

should benefit all entities, as it will result in more efficient use of the spectrum by allowing a greater number of entities to share existing spectrum. However, requiring the use of narrowband equipment by a date certain, or prohibiting the manufacture or import of non-compliant equipment, could impact some small entities requiring them to upgrade their communications systems before they would otherwise do so. An alternative would be to maintain the current rules, which are intended to foster migration to narrowband technology by way of progressively more stringent type certification requirements. We issue this *FNPRM* in order to consider whether a change in the Rules would benefit small entities and other PLMR licensees.

27. In the Report and Order portion of this item, we amended our rules to allow 800 MHz BI/LT licensees to assign or transfer their spectrum to CMRS licensees for use in CMRS operations, or to modify the licenses to CMRS use in their own systems. We also adopted rules to safeguard against trafficking in 800 MHz Business and I/LT licenses, and notification procedures to avoid interference to 800 MHz public safety operations. This *FNPRM* now seeks comment on whether this flexibility in use of PLMR channels should be extended to the 900 MHz band.

28. In the context of 800 MHz PLMR, we have found that allowing licensees to convert their frequencies to CMRS use or assign or transfer these frequencies to CMRS entities will not affect the supply of available PLMR spectrum for licensing from the PLMR pool, and thus should not further exacerbate the current shortage of private spectrum available to small business entities and other PLMR eligibles. An alternative approach might permit such modifications without restriction; however, this might affect the supply of available PLMR spectrum which might, in turn, have possible adverse effects on small businesses.

Federal Rules That May Duplicate, Overlap, or Conflict With the Proposed Rules

29. None.

List of Subjects in 47 CFR Parts 1 and 90

Radio, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements.

Federal Communications Commission.

William F. Caton,
Deputy Secretary.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

49 CFR Parts 567, 591, 592 and 594

[Docket No. NHTSA-2000-8159; Notice 2]

RIN 2127-AH67

Certification; Importation of Vehicles and Equipment Subject to Federal Safety, Bumper and Theft Prevention Standards; Registered Importers of Vehicles Not Originally Manufactured to Conform with the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards; Schedule of Fees Authorized by 49 U.S.C. 30141

AGENCY: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), DOT.

ACTION: Extension of comment period.

SUMMARY: This document grants a request to extend the comment period on an agency proposal, principally to amend the regulations pertaining to registered importers of motor vehicles not originally manufactured to conform with the Federal motor vehicle safety, bumper, and theft prevention standards. The agency also proposed associated amendments to allied regulations. The agency is extending the comment period an additional four weeks.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before the close of business on February 1, 2001 (the comments were originally due on January 4, 2001).

ADDRESSES: You should mention the docket number of this document in your comments, and submit your comments in writing to: Docket Management, Room PL-401, 400 Seventh Street, SW, Washington, DC 20590. Comments may also be submitted to the docket electronically by logging onto the Dockets Management System website at <http://dms.dot.gov>. Click on "Help & Information," or "Help/Info" to obtain instructions for filing the document electronically.

You may call Docket Management at 202-366-9324. You may visit the Docket from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Taylor Vinson, Office of Chief Counsel, NHTSA, 400 Seventh St., SW., Washington, DC 20590. (202-366-5263).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On November 20, 2000, NHTSA published a notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) proposing to amend 49 CFR part 592, *Registered Importers of Vehicles Not Originally Manufactured to Conform with the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards* (65 FR 69810). The

NPRM also proposed conforming amendments to 49 CFR part 567, *Certification*, 49 CFR part 591, *Importation of Vehicles and Equipment Subject to Federal Safety, Bumper and Theft Prevention Standards*, and 49 CFR part 594, *Schedule of Fees Authorized by 49 U.S.C. 30141*.

The NPRM specified a comment closing date of January 4, 2001 (45 days after the date of publication). However, on December 22, 2000, the agency received a written request for an extension of the comment closing date from the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA). AAMVA said that it wishes to provide comments on the proposal but that "the time needed to consult with AAMVA's member jurisdictions will not permit the association to submit comments by the January 4, 2001 deadline." AAMVA requested an extension "to allow the Association additional time to complete its review of the notice and the many issues raised for consideration."

The agency may grant a person's petition for an extension of a comment period if the petition shows good cause for the extension, and if the extension is consistent with the public interest (49 CFR 553.19). The agency concludes that the petitioner has made that showing and that an extension is in the public interest. An extension would aid AAMVA and other interested persons (such as American Honda Motor Co., which made an oral request for an extension) in fully responding to the changes proposed. Accordingly, this notice extends the comment closing date an additional four weeks, to February 1, 2001.

Authority: 49 U.S.C. 322, 30111, and 30166; delegations of authority at 49 CFR 1.50 and 49 CFR 501.8.

Issued on: December 27, 2000.

Kenneth N. Weinstein,
Associate Administrator for Safety Assurance.

[FR Doc. 00-33455 Filed 12-27-00; 4:24 pm]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 648

[I.D. 122200C]

Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Northeast Skate Fishery; Scoping Process

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

Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and notice of scoping process; request for comments.

SUMMARY: The New England Fishery Management Council (Council) announces its intent to prepare a Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for the northeast region skate complex and to prepare an EIS to analyze the impacts of any proposed management measures. The FMP would be developed pursuant to the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act). The Council also formally announces the initiation of a public process to determine the scope of issues to be addressed in the environmental impact analysis. The purpose of this notice is to alert the interested public of the scoping process and to provide for public participation in compliance with environmental documentation requirements.

DATES: The Council will discuss and take scoping comments at public meetings in January and February 2001. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for specific dates and times. Written scoping comments must be received at the appropriate address or fax number, (See **ADDRESSES**), on or before 5:00 p.m. local time, February 21, 2001.

ADDRESSES: Written comments and requests for copies of the scoping document and other information should be directed to Paul J. Howard, Executive Director, New England Fishery Management Council, 50 Water Street, Mill 2, Newburyport, MA 01950, Telephone (978) 465-0492. Comments may also be sent via facsimile (fax) to (978) 465-3116.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Paul J. Howard, Executive Director, (978) 465-0492.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The seven species in the northeast region skate complex currently include: winter skate (*Leucoraja ocellata*), barndoor skate (*Dipturus laevis*), thorny skate (*Amblyraja radiata*), smooth skate (*Malacoraja senta*), little skate (*Leucoraja erinacea*), clearnose skate (*Raja eglanteria*), and rosette skate (*Leucoraja garmani*). The northeast skate complex is generally distributed along the coast of the eastern United States from near the tide line to depths exceeding 700 m (383 fathoms). In the northeast region, the center of distribution for the little and winter skates is Georges Bank and Southern

New England. The barndoor skate is most common in the Gulf of Maine, on Georges Bank, and in Southern New England. The thorny and smooth skates are commonly found in the Gulf of Maine. The clearnose and rosette skates have a more southern distribution, and are found primarily in the Chesapeake Bight.

Status of the Stocks

A benchmark assessment of the northeast skate complex was completed at the 30th Stock Assessment Workshop (SAW 30) in November 1999. Conclusions about the status of the seven species in the northeast region skate complex are based mainly on standardized research trawl survey data collected by the U.S. and Canada during 1963-1999. Taken as a group, the skate biomass for the seven species in the northeast region is at a medium level. The large increase in skate biomass in the mid to late 1980s was dominated by winter and little skate. The biomass of large-sized skates (>100 cm maximum length; barndoor, winter, and thorny) has steadily declined since the mid-1980s. The recent increase in aggregate skate biomass has been due to an increase in small-sized skates (<100 cm maximum length; little, clearnose, rosette, and smooth), mainly little skate.

At SAW 30, each species in the northeast skate complex was individually assessed. SAW scientists developed status determination criteria to evaluate whether overfishing was occurring and whether or not a species is in an overfished condition. Based on the SAW 30 criteria, overfishing was found to be occurring on one species of skate (winter skate), and four species were found to be in an overfished condition (winter skate, thorny skate, barndoor skate, and smooth skate).

On June 21, 1999, a notice regarding barndoor skate was published by NMFS in the **Federal Register**. This notice indicated that NMFS had received a petition to add the barndoor skate to the list of threatened and endangered wildlife and to designate critical habitat for barndoor skate, and was seeking information and comments. At the SAW 30 in November 1999, assessment scientists reviewed each of the ESA listing criteria relative to barndoor skate and provided an assessment with recommendations and comments regarding the potential ESA listing. The Stock Assessment Review Committee (SARC) found that there was no evidence that the barndoor skate is in danger of extinction or likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range. As of the date of

publication of this notice, NMFS has not published a decision.

In March 2000, NMFS informed the Council of its decision to designate the Council as the responsible body for the development and management of the seven species included in the northeast region skate complex. Based on work completed at SAW 30, NMFS identified four species of skates as overfished: barndoor, smooth, thorny, and winter skate. The overfished status of these species necessitates development of an FMP to end overfishing and rebuild these stocks in accordance with Section 304(e) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

Purpose

The purpose of the proposed Skate FMP is to establish conservation and management measures to end overfishing and rebuild overfished stocks in the northeast skate complex.

Management Options

The Skate FMP may establish mechanisms to obtain better information about individual skate species and directed and incidental skate fisheries. With the implementation of the Skate FMP, vessels may be required to obtain a Federal permit to fish for skates. Vessels with skate permits may be required to submit Vessel Trip Reports (VTRs or logbooks) for all trips. To collect better information about the skate fisheries, the Council may also require that vessels report landings and discards of skates by species and/or by fishery (wings/bait).

The low abundance level and current overfished status of barndoor skate will likely require a significant reduction in fishing mortality. Because the barndoor skate is not a primary component of either the bait fishery or the wing fishery, the Council may consider prohibiting its possession.

Clearnose and rosette skate are distributed considerably further south than the other five skates in the northeast complex, the northern extent of their ranges reaching only to waters off the New Jersey coastline. These two species are not overfished and are not known to be a component of either the bait or wing fishery in the northeast region. Including these two species as part of the northeast skate complex for management purposes could complicate the development of management measures and could pose unnecessary burdens on fisheries that do not interact with the other five species of skates. Therefore, the Council is considering eliminating clearnose and rosette skate from the northeast complex for management purposes.

The Council may consider developing a limited access program for directed and/or incidental skate fishing. This could include the establishment of a control date for skate fishing. The Council will consider other management measures (e.g., minimum sizes, gear restrictions, area closures, quotas, trip limits, fishing seasons, Skate days-at-sea, etc.) as appropriate, based on comments received through the scoping process.

Scoping Process

Scoping meetings for the Skate FMP are as follows:

1. *January 23, 2001*, 6 p.m., Sheraton Ferncroft Hotel, 50 Ferncroft Road, Danvers, MA 01923, (978) 777-2500; fax (978) 750-7991;

2. *February 2, 2001*, 10 a.m., Provincetown Town Hall, 260

Commercial Street, Provincetown, MA 02657, (508) 487-7013; fax (508) 487-9560;

3. *February 6, 2001*, 7 p.m., Wyndham Hotel, 700 King Street, Wilmington, DE 19801, (302) 655-0400; fax (302) 429-5979; and

4. *February 12, 2001*, 6 p.m., Tiverton Community Center, 346 Judson Street, Tiverton, RI 02878, (401) 625-6704; fax (401) 625-6705.

Additional meetings of the Council, Skate Committee, or Advisory Panel during the scoping period will provide opportunities for public comment on specific issues identified in the respective agendas.

All persons affected by or otherwise interested in skate fisheries management are invited to participate in determining the scope and significance of issues to be analyzed by submitting written

comments (see **ADDRESSES**). Alternatives include not developing a management plan, developing amendments to existing plans, or other reasonable courses of action. Impacts of this proposed action to be considered in this process may be direct, indirect, individual, or cumulative. The scoping process will also identify and eliminate from detailed study issues that are not significant. Once a draft FMP and an Environmental Assessment or an EIS is developed, the Council will hold public hearings to receive comments.

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

Dated: December 26, 2000.

Valerie Chambers,

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

[FR Doc. 00-33452 Filed 12-29-00; 8:45 am]

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