

governing the fisheries of the Northeastern United States. The EFP may allow for exemptions from the NE multispecies days-at-sea (DAS) effort control program for up to 11 DAS for the purposes of studying the effects of a soft grid species separation trawl. In addition, this EFP would allow exemptions from the Gulf of Maine (GOM) Rolling Closure Areas II, III, and IV.

Regulations under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act require publication of this notification to provide interested parties the opportunity to comment on applications for proposed EFPs.

DATES: Comments on this document must be received on or before February 22, 2005.

ADDRESSES: Comments on this notice may be submitted by e-mail. The mailbox address for providing e-mail comments is DA5-08@noaa.gov. Include in the subject line of the e-mail comment the following document identifier: "Comments on UNH Soft Grid Gear Modification EFP Proposal." Written comments should be sent to Patricia A. Kurkul, Regional Administrator, NMFS, Northeast Regional Office, 1 Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930. Mark the outside of the envelope "Comments on UNH Soft Grid Gear Modification EFP Proposal." Comments may also be sent via facsimile (fax) to (978) 281-9135.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Heather L. Sagar, Fishery Management Specialist, phone 978-281-9341.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Dr. Pingguo He of the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension (UNH) submitted an application for an EFP on May 27, 2004. This EFP was approved and granted for the period November 19, 2004, through April 30, 2005. This is a continuation of a project that was begun in 2002. Due to the time needed to conduct gear modifications and tank flume tests, as well as poor weather conditions, the sea trials were not completed during the 2003-2004 fishing years. This EFP would authorize one commercial vessel to conduct sea trials using a soft grid finfish excluder device. The objective of the research is to test trawl gear designed to separate flatfish from roundfish for the purpose of reducing bycatch of roundfish, particularly cod. The separation device is designed to exploit behavioral differences that exist between these two types of fish.

The proposed gear design consists of a trawl net with a soft panel, or ramp, that would be positioned in front of a double codend. The gear is designed in

such a way as to take advantage of the tendency for flatfish to swim towards the ocean bottom after encountering the separation panel and thereby into the lower codend portion of the net. Roundfish, which are not expected to swim towards the sea floor after encountering the panel, are expected to swim into the upper codend portion of the net, which would be left open under normal fishing practices when the vessel is targeting flatfish. However, for the purposes of this experiment, both codends would remain closed in order to quantify separation success of these two types of fish. The net would also utilize visual stimuli fixed forward of the codend to test changes in swimming behavior in roundfish and flatfish in response to the stimuli. Underwater videography would be employed to observe fish behavior and functioning of the experimental selectivity device. The sea trials would be conducted in shallow water (30 to 50 fathoms (55 to 91 m)) off the coasts of New Hampshire, southern Maine, and a small portion of northern Massachusetts. UNH researchers would be aboard the vessel at all times during the experimental work.

In a letter dated January 20, 2005, Dr. He requested that this EFP be extended from April 30, 2005, the previously proposed end date, through July 31, 2005. Because no additional DAS would be exempted from what was allowed under the previously approved 2004 EFP, the at-sea portion of the experiment would last no longer than 11 fishing days from November 19, 2004, through July 31, 2005. Based upon the catch rates from 8 days of fishing during the same period of time in the 2003 fishing year, the following catch is estimated to be harvested under this EFP during the period May 1, through July 31, 2005: Cod 2,846 lb (1,291 kg); witch flounder 1,547 lb (702 kg); American plaice 274 lb (124 kg); white hake 140 lb (64 kg); yellowtail flounder 87 lb (40 kg); winter flounder 50 lb (23 kg); haddock 34 lb (15 kg); and pollock 11 lb (5 kg). All undersized fish would be returned to the sea as quickly as possible. Legal-sized fish that would otherwise have to be discarded would be allowed to be retained and sold within the applicable GOM possession limits. The participating vessel would be required to report all landings in its Vessel Trip Report.

Due to an oversight in the **Federal Register** notice announcing the 2004 EFP for this project (69 FR 58153, September 29, 2004), this EFP would also exempt vessels from Rolling Closure Area II during April 2005. Thus, an EFP would be issued to one vessel

exempting it from GOM Rolling Closure Areas II, III, and IV and; from the NE multispecies DAS effort control program for any of the 11 DAS remaining from the previous 2004 EFP that was issued. The applicant may request minor modifications to the EFP throughout the year. EFP modifications may be granted without further notice if they are deemed essential to facilitate completion of the proposed research and minimal as not to change the scope or impact the initially approved EFP request.

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

Dated: February 2, 2005.

Alan D. Risenhoover,

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

[FR Doc. E5-484 Filed 2-4-05; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-S

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 020105A]

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council; Public Meetings

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

ACTION: Notice of public meeting.

SUMMARY: The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) will convene a public meeting of the Socioeconomic Panel (SEP).

DATES: A meeting of the SEP will be held beginning at 9 a.m. on Thursday, February 24, 2005 and will conclude no later than 3 p.m. on Friday, February 25, 2005.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held at the Four Points By Sheraton New Orleans Airport, 6401 Veterans Memorial Boulevard, Metairie, LA 70003; 504.885.5700.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Assane Diagne, Economist, Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, 3018 U.S. Highway 301 North, Suite 1000, Tampa, Florida 33619; telephone: 813-228-2815.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Council will convene its Socioeconomic Panel (SEP) to review "Draft Amendment 13 for Shrimp", "Draft Amendment 18A for Reef Fish", and "Draft Amendment 26 for Red Snapper." The shrimp amendment considers several issues including the establishment of a moratorium on the

issuance of commercial shrimp vessel permits and the requirement of separate vessel permits for the royal red shrimp fishery. The reef fish amendment reviews effort capacity control measures, enforcement and monitoring issues in the reef fish fishery. The red snapper amendment considers the establishment of an individual fishing quota (IFQ) for the commercial red snapper fishery. In addition, the SEP will discuss potential grouper trip limits and buyback programs.

A report will be prepared by the SEP containing their conclusions and recommendations. This report will be presented to the Council at its meeting on March 7–10, 2005 in Birmingham, Alabama.

Composing the SEP membership are economists, sociologists, and anthropologists from various universities and state fishery agencies throughout the Gulf. They advise the Council on the social and economic implications of certain fishery management measures.

A copy of the agenda can be obtained by calling 813–228–2815. Although other non-emergency issues not on the agenda may come before the SEP 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 SEP will be restricted to those issues specifically identified in the agendas 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 action to address the emergency.

Special Accommodations

The meeting is open to the public and is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to the Council office by February 17, 2005.

Dated: February 2, 2005.

Alan D. Risenhoover,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.
[FR Doc. E5–483 Filed 2–4–05; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–22–S

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 020105B]

Pacific Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

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

ACTION: Notice of public meeting.

SUMMARY: The Pacific Fishery Management Council's (Council) Ad Hoc Groundfish Trawl Individual Quota Committee (TIQC) will hold a working meeting which is open to the public.

DATES: The TIQC working meeting will begin Wednesday, February 23, 2005 at 8:30 a.m. and may go into the evening if necessary to complete business for the day. The meeting will reconvene from 8:30 a.m. and continue until business for the day is complete on Thursday, February 24, 2005.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held in the Broadway Room at the Residence Inn by Marriott-Portland Downtown, RiverPlace, 2115 SW River Parkway, Portland, OR 97201. Telephone: 503–552–9500

Council address: Pacific Fishery Management Council, 7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 200, Portland, OR 97220–1384.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Jim Seger, Staff Officer (Economist), 503–820–2280.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The purpose of the TIQC working meeting is to continue to review results from public scoping, and some preliminary analysis, and refine recommendations to the Council on an individual quota program to cover limited entry trawl landings in the West Coast groundfish fishery.

Although nonemergency issues not contained in the TIQC meeting agenda may come before the TIQC for discussion, those issues may not be the subject of formal TIQC action during these meetings. TIQC action will be restricted to those issues specifically listed in this notice and to any issues arising after publication of this notice requiring emergency action under Section 305(c) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, provided the public has been notified of the TIQC's intent to take final action to address the emergency.

Special Accommodations

The meeting is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for

sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Ms. Carolyn Porter at 503–820–2280 at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.

Dated: February 1, 2005.

Alan D. Risenhoover,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.
[FR Doc. E5–481 Filed 2–4–05; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–22–S

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 020105H]

Western Pacific Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

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

ACTION: Notice of a public meeting.

SUMMARY: The 88th meeting of the Western Pacific Fishery Council's (Council) Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) will convene February 22–24, 2005, in Honolulu, HI.

DATES: The SSC meeting will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day.

ADDRESSES: The 88th SSC meeting will be held at the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council Office conference room, 1164 Bishop St., Suite 1400, Honolulu, HI; phone: (808) 522–8220.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Kitty M. Simonds, Executive Director; phone: (808) 522–8220.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The SSC will discuss and may make recommendations to the Council on the agenda items here. The order in which agenda items will be addressed can change.

Agenda

Tuesday, February 22, 2005, 8:30 a.m.

1. Introductions
2. Approval of Draft Agenda and Assignment of Rapporteurs
3. Approval of the Minutes of the 87th SSC Meeting
4. Ecosystem and Habitat

A. Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI) Sanctuary

1. Background Information and Alternatives
2. Report on Public Hearings