

should be addressed to the New England Fishery Management Council, 5 Broadway, Saugus, MA 01906-1036; telephone: (781) 231-0422.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Paul J. Howard, Executive Director, New England Fishery Management Council (781) 231-0422.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Wednesday, February 24, 1999

Following introductions, the meeting will begin with reports on recent activities from the Council Chairman, Executive Director, the NMFS Acting Regional Administrator, Northeast Fisheries Science Center and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council liaisons, and representatives of the Coast Guard, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Following reports, the Chairman of the Gear Conflict Committee will make recommendations for resolving gear conflicts involving lobster traps and mobile gear in the offshore canyon areas. The Herring Committee will discuss possible measures to be included in the annual framework adjustment to the Atlantic Herring Fishery Management Plan (FMP). After a noon break, the Executive Director will review scientific information and research needs for 1999 and there will be a presentation on Overfishing Definition/Control Rule by staff members of the Council and the Northeast Fisheries Science Center. The day will conclude with the Marine Mammal Committee report during which the Council will approve final action on Framework Adjustment 28 to the Northeast Multispecies FMP. Framework Adjustment 28 would contain measures which would modify harbor porpoise regulations previously implemented by the Council to be consistent with the Harbor Porpoise Take Reduction Plan recently implemented by NMFS.

Thursday, February 25, 1999

The Council will consider initial action on Framework Adjustment 29 to the Northeast Multispecies FMP. Framework Adjustment 29 contains measures which would modify the FMP regulations to allow scallop vessels controlled access to the Georges Bank groundfish closed areas and establish measures to reduce fishing mortality on Georges Bank cod by 22 percent to meet FMP target levels. Additionally, the Council will approve a range of measures to be considered at public hearings and for inclusion in Amendment 13 to the Northeast Multispecies FMP. Potential items

include but are not limited to revised rebuilding programs as needed under new overfishing definitions for all multispecies stocks; implementation of a two-tier permit system to address latent fishing effort; quota management, managing fleet capacity, proposals for industry support systems involving scientific research and conservation engineering programs; modification of the annual adjustment schedule and possible change to the fishing year and development of an exemption certification for access to groundfish closed areas by groundfish vessels targeting specific species. The Office of General Counsel will make a presentation on conflict of interest issues. Following a noon break, the Scallop Committee will consider initial action on Framework Adjustment 11 to the Atlantic Sea Scallop FMP to establish measures for managing scallop vessel access to the Georges Bank groundfish closed areas. The day will conclude with the Spiny Dogfish Committee report which will discuss and seek possible approval of recommendations for an overfishing definition, rebuilding schedule, and interim management measures. Discussion of any other business will take place before the close of the meeting.

Although other issues not contained in this agenda may come before this Council for discussion, in accordance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, those issues may not be the subject of formal Council action during this meeting. Council action will be restricted to those issues specifically listed in this notice.

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 date.

Dated: February 4, 1999.

Bruce C. Morehead,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.
[FR Doc. 99-3246 Filed 2-9-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-F

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Parts 649 and 697

[Docket No. 990105002-9002-01; I.D. 110598D]

RIN 0648-AH41

American Lobster Fishery; Extension of the Comment Period

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

ACTION: Proposed rule; extension of the comment period.

SUMMARY: In a document published in the **Federal Register** on January 15, 1999, NMFS requested comments on proposed regulations to implement proposed management measures for the American lobster fishery in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) from Maine through North Carolina on or before February 10, 1999. The intent of this document is to announce an extension of the public comment period from February 10, 1999, to February 26, 1999.

DATES: Receipt of comments on the proposed rule is extended from February 10, 1999, to February 26, 1999.

ADDRESSES: Comments on the rule should be sent to, and copies of supporting documents, including a Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Regulatory Impact Review and an Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis, are available from the Director, State, Federal and Constituent Programs Office, NMFS, 1 Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930. Comments regarding burden estimates should be sent to: the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Management and Budget, Washington, DC 20503 (ATTN: NOAA Desk Officer).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Robert Ross, NMFS, Northeast Region, 978-281-9234.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: As announced in the **Federal Register** on January 15, 1999 (64 FR 2708), NMFS requested comments on proposed regulations to implement proposed management measures for the American lobster fishery in the EEZ from Maine through North Carolina on or before February 10, 1999. By this document, NMFS is extending the public comment period. There were no changes from the proposed rule previously published.

Dated: February 5, 1999.

Gary C. Matlock,

*Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries,
National Marine Fisheries Services.*

[FR Doc. 99-3244 Filed 2-9-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-F

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 660

[Docket No. 990121026-9026-01; I.D.
112498A]

RIN 0648-AL52

Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery; Amendment 11

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

ACTION: Proposed rule; request for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS proposes regulations to implement portions of Amendment 11 to the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP). The Council prepared Amendment 11 in order to bring the FMP into compliance with the Sustainable Fisheries Act (SFA) regarding overfishing, bycatch, essential fish habitat, and fishing communities. This proposed rule would implement the portions of Amendment 11 that would establish procedures for compensating a vessel owner or operator who has collected resource information according to a NMFS-approved protocol, with the opportunity to harvest fish in excess of current vessel limits and/or outside other restrictions. The proposed rule would also modify the regulatory definition of "processing or to process," and add a regulatory definition for "optimum yield" consistent with the definitions of those terms in Amendment 11. This action is also intended to improve the types and amounts of scientific information available for use in stock assessments and management of the Pacific coast groundfish fishery.

DATES: Comments must be submitted in writing by March 29, 1999.

ADDRESSES: Send comments to William Stelle, Jr., Administrator, Northwest Region, (Regional Administrator) NMFS, 7600 Sand Point Way NE., Seattle, WA 98115; or Dr. William T. Hogarth, Administrator, Southwest Region, (Regional Administrator) NMFS, 501 West Ocean Blvd., Suite 4200, Long Beach, CA 90802-4213. Copies of

Amendment 11 to Pacific Coast Groundfish FMP, and the Environmental Assessment/Regulatory Impact Review (EA/RIR) are available from Larry Six, Executive Director, Pacific Fishery Management Council, 2130 SW Fifth Avenue, Suite 224, Portland, OR 97201. Send comments regarding the reporting burden estimate or any other aspect of the collection-of-information requirements in this proposed rule, including suggestions for reducing the burden, William Stelle, Jr. or to Dr. William T. Hogarth and to the Office on Information and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Management and Budget (OMB), Washington, DC 20503 (ATTN: NOAA Desk Officer).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Katherine King or Yvonne deReynier at 206-526-6140, or James Morgan at 562-980-4000.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On October 11, 1996, the SFA amended the law first known as the Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976. For over 20 years, successive iterations of that law have provided broad guidelines and policy direction for U.S. fisheries management. Those guidelines and policy directions have been significantly revised in the law's current iteration, the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act). The new Magnuson-Stevens Act gives the Regional Fishery Management Councils and the Secretary of Commerce (Secretary), through NMFS, many new responsibilities.

The SFA amended the requirements for FMPs in section 303(a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. The SFA established a 2-year deadline (October 11, 1998) by which each Regional Fishery Management Council had to submit amendments to NMFS to bring its FMPs into compliance with the new requirements in section 303(a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

Through Amendment 11, the Council intends to make the Pacific Coast Groundfish FMP consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Act by amending the FMP framework that defines "optimum yield" for setting annual groundfish harvest limits; setting framework control rules on defining rates of "overfishing" and levels at which managed stocks are considered "overfished;" defining Pacific Coast groundfish essential fish habitat; setting a bycatch management objective and a framework for bycatch reduction measures; establishing a management objective to take the importance of fisheries to fishing communities into account when setting groundfish management measures;

providing authority within the FMP for the Council to require groundfish use permits for all groundfish users; authorizing the use of fish for compensation for private vessels conducting NMFS-approved research; removing jack mackerel from the fishery management unit; and updating FMP objectives, definitions, and industry descriptions.

NMFS is proposing this rule to implement the portions of Amendment 11 that would authorize NMFS to compensate the owners or operators of private vessels conducting NMFS-approved research with fish. The proposed rule would add a definition for the term "optimum yield" (OY) and make minor changes to the definitions of several regulatory terms in the existing regulations governing the Pacific Coast groundfish fishery. This proposed rule would not remove jack mackerel from the fishery management unit, because that will be done with the implementation of the Coastal Pelagic Species FMP, which will include jack mackerel in its fishery management unit. This proposed rule is based on recommendations of the Council, under the authority of the Pacific Coast Groundfish FMP and the Magnuson-Stevens Act. The background and rationale for the Council's recommendations are summarized below. Further detail appears in the EA/RIR prepared by the Council for Amendment 11.

Background

Among the many changes to the Magnuson-Stevens Act was an amendment to authorize the Secretary to use the private sector to provide vessels, equipment, and services necessary to survey fishery resources and to compensate vessel owners or operators with the fish taken during the survey and with the opportunity to harvest fish in excess of otherwise applicable management measures, if the quality or amount of fish is not adequate, on a subsequent commercial fishing trip (sec. 402(e) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. Section 303(b)(11) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act further enables the Secretary to "reserve a portion of the allowable biological catch of the fishery for use in scientific research."

At its November 1997 meeting, the Council recommended that NMFS implement an emergency rule for 1998 that would allow owners or operators of vessels that collect resource information to be compensated with the opportunity to harvest fish in excess of current vessel limits and/or outside other restrictions (hereinafter "compensated with fish"). At the time, the Council was