

Thermometry of Ocean Climate experiment and from the U.S. Navy's Low-Frequency Active sonar system testing is provided in the Habitat Degradation and Military Operations sections, respectively.

Comment 11. With regard to the discussion on stocks in the North Pacific population, one commenter suggested adding the phrase "...based on the presence of rare epizootes on blue whales which were not found on other species known to migrate north ..." to the sentence, "[h]owever, he recently concluded that the California population is separate from that in the Gulf of and eastern Aleutians (Rice 1992)."

Response. This suggested change has been made.

Comment 12. One reviewer challenged the assertion that blue whales regularly feed on the pelagic red crab, *Pleuroncodes planipes*, as reported by Rice (1974) and Rice (1986).

Response. In response to this comment, the sentence that read "[o]ne exception to their near-total dependence on euphausiid prey is that blue whales regularly feed on pelagic red crabs, *Pleuroncodes planipes*, off Baja California (Rice 1974, 1986)" in the draft has been changed in the final plan to read, "[o]ne exception to their near-total dependence on euphausiid prey is that blue whales have been observed feeding on pelagic red crabs, *Pleuroncodes planipes*, off Baja California (Rice 1974, 1986), although these observations have not been confirmed by subsequent observations or other analyses (e.g., fecal analysis)."

Comment 13. A reviewer suggested a change in the discussion about blue whale prey in the Gulf of California, Mexico.

Response. Two sentences on this subject have been changed to read, "[b]etween February and April, blue whales in the Gulf of California, Mexico, have been observed feeding on euphausiid surface swarms (Sears 1990), consisting mainly of *Nyctiphanes simplex* engaged in reproductive activities (Gendron 1990, 1992). Sears (1990) regarded *Nyctiphanes simplex* as the principal prey of blue whales in the region, and results from recent fecal analyses confirmed this assertion (Del Angel-Rodriguez and Gendron 1997)."

Comment 14. One reviewer indicated that the section on Reproduction did not, but should, indicate that the Gulf of California is the only known nursing and probable calving ground in the North Pacific.

Response. The following sentence has been added "[t]herefore, this area is

likely an important nursing and calving area for the species."

Comment 15. A reviewer pointed out that there are no regulations or guidelines for whale watching in Mexican waters and suggested that this be noted in the plan.

Response. The boat disturbance discussion in the North Pacific section has been modified to reflect this comment.

Comment 16. One reviewer noted that there are three (not two) blue whale photo-identification catalogs, including one for the waters off Baja California and portions of the Mexico mainland Pacific coast.

Response. Under Narrative, section 2.3 of the Plan has been modified accordingly.

Comment 17. A reviewer suggested that the importance of blue whale habitat in the Gulf of California be clarified in section 3.2 of the Narrative.

Response. In response to this comment, the sentence on Mexico has been modified to read, "[i]n Mexico, the waters of Baja California, particularly the southwestern portion of the Gulf of California where nursing, feeding, and probably calving occurs, are clearly of great importance to many eastern North Pacific blue whales, including whales that spend part of the year in U.S. waters."

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1531-1543 *et seq.*

Dated: October 19, 1998.

Hilda Diaz-Soltero,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 101698F]

Mid-Atlantic 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 Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's (Council) Large Pelagics Committee will hold a public meeting.

DATES: The meetings will be held on Monday, November 9, 1998, from 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m., and Tuesday, November 10, 1998, from 8:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m.

ADDRESSES: This meeting will be held at the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council Office, 2nd Floor Conference Room, Alan Frear Federal Building, 300 S. New Street, Dover, DE 19904, telephone: 302-674-2331.

Council address: Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, 300 S. New Street, Dover, DE 19904, telephone: 302-674-2331.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Christopher M. Moore, Ph.D., Acting Executive Director, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council; telephone: 302-674-2331, ext. 16.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The purpose of this meeting is to develop Mid-Atlantic Council comments on the Highly Migratory Species and Atlantic Billfish Fishery Management Plans.

Although other issues not contained in this agenda may come before the Committee 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. Action will be restricted to those issues specifically identified in this notice.

Special Accommodations

These meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Joanna Davis at the Council (see **ADDRESSES**) at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.

Dated: October 19, 1998.

Bruce C. Morehead,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 101698E]

North Pacific Fishery Management Council; Public Meetings

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

ACTION: Notice of public meetings.

SUMMARY: The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) and its advisory committees will meet in Anchorage, AK.

DATES: The meetings will be held on November 8-12, 1998.