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New England Fishery Management Council

50 WATER STREET | NEWBURYPORT, MASSACHUSETTS 01950 | PHONE 978 465 0492 | FAX 978 465 3116
C.M. "Rip" Cunningham, *Chairman* | Paul J. Howard, *Executive Director*

April 12, 2012

Mr. Daniel Morris
Acting Regional Administrator
NMFS, Northeast Regional Office
55 Great Republic Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930

RE: Comments on the NEFSC Study Fleet EFP

Dear Dan:

The New England Fishery Management Council has no objection to the experimental fishery proposal noted above published in the *Federal Register* on April 6, 2012.

If you have any question please contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul J. Howard".

Paul J. Howard
Executive Director

measurement traceability, tolerances and other technical requirements for commercial measuring systems, existing standards for testing equipment, field implementation, data analysis, field test and type evaluation procedures, field enforcement issues, training at all levels, and other relevant issues identified by the WG. WG recommendations may result in the revision of current standards or the development of new standards for testing equipment, including documents such as the NIST Handbook 105 Series for field standards; NIST HB 44, *Specifications, Tolerances, and Technical Requirements for Weighing and Measuring Devices*; NIST Examination Procedure Outlines; and NIST Handbook 137, *Examination of Distance Measuring Devices*, as well as proposed changes to requirements and testing procedures for commercial devices and systems used to assess charges to consumers based on time and/or distance measurements.

Dated: March 30, 2012.

Willie E. May,

Associate Director for Laboratory Programs.

[FR Doc. 2012-8365 Filed 4-5-12; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-13-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Institute of Standards and Technology

Manufacturing Extension Partnership Advisory Board

AGENCY: National Institute of Standards and Technology, Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of Open Meeting.

SUMMARY: NIST announces that the Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) Advisory Board, National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) will hold an open meeting on Sunday, May 6, 2012, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

DATES: The meeting will convene on Sunday, May 6, 2012, at 9 a.m. and will adjourn at 5 p.m. the same day.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held at the Orlando World Center Marriott Resort and Convention Center, 8701 World Center Drive, Orlando, Florida 32821.

Please see admission instructions in the SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION section below.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Karen Lellock, Manufacturing Extension Partnership, National Institute of Standards and Technology, 100 Bureau Drive, Mail Stop 4800, Gaithersburg,

Maryland 20899-4800, telephone number (301) 975-4269.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This meeting is being held in conjunction with MEP's Manufacturing Innovations 2012 Conference in Orlando, Florida. The MEP Advisory Board (Board) is composed of 10 members, appointed by the Director of NIST. MEP is a unique program consisting of centers across the United States and Puerto Rico with partnerships at the state, federal, and local levels. The Board works closely with MEP to provide input and advice on MEP's programs, plans, and policies. This meeting will focus on (1) discussions with local MEP Board members, (2) a national manufacturing strategy, and (3) an update on MEP's workforce initiatives. The agenda may change to accommodate other Board business.

Admission Instructions: Anyone wishing to attend this meeting should submit their name, email address and phone number to Karen Lellock (karen.lellock@nist.gov or 301-975-4269) no later than April 30, 2012.

Individuals and representatives of organizations who would like to offer comments and suggestions related to the MEP Advisory Board's business are invited to request a place on the agenda. Approximately 15 minutes will be reserved for public comments at the beginning of the meeting. Speaking times will be assigned on a first-come, first-served basis. The amount of time per speaker will be determined by the number of requests received but is likely to be no more than three to five minutes each. Questions from the public will not be considered during this period. Speakers who wish to expand upon their oral statements, those who had wished to speak but could not be accommodated on the agenda, and those who were unable to attend in person are invited to submit written statements to the MEP Advisory Board, National Institute of Standards and Technology, National Institute of Standards and Technology, 100 Bureau Drive, Mail Stop 4800, Gaithersburg, Maryland 20899-4800, or via fax at (301) 963-6556, or electronically by email to karen.lellock@nist.gov.

Phillip Singerman,

Associate Director for Innovation & Industry Services.

[FR Doc. 2012-8366 Filed 4-5-12; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-13-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XB148

Magnuson-Stevens Act Provisions; General Provisions for Domestic Fisheries; Application for Exempted Fishing Permit

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

ACTION: Notice; request for comments.

SUMMARY: The Assistant Regional Administrator for Sustainable Fisheries, Northeast Region, NMFS (Assistant Regional Administrator), has made a preliminary determination that an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) application submitted by the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) contains all of the required information and warrants further consideration. The EFP would exempt participating vessels from the following types of fishery regulations: Minimum fish size restrictions; fish possession limits; prohibited fish species, not including species protected under the Endangered Species Act; and gear-specific fish possession restrictions for the purpose of collecting fishery dependent catch data and biological samples.

Regulations under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act require publication of this notification to provide interested parties the opportunity to comment on EFP applications.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before April 23, 2012.

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

- **Email:** nero.efp@noaa.gov. Include in the subject line "Comments on NEFSC Study Fleet EFP."
- **Mail:** Daniel S. Morris, Acting Regional Administrator, NMFS, NE Regional Office, 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930. Mark the outside of the envelope "Comments on NEFSC Study Fleet EFP."
- **Fax:** (978) 281-9135.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Brett Alger, Fisheries Management Specialist, 978-675-2153, Brett.Alger@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NEFSC submitted a complete application for an EFP on February 28, 2012, to enable data collection activities that the regulations on commercial fishing would otherwise restrict. The EFP

would exempt 29 federally permitted commercial fishing vessels from the regulations detailed below while participating in the Study Fleet Program and operating under projects managed by the NEFSC. The EFP would exempt participating vessels from minimum fish size restrictions; fish possession limits; prohibited fish species, not including species protected under the Endangered Species Act; and gear-specific fish possession restrictions for the purpose of at-sea sampling and, in limited situations for research purposes only, to retain and land fish.

The NEFSC Study Fleet Program was established in 2002 to more fully characterize commercial fishing operations and to leverage sampling opportunities to augment NMFS data collection programs. Participating vessels are contracted by NEFSC to collect tow by tow catch and environmental data, and to fulfill specific biological sampling needs identified by NEFSC. To collect these data, the NEFSC Study Fleet Program has obtained an EFP to secure the

necessary waivers needed by the vessels to obtain fish that would otherwise be prohibited by regulations.

Crew trained by the NEFSC Study Fleet Program in methods that are consistent with the current NEFSC observer protocol, while under fishing operations, would sort, weigh, and measure fish that are to be discarded. An exemption from minimum fish size restrictions; fish possession limits; prohibited fish species, not including species protected under the Endangered Species Act; and gear-specific fish possession restrictions for at-sea sampling is required because some discarded species would be on deck slightly longer than under normal sorting procedures.

Participating vessels would also be authorized to retain and land, in limited situations for research purposes only, fish that do not comply with fishing regulations. The vessels would be authorized to retain specific amounts of particular species in whole or round weight condition, in marked totes, which would be delivered to Study

Fleet Program technicians. The NEFSC would require participating vessels to obtain written approval from the NEFSC Study Fleet Program prior to landing any fish in excess of possession limits and/or below minimum size limits to ensure that the landed fish do not exceed any of the Study Fleet Program's collection needs, as detailed below. None of the landed biological samples from these trips would be sold for commercial use or used for any other purpose other than scientific research.

The table below details the regulations from which the participating vessels would be exempt. The participating vessels would be required to comply with all other applicable requirements and restrictions specified at 50 CFR part 648, unless specifically exempted in this EFP. All catch of stocks allocated to Sectors by vessels on a Sector trip would be deducted from the Sector's Annual Catch Entitlement for each Northeast multispecies stock regardless of what fishery the vessel was participating in when the fish was caught.

NEFSC STUDY FLEET PROGRAM EFP

| | |
|---|--|
| Number of Vessels | 29. |
| Possession | Possession for at-sea sampling plus limited landing. |
| Exempted regulations in 50 CFR part 648 | <i>Size limits.</i> § 648.83(a)(3) NE multispecies minimum size. § 648.93 Monkfish minimum fish size. § 648.103 Summer flounder minimum fish size. § 648.143(a) Black sea bass minimum fish size. <i>Possession restrictions.</i> § 648.86(b) Atlantic cod. § 648.86(c) Atlantic halibut. § 648.86(e) White hake. § 648.86(g) Yellowtail flounder. § 648.86(g)(1) Southern New England yellowtail flounder possession limit. § 648.86(j) Georges Bank winter flounder. § 648.86(l) Zero retention of SNE winter flounder and Atlantic wolffish. § 648.94 Monkfish possession limit. § 648.22(c) Incidental possession limit of long-finned squid. § 648.322 Skate possession and landing restrictions. § 648.145 Black sea bass possession limits. § 648.235 Spiny dogfish possession and landing restrictions. |

NEFSC Study Fleet Program's Sampling Needs

Haddock-whole fish would be retained for maturity and fecundity research. The haddock retained would not exceed 30 fish per trip, or 360 fish for all trips. The maximum weight of haddock on any trip would not exceed 120 lb (54.43 kg) total weight per trip, and would not exceed 1,440 lb (653.17 kg) for all trips combined.

Yellowtail Flounder—whole fish would be retained for maturity, fecundity, bioelectrical impedance analysis (BIA), food habits, and genetic research. The yellowtail flounder

retained would not exceed 120 fish per month from each of the three stock areas (Gulf of Maine (GOM), Georges Bank (GB), Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic (SNE/MA)), or 1,800 fish total from each stock area for all trips. The maximum weight on any trip would not exceed 50 lb (22.70 kg) total weight, and would not exceed 1,500 lb (680.39 kg) for all trips combined.

Summer Flounder—whole fish would be retained for maturity, fecundity, BIA, food habits, and genetic research. The summer flounder retained would not exceed 120 fish per month from each of the three stock areas (GOM, GB, SNE/

MA), or 1,800 fish total from each stock area for all trips. The maximum weight on any trip would not exceed 100 lb (45.36 kg) total weight, and would not exceed 3,000 lb (1,360.78 kg) for all trips combined.

Winter Flounder—whole fish would be retained for maturity, fecundity, BIA, food habits, and genetic research. The winter flounder retained would not exceed 120 fish per month from each of the three stock areas (GOM, GB, SNE/MA), or 1,800 fish total from each stock area for all trips. The maximum weight on any trip would not exceed 75 lb (34.02 kg) total weight, and would not

exceed 2,250 lb (1,020.58 kg) for all trips combined.

Spiny Dogfish—whole fish would be retained for reproductive biology research. The spiny dogfish retained would not exceed 50 fish per month from each of the two stock areas (GOM, SNE/MA), or 1,200 fish total for all trips. The maximum weight on any trip would not exceed 390 lb (176.9 kg), and would not exceed 9,360 lb (4,245.62 kg) total for all trips.

Monkfish—whole fish would be retained for maturity and fecundity research. Monkfish retained would not exceed 10 fish per trip, or 120 fish total for all trips. The maximum weight on any trip would not exceed 100 lb (45.36 kg) total weight, and would not exceed 1,200 lb (544.31 kg) for all trips combined.

Cod—whole fish would be retained for tagging demonstrations and educational purposes. Cod to be retained would not exceed 15 fish per trip, or 60 cod for all trips. The maximum weight on any trip would not exceed 150 lb (68.04 kg) total weight, and would not exceed 600 lb (272.16 kg) for all trips combined.

Barndoor Skate—whole and, in some cases, live skates would be retained for age and growth research and species confirmation. The barndoor skates retained would not exceed 20 fish per 3-month period, or 80 skates total for all trips. The maximum weight on any trip would not exceed 75 lb (34.02 kg) total weight, and would not exceed 300 lb (136.08 kg) total for all trips combined.

Thorny Skate—whole and, in some cases, live skates would be retained for age and growth research and species confirmation. Thorny skates retained would not exceed 20 fish per 3-month period, or 80 skates total for all trips. The maximum weight on any trip would not exceed 75 lb (34.02 kg) whole weight, and would not exceed 300 lb (136.08 kg) total for all trips combined.

Black Sea Bass—whole fish would be retained for examination of seasonal and latitudinal patterns in energy allocation. This effort is in support of an ongoing study at the NEFSC to evaluate BIA to measure fish energy density and reproductive potential for stock assessment. Black sea bass retained would not exceed 75 fish per trip or 300 black sea bass total for all trips. The maximum weight on any trip would not exceed 250 lb (113.40 kg) total weight, and would not exceed 1,000 lb (453.59 kg) total for all trips combined.

Atlantic wolffish—whole fish would be retained for maturity, fecundity, and life history research. Atlantic wolffish retained would not exceed 30 fish per month or 360 fish total for all trips. The

maximum weight on any trip would not exceed 120 lb (54.4 kg) and would not exceed 3,000 lb (1,360.8 kg) total for all trips combined.

Cusk—whole fish would be retained for maturity, fecundity, and life history research. Cusk retained would not exceed 30 fish per month or 360 fish total for all trips. The maximum weight on any trip would not exceed 100 lb (45.4 kg) and would not exceed 2,300 lb (1,043.3 kg) total for all trips combined.

If approved, the applicant may request minor modifications and extensions to the EFP throughout the year. EFP modifications and extensions may be granted without further notice if they are deemed essential to facilitate completion of the proposed research and have minimal impact that do not change the scope or impact of the initially approved EFP request. Any fishing activity conducted outside the scope of the exempted fishing activity would be prohibited.

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

Dated: April 3, 2012.

Emily H. Menashes,

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

[FR Doc. 2012-8374 Filed 4-5-12; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XB151

New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC); Public Meeting

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

ACTION: Notice of a public meeting.

SUMMARY: The New England Fishery Management Council (Council) will hold a 3-day meeting from Tuesday through Thursday, April 24–April 26, 2012, to consider actions affecting New England fisheries in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

DATES: The meeting will be held on Tuesday, April 24th, Wednesday, April 25th and Thursday, April 26th beginning at 9 a.m. on Tuesday, and 8:30 a.m. on Wednesday and Thursday.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held at the Hilton Hotel, 20 Coogan Boulevard, Mystic, CT 06355-1900; telephone: (860) 572-0731; fax: (860) 572-0328.

Council address: New England Fishery Management Council, 50 Water

Street, Mill 2, Newburyport, MA 01950; telephone: (978) 465-0492.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Paul J. Howard, Executive Director, New England Fishery Management Council; telephone: (978) 465-0492.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Tuesday, April 24, 2012

Following introductions and any announcements, brief reports will be presented by the Council Chairman and Executive Director, NOAA Fisheries Regional Administrator (Northeast Region), Northeast Fisheries Science Center and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council liaisons, as well as NOAA General Counsel, representatives of the U.S. Coast Guard and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, and staff from the Vessel Monitoring Systems Operations and NOAA's Law Enforcement offices. During this period, the Council will receive an overview of activities related to the development of a Standard Bycatch Reporting Methodology amendment and the possible establishment of a joint Mid-Atlantic and New England Council Committee. That discussion will be followed by a review of any experimental fishery permit applications that have been made available since the January 2012 Council meeting.

Prior to a lunch break, the Council will discuss revising its list of management priorities for 2012 in the context of an Endangered Species Act listing for Atlantic sturgeon and the Council resources that may be required to address that issue.

Following a lunch break, the Council may revise its policies concerning procedures for advisory panel and plan development team operations. The Sea Scallop Committee will ask for approval of research priorities to be used in soliciting proposals funded through the NEFMC's sea scallop research set-aside program. During this report, the Northeast Fisheries Science Center will present information about future plans for the federal sea scallop survey, including the integration of Habcam (towed underwater camera) results with existing survey technologies. The Enforcement Committee will provide recommendations and ask for approval of comments related to Amendment 5 to the Atlantic Herring Fishery Management Plan (FMP), NOAA's revised enforcement priorities, issues related to coral reef protection, sector landings monitoring and correspondence to the Secretary of Commerce requesting NOAA General Counsel/Northeast participation in



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
NORTHEAST REGION
55 Great Republic Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930-2276

April 5, 2012

Paul J. Howard, Executive Director
New England Fishery Management Council
50 Water Street, Mill 2
Newburyport, MA 01950



Re: Experimental Fishing Permit (EFP) Proposal

Dear Paul:

The regulations on exempted fishing activities at 50 CFR 600.745(b)(3) require that the Regional Administrator forward copies of EFP applications to the Regional Fishery Management Council(s), the U.S. Coast Guard, and the appropriate fishery management agencies of affected states, accompanied by the following information: (A) The effect of the proposed EFP on the target and incidental species, including the effect on any Total Allowable Catch; (B) a citation of the regulation or regulations that, without the EFP, would prohibit the proposed activity; and (C) biological information relevant to the proposal, including appropriate statements of environmental impacts, including impacts on marine mammals and threatened or endangered species. Therefore, we have attached the Federal Register notice that describes the activities proposed by the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) Study Fleet Program. The primary goal of this EFP is to allow Study Fleet technicians and vessel operators to record more detailed and accurate data on discards, as well as to collect select species of interest, including undersized fish and/or in excess of trip limits for more intensive biological sampling.

An application for an EFP was submitted by NEFSC on February 28, 2012. The EFP would exempt federally permitted commercial fishing vessels from the regulations detailed below while participating in the Study Fleet Program and operating under projects managed by the NEFSC and funded by the Northeast Cooperative Research Program. The EFP would exempt participating vessels from the following types of fishery regulations: Minimum fish size restrictions; fish possession limits; prohibited fish species, not including species protected under the Endangered Species Act; and gear-specific fish possession restrictions for the purpose of at-sea sampling and, in limited situations and for research purposes only, to retain and land fish that would otherwise be prohibited.

Trained crew, while under normal fishing operations, would sort, weigh, and measure fish that are to be discarded, in a method that is consistent with current NEFSC observer protocols. An exemption from minimum fish size restrictions; fish possession limits; prohibited fish species, not including species protected under the Endangered Species Act; and gear-specific fish possession restrictions for at-sea sampling is required because



some discarded species would be on deck slightly longer than under normal sorting procedures.

Participating vessels would also be authorized to retain and land, in limited situations for research purposes only, fish that do not comply with fishing regulations. The vessels would be authorized to retain specific amounts of particular species in whole or round weight condition, in marked totes, which would be delivered to Study Fleet Program technicians. NEFSC would require participating vessels to obtain written approval from the NEFSC Study Fleet Program prior to landing any fish in excess of possession limits and/or below minimum size limits to ensure that the landed fish do not exceed any of the Study Fleet Program's collection needs, as detailed below.

| Species | Stock Area* | Gear Types# | Collection Frequency | Individual fish per collection period | Maximum weight allowed per trip (lb) | Maximum Allowance (lb) |
|---------------------|--------------|--------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Haddock | GB, GOM | OTF, LLB, GNS, DRS | Monthly | 30/month | 120 | 1,440 |
| Yellowtail Flounder | GOM, GB, SNE | OTF, GNS, DRS | Monthly | 120/stock area | 50 | 1,500 |
| Summer Flounder | GOM, GB, SNE | OTF, GNS, DRS | Monthly | 120/stock area | 100 | 3,000 |
| Winter Flounder | GOM, GB, SNE | OTF, GNS, DRS | Monthly | 120/stock area | 75 | 2,250 |
| Spiny Dogfish | GOM, GB, SNE | OTF, LLB, GNS, DRS | Monthly | 50/stock area | 390 | 9,360 |
| Monkfish | GOM, GB, SNE | OTF, GNS, DRS | Monthly | 10/month | 100 | 1,200 |
| Atlantic Cod | GOM, GB, SNE | OTF, LLB, GNS, DRS | Quarterly | 10/quarter | 150 | 600 |
| Barndoor Skate | GOM, GB, SNE | OTF, GNS, DRS | Quarterly | 20/quarter | 75 | 300 |
| Thorny Skate | GOM, GB, SNE | OTF, GNS, DRS | Quarterly | 20/quarter | 75 | 300 |
| Black Sea Bass | GB, SNE | PTF, OTF | Quarterly | 75/quarter | 250 | 1,000 |
| Atlantic wolffish | GOM, GB | OTF, GNS, LLB | Monthly | 30/month | 120 | 3,000 |
| Cusk | GOM, GB | OTF, GNS, LLB | Monthly | 30/month | 100 | 2,300 |

* Stock area abbreviations: Gulf of Maine (GOM), Georges Bank (GB), Southern New England (SNE)
 # Gear abbreviations: Otter trawl (OTF), bottom longline (LLB), sink gill net (GNS), sea scallop dredge (DRS), fish pot (PTF)

The participating vessels would be required to comply with all other applicable regulations specified at 50 CFR part 648. This includes catch of stocks allocated to Sectors by vessels on a Sector trip shall be deducted from the Sector's Annual Catch Entitlement for each Northeast multispecies stock, regardless of what fishery the vessel was participating in when the fish was caught.

Please respond to the following contact person with any comments you have on the experimental fishing proposal within 15 days of your receipt of this letter.

CONTACT

Brett Alger
Sustainable Fisheries Division, Northeast Region, NMFS
55 Great Republic Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930
Phone: (978) 675-2153
FAX: (978) 281-9135

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "George H. Darcy".

George H. Darcy
Assistant Regional Administrator
for Sustainable Fisheries