

[sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable\\_fisheries/gulf\\_fisheries/LOA\\_and\\_EFP/index.html](http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/gulf_fisheries/LOA_and_EFP/index.html).

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Karla Gore, 727-824-5305; email: [karla.gore@noaa.gov](mailto:karla.gore@noaa.gov).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The EFP is requested under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*), and regulations at 50 CFR 600.745(b) concerning exempted fishing.

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) and NMFS do not manage the harvest of golden crab in Federal waters of the Gulf. However, the use or possession of a fish trap in Federal waters in the Gulf is prohibited (50 CFR 622.9(c)), and a “fish trap” is any trap capable of taking finfish, except for a trap historically used in the directed fishery for crustaceans (that is, blue crab, stone crab, and spiny lobster) (50 CFR 622.2). Therefore, golden crab traps are a prohibited gear in Gulf Federal waters.

If granted, the EFP would exempt the applicants from the prohibition on the use or possession of a fish trap in Federal waters of the Gulf to allow the testing of various golden crab trap designs and fishing configurations to determine if a commercial golden crab fishery is viable in the Gulf. Additionally, because most of the information and data on golden crab in the Gulf is at least 20 years old, this project would allow for the collection of new information on golden crab in the Gulf. The applicants have requested the EFP be effective for 2 years. During that time, the applicants would collect information on harvest rates, soak time, effectiveness of the various trap style, bycatch, and crab quality. The project design is intended to avoid impacts to non-target species, protected species, and habitats.

As described in the application, the applicants would test the catch efficiency of four different golden crab trap configurations that are currently used in the South Atlantic golden crab fishery. The two vessels to be used in the EFP would deploy a maximum of two strings of 6 to 40 traps per trip. The traps would be baited with fish carcasses and trap soak times would range from overnight up to 17 days depending on trap type and location. Sampling would occur year-round and the applicants expect to set and haul the traps a maximum of 60 times over the course of the 2-year project. At any time, there would be no more than 100 golden crab traps deployed on the seafloor

during the project. Setting and hauling of the traps will occur during all hours.

The golden crab trap gear would be deployed in the southeastern Gulf, on mud bottom. From south to north, the gear would be set, between 25° and 28° north latitude with the western gear boundary ranging from 84.20° to 85.40° west longitude in depths ranging from 1,800 to 2,600 ft (548.6 m to 792.4 m). The 1,800 ft (548.6 m) contour will also mark the eastern boundary for gear deployment. This location is west of southwest Florida and outside the range of any other known directed-fishery operating in the Gulf, including the deep-water shrimp fishery. The applicants have agreed to avoid areas of known coral habitats and have communicated with the members of the Council’s Scientific and Statistical Committee to identify these coral locations. This project area is also outside the boundaries of both the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary and the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. However, the project area is close to Bryde’s whale habitat and part of the project area overlaps with an area where sperm whales are known to be present.

As described in the application, the traps to be tested would be of various shapes (rectangle, square and round), various sizes (from 6 ft by 6 ft by 2 ft to 2 ft by 3 ft by 4 ft, (1.8 m by 1.8 m by 0.6 m to 0.6 m by 0.9 m by 1.2 m)), and have different mesh sizes (1.5 inch to 4 inch (3.8 cm to 10.2 cm)). The traps would also have different types of entrances, including top entrances from 8 inch by 8 inch (20.3 cm by 20.3 cm) to 9 inch by 9 inch (22.9 cm by 22.9 cm), and on circle traps, top funnels that are 3 feet (0.9 m) in diameter. One variation of trap would include a 4-inch by 6-inch (10.2 cm to 15.2 cm) side entrance. All of the traps would have the same size escape gap (3 inches by 4 inches (7.6 cm by 10.2 cm)) and would be constructed of steel or rebar frames covered in vinyl-coated mesh. The weight of each trap is estimated to range from 50 lb to 100 lb (23 to 45 kg), depending on the design used.

Each trap location would be marked on the vessel’s global positioning system (GPS) before deployment to ensure ease of retrieval. There would be no buoy lines to the surface and the gear would be set in muddy bottom habitat. Sophisticated sounder technology on each vessel is capable of identifying bottom characteristics that are suitable habitat (muddy bottom) for golden crab traps and fishing while avoiding coral habitat.

The applicants would conduct the testing using two vessels issued South

Atlantic commercial golden crab permits. Vessel crew would keep detailed records during the sampling trips, including the location of the trip, set and haul date and time, species harvested, impacts on bottom features, trap efficiency, and any bycatch. This information would be shared with the Council and NMFS. Landings information would be collected through the vessel trip ticket program and any golden crab landed from the project would only be sold to federally licensed dealers.

The Council reviewed the EFP application at its April 2018 meeting, provided comments related to avoiding both coral areas and conflicts with shrimp vessels, and recommended that NMFS approve the application. NMFS finds the application warrants further consideration. Possible conditions the agency may impose on the permit, if granted, include but are not limited to, a prohibition on conducting research in known coral areas, marine protected areas, marine sanctuaries, special management zones, or areas where they might interfere with managed fisheries without additional authorization. Additionally, NMFS may require special protections for marine mammals, ESA-listed species and designated critical habitat, and may require particular gear markings. A final decision on issuance of the EFP will depend on NMFS’ review of public comments received on the application, consultations with the appropriate fishery management agencies of the affected states, and the U.S. Coast Guard, as well as a determination that it is consistent with all applicable laws.

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

Dated: October 11, 2018.

**Margo B. Schulze-Haugen,**

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

[FR Doc. 2018-22487 Filed 10-15-18; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3510-22-P**

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

**RIN 0648-XG542**

### New England Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

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

**ACTION:** Notice; public meeting.

**SUMMARY:** The New England Fishery Management Council (Council) is scheduling a public meeting of its Recreational Advisory Panel 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:** This meeting will be held on Monday, October 29, 2018 at 10 a.m.

**ADDRESSES:** The meeting will be held at the Hilton Garden Inn, Four Home Depot Drive, Plymouth, MA 02360; phone: (508) 830-0200.

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

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Thomas A. Nies, Executive Director, New England Fishery Management Council; telephone: (978) 465-0492.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

**Agenda**

The Recreational Advisory Panel will receive an overview of recreational fishing data for fishing year 2017 and preliminary fishing year 2018 from National Marine Fisheries Service staff. They will also discuss recent changes to the Marine Recreational Information Program data with respect to groundfish stocks. The panel will receive an update on the Council's public listening sessions on the possibility of limited entry in the groundfish party and charter fishery. The panel will discuss planning the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office's Upcoming Recreational Workshops building off the outcomes of the 2017 workshop. They also plan to hold a discussion of possible recreational priorities for 2019 and develop recommendations to the Groundfish Committee. Other business will be discussed as necessary.

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 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**

This meeting is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Thomas A. Nies,

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 11, 2018.

**Tracey L. Thompson,**

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

[FR Doc. 2018-22497 Filed 10-15-18; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3510-22-P**

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

**RIN 0648-XG544**

**Pacific Fishery Management Council; Public Meetings**

**AGENCY:** National Marine Fisheries Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Commerce.

**ACTION:** Notice of public meetings.

**SUMMARY:** The Pacific Fishery Management Council (Pacific Council) and its advisory entities will hold public meetings.

**DATES:** The Pacific Council and its advisory entities will meet November 1-8, 2018. The Pacific Council meeting will begin on Saturday, November 3, 2018 at 10 a.m. Pacific Daylight Time (PDT), reconvening at 8 a.m. each day through Thursday, November 8, 2018. All meetings are open to the public, except a closed session will be held from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m., Saturday, November 3 to address litigation and personnel matters. The Pacific Council will meet as late as necessary each day to complete its scheduled business.

**ADDRESSES:** The meetings will be held at the San Diego Marriott Del Mar, 11966 El Camino Real, San Diego, CA; phone: (858) 523-1700.

*Council address:* Pacific Fishery Management Council, 7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 101, Portland, OR 97220.

Instructions for attending the meeting via live stream broadcast are given under **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION**, below.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Mr. Chuck Tracy, Executive Director; telephone: (503) 820-2280 or (866) 806-7204 toll-free; or access the Pacific Council website, <http://www.pcouncil.org> for the current meeting location, proposed agenda, and meeting briefing materials.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The November 1-8, 2018 meeting of the Pacific Council will be streamed live on

the internet. The broadcasts begin initially at 10 a.m. PDT Saturday, November 3, 2018 and continue at 8 a.m. daily through Thursday, November 8, 2018. Broadcasts end daily at 5 p.m. PDT or when business for the day is complete. Only the audio portion and presentations displayed on the screen at the Pacific Council meeting will be broadcast. The audio portion is listen-only; you will be unable to speak to the Pacific Council via the broadcast. To access the meeting online, please use the following link: <http://www.gotomeeting.com/online/webinar/join-webinar> and enter the September Webinar ID, 530-089-227, and your email address. You can attend the webinar online using a computer, tablet, or smart phone, using the GoToMeeting application. It is recommended that you use a computer headset to listen to the meeting, but you may use your telephone for the audio-only portion of the meeting. The audio portion may be attended using a telephone by dialing the toll number 1-562-247-8321 (not a toll-free number), audio access code 240-052-611, and entering the audio pin shown after joining the webinar.

The following items are on the Pacific Council agenda, but not necessarily in this order. Agenda items noted as "Final Action" refer to actions requiring the Council to transmit a proposed fishery management plan, proposed plan amendment, or proposed regulations to the U.S. Secretary of Commerce, under sections 304 or 305 of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Additional detail on agenda items, Council action, advisory entity meeting times, and meeting rooms are described in Agenda Item A.4, Proposed Council Meeting Agenda, and will be in the advance November 2018 briefing materials and posted on the Pacific Council website at [www.pcouncil.org](http://www.pcouncil.org) no later than Tuesday, October 16, 2018.

**A. Call to Order**

1. Opening Remarks
2. Roll Call
3. Executive Director's Report
4. Approve Agenda

**B. Open Comment Period**

1. Comments on Non-Agenda Items

**C. Habitat**

1. Current Habitat Issues

**D. Salmon Management**

1. National Marine Fisheries Service Report
2. Preliminary Rebuilding Plans
3. 2019 Preseason Management Schedule

**E. Coastal Pelagic Species Management**

1. National Marine Fisheries Service Report