

and collection of these carcasses, for each species that may result from capture activities. In addition, live animals may be harassed during vessel and aerial surveys for species counts and observation.

Dated: March 26, 2018.

Julia Harrison,

*Chief, Permits and Conservation Division,
Office of Protected Resources, National
Marine Fisheries Service.*

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XG062

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC); Public Meetings

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

ACTION: Notice of a public meeting.

SUMMARY: The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's (Council) Surfclam and Ocean Quahog Advisory Panel will hold a public meeting.

DATES: The meeting will be held on Friday, April 13, 2018, from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held via internet Webinar. Detailed connection details are available at <http://www.mafmc.org>. To join the Webinar, follow this link and enter the online meeting room: <http://mafmc.adobeconnect.com/scoq2018ap/>
Council address: Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, 800 North State Street, Suite 201, Dover, DE 19901; telephone: (302) 674-2331.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Christopher M. Moore Ph.D., Executive Director, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, 800 N. State Street, Suite 201, Dover, DE 19901; telephone: (302) 526-5255.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The purpose of the meeting is to develop a fishery performance report by the Council's Surfclam and Ocean Quahog Advisory Panel. The intent of this report is to facilitate structured input from the Surfclam and Ocean Quahog Advisory Panel members to the Council and its Scientific and Statistical Committee. Advisors will also receive an update on the clam dredge access framework under development by the New England Fishery Management Council.

Special Accommodations

The meeting is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to M. Jan Saunders at the Mid-Atlantic Council Office (302) 526-5251 at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.

Dated: March 26, 2018.

Tracey L. Thompson,

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

[FR Doc. 2018-06311 Filed 3-28-18; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XG018

Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fisheries; Scoping Process

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

ACTION: Supplemental notice of intent (NOI) to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS).

SUMMARY: The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council has been preparing an amendment to the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan, known as the "Comprehensive Summer Flounder Amendment," to modify aspects of the fishery management plan related to summer flounder commercial and recreational management. To avoid delaying the amendment while waiting for updated recreational information, the Council is now splitting several issues within this original action, including fishery management plan goals and objectives, commercial allocation, commercial moratorium permits, and commercial framework provisions into a separate action that will continue to be developed as an EIS. The Council is taking comments on this modified action, which is now being referred to as the "Summer Flounder Commercial Issues Amendment." Following completion of this "Commercial Issues" amendment, the Council may then develop at least one future action relating to recreational fishery issues and commercial/recreational allocation to incorporate updated recreational fishery data when it becomes available later this year. The purpose of this notification is to alert

and seek comment from the public about the Council's consideration of splitting this amendment, by delaying some issues to be pursued via later actions.

DATES: Written comments must be received on or before April 30, 2018.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments by any of the following methods:

- **Email:** nmfs.flukeamendment@noaa.gov; Include "Summer Flounder Amendment Scoping Comments" in the subject line;
- **Mail:** Christopher M. Moore, Ph.D., Executive Director, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, 800 N. State Street, Suite 201, Dover, DE 19901.
- **Fax:** (302) 674-5399.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Christopher M. Moore, Ph.D., Executive Director, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, telephone: (302) 526-5255.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On September 16, 2014, an NOI was published in the **Federal Register** (79 FR 55432) announcing the Council's intent to prepare an EIS for a broad management action addressing several categories of summer flounder issues in the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan (FMP). The Council initiated this Comprehensive Summer Flounder Amendment jointly with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission to review all aspects of the FMP related to summer flounder. The amendment was intended to consider updating the goals and objectives of the FMP as related to the allocation between the commercial and recreational sector, and modifying many management strategies and requirements for both commercial and recreational fisheries for summer flounder. Since publication of the original NOI, the Council has delayed development of recreational fishery issues and recreational/commercial allocation and narrowed the remaining range of issues to a more focused list of priority topics.

The primary driver of this proposed split is the ongoing revisions to recreational data by the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP), which are expected to substantially change the current understanding of recreational catch and landings. Due to these changes, the Council and Commission chose to delay development of any issues that would rely heavily on recreational data, including quota allocation between the commercial and recreational sectors, as well as recreational management measures and strategies. If this action

was not split, the Council and Commission would either need to wait for revised MRIP data to become available to begin analysis of recreational-related alternatives, or begin analysis with the current data and later revise substantial portions of the document once new MRIP data became available. Because substantial progress has been made on development of alternatives for commercial issues, the Council and Commission have proposed splitting the action in order to more quickly complete the revisions to the commercial issues and FMP objectives without letting these issues become delayed by recreational data revisions.

The purpose of this revised amendment is to consider revisions to the current qualification criteria for Federal moratorium permit holders, the current allocation of commercial quota, and the current list of frameworkable items in the FMP (*i.e.*, including a provision for commercial landings flexibility). In addition, the purpose of the action is to revise the FMP goals and objectives for summer flounder only. An EIS will be prepared for this action. The Council believes that the measures have separate utility, a clearly unique purpose and need, and are not directly linked to the remaining measures from the original amendment proposed to be pursued in a future action.

The Council and Commission intend to initiate a separate action or actions once revised MRIP data become available. This future action is expected to consider revisions to the allocation between the commercial and recreational sectors for summer flounder, as well as several recreational fishery issues. General categories of recreational issues previously identified for evaluation include: Recreational process, conservation equivalency framework, and recreational allocations; recreational sector separation (for-hire and/or private mode); alternative recreational strategies (allow for alternatives to minimum size, bag limit, and season restrictions; *e.g.*, slot limits); recreational gear requirements or restrictions; and recreational data collection requirements and protocols.

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

Dated: March 23, 2018.

Jennifer M. Wallace,

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

[FR Doc. 2018-06314 Filed 3-28-18; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XG112

Gulf of Mexico 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 Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) will hold a five-day meeting to consider actions affecting the Gulf of Mexico fisheries in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

DATES: The meeting will be held on Monday, April 16 through Friday, April 20, 2018.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will take place at the Marriott Courtyard hotel, located at 1600 E. Beach Boulevard, Gulfport, MS 39501; telephone: (228) 864-4310.

Council address: Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, 2203 N. Lois Avenue, Suite 1100, Tampa, FL 33607; telephone: (813) 348-1630.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Douglas Gregory, Executive Director, Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council; telephone: (813) 348-1630.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Agenda

Monday, April 16, 2018; 8 a.m.–5:30 p.m.; Closed Session

The meeting will begin in a Closed Session of the Full Council all day to hold applicant interviews, select the 2017 Law Enforcement Officer of the Year, and to select members to the Shrimp and Reef Fish Advisory Panels.

Tuesday, April 17, 2018; 8:30 a.m.–5:45 p.m.

The Coral Committee will meet briefly to review a public hearing draft for Coral Amendment 9. The Shrimp Committee will review updated stock assessments, biological review of the Texas closure, and receive a summary from the Shrimp Advisory Panel Meeting. The Mackerel Committee will review and discuss the South Atlantic Council's Amendment 31: Atlantic Cobia Management. The Administrative/Budget Committee will review the grant expenditures, and anticipated budget activities and funding. The Sustainable Fisheries Committee will review a revised policy statement on the use of descending tools and venting devices and a 5-year review

on inclusion/exclusion of species and species groupings in fishery management plans; and hold a discussion on historical captain permits. After lunch, the Reef Fish Management Committee will review the Reef Fish Landings; receive an update on state management of recreational Red Snapper Exempted Fishing Permits (EFPs); review a public hearing draft for Joint Reef Fish Amendment 48 and Red Drum Amendment 4—Status Determination Criteria and Optimum Yield; and discuss the State Management Program for Recreational Red Snapper.

Wednesday, April 18, 2018; 8 a.m.–5:30 p.m.

The Reef Fish Management Committee will reconvene and receive a presentation on recreational data challenges and potential South Atlantic Council responses; discuss the Commercial Individual Fishing Quotas (IFQ) Programs; and, review an options paper on framework action Greater Amberjack Recreational Bag Limits, Seasonal Quotas and Commercial Trip Limits. After lunch, the Committee will review the decision tools and amendments for Amendment 42—Reef Fish Management for Headboat Survey and Amendment 41—Allocation-based Management for Federally Permitted Charters Vessels; and, receive a summary from the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) meeting.

Thursday, April 19, 2018; 8:30 a.m.–4:45 p.m.

The Full Council will reconvene with a Call to Order, Announcements, and Introductions; Adoption of Agenda and Approval of Minutes. The Council will receive a presentation from Mississippi Law Enforcement; a summary from the Law Enforcement Technical Committee meeting; a regulatory review; and, a presentation on Highly Migratory Species on Shortfin Mako. The Council will review Exempted Fishing Permit (EFPs) Applications and public comments on EFP applications, if any. After lunch, the Council will receive open public testimony from 12:30 p.m. until 3:30 p.m. on Fishery Issues or Concerns. Anyone wishing to speak during public comment should sign in at the registration station located at the entrance to the meeting room.

After public testimony, the Full Council will receive committee reports from the Coral, Shrimp, Mackerel and Administrative/Budget Management Committees.