

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration****50 CFR Part 648****[I.D. 101403A]****New England Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting**

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

ACTION: Public meeting.

SUMMARY: The New England Fishery Management Council (Council) will hold a 3-day Council meeting on November 4–6, 2003, to consider actions affecting New England fisheries in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

DATES: The meeting will be held on Tuesday, November 4, 2003, beginning at 9 a.m. and on Wednesday and Thursday November 5 and 6, beginning at 8:30 a.m.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held at the Holiday Inn, One Newbury Street, Peabody, MA 01960; telephone (978) 535-4600. Requests for special accommodations should be addressed to the New England Fishery Management Council, 50 Water Street, Mill 2, Newburyport, MA 01950; telephone (978) 465-0492.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Paul J. Howard, Executive Director, New England Fishery Management Council, (978) 465-0492.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, November 4–6, 2003**

Following introductions, the Council will receive reports on recent activities from the Council Chairman and Executive Director, the NMFS Regional Administrator, Northeast Fisheries Science Center and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council liaisons, NOAA General Counsel and representatives of the U.S. Coast Guard, NMFS Enforcement and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. For the remainder of the day the Council will focus on discussion, selection, and approval of final management measures for inclusion in Amendment 13 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan (FMP). This process will continue through mid-day on Wednesday, November 5. At that time the Council has scheduled an open period for public comment on items relevant to Council business, but not otherwise listed on the

agenda. The Council will then continue with the Amendment 13 decision-making process through Thursday, November 6. During the afternoon session on November 6 the Council will consider initial action on a framework adjustment that would allow limited access scallop vessels to fish in the Georges Bank areas now closed to protect groundfish. Framework Adjustment 16 to the Sea Scallop FMP/ Framework Adjustment 39 to the Northeast Multispecies FMP could include Total Allowable Catch and possession limits for finfish, seasonal access, gear modifications, mandatory observer coverage and other measures to minimize bycatch. The meeting will adjourn once any other business-related issues have been addressed.

Although other non-emergency issues not contained in this agenda may come before this Council for discussion, those issues may not be the subjects 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 Fishery Conservation and Management Act, provided that the public has been notified of the Council's intent to take final action to address the emergency.

Special Accommodations

This meeting is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Paul J. Howard (see **ADDRESSES**) at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.

Dated: October 14, 2003.

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****50 CFR Part 697****[I.D. 063003A]****RIN 0648-AR33****Atlantic Striped Bass Conservation Act; Atlantic Striped Bass Fishery**

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

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and notice of scoping process; request for comments.

SUMMARY: Based on recommendations from the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) and comments received from an advance notice of proposed rulemaking (ANPR), NMFS announces its intent to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) to analyze the impacts on the human environment of potential revisions to Federal Atlantic striped bass regulations for the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). In addition, NMFS announces that the public will have additional opportunities to comment on potential management measures, including a no action alternative, addressing the Commission's recommendations and on issues that should be considered in development of the EIS during scheduled scoping meetings. The purpose of this notice is to alert the interested public: (1) of NMFS intent to prepare an EIS; (2) that NMFS will be accepting written comments on its intention to draft an EIS; and (3) that NMFS will conduct public scoping hearings for the impact statement during which the public is invited to attend and comment.

DATES: NMFS will discuss and take scoping comments at public meetings in November and December 2003. Written scoping comments will also be accepted and must be received at the appropriate address or facsimile (fax) number (see **ADDRESSES**) no later than 5 p.m. Eastern Standard Time on or before December 22, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Written scoping comments and requests for copies of the scoping document and other information should be sent to: Anne Lange, Chief, State-Federal Fisheries Division, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, NMFS, 1315 East West Highway, Room 13317, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Copies of scoping documents may also be obtained on the State-Federal Fisheries Division's website at http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/state_federal/state_federal.htm after 5 p.m. Eastern Standard Time on November 3, 2003. Comments may also be sent via fax to (301) 713-0596. Comments submitted via e-mail or Internet will not be accepted.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Anne Lange, telephone (301)713-2334.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**Background**

NMFS published an ANPR concerning striped bass in the **Federal**