

at the earliest possible time in the EIS process as stipulated by Council on Environmental Quality regulations. The Preferred Alternative will identify a proposed plan for funding and operation of Mitchell Act hatchery programs after considering funding availability, consistency with the ESA, potential impacts on environmental resources, and broader objectives for harvest and/or conservation.

ESA listed species under NMFS jurisdiction that may potentially be affected by the proposed action include: Lower Columbia River Chinook Salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*); Upper Willamette River Chinook Salmon (*O. tshawytscha*); Upper Columbia River Spring-Run Chinook Salmon (*O. tshawytscha*); Snake River Spring/Summer-Run Chinook Salmon (*O. tshawytscha*); Snake River Fall-Run Chinook Salmon (*O. tshawytscha*); Snake River Sockeye Salmon (*O. nerka*); Columbia River Chum Salmon (*O. keta*); Lower Columbia River Steelhead (*O. mykiss*); Upper Willamette River Steelhead (*O. mykiss*); Middle Columbia River Steelhead (*O. mykiss*); Upper Columbia River Steelhead (*O. mykiss*); and, Snake River Basin Steelhead (*O. mykiss*). ESA listed species regulated by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service that may potentially be affected by the proposed action include bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*) and bald eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*).

Comments and suggestions are invited from all interested parties to ensure that the EIS considers the full range of related issues and alternatives to the proposed action. NMFS requests that comments be as specific as possible. In particular, NMFS requests information regarding: other possible alternatives; the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts that implementation of the proposed plan could have on endangered and threatened species and their communities and habitats; potential adaptive management and/or monitoring provisions; funding issues; baseline environmental conditions in counties that may be affected; other plans or projects that might be relevant to this proposed project; and potential methods to minimize and mitigate for impacts.

Written comments concerning the proposed action and its environmental review should be directed to NMFS as described above (see **ADDRESSES**). All comments and materials received, including names and addresses, will be made available to the public upon request.

The environmental review of this project will be conducted in accordance with the requirements of NEPA, as

amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), National Environmental Policy Act Regulations (40 CFR 1500 1508), NOAA Administrative Order 216-6, and other appropriate Federal laws and regulations.

Dated: August 30, 2004.

Alan D. Risenhoover,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 083004C]

Fisheries of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic; Fishery Management Plan for the Reef Fish Resources of the Gulf of Mexico; Amendment 24

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

ACTION: Notice announcing the preparation of an environmental assessment.

SUMMARY: NMFS, in cooperation with the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council), is preparing an environmental assessment (EA) for proposed Amendment 24 to the Fishery Management Plan for Reef Fish Resources of the Gulf of Mexico (Reef Fish FMP). A notice published February 13, 2004, indicated that Amendment 24 would be supported by a Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (DSEIS). This notice is intended to inform the public of the change in the environmental review document supporting Amendment 24.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Rick Leard, phone: 813-228-2815 ext. 228, fax: 813-225-7015, e-mail:

Rick.Leard@gulfcouncil.org; or Phil Steele, phone: 727-570-5305, fax: 727-570-5583, e-mail: *phil.steele@noaa.gov*.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NMFS, in cooperation with the Council, is preparing an EA for proposed Amendment 24 to the Reef Fish FMP. The EA will examine alternatives related to the commercial vessel reef fish permit moratorium, which is scheduled to expire on December 31, 2005. Specifically, Amendment 24 includes alternatives that would: allow the moratorium to expire, extend the existing moratorium for a designated

time frame, or extend the existing moratorium indefinitely.

On February 13, 2004, NMFS and the Council published a Notice of Intent in the **Federal Register** to prepare a DSEIS in association with Amendment 24 (69 FR 7187). However, the preliminary environmental review of Amendment 24 indicated that it would not likely have a significant impact on the quality of the human environment. Consequently, NMFS and the Council are preparing an EA, rather than proceeding directly with the development of a SEIS. This notice is intended to inform the public of this change.

If the EA results in a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), the EA and FONSI will be the final environmental documents required by the National Environmental Policy Act. If the EA reveals that significant environmental impacts may be reasonably expected to result from the proposed actions, NMFS and the Council will develop a DSEIS to further evaluate those impacts.

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

Dated: August 30, 2004.

Alan D. Risenhoover,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 082304C]

South Atlantic 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 South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) will hold meetings of its Scientific and Statistical Committee's (SSC) Socioeconomic Subcommittee, SSC Biological Assessment Subcommittee, the SSC, and a joint meeting of the SSC and the SSC Selection Committee. The Council will also hold a joint meeting of its Ecosystem-Based Management Committee and Habitat Committee, a joint meeting of its Shrimp Advisory Panel and Committee, Shrimp Committee, Snapper Grouper Committee, Standard Operation, Policy, and Procedure (SOPPs) Committee, Law Enforcement Committee, Mackerel Committee, and a joint Executive/