

the Public Comments Solicited section below.

The public comment period for the June 13, 2002, proposal originally closed on August 12, 2002. On August 26, 2002, we published a **Federal Register** notice (67 FR 54763) extending the comment period for the proposed designation of critical habitat for Blackburn's sphinx moth. We are now announcing the availability of the draft economic analysis. We will accept public comments on the proposal and the associated draft economic analysis for the Blackburn's sphinx moth until December 30, 2002. Comments already submitted on the proposed designation of critical habitat for the Blackburn's sphinx moth do not need to be resubmitted as they will be fully considered in the final determinations. Written comments should be submitted to us (*see* ADDRESSES).

Public Comments Solicited

We will accept written comments and information on the proposed critical habitat designation and draft economic analysis for Blackburn's sphinx moth. If you wish to comment, you may submit your comments and materials concerning the proposal and draft economic analysis by the following methods:

(1) You may submit written comments and information to the Field Supervisor by mail, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Pacific Islands Office, 300 Ala Moana Blvd., P.O. Box 50088, Honolulu, HI 96850-0001, or by facsimile, (808) 541-3470.

(2) You may hand-deliver comments to our Honolulu Fish and Wildlife Office at the address given above.

Comments and materials received, as well as supporting documentation used in preparation of the proposal to designate critical habitat, will be available for inspection, by appointment, during normal business hours at the address under (1) above. Copies of the draft economic analysis are available on the Internet at <http://pacificislands.fws.gov> or by request from the Field Supervisor at the address and phone number under (1) above.

Author(s)

The primary author of this notice is Mike Richardson (*see* ADDRESSES).

Authority

The authority for this action is the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).

Dated: November 5, 2002.

Paul Hoffman,

Acting Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks.

[FR Doc. 02-29049 Filed 11-12-02; 3:04 pm]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 635

[I.D. 103102B]

Atlantic Highly Migratory Species; Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Amendment 1 to the Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Tunas, Swordfish and Sharks; Shark Management Measures

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

ACTION: Notice of intent (NOI) to prepare an EIS; request for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces its intent to prepare an EIS under the National Environmental Policy Act to assess the potential effects on the human environment of its proposed action to initiate Amendment 1 to the Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Tunas, Swordfish and Sharks based on the results of the 2002 stock assessments of large coastal sharks (LCS) and small coastal sharks (SCS). The amendment will examine management alternatives available to rebuild or prevent overfishing of Atlantic sharks, consistent with the LCS and SCS stock assessments, the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act), and other relevant Federal laws. NMFS is requesting comments on a wide range of commercial and recreational management measures including, but not limited to, quotas, minimum sizes, and prohibited species.

DATES: Comments on this action must be received no later than 5 p.m., local time, on March 17, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Written comments on this action should be mailed to Christopher Rogers, Chief, NMFS Highly Migratory Species Management Division, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910; or faxed to (301) 713-1917. Comments will not be accepted if submitted via email or Internet. For a copy of the 2002 stock assessments, contact Kimberly Marshall, Heather

Stirratt, or Karyl Brewster-Geisz at (301) 713-2347.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Karyl Brewster-Geisz, Kimberly Marshall, or Heather Stirratt at (301) 713-2347.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Atlantic shark fisheries are managed under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. The Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Tunas, Swordfish, and Sharks (HMS FMP) is implemented by regulations at 50 CFR part 635.

Background

LCS

The LCS complex is composed of several species including, but not limited to, sandbar, blacktip, spinner, bull, and tiger sharks. Since the 1993 Shark FMP, LCS have been considered overfished. The latest stock assessment of LCS in the U.S. Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico, completed in September 2002, provides an update on the status of LCS stocks and projects their future abundance under a variety of catch levels in waters off the U.S. Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico coasts. The 2002 assessment includes catch estimates, new biological data, and a number of fishery-independent catch rate series, as well as extended fishery-dependent catch rate series.

The results for the LCS complex indicate that overfishing could still be occurring and the resource may be overfished. However, for sandbar sharks, the stock assessment indicates that, while overfishing could be occurring, current biomass could be near, or somewhat above, maximum sustainable yield (MSY). Additionally, the stock assessment indicates that no reduction in catch for blacktip sharks is needed to maintain the stock at current levels and that some increase may be sustainable in the long term. This stock assessment is currently under peer review.

SCS

The SCS complex is comprised of four species including Atlantic sharpnose, blacknose, bonnethead, and finetooth. The 1992 stock assessment classified SCS as being fully utilized. The 2002 stock assessment of SCS in the U.S. and Gulf of Mexico indicates that the current level of removals is sustainable for the SCS aggregate. Aggregate biomass levels for the SCS aggregate are estimated at or above those which could produce MSY, and are not considered to be overfished. However, recent fishing mortality of finetooth sharks exceeds the fishing mortality at MSY, indicating overfishing is occurring for this species.

Copies of the assessments are available for review (see **ADDRESSES**).

Management Options

NMFS requests comments on management options for this action. Specifically, NMFS requests comments on commercial management options including quota levels, regional and seasonal quotas, trip limits, minimum sizes, applying dead discards and state landings after a Federal closure to the quota, counting quota over- and underages, and fishery closure and opening notices. Additionally, NMFS request comments on recreational management options including retention limits, minimum sizes, authorized gear, and landing requirements. NMFS also seeks comment regarding deep water and prohibited shark species, display quotas, time/area closures and the organization of species groupings. Comments received on this action will assist NMFS in determining the options for rulemaking to conserve and manage shark resources and shark fisheries.

NMFS intends to publish an Issues and Options paper summarizing the different options under consideration and will announce the availability of this document at a later date. Within the comment period established in this action, NMFS will hold at least one scoping meeting to gather public comment on the implementation of new management measures for Atlantic sharks (time and location details of which will be announced in a subsequent **Federal Register** notification).

Based on the 2002 stock assessments, NMFS believes the implementation of new management measures via an amendment to the HMS FMP is necessary to rebuild or prevent overfishing of Atlantic sharks. NMFS anticipates completing this amendment and any related documents by January 1, 2004. NMFS is currently in the process of developing new interim management measures via a proposed and final rule. These interim management measures would address quotas and other management measures currently in place and would remain in effect until the amendment is finalized.

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

Dated: November 12, 2002.

John H. Dunnigan,

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

[FR Doc. 02-29086 Filed 11-14-02; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 648

[Docket No. 021101264-2264-01; I.D. 101802D]

RIN 0648-AQ33

Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Atlantic Herring Fishery

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

ACTION: Proposed 2003 specifications for the Atlantic herring fishery; request for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS proposes specifications for the 2003 Atlantic herring fishery. The regulations for the Atlantic herring fishery require NMFS to publish specifications for the upcoming year and to provide an opportunity for public comment. The intent of the specifications is to conserve and manage the Atlantic herring resource and provide for a sustainable fishery.

DATES: Comments must be received no later than 5 p.m., Eastern Standard Time, on December 16, 2002.

ADDRESSES: Copies of supporting documents, including the Environmental Assessment, Regulatory Impact Review, Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis (EA/RIR/IRFA), Essential Fish Habitat Assessment, and the Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) Report for the 2001 Atlantic Herring Fishing Year are available from Paul J. Howard, Executive Director, New England Fishery Management Council, 50 Water Street, Mill 2, Newburyport, MA 01950. The EA/RIR/IRFA is accessible via the Internet at <http://www.nero.nmfs.gov/ro/doc/nero.html>.

Written comments on the proposed specifications should be sent to Patricia A. Kurkul, Regional Administrator, National Marine Fisheries Service, 1 Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930. Mark on the outside of the envelope:

“Comments--2003 Herring Specifications.” Comments may also be sent via facsimile (fax) to (978) 281-9371. Comments will not be accepted if submitted via e-mail or the Internet.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Paul H. Jones, Fishery Policy Analyst, (978) 281-9273, e-mail at paul.h.jones@noaa.gov, fax at (978) 281-9135.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Regulations implementing the Atlantic

Herring Fishery Management Plan (FMP) require the New England Fishery Management Council's (Council) Atlantic Herring Plan Development Team (PDT) to meet at least annually, no later than July each year, with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's (Commission) Atlantic Herring Plan Review Team (PRT) to develop and recommend the following specifications for consideration by the Council's Atlantic Herring Oversight Committee: Allowable biological catch (ABC), optimum yield (OY), domestic annual harvest (DAH), domestic annual processing (DAP), total foreign processing (JVpt), joint venture processing (JVP), internal waters processing (IWP), U.S. at-sea processing (USAP), border transfer (BT), total allowable level of foreign fishing (TALFF), and reserve (if any). The PDT and PRT also recommend the total allowable catch (TAC) for each management area and subarea identified in the FMP. As the basis for its recommendations, the PDT reviews available data pertaining to: Commercial and recreational catch; current estimates of fishing mortality; stock status; recent estimates of recruitment; virtual population analysis results and other estimates of stock size; sea sampling and trawl survey data or, if sea sampling data are unavailable, length frequency information from trawl surveys; impact of other fisheries on herring mortality; and any other relevant information. Recommended specifications are presented to the Council for adoption and recommendation to NMFS.

Proposed 2003 Specifications

At its August 2002 meeting, the Council recommended specifications for the 2003 Atlantic herring fishery. Based on the Council's recommendations, NMFS proposes the specifications and Area TACs contained in the following table.

SPECIFICATIONS AND AREA TACs FOR THE 2003 ATLANTIC HERRING FISHERY

Specification	Proposed Allocation (mt)
ABC	300,000
OY	250,000
DAH	250,000
DAP	226,000
JVpt	20,000
JVP	10,000
IWP	10,000
USAP	20,000
BT	4,000
TALFF	0
Reserve	0