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Sheleen Dumas,

Department PRA Clearance Officer, Office of the Chief Information Officer, Commerce Department.

[FR Doc. 2021–14740 Filed 7–9–21; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–22–P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648–XB218]

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

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

ACTION: Notice; public meeting.

SUMMARY: The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's (Council) Bluefish Advisory Panel will hold a public meeting, jointly with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) Bluefish Advisory Panel.

DATES: The meeting will be held on Wednesday, July 28, 2021, from 2 p.m. until 4 p.m. For agenda details, see

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held via webinar with a telephone-only connection option. Details on the proposed agenda, webinar listen-in access, and briefing materials can be accessed on the Council's website at: www.mafmc.org.

Council address: Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, 800 N State Street, Suite 201, Dover, DE 19901; telephone: (302) 674–2331; www.mafmc.org.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

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

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's Bluefish Advisory Panel will meet jointly with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Bluefish Advisory Panel via webinar. The purpose of this meeting is to welcome new Advisory Panel members, review recent management track stock assessment information for bluefish, and to review the recommendations of the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) and Monitoring Committee for 2022–23 catch and landings limits.

Special Accommodations

The meeting is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Kathy Collins at the Council Office, (302) 526–5253, at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.

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

Dated: July 7, 2021.

Tracey L. Thompson,

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

[FR Doc. 2021–14750 Filed 7–9–21; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–22–P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

United States Patent and Trademark Office

[Docket No.: PTO–P–2020–0027]

Extension of the Fast-Track Appeals Pilot Program

AGENCY: United States Patent and Trademark Office, Department of Commerce.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) is extending the Fast-Track Appeals Pilot Program, initiated on July 2, 2020, which provides for the advancement of applications out of their turn in the *ex parte* appeals phase of patent prosecution before the Patent Trial and Appeal Board (PTAB or Board). The Fast-Track Appeals Pilot Program permits an appellant who has filed an *ex parte* appeal and received a notice that the appeal has been docketed to file a petition to expedite the review of the appeal. The Fast-Track Appeals Pilot Program sets a target of reaching a decision on an *ex parte* appeal within six months from the date that the appeal is entered into the program.

DATES:

Applicable Date: July 12, 2021.

Duration: The Fast-Track Appeals Pilot Program will run until July 2, 2022. The USPTO may extend the Fast-Track Appeals Pilot Program (with or without modification) on either a temporary or a permanent basis, or may discontinue the program after that date.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Steven Bartlett, PTAB, by telephone at 571–272–9797 or by email at fasttrackappeals@uspto.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Appeals to the Board are normally taken up for decision in the order in which they are docketed. See USPTO Standard

Operating Procedure 1, Assignment of judges to panels (Sept. 20, 2018), available at www.uspto.gov/patents/ptab/resources. Currently, the average appeal pendency is about 13 months, down from 15 months in 2020, and from 30 months in 2015. See the PTAB statistics available at www.uspto.gov/patents/ptab/statistics. However, a small number of appeals are advanced out of turn due to a special status reflecting, for example, that the appealed case is a reissue application or a reexamination proceeding, or in light of an inventor's advanced age or poor health.

On July 2, 2020, the PTAB adopted, on a temporary basis, the Fast-Track Appeals Pilot Program, under which an appellant may have an *ex parte* appeal to the Board advanced out of turn by filing a petition under 37 CFR 41.3, accompanied by the petition fee set forth in 37 CFR 41.20(a). See Fast-Track Appeals Pilot Program, 85 FR 39888 (July 2, 2020) (Fast-Track Notice). The Fast-Track Appeals Pilot Program permits an appellant to accelerate the Board's decision on an *ex parte* appeal, hastening the pace at which patentability determinations are made and products or services embodying those patented inventions are brought to the marketplace, and thus spurring follow-on innovation, economic growth, and job creation. The USPTO provides a form for the Fast-Track petition, Form PTO/SB/451, which is available on the USPTO's website at www.uspto.gov/patents/apply/forms/forms-patent-applications-filed-or-after-september-16-2012.

The Fast-Track Notice required, *inter alia*, that a petition be filed before July 2, 2021, to participate in the program. The Fast-Track Notice also set a maximum number of 500 appeals that may be advanced through Fast-Track petitions.

The Fast-Track Appeals Pilot Program is hereby extended to accept petitions for advancing out of turn (according “Fast-Track status” to) *ex parte* appeals through July 2, 2022. The requirements for the program remain the same as those set forth in the original notice (see Fast-Track Notice, 85 FR 39888), with the following modification regarding the petition limit.

The upper limit of 500 total granted Fast-Track petitions, as set forth in the Fast-Track Notice, is no longer applicable. To maintain the Board's ability to provide a faster appeal option while timely resolving other appeals, however, the number of granted petitions in the Fast-Track Appeals Pilot Program remains limited to 125 granted petitions per quarter. If a quarterly limit