other interested persons to participate in the EIS process.
2. Determine the potential significant environmental issues to be analyzed in the EIS.
3. Identify and eliminate issues determined to be insignificant or addressed in other documents.
4. Allocate assignments among the lead agency and cooperating agencies regarding preparation of the EIS, including impact analysis and identification of mitigation measures.
5. Identify related environmental documents being prepared.
6. Identify other environmental review and consultation requirements.

The official scoping period is from the date of publication in the **Federal Register** of this document until October 31, 2011. Please visit NMFS Alaska Region web page at <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov> for more information on this EIS. NMFS estimates the draft EIS will be available in April 2012.

Authority

The preparation of the EIS for the subsistence harvest of Western Arctic bowhead whales by Alaska Natives will be conducted under the authority and in accordance with the requirements of NEPA, Council on Environmental Quality Regulations (40 CFR 1500–1508), other applicable Federal laws and regulations, and policies and procedures of NMFS for compliance with those regulations.

Dated: September 16, 2011.

James H. Lecky,

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

[FR Doc. 2011–24392 Filed 9–21–11; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–22–P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648–XA721

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC); Public Meetings

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

ACTION: Notice of public meetings.

SUMMARY: The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council), its Research Set-Aside (RSA) Committee, its Squid, Mackerel, Butterfish (SMB) Committee, its Executive Committee, and its Spiny Dogfish Committee will hold public meetings.

DATES: The meetings will be held Tuesday, October 11 through Thursday, October 13, 2011. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for specific dates and times.

ADDRESSES: The meetings will be held at the Dolce Seaview, 401 South New York Road, Galloway, NJ 08205; *telephone:* (609) 652–1800.

Council address: Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, 800 N. State St., Suite 201, Dover, DE 19901–3910; *telephone:* 302–674–2331.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. Christopher Moore, Executive Director, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council; *telephone:* (302) 674–2331 ext. 255.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On Tuesday, October 11, the RSA Committee will meet from 8:30 a.m. until 10:30 a.m. The SMB Committee will meet from 10:30 a.m. until 5 p.m. There will be a Public Listening Session from 5 p.m. until 6 p.m. On Wednesday,

October 12, the Executive Committee will meet from 8:30 a.m. until 9:30 a.m. The Council will convene at 9:30 a.m. Swearing in of the new Council member will be from 9:30 a.m. until 9:45 a.m. From 9:45 a.m. until 11 a.m., SMB Amendment 14 DEIS Alternatives will be discussed. From 11 a.m. until 12 p.m., the Council will receive a Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology (SBRM) Report. Amendment 17 to the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan (FMP) will be discussed from 1 p.m. until 3 p.m. From 3 p.m. until 4:30 p.m., Spiny Dogfish Specifications will be approved as a Committee of the Whole. From 4:30 p.m. until 5:30 p.m., there will be a Scoping Presentation on Consolidation of the Highly Migratory Species (HMS) FMP. On Thursday, October 13, the Council will convene at 8:30 a.m. The RSA Program Review Report will be heard from 8:30 a.m. until 9:30 a.m. From 9:30 a.m. until 1 p.m., the Council will conduct its regular Business Session, receive Organizational Reports, Council Liaison Reports, Executive Director's Report, Science Report, Committee Reports, and any continuing and/or new business.

Agenda items by day for the Council's Committees and the Council itself are: On Tuesday, October 11, the RSA Committee will review the staff evaluation of the RSA Program and recommend changes to the RSA Program to address scientific and administrative issues. The SMB Committee will review Amendment 14 analyses and develop recommendations for preferred alternatives. On Wednesday, October 12, the Executive Committee will meet in a closed session to discuss the Ricks E Savage Award followed by the Council convening to swear in the new Council member. The Council will approve the SMB Amendment 14 document for public hearings. Dr. Paul Rago of NMFS will provide the Council with a report of the 3-year SBRM review. The Council will review draft alternatives of Amendment 17 to the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass FMP to address spatial/regional management of the recreational black sea bass fishery. The Spiny Dogfish Committee will meet as a Committee of the Whole to review the SSC and the Spiny Dogfish Monitoring Committee recommendations for 2012 and adopt the recommendations for 2012 management measures. There will be a NMFS Scoping Presentation on the Consolidated HMS FMP. On Thursday, October 13, the Council will convene to discuss and adopt recommended

changes to the RSA Program. The Council will hold its regular Business Session to approve the August 2011 minutes and address any outstanding actions from the August 2011 meeting, Organizational Reports, Liaison Reports, the Executive Director's Report, the Science Report, Committee Reports, and any continuing and/or new business.

Special Accommodations

This meeting is 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.

Dated: September 19, 2011.

Tracey L. Thompson,

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

[FR Doc. 2011-24355 Filed 9-21-11; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XA720

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

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

ACTION: Council to convene public meeting.

SUMMARY: The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council will convene a meeting of the Reef Fish Advisory Panel.

DATES: The meeting will convene at 1 p.m. on Thursday, October 13, 2011 and conclude by 12 p.m. on Friday, October 14, 2011.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held at the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, 2203 North Lois Avenue, Suite 1100, Tampa, FL 33607.

Council address: Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, 2203 N. Lois Avenue, Suite 1100, Tampa, FL 33607.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Steven Atran, Population Dynamics Statistician; Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council; *telephone:* (813) 348-1630.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Reef Fish Advisory Panel (AP) will review actions by the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) which meets immediately prior to the AP meeting.

The AP will also receive presentations from representatives of the SSC on how acceptable biological catch is set, and on how stock assessments are done. The AP will then review presentations on update assessments for vermilion snapper and gray triggerfish, and will make recommendations on management of those stocks. The AP will also review draft Reef Fish Amendment 35, which contains actions to modify the rebuilding plan and management measures for greater amberjack. The AP will also discuss red snapper issues relating to the five year review of the red snapper individual fishing quota program, and to the data collection programs for the recreational red snapper fishery.

Copies of the agenda and other related materials can be obtained by calling (813) 348-1630 or can be downloaded from the Council's ftp site, *ftp.gulfcouncil.org*.

Although other non-emergency issues not on the agenda may come before the Advisory Panel for discussion, in accordance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, those issues may not be the subject of formal action during this meeting. Actions of the Advisory Panel will be restricted to those issues specifically identified in the agenda and any issues arising after publication of this notice that require emergency action under Section 305(c) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, provided the public has been notified of the Council's intent to take 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 Kathy Pereira at the Council (see **ADDRESSES**) at least 5 working days prior to the meeting.

Dated: September 16, 2011.

Tracey L. Thompson,

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

[FR Doc. 2011-24303 Filed 9-21-11; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XA719

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and