

subsistence uses of bowhead whales. As SOI notes in its IHA application, there could be an adverse impact on the Inupiat bowhead subsistence hunt if the whales were deflected seaward (further from shore) in the traditional hunting areas north of Pt. Thomson in Camden Bay. NMFS believes that this could result in whaling crews being forced to travel greater distances to intercept westward migrating whales thereby creating a significant safety hazard for whaling crews (with a potential loss of life), limiting chances of successfully striking and landing bowheads, and/or not landing bowheads quickly before decomposition and spoilage occurs. Prior to issuing an IHA for activities that take place in Arctic waters, NMFS must ensure that the taking by the activity will not have an unmitigable adverse impact on subsistence uses of marine mammals. In 50 CFR 216.103, NMFS has defined an "unmitigable adverse impact" to mean:

an impact resulting from the specified activity: (1) That is likely to reduce the availability of the species to a level insufficient for a harvest to meet subsistence needs by: (i) Causing the marine mammals to abandon or avoid hunting areas; (ii) Directly displacing subsistence users; or (iii) Placing physical barriers between the marine mammals and the subsistence hunters; and (2) That cannot be sufficiently mitigated by other measures to increase the availability of marine mammals to allow subsistence needs to be met.

While SOI states that the potential impact will be mitigated by the application of mitigation procedures described in its application and implemented by a CAA between the SOI, the AEWC and the whaling captains' associations of Kaktovik, Nuiqsut and Barrow, the IHA application does not contain suggested measures to mitigate impacts on the fall bowhead subsistence hunt. NMFS presumes that SOI preferred to not make these measures public while it continued discussions with the AEWC and affected whaling captains (see Plan of Cooperation). Mitigation measures suggested publically include warm shutdown of drilling operations during the subsistence hunt and moving the drilling structures either further offshore or behind the barrier islands. Therefore, while SOI believes that the mitigation measures that will be implemented will minimize any adverse effects on whales and whalers, NMFS has not been provided an opportunity to make a similar determination. In its application, SOI states that it would provide results of its discussion of measures to reduce impacts to subsistence uses for bowhead whales this spring. NMFS encourages SOI to complete its negotiations quickly

to ensure NMFS being able to make the determinations necessary under the MMPA within the time frames provided by the MMPA.

Therefore, provided the mitigation measures contained in the CAA are agreed upon by the involved parties (which does not include NMFS) and provided publically during the public comment period, NMFS proposes to issue an IHA to SOI for conducting an offshore drilling program in the U.S. Beaufort Sea in 2007, provided the previously mentioned monitoring and reporting requirements are incorporated. NMFS has preliminarily determined that the proposed activity would result in the harassment of small numbers of marine mammals; would have no more than a negligible impact on the affected marine mammal stocks; and, subject to development of mitigation measures during discussions with interested parties, would not have an unmitigable adverse impact on the availability of species or stocks for subsistence uses.

Dated: April 4, 2007.

P. Michael Payne,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 040507D]

New England Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

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

ACTION: Notice of a public meeting.

SUMMARY: The New England Fishery Management Council (Council) is scheduling a public meeting of its Ad Hoc Sector Omnibus Committee (Committee) in April, 2007, 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: The meeting will be held on Thursday, April 26, 2007, at 9:30 a.m.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held at the Sheraton Ferncroft, 50 Ferncroft Road, Danvers, MA 01923; telephone: (978) 777-2500; fax: (978) 750-7959.

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

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

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Committee will continue development of sector programs and operational guidelines addressing the specific terms of reference issues provided by the Council.

Although non-emergency issues not contained in this agenda may come before this group for discussion, those issues may not be the subject of formal action during this meeting. 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.

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, Executive Director, at (978) 465-0492, at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.

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

Dated: April 5, 2007.

Tracey L. Thompson,

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

[FR Doc. E7-6715 Filed 4-9-07; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 040507C]

North Pacific Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

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

ACTION: Notice of a public meeting.

SUMMARY: The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) Salmon Bycatch Workgroup will meet in Anchorage, AK.

DATES: The meeting will be held on Friday, April 27, 2007, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held at the Anchorage Hilton, 500 West 3rd Avenue, Lupine Room, Anchorage, AK.

Council address: North Pacific Fishery Management Council, 605 W.