

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

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**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** Many species of fish in the reef fish fishery in Puerto Rico and the USVI are believed to be overexploited, largely due to trap fishing and bycatch associated with this fishery. Landings from the trap fishery have continuously decreased since 1990 in Puerto Rico; species composition has changed; and size frequency of some fish has decreased over the last 10 years. These effects have been attributed to excessive trap fishing effort, lack of compliance with trap construction requirements (i.e., fishers often do not use the required biodegradable fasteners on trap doors), use of other gears by commercial fishers (e.g., gill nets), and the lack of escape panels in traps which would allow smaller fishes to escape, resulting in high mortality of juveniles and a loss of long-term potential yield.

According to the NMFS Report on the Status of the U.S. Fisheries for 2006, five stocks are undergoing overfishing, four are overfished, and two are approaching an overfishing condition. The five stocks undergoing overfishing are Grouper Unit 1 (Nassau grouper), Grouper Unit 4 (red, yellowedge, misty, tiger, and yellowfin grouper), Snapper Unit 1 (silk, blackfin, black, and vermilion snapper), parrotfishes, and queen conch. The four stocks that are overfished are Grouper Unit 1 (Nassau grouper), Grouper Unit 2 (goliath grouper), Grouper Unit 4 (red, yellowedge, misty, tiger, and yellowfin grouper), and queen conch. The two stocks approaching an overfished condition are Snapper Unit 1 (silk, blackfin, black, and vermilion snapper) and parrotfishes. All of the finfish species and spiny lobster are susceptible to trap capture at some life history stage, particularly the juvenile stage.

Under current fishing practices, bycatch and the associated mortality of bycatch is not expected to be reduced sufficiently in the reef fish or spiny lobster trap fisheries. Without a reduction in bycatch, those stocks experiencing overfishing may become overfished, and those stocks overfished may not meet the goals of the rebuilding plan set forth in the Sustainable Fisheries Act Amendment of 2005. Therefore, the use of escape panels as a management tool is proposed in this amendment to help achieve the necessary reductions in fishing

mortality among the species harvested by traps.

The Council in conjunction with NMFS will develop a DEIS to describe and analyze management alternatives to implement escape panels in the trap sector of both fisheries. The DEIS will provide updates to the best available scientific information regarding the reef fish complex and the spiny lobster stock, and based on the information, the Council, in conjunction with NMFS, will determine what actions and alternatives are necessary to protect reef fishes and spiny lobster. Those alternatives may include, but are not limited to: a "no action" alternative regarding the fisheries, which would not require escape vents; alternatives to require one escape panel of various sizes and shapes in traps; and an alternative requiring two escape panels of various sizes and shapes.

In accordance with NOAA's Administrative Order NAO 216-6, Section 5.02(c), the Council, in conjunction with NMFS, has identified this preliminary range of alternatives as a means to initiate discussion for scoping purposes only. This may not represent the full range of alternatives that eventually will be evaluated by the Council and NMFS.

Once the Council and NMFS completes the DEIS associated with the amendment to the Caribbean reef fish and spiny lobster FMPs, NMFS will submit the DEIS for filing with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The EPA will publish a notice of availability of the DEIS for public comment in the **Federal Register**. The DEIS will have a 45-day comment period. This procedure is pursuant to regulations issued by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA; 40 CFR parts 1500-1508) and to NOAA's Administrative Order 216-6 regarding NOAA's compliance with NEPA and the CEQ regulations.

The Council and NMFS will consider public comments received on the DEIS in developing the final environmental impact statement (FEIS) and before adopting final management measures for the amendment. The Council will submit both the final joint amendment and the supporting FEIS to NMFS for review under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, i.e., Secretarial review.

NMFS will announce, through a notice published in the **Federal Register**, the availability of the final joint amendment for public review during the Secretarial review period. During Secretarial review, NMFS will

also file the FEIS with the EPA for a final 30-day public comment period. This comment period will be concurrent with the Secretarial review period and will end prior to final agency action to approve, disapprove, or partially approve the final joint amendment.

NMFS will announce, through a notice published in the **Federal Register**, all public comment periods on the final joint amendment, its proposed implementing regulations, and its associated FEIS. NMFS will consider all public comments received during the Secretarial review period, whether they are on the final amendment, the proposed regulations, or the FEIS, prior to final agency action.

#### **Scoping Meeting Dates, Times, and Locations**

All scoping meetings are scheduled to be held from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. The meetings will be physically accessible to people with disabilities. Request for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to the Council (see **ADDRESSES**).

October 16—Windward Passage Hotel, Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, USVI.

October 17—Buccaneer Hotel, Christiansted, St. Croix, USVI.

October 23—Pierre Hotel, De Diego Avenue, San Juan, PR.

October 24—Ponce Golf and Casino Resort, 1150 Caribe Avenue, Ponce, PR.

October 25—Mayaguez Holiday Inn, 2701 Highway 12, Mayaguez, PR.

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

Dated: October 2, 2007.

**Emily H. Menashes,**

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

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## **DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

### **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

#### **Meeting: Climate Change Science Program (CCSP) Product Development Committee (CPDC) for Synthesis and Assessment Product 3.3**

**AGENCY:** Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce (DOC).

**ACTION:** Notice of open meeting.

**SUMMARY:** The Climate Change Science Program (CCSP) Product Development Committee for Synthesis and Assessment Product 3.3 (CPDC-S&A

3.3) was established by a Decision Memorandum dated October 17, 2006. CPDC—S&A 3.3 is the Federal Advisory Committee charged with responsibility to develop a draft Synthesis and Assessment Product that addresses CCSP Topic 3.3: “Weather and Climate Extremes in a Changing Climate”.

*Place:* The meeting will be held at the National Climatic Data Center, 151 Patton Ave., Asheville, North Carolina, 28801.

*Time and Date:* The meeting will convene at 8:30 a.m. on Monday, October 22, 2007 and adjourn early afternoon on October 24, 2007. Meeting information will be available online on the CPDC—S&A 3.3 Web site (<http://www.climate.noaa.gov/index.jsp?pg=./ccsp/33.jsp>). Please note that meeting location, times, and agenda topics described below are subject to change.

*Status:* The meeting will be open to public participation and will include a 30-minute public comment period on October 22 from 8:30 a.m. to 9 a.m. (check Web site to confirm this time and the room in which the meeting will be held). The CPDC—S&A 3.3 expects that public statements presented at its meetings will not be repetitive of previously submitted verbal or written statements. In general, each individual or group making a verbal presentation will be limited to a total time of five (5) minutes. Written comments (at least 35 copies) should be received by the CPDC—S&A 3.3 Designated Federal Official (DFO) by October 15, 2007 to provide sufficient time for review. Written comments received after October 15 will be distributed to the CPDC—S&A 3.3, but may not be reviewed prior to the meeting date. Seats will be available to the public on a first-come, first-served basis.

*Matters To Be Considered:* The meeting will (1) formulate responses to the comments received during the official Public Comment Period on the Second Draft of Synthesis and Assessment Product 3.3 and revise the Second Draft accordingly; (2) finalize plans for completion and submission of the Third Draft of Synthesis and Assessment Product 3.3 to the Climate Change Science Program Office.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Dr. Christopher D. Miller, CPDC—S&A 3.3 DFO and the Program Manager, NOAA/OAR/Climate Program Office, Climate Change Data and Detection Program Element, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 12239, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910; telephone 301-734-1241, e-mail: [Christopher.D.Miller@noaa.gov](mailto:Christopher.D.Miller@noaa.gov).

Dated: October 2, 2007.

**Mark E. Brown,**

*Chief Financial Officer, Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

**RIN: 0648-XD17**

#### New England Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

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

**ACTION:** Notice of public meetings.

**SUMMARY:** The New England Fishery Management Council (Council) is scheduling public meetings of its Monkfish Advisory Panel and its Oversight Committee, in October, 2007, to consider actions affecting New England fisheries in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ). Recommendations from these groups will be brought to the full Council for formal consideration and action, if appropriate.

**DATES:** These meetings will be held on Tuesday, October 23, at 9 a.m. and on Wednesday, October 24, at 9:30 a.m.

**ADDRESSES:** These meetings will be held at the Holiday Inn, One Newbury Street, Peabody, MA 01960; telephone: (978) 535-4600; fax: (978) 535-8238.

*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:

##### 1. Tuesday, October 23, 2007; Monkfish Advisory Panel meeting.

The Advisory Panel will review the analysis of alternatives under consideration in Framework 5 to the Monkfish FMP and make recommendations on preferred alternatives to the Monkfish Committee and New England and Mid-Atlantic Councils. Framework 5 alternatives will address changes to the biological reference points (as recommended by the recent stock assessment workshop), days-at-sea (DAS) carryover limits, monkfish landings under the 3-hour gillnet rule, Mid-Atlantic/Southern New

England area large-mesh monkfish incidental catch limits, and the requirement to obtain a monkfish Letter of Authorization to fish in the northern management area.

##### 2. Wednesday, October 24, 2007; Monkfish Oversight Committee meeting.

The Committee will review the analysis of alternatives under consideration in Framework 5 to the Monkfish FMP and consider the recommendations of the Monkfish Advisory Panel as well as public comment, and make recommendations on preferred alternatives to the New England and Mid-Atlantic Councils. Framework 5 alternatives will address changes to the biological reference points (as recommended by the recent stock assessment workshop), DAS carryover limits, monkfish landings under the 3-hour gillnet rule, Mid-Atlantic/Southern New England area large-mesh monkfish incidental catch limits, and the requirement to obtain a monkfish Letter of Authorization to fish in the northern management area.

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

These meetings are 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: October 3, 2007.

**Tracey L. Thompson,**

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

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