

TABLE 2: ESTIMATED CATCH AND DISCARDS BY SPECIES LB (KG)—Continued

Species	Harvest	Discards
Cod	6,000 (2,721.6)	600 (272.2)
Monkfish	4,500 (2,041.2)	900 (408.2)
Grey Sole	900 (408.2)	100 (45.4)
Pollock	600 (272.2)	50 (22.7)
American Plaice	600 (272.2)	100 (45.4)
Winter Flounder	300 (136.1)	100 (45.4)
Redfish	1,200 (544.3)	300 (136.1)
Whiting	300 (136.1)	50 (22.7)
Hake sp.	300 (136.1)	100 (45.4)
Dogfish	0 (0)	3,000 (1,360.8)
Skate sp.	0 (0)	2,400 (1,088.6)
Lumpfish	0 (0)	600 (272.2)
Lobster	0 (0)	600 (272.2)
Crab sp.	0 (0)	600 (272.2)

The applicants may request minor modifications and extensions to the EFP throughout the course of research. EFP modifications and extensions may be granted without further public notice if they are deemed essential to facilitate completion of the proposed research and result in only a minimal change in the scope or impacts of the initially approved EFP request.

In accordance with NAO Administrative Order 216–6, a Categorical Exclusion or other appropriate NEPA document would be completed prior to the issuance of the EFP. Further review and consultation may be necessary before a final determination is made to issue the EFP. After publication of this document in the **Federal Register**, the EFP, if approved, may become effective following the public comment period.

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

Dated: May 1, 2008.

Emily H. Menashes

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.
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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Draft Management Plan and Environmental Assessment for the Gerry E. Studds Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary: Notice of Public Availability and Meetings

AGENCY: Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS), National Ocean Service (NOS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce (DOC).

ACTION: Notice of public availability and meetings.

SUMMARY: In accordance with section 304(e) of the National Marine Sanctuaries Act, as amended, (NMSA) NOAA is soliciting public comment on the draft management plan and draft environmental assessment for the Gerry E. Studds Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary.

DATES: *Comments:* Comments on the draft management plan and draft environmental assessment will be considered if received on or before August 4, 2008.

Public meetings: See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** section below for the dates and locations for the public meetings.

ADDRESSES: *To obtain a copy:* For a copy of the draft management plan and draft environmental assessment, contact the Management Plan Review Coordinator, Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary, 175 Edward Foster Rd., Scituate, MA 02066. Copies can also be downloaded from the SBNMS Web site at <http://stellwagen.noaa.gov>.

To submit comments: Comments on the draft management plan and draft environmental assessment may be submitted by one of the following methods:

1. In writing to the SBNMS Management Plan Review Coordinator (see *to obtain a copy* section above);
2. By e-mail to sbplan@noaa.gov; or
3. By providing comments (oral or written) at one of the public meetings (see public meetings section below).

Public meetings: See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** section for the dates and locations for the public meetings.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Benjamin Cowie-Haskell at (781) 545–8026 or via e-mail at sbplan@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background Information

Congress designated the Gerry E. Studds Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary (sanctuary or SBNMS) through the Oceans Act of 1992

(November 4, 1992; Public Law 102–587 at section 2202). In 1993, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) issued final regulations and released a final management plan and environmental impact statement (EIS) to implement this designation (NOAA 1993). Section 304(e) of the NMSA requires NOAA to review its management plans for national marine sanctuaries every five years, and to evaluate the substantive progress toward implementing the management plans and goals for each sanctuary, especially the effectiveness of site-specific management techniques (16 U.S.C. 1434(e)).

In accordance with this requirement, NOAA initiated a review of the SBNMS management plan in 1998. This review was done in cooperation with members of the Sanctuary Advisory Council (SAC), a group formed of members of the public to provide advice to the sanctuary superintendent on the management and protection of sanctuary resources. The review was delayed two years due to a change in sanctuary management. NOAA restarted the review in June of 2002 with the publication of the “State of the Sanctuary Report,” which set the stage for the scoping meetings and public comment period that ended on October 18, 2002.

The review revealed that many of the initial goals and objectives of the original 1993 management plan had been met; however, in some areas these goals and objectives were non-specific and general in scope and/or based on limited scientific knowledge. New information about the natural and cultural resources of the sanctuary and the human uses of the resources made it apparent to NOAA that the plan was out-of date and outmoded. NOAA decided to incorporate this new knowledge by developing a new approach to managing the sanctuary, including an updated vision, mission, and statement of goals and objectives. In addition, NOAA revised the content and formatting requirements for all national marine sanctuary management plans. The ultimate purpose of this revised draft management plan is to update NOAA’s approach to managing, protecting, and restoring the resources of the sanctuary pursuant to the purposes and policies of the NMSA. In April 2007, a report on the condition of sanctuary resources was released for public review and set the stage for this draft management plan.

Management Plan Contents

The SBNMS draft management plan serves as a non-regulatory policy

framework for addressing the issues facing the sanctuary over the next five years. It lays the foundation for restoring and protecting the sanctuary's ecosystem; details the human pressures that threaten the qualities and resources of the sanctuary; and recommends actions that should be taken both now and in the future to better manage the area and resources.

This document provides strategic guidance for management actions and focuses these actions on four priority

programmatic areas: capacity building, ecosystem protection, marine mammal protection and maritime heritage management. The eleven action plans detailed in the draft management plan address issues relative to these four areas, and are based extensively on the advice of working groups established by the SAC, cooperative coordination with other government agencies and organizations and ongoing public input. The draft environmental assessment analyzes the environmental impacts of

the revised management plan pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act. In doing so, it analyzes two alternatives: the status quo (no change to the 1993 management plan) and the preferred alternative (revising the 1993 management plan).

Public Meetings

Public meetings will be held at the following locations and dates:

June 5	Portland, ME	University of Southern Maine Law School, Talbot Lecture Hall, 88 Bedford Street.
June 9	Wenham, MA	Gordon College, Lane Student Center, President's Dining Room, 255 Grapevine Road.
June 10	Boston, MA	Boston University, School of Management, 4th Floor, Rooms 426 and 428, 595 Commonwealth Ave.
June 11	Plymouth, MA	Hilton Garden Inn Plymouth, Plymouth Rooms 1 and 2, Four Home Depot Drive.
June 12	Hyannis, MA	The Cape Codder Resort, JFK Ballroom, 1225 Iyanough Road, Route 132 & Bearse's Way.
June 16	Portsmouth, NH	Sheraton Portsmouth Harborside Hotel, Harbor's Edge Room, 250 Market Street.
June 17	North Dartmouth, MA	University of Massachusetts—Dartmouth, Woodland Common, 285 Old Westport Road.
June 19	Mystic, CT	Mystic Aquarium, Main Exhibit Hall, 55 Coogan Boulevard.

Dated: April 21, 2008.

Daniel J. Basta,

Director, Office of National Marine Sanctuaries.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN: 0648-XH68

Gulf of Mexico 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 Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council will convene a joint meeting of The Standing and Special Reef Fish SSCs (SSC).

DATES: The Joint Standing and Special Reef Fish SSC meeting will begin at 1:30 p.m. on Tuesday, May 27, 2008 and conclude by 3 p.m. on Thursday, May 29, 2008.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held at the Quorum Hotel, 700 N. Westshore Blvd., Tampa, FL 33609; telephone: (813) 289-8200.

Council address: Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, 2203

North Lois Avenue, Suite 1100, Tampa, FL 33607.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Steven Atran, Population Dynamics Statistician; Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council; telephone: (813) 348-1630.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Joint Standing and Special Reef Fish SSC will meet to review scientific information on the Gulf of Mexico gag and red grouper stocks, and to review draft Reef Fish Amendment 29 dealing with grouper and tilefish effort management. At the April 7-11, 2008 Council meeting, the Council heard an outside review of the gag stock assessment by Dr. Trevor Kenchington, Gadus Associates, in which it was suggested that overfishing of gag had ended in 2006. The Council also heard a review of the assessment from the Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC), along with updated indices of abundance which suggested that, after peaking in 2004, the gag and red grouper stock levels are again declining. The SSC will review and discuss the information from Dr. Kenchington and the SEFSC, and will advise the Council with regard to recent trends in abundance of gag and red grouper, current estimates of spawning stock biomass (SSB), current estimates of natural mortality, the extent to which reduced effort and/or reduced SSB are contributing to a reduction in landings, and recommendations for appropriate catch levels. The SSC will also review

the appropriate baseline to use when determining percent reductions needed in harvest. If time permits, the SSC will also review a red grouper yield per recruit analyses which was prepared last fall by the SEFSC but has not yet been reviewed by the SSC.

The SSC will also review the alternatives in draft Reef Fish Amendment 29. This Amendment proposes to rationalize effort and reduce overcapacity in the commercial Gulf of Mexico grouper and tilefish fisheries in order to achieve and maintain optimum yield. Approaches being considered include permit endorsements and individual fishing quotas.

Copies of the agenda and other related materials can be obtained by calling (813) 348-1630.

Although other non-emergency issues not on the agenda may come before the SSCs for discussion, in accordance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act), those issues may not be the subject of formal action during this meeting. Actions of the SSCs 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 Act, provided the public has been notified of the Council's intent to take action to address the emergency.