

percent is applied to the 32 kg of halibut that are sampled in the factory, resulting in a halibut mortality of 28.8 kg in the factory. In this example, the total halibut mortality for the haul is 212.8 kg.

The halibut mortality data collected by observers would be available to NMFS in near-real time for inseason management in 2018 and 2019. In addition to the observer samples, under the 2018 EFP, at the discretion of the vessel operator, vessel crew could conduct a census (a full count) of halibut in the factory, after they have been available to the observer for sampling, to compare observer estimates of total halibut and census results.

In 2018, EFP participants would continue to operate under a single catch handling and accounting method for all hauls on a fishing trip designated as an EFP trip. Operators of participating vessels would still have a way to opt out of sorting on deck when it is potentially unsafe or when the vessel has located a fishing area where halibut bycatch is very low.

This proposed action would exempt participating catcher/processors from selected 50 CFR part 679 prohibitions, and monitoring and observer requirements. Should the Regional Administrator issue a permit based on this EFP application, the conditions of the permit will be designed to minimize halibut mortality and any potential for biasing estimates of groundfish and halibut mortality. Vessels participating in EFP fishing may be exempt from, at minimum, the following regulations:

1. The prohibition against interfering with or biasing the sampling procedure employed by an observer including physical, mechanical, or other sorting or discarding of catch before sampling, at § 679.7(g)(2);

2. the requirements to weigh all catch by an Amendment 80 vessel on a NMFS-approved scale at § 679.93(c)(1) and by all vessels at § 679.28(b); and

3. the requirement to return all prohibited species, or parts thereof, to the sea immediately, with a minimum of injury, regardless of its condition at § 679.21(b)(2)(ii).

In 2020, the AKSC would be required to submit to NMFS a report of the EFP results after EFP experimental fishing has ended in 2019. The report would include a comparison of halibut mortality from halibut sampled during the EFP and an estimate of halibut mortality under standard IPHC halibut mortality rates for those target fisheries.

Under the EFP, participants would be limited to their groundfish allocations under the 2016 harvest specifications. The amount of halibut mortality applied

to the EFP activities would be subject to review and approval by NMFS.

This EFP would be valid upon issuance in 2018 until either the end of 2019 or when the annual halibut mortality apportionment is reached in areas of the BSAI and GOA open to directed fishing by the various sectors. EFP-authorized fishing activities would not be expected to change the nature or duration of the groundfish fishery, gear used, or the amount or species of fish caught by the participants.

The fieldwork that would be conducted under this EFP is not expected to have a significant impact on the human environment as detailed in the categorical exclusion prepared for this action (see **ADDRESSES**).

In accordance with § 679.6, NMFS has determined that the application warrants further consideration and has forwarded the application to the Council to initiate consultation. The Council is scheduled to consider the EFP application during its October 2017 meeting, which will be held at the Hilton Hotel, Anchorage AK. The EFP application will also be provided to the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee for review at the October Council meeting. The applicant has been invited to appear in support of the application.

Public Comments

Interested persons may comment on the application at the February 2016 Council meeting during public testimony or until October 10, 2017. Information regarding the meeting is available at the Council's Web site at <http://www.npfmc.org>. Copies of the application and categorical exclusion are available for review from NMFS (see **ADDRESSES**). Comments also may be submitted directly to NMFS (see **ADDRESSES**) by the end of the comment period (see **DATES**).

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

Dated: September 18, 2017.

Emily H. Menashes,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.
[FR Doc. 2017-20187 Filed 9-21-17; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XF698

New England Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

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

ACTION: Notice; public meeting.

SUMMARY: The New England Fishery Management Council (Council) is scheduling a public meeting of its Scientific & Statistical Committee to consider actions affecting New England fisheries in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ). Recommendations from this group will be brought to the full Council for formal consideration and action, if appropriate.

DATES: This meeting will be held on Thursday, October 12, 2017 beginning at 10 a.m.

ADDRESSES:

Meeting address: The meeting will be held at the Hilton Garden Inn, Boston Logan, 100 Boardman Street, Boston, MA 02128; phone: (617) 567-6789.

Council address: New England Fishery Management Council, 50 Water Street, Mill 2, Newburyport, MA 01950.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Thomas A. Nies, Executive Director, New England Fishery Management Council; telephone: (978) 465-0492.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Agenda

The Committee will review information provided by the Council's Scallop Plan Development Team (PDT) and recommend the overfishing levels (OFLs) and acceptable biological catches (ABCs) for Atlantic sea scallops for fishing years 2018-19 (default). They will also review information provided by the Council's Whiting PDT and recommend the OFLs and ABCs for the northern and southern stocks of silver hake and separately for red hake for fishing years 2018-20. Other business will be discussed as needed.

Although non-emergency issues not contained on this agenda may come before this Council for discussion, those issues may not be the subject of formal action during this meeting. Council action will be restricted to those issues specifically listed in this notice 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 final action to address the emergency. The public also should be aware that the meeting will be recorded. Consistent with 16 U.S.C. 1852, a copy of the recording is available upon request.

Special Accommodations

This meeting is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Thomas A. Nies, Executive Director, at (978) 465-0492, at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.

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

Dated: September 19, 2017.

Tracey L. Thompson,

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

[FR Doc. 2017-20236 Filed 9-21-17; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XF703

Fisheries of the South Atlantic; South Atlantic Fishery Management Council; Public Meetings

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

ACTION: Notice of a public meeting of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's (Council) Information & Education Advisory Panel (AP).

SUMMARY: The Council's Information and Education AP will meet to address outreach efforts and communication needs. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION**.

DATES: The Information and Education AP meeting will be held Tuesday, October 10, 2017, from 1:30 p.m. until 5 p.m. and from 9 a.m. until 12 p.m. on Wednesday, October 11, 2017.

ADDRESSES:

Meeting address: The meeting will be held at the Hilton Garden, 5265 International Boulevard, North Charleston, SC 29418.

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, South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, 4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201, N. Charleston, SC 29405; phone 843/571-4366 or toll free 866/SAFMC-

10; FAX 843/769-4520; email: kim.iverson@safmc.net.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Information and Education AP will review and provide recommendations on the Council's transition to a new fishing regulations mobile application and the development of the Council's online Fishermen's Forum. The AP will also receive presentations and have the opportunity to provide recommendations on the Council's recreational reporting projects, specifically the MyFishCount Recreational Reporting Project, the For-Hire Electronic Reporting Outreach Project, and the use of iAngler for possible recreational reporting opportunities. Additionally, the AP will receive program updates from the Council's Citizen Science Program and the Marine Resource Education Program.

Although other non-emergency issues not on the agenda may come before this group for discussion, those issues may not be the subject of formal action during this meeting. Actions will be restricted to those issues specifically listed in this notice 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 final action to address the emergency.

Special Accommodations

This meeting is accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for auxiliary aids should be directed to the SAFMC office (see **ADDRESSES**) at least 5 business 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: September 19, 2017.

Tracey L. Thompson,

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

[FR Doc. 2017-20237 Filed 9-21-17; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XF681

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone off Alaska; Application for an Exempted Fishing Permit

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

Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice; receipt of application for exempted fishing permit.

SUMMARY: This notice announces receipt of an exempted fishing permit (EFP) application from the International Halibut Commission (IPHC). If granted, this EFP would allow crew members on a selected hook-and-line vessel targeting Pacific cod in the western Aleutian Islands in winter to collect biological samples from incidentally caught halibut and release those fish back to the water in a timely manner to increase survivability. Biological samples collected would include a fork length measurement and a small tissue sample from the caudal fin for genetic analysis. A NMFS-trained fishery observer would assign a viability category for each sampled halibut as per existing IPHC/NMFS protocols. The objective of the EFP application is to confirm or reject results of a previous genetic stock structure study which indicated that Pacific halibut in the western Aleutian Islands are genetically distinct from the remainder of the eastern Pacific population. This experiment has the potential to promote the objectives of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act and the Northern Pacific Halibut Act.

DATES: Comments on this EFP application must be submitted to NMFS on or before October 10, 2017. The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) will consider the application at its meeting from October 2, 2017, through October 10, 2017, in Anchorage, AK.

ADDRESSES: The Council meeting will be held at the Anchorage Hilton Hotel, 500 W 3rd Ave, Anchorage, AK 99501. The agenda for the Council meeting is available at <http://www.npfmc.org>. You may submit comments on this document, identified by NOAA-NMFS-2017-0114, by any of the following methods:

- **Electronic Submission:** Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal. Go to www.regulations.gov#!/docketDetail;D=NOAA-NMFS-2017-0114, click the "Comment Now!" icon, complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments.

- **Mail:** Submit written comments to Glenn Merrill, Assistant Regional Administrator, Sustainable Fisheries Division, Alaska Region NMFS, Attn: Ellen Sebastian. Mail comments to P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802-1668.

Instructions: Comments sent by any other method, to any other address or