

England Fishery Management Council; (978) 465-0492.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Committee will review alternatives for designating essential fish habitat for deep-sea red crab, to be incorporated in the proposed Red Crab Fishery Management Plan. The Committee may select preferred alternatives to recommend to the full 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 (see **ADDRESSES**) at least 5 days prior to the meeting dates.

Dated: October 15, 2001.

Richard W. Surdi,

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

[FR Doc. 01-26456 Filed 10-18-01; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-S

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 101201B]

New England Fishery Management Council; Public Meetings

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 a public meeting of its Monkfish Oversight and Skate Oversight Committees in November 2001 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: The meetings will be held on November 5, 2001. The Monkfish Oversight Committee will meet at 9:30

a.m. The Skate Oversight Committee will meet from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

ADDRESSES: The meetings will be held at the King's Grant Inn, Trask Road, Route 128, Danvers, MA 01923; telephone: (978) 774-6800.

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; (978) 465-0492.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Meeting Agendas The Monkfish Oversight Committee will review the Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) Report for 2000, incorporating the Monkfish Monitoring Committee Report. Based on this review, the committee will develop recommendations to the Council for adjustments to the Monkfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for the 2002 fishing year, in accordance with the framework adjustment procedures in the FMP. Options under consideration include, but are not limited to: taking no action and allowing the Year 4 default measures to take effect (eliminating the directed fishery); postponing for one year the Year 4 default measures and adjusting trip limits to achieve current landings levels after accounting for the effect of the recent court decision eliminating gear-based differential trip limits; and, adjusting management measures to reduce catches to the Years 2 and 3 total allowable catch (TAC) targets. The committee will also develop recommendations to the Council for research priorities under cooperative programs with the industry. At the end of the meeting the committee will hold a closed session to review applications and make recommendations for membership on the Monkfish Advisory Panel.

The Skate Oversight Committee will review guidance on skate overfishing definitions from the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee and the Skate Plan Development Team. They will also develop recommendations as to which overfishing definition alternatives should be fully analyzed for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and public hearing document. They will also review a timeline for DEIS development.

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

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 (see **ADDRESSES**) at least 5 days prior to the meeting dates.

Dated: October 15, 2001.

Richard W. Surdi,

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

[FR Doc. 01-26457 Filed 10-18-01; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 100101A]

Marine Mammals; Pinniped Removal Authority

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

ACTION: Proposed extension of a Letter of Authorization (LOA) and request for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS solicits public comments on a request from the State of Washington and a proposal by NMFS to extend, for 5 years, an LOA for the lethal removal of individually identifiable California sea lions that are having a significant negative impact on the status and recovery of winter steelhead that migrate through the Ballard Locks in Seattle, WA. No changes to the existing terms and conditions of the authorization are proposed beyond extension of the expiration date to June 30, 2006. This action is authorized under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA).

DATES: Comments must be received on or before November 19, 2001.

ADDRESSES: Comments on this action should be submitted to Chief, Protected Resources Division, NMFS, 525 NE Oregon Street, Suite 500, Portland, OR 97232. Comments will not be accepted if submitted via email or the Internet. However, comments may be sent via fax to (503) 230-5435.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Garth Griffin, NMFS, Northwest Region,

(503) 231-2005, or Tom Eagle, NMFS, Office of Protected Resources, (301) 713-2322 ext. 105.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Electronic Access

Additional information, including the State's LOA extension request, prior Environmental Assessments, and the current LOA, is available via the internet at <http://www.nwr.noaa.gov>.

Background

Pursuant to section 120 (b) of the MMPA, the State of Washington submitted an application to NMFS on June 30, 1994, requesting consideration of lethal removal of California sea lions at the Ballard Locks in Seattle, WA. In response to the application, NMFS formed the Ballard Locks Pinniped-Fisheries Interaction Task Force (Task Force). The Task Force met in late 1994, reviewed the available information and recommended approval of lethal removal with conditions. NMFS took the recommendations of the Task Force and public comments into consideration when it issued the initial 3-year LOA to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) on January 5, 1995.

As required by section 120, the Task Force reconvened in late 1995 to evaluate the effectiveness of the permitted lethal taking or alternative actions and recommended modifications to the terms and conditions of the LOA. The LOA was modified in 1996 and subsequently extended through June 30, 2001. No lethal removals were conducted during the period of the current LOA.

Information on Washington's original application for lethal removal, the process for considering the application, which included formation of a Pinniped-Fishery Interaction Task Force, the Terms and Conditions of the LOA issued to WDFW and its subsequent extension was published in the **Federal Register** on August 2, 1994 (59 FR 39325), September 27, 1994 (59 FR 49234), January 19, 1995 (60 FR 3841), August 15, 1995 (60 FR 42146), March 26, 1996 (61 FR 13153), August 26, 1996 (61 FR 43737), June 19, 1997 (62 FR 33396), and September 29, 1997 (62 FR 50903). Background information on the sea-lion steelhead conflict at the Ballard Locks and findings on the environmental consequences of issuance of the LOA are provided in two Environmental Assessments prepared by NMFS in 1995 and 1996 (see Electronic Access).

At the request of WDFW, NMFS granted a temporary extension of the LOA expiration date from June 30, 2001, to December 15, 2001, to allow time for

the State to prepare, and NMFS to process, a formal request to extend the existing LOA. Under the terms and conditions of the LOA, which authorized lethal removal only during the steelhead migration period (January through May) no sea lions may be lethally removed during the temporary extension.

In a letter dated September 12, 2001, the State of Washington requested an extension of the LOA for an additional 5 years (with a new expiration date of June 30, 2006). The State's request cites severely depressed steelhead run returns (42 fish returned to spawn in 2001) and the need to quickly remove any sea lion that meets the criteria outlined in the LOA while the State continues management efforts to recover the run. In addition, the State noted that there are no lethal removals planned at this time and requested the authorization be extended so that, as a last resort, it can respond in a timely manner to uncontrollable sea lion predation and protect steelhead as the run recovers. The State requests no modifications to the terms and conditions of the LOA other than the extension to June 30, 2006. Copies of the request for extension are available (see Electronic Access).

The Task Force last met in 1996 to consider an earlier extension request by the State, and it submitted a report to NMFS that recommended that the LOA be extended, if so requested by the State, until such time as (a) the escapement goal of 1600 steelhead is reached or (b) it becomes clear that the process is unlikely to achieve the stated goal. At that time, the Task Force opinions on the extension ranged from "no extension" to "an extension period of 8 years (two steelhead life cycles)", with the majority favoring 4 years. The Task Force indicated that extending the LOA would provide needed time to enable an evaluation of the effectiveness of lethal or non-lethal but permanent removal on subsequent steelhead returns when they have recovered to abundances that previously attracted predatory sea lions. At the completion of their deliberations, the Task Force adjourned until such time as substantive new information and analysis become available that may alter its recommendation. Copies of the Task Force report and recommendations are available (see Electronic Access). The State's extension request indicates that, since the Task Force last met, conditions at the Locks have remained virtually unchanged (i.e., no sea lions have been lethally removed, no new individually identifiable sea lions have been added to the list of predatory sea

lions to be removed, the steelhead run has not recovered, and efforts to recover the run are continuing.) The MMPA requires NMFS to consider the recommendations of the Task Force when determining whether to issue a lethal removal authorization. In order to obtain the Task Force's views regarding this extension of the previously issued LOA in light of its decision to adjourn pending significant new data or analysis, NMFS is consulting with Task Force members by mail during the 30-day public comment period.

NMFS is seeking public comments on the proposal to extend the LOA for a period of 5 years. After considering public comments and advice from Task Force members, NMFS will publish notice of its final decision in the **Federal Register**.

The environmental consequences of extending the existing LOA as requested, without further modification of the terms and conditions, are expected to be the same as those previously assessed. Nonetheless, NMFS will conduct an environmental analysis on the proposed 5-year extension as required by the National Environmental Policy Act.

Dated: October 15, 2001.

Wanda L. Cain,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Disclosure Document Program

ACTION: Proposed collection; comment request.

SUMMARY: The United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO), as part of its continuing effort to reduce paperwork and respondent burden, invites the general public and other Federal agencies to take this opportunity to comment on the continuing and proposed information collection, as required by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, Public Law 104-13 (44 U.S.C. 3506(c)(2)(A)).

DATES: Written comments must be submitted on or before December 18, 2001.

ADDRESSES: Direct all written comments to Susan K. Brown, Records Officer, Office of Data Management, Data Administration Division, USPTO, Suite 310, 2231 Crystal Drive, Washington, DC 20231; by telephone 703-308-7400; by e-mail at susan.brown@uspto.gov; or by facsimile at 703-308-7400.