



National Marine Fisheries Service
Northeast Regional Office
Sustainable Fisheries Division
<http://www.nero.nmfs.gov>



Status Report of Northeast Region Actions

Prepared for the April 24, 2011 – April 26, 2012
Meeting of the
New England Fishery Management Council

April 10, 2012

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New England Council Actions

Groundfish

Secretarial Amendment for Small-Mesh Multispecies

NMFS published a final rule for a Secretarial amendment for small-mesh multispecies in the Federal Register on March 30, 2012. Effective May 1, 2012, the rule will implement ACLs and AMs for the small-mesh multispecies fishery while the Council continues the development of Amendment 19 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan.

The measures include: A stock area-wide acceptable biological catch, ACLs, and TAL limits for the four stocks of small-mesh multispecies; an in-season AM that would reduce the possession limit of red hake to 400 lb and the possession limit of silver or offshore hake to 1,000 lb, if 90 percent of a TAL is projected to be harvested; and a pound-for-pound payback AM if an ACL is exceeded.

Sector Rule

Nineteen sectors have submitted operations plans and contracts for fishing year (FY) 2012. The operations plans include all previously granted exemptions and a number of new exemption requests. A total of 49 exemptions from the Northeast multispecies regulations were requested. These requests are grouped into several categories in the proposed rule: Exemptions previously approved (16); new exemption requests for FY 2012 (9); requested exemptions not being considered in this action because they are prohibited (13); were previously rejected and no new information was provided (8); or, were initially considered, but not proposed due to concern based on the results of the recent Gulf of Maine cod stock assessment (3). A full discussion of the 25 exemptions being considered is contained in the proposed rule that published February 15, 2012. The comment period ended March 1, 2012. A final rule will be published in late-April.

Gulf of Maine Cod Interim Action

On April 3, 2012, NMFS published interim measures for the 2012 fishing year Gulf of Maine cod fishery which begins on May 1.

These measures include a total fishery ACL of 6,700 mt and allow sectors to carry over 10 percent of their unused FY 2011 annual catch entitlement (ACE); however, the carryover is included within the total fishery ACL as opposed to allowing carryover above and beyond the ACL. The interim measures also include changes to recreational management measures. The angler possession limit was reduced from 10 to 9 fish, and the minimum fish size was reduced from 24 to 19 inches.

Framework Adjustment 47

The New England Fishery Management Council approved Framework Adjustment (FW 47) for submission to NMFS for review on November 16, 2011. The Council submitted FW 47 to NMFS on February 8, 2012. A proposed rule published in the Federal Register on March 27, 2012 and the comment period closed April 11, 2012. A final rule is expected to publish in late-April 2012.

Amendment 17

NMFS approved Amendment 17 on March 8, 2012. The final rule implementing Amendment 17 was published in the Federal Register on March 23, 2012. Amendment 17 amends the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan to explicitly define and facilitate the effective operation of state-operated permit banks.

The proposed rule for Amendment 17 published on December 22, 2011. Comments on the proposed rule were originally required to be submitted to NMFS by January 23, 2012. However, the comment period on the Amendment was extended through February 10, 2012.

Rule to Remove Accountability Measures for the Recreational Fishery for Gulf of Maine Haddock

NMFS implemented measures on January 6, 2012 to address an overage of the portion of the 2010 fishing year Gulf of Maine haddock annual catch limit allocated to the recreational fishery. However, new data indicate that there was not an overage of Gulf of Maine haddock in the recreational fishery for the 2010 fishing year. Therefore, NMFS published a final rule on April 20, 2012 to remove the accountability measures and revert back to the recreational measures previously in place; no possession limit and an 18 inch minimum fish size of Gulf of Maine haddock.

DAS and ACE Summary Report
May 1, 2011 – April 16, 2012

DAS Leasing Program

	Common Pool	Sectors
Total Leases Processed:	30	347
Total Leases Approved:	22	269
Number of Distinct Permits:	27	2289
Total DAS Leased:	342	7,598
Average Cost per DAS Leased*:	\$115.62	\$90.10
Highest Cost per DAS Leased:	\$250.00	\$6,500.00
Lowest Cost per DAS Leased:	\$0.00	\$0.00

* For leases greater than \$ 0.00

Sector ACE Transfers

STOCK	Number of Transfers	Total Pounds Transferred
CC/GOM Yellowtail Flounder	120	648,425
GB Cod East	71	90,728
GB Cod West	114	2,614,086
GB Haddock East	19	377,266
GB Haddock West	25	1,275,787
GB Winter Flounder	61	436,893
GB Yellowtail Flounder	56	473,189
GOM Cod	167	2,708,219
GOM Haddock	102	649,228
GOM Winter Flounder	82	107,561
Plaice	53	663,439
Pollock	56	3,394,642
Redfish	34	514,210
SNE/MA Yellowtail Flounder	60	325,275
White Hake	147	2,044,296
Witch Flounder	112	667,304
Total	1,279	16,990,548

Scallops

Delmarva Emergency Action - The New England Fishery Management Council recently requested that we implement an emergency action to close the Delmarva Access Area and redistribute trips allocated into that area into other areas. We are currently considering this request for emergency action. Regardless of the agency's decision on taking emergency action, we will not take action prior to the start of FY 2012. As a result, the current trip assignments posted on our website are effective beginning March 1, 2012, until further notice. If we do close the Delmarva Access Area, we will notify scallop vessel owners as soon as possible of any adjustments to their access area trip allocations. In the meantime, vessels with Delmarva trips can fish their trips at the start of 2012 or wait until we have announced any plans on adjusting these allocations.

Final Rule for Framework 23 - The final rule for Framework 23 published in the *Federal Register* on April 6, 2012. The rule is effective May 7, 2012. Framework 23 addresses the following issues:

Measures Effective May 7, 2012

- Federally permitted Northern Gulf of Maine (NGOM) permitted vessels may declare a state-waters only trip and not have those landings applied to the yearly Federal NGOM allocation. This measure provides federally permitted NGOM vessels more flexibility to fish in state and Federal waters.
- Scallop vessels will be able to make their scallop fishing trip declaration shoreward of the vessel monitoring system (VMS) Demarcation Line following a steam from a distant port, rather than being required to enter a designated port to make their trip declaration. This modification of the scallop VMS trip notification procedures to improve flexibility for the scallop fleet.
- A revision to the yellowtail flounder accountability measure closure schedules to better target months with the highest yellowtail flounder catch rates. This Improves the effectiveness of the scallop fishery's accountability measures adopted under Scallop Amendment 15 related to the yellowtail flounder annual catch limits

Measures Effective May 1, 2013

- Turtle deflector dredges will be required May 1 through October 31 each year, starting in 2013 in all waters West of 71 degrees W. longitude. This measure has be put in place to reduce impacts on sea turtles that come in contact with a scallop dredge on the sea floor because they will be more easily deflected over the dredge frame and dredge bag rather than getting caught on the frame.

For additional information on Framework 23 contact Emily Gilbert at (978) 281-9244.

Monkfish

None at this time

Herring

Closure of the Directed Herring Fishery in Area 2

The directed fishery for Atlantic herring was closed in Area 2 as of 0001 hours, February 20, 2012. Vessels issued Federal Atlantic herring permits were prohibited from fishing for, catching, possessing or landing more than 2,000 lb of herring from Area 2 beginning February 20, 2012, per trip or calendar day until December 31, 2012.

Final Rule Reducing the 2012 Herring Specifications

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The herring specifications have already been set for 2010-2012; this action reduced the 2012 specifications for the herring fishery to account for overages in 2010. In 2010, there were catch limit overages in herring management areas 1A and 1B. This action deducted the 2010 overages from 2012. Therefore, in 2012, the annual catch limit for Area 1A is 25,592 mt (reduced from 26,546 mt) and the annual catch limit for Area 1B is 2,725 mt (reduced from 4,362 mt). This action was published in the Federal Register on February 24, 2012 (77 FR 10978). For additional information, please contact Carrie Nordeen at (978) 281-9272.

Closure of the Directed Herring Fishery in Area 1B

The directed fishery for Atlantic herring was closed in Area 1B as of 0001 hours, February 24, 2012. Vessels issued Federal Atlantic herring permits were prohibited from fishing for, catching, possessing or landing more than 2,000 lb of herring from Area 1B beginning February 24, 2012, per trip or calendar day until December 31, 2012.

Skate

Proposed 2012-2013 Specifications for the Northeast Skate Fishery: The proposed rule for 2012-2013 Northeast Skate Specifications published in the Federal Register on February 22, 2012. The comment period closed March 23, 2012. The final rule is under review by NMFS. The proposed specifications, including the skate annual catch limit (ACL), annual catch target (ACT), and total allowable landings (TALs) for the wing and bait fisheries are consistent with the measures implemented by Secretarial emergency action in 2011. These include a 23-percent increase in ACL and a 56-percent increase in TAL compared to 2010 levels. Possession limits in the skate wing fishery were proposed to be reduced (to 2,200 lb in Season 1 and 3,600 lb in Season 2), while possession limits in the bait fishery were proposed to be increased (to 25,000 lb). The proposed rule also included minor modifications to skate status determination criteria and fishery monitoring. For more information contact Tobey Curtis at (978)-281-9273.

Atlantic Deep-Sea Red Crab

None at this time

Mid-Atlantic Council Actions

Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass

Summer Flounder Quota Transfers: On March 12, 2012, NMFS published a temporary rule in the Federal Register (77 FR 14481) that transferred 879,118 lb of commercial summer flounder quota from North Carolina to Virginia. On April 3, 2012, NMFS published an additional temporary rule in the Federal Register (77 FR 19951) that transferred 831,241 lb of commercial summer flounder quota from North Carolina to Virginia for 2012, and retroactively transferred 8,601 lb of commercial summer flounder quota from North Carolina to Virginia for 2011. The revised summer flounder quotas for calendar year 2011 are: North Carolina, 3,151,783 lb; and Virginia, 5,305,295 lb. The revised summer flounder quotas for calendar year 2012 are: North Carolina, 1,783,420 lb; and Virginia, 4,423,924 lb. Both transfers were prompted by landings of a number of North Carolina fishing vessels authorized to land summer flounder in Virginia under safe harbor provisions due to hazardous shoaling in Oregon Inlet, North Carolina

Atlantic Bluefish

2012 Atlantic Bluefish Specifications: On February 15, 2012, NMFS published a proposed rule in the Federal Register (77 FR 8776). The comment period closed on March 1, 2012. The final rule is under review in the region. This is the first year of specifications under the provisions of the MAFMC's ACL and AM Omnibus Amendment. Compared to 2011, the specifications will increase the commercial quota by 10%, and reduce the recreational harvest limit by 2%. However, both the commercial quota and recreational harvest limit are greater than 2011 landings. Additionally, 491,672 lb of bluefish have been approved by NOAA's Grants Management Division to be utilized in the Research Set-Aside Program.

Spiny Dogfish

Proposed 2012 Specifications for the Spiny Dogfish Fishery: The proposed rule for the 2012 Spiny Dogfish Specifications published in the Federal Register on March 19, 2012. The comment period ends on April 18, 2012. The proposed specifications include an ACL, commercial quota, and trip limit. The proposed commercial quota is consistent with the recommendations of the New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils (35.694 million lb). This represents a 78-percent increase in the commercial quota compared to 2011. The trip limit is proposed to remain at status quo (3,000 lb) in order to prolong the fishing season and avoid fishery closures. For more information contact Tobey Curtis at (978)-281-9273.

Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish (MSB)

Final Rule for 2012 Atlantic Mackerel, 2012-2014 *Illex* and Longfin Squid Specifications; and Interim Final Rule for 2012 Butterfish Specifications - On March 21, 2012 (77 FR 16472), NMFS published a final rule to establish 2012 specifications for Atlantic mackerel (mackerel) fishery, and 2012-2014 specifications for longfin and *Illex* squid. Compared to 2011, the specifications reduced the commercial mackerel quota by 13%, and reduced the *Illex* quota by 2%. Additionally, they increased the longfin squid quota by 13%. These measures are effective on April 20, 2012. The rulemaking also included interim final 2012 specifications for the butterfish fishery. The butterfish specifications are revised from the proposed rule as a result of a public comment that pointed out an inconsistency in the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's (MAFMC's) recommendations and the regulations regarding the MAFMC's risk policy. As a result, NMFS implemented the status quo (same as 2011) butterfish quota and butterfish mortality cap on the longfin squid fishery in an interim final rule to allow for public comment on the adjustment. We are

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accepting public comments on the interim final measures for butterfish until April 20, 2012. After reviewing public comments, we will publish a final rule to implement measures for the remainder of the 2012 fishing year. For more information, contact Aja Szumylo at [978-281-9195](tel:978-281-9195).

Tilefish

None at this time

Surfclam and Ocean Quahog

None at this time

ACL/AM Omnibus Amendment

Omnibus ACL/AM Amendment Final Rule: NMFS approved the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's Omnibus Amendment to implement Annual Catch Limits (ACLs) and Accountability Measures (AMs) on August 12, 2011. The Secretarial approval decision was separated from the final rule so the Council could be notified of the approval at their August 16-18, 2011, meeting. The final rule to implement the approved measures published in the Federal Register on September 29, 2011 (76 FR 60606). Measures become effective on October 31, 2011.

The rule to implement the amendment measures is largely unchanged from the proposed measures. The rule implements the following components: Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) control rules, a risk policy use by the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) in deriving and recommending ABC to the Council; ACL and AM approaches for all species except longfin and *Illex* squids, which are exempt due to annual life cycles; and mechanisms for assessing and changing the performance of this new catch system. (Michael Ruccio, 978-281-9104).

Other Actions

American Lobster Proposed Rule to Implement a Limited Access Program in Lobster Area 1 (inshore Gulf of Maine). A proposed rule was published in the Federal Register on November 18, 2011 which proposes to implement a limited entry program in the Area 1 lobster trap fishery, consistent with the recommendations of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) in Addendum XV to Amendment 3 of the Commission's Interstate Fishery Management Plan for American Lobster. The program would prevent the migration of trap effort into Area 1 by capping the number of Federal Area 1 permits at recent levels. The 45-day comment period ended on January 2, 2012 and many comments were received. A final rule, in consideration of the comments received, is expected to publish in June 2012. For more information or copies of the proposed rule and Draft Environmental Assessment contact Carol Shé at 978-282-8464.

ANPR Seeking Public Comment on Vessel Baseline Restrictions - NMFS, in consultation with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and the New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils has published an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPR) to collect public comments on the current regulations that restrict the length, tonnage, and horsepower of a replacement fishing vessel and on possible changes to those regulations. The notice published in the *Federal Register* on October 5, 2011, and comments must be submitted by December 5, 2011. We are at an early stage in this process, and there are

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no firm plans for if, how much, or when the vessel baseline regulations might change. A copy of the ANPR is available on the Northeast Regional Office website (www.nero.noaa.gov). For additional information contact Douglas Potts at 978-281-9341.

Experimental Fishery Actions

Research Document Applications under Review

The Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) submitted an LOA application on February 7, 2012, requesting acknowledgment that the 2011 Northeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (NEAMAP) trawl survey meets the definition of a scientific research vessel conducting a scientific research activity. The NEAMAP near-shore trawl survey, which is supported under the 2012 Mid-Atlantic Research Set-Aside Program, samples Mid-Atlantic and Southern New England waters that are not sampled by NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). VIMS also submitted an EFP application to authorize vessels to harvest mid-Atlantic RSA quota in excess of possession limits and during Federal fishery closures. Proceeds generated from the harvest of RSA quota would be used to fund the survey program and compensate the vessel harvesting the RSA quota. For additional information, contact Carly Bari ([978-281-9326](tel:978-281-9326), carly.bari@noaa.gov).

Fisheries Specialists submitted a complete application for an EFP on March 5, 2012, to conduct commercial fishing activities that the regulations would otherwise restrict. The EFP would authorize four limited access general category (LAGC) individual fishing quota (IFQ) vessels to temporarily possess and scientifically sample fish caught during commercial fishing operations that would otherwise be required to be immediately discarded. The requested exemptions from size and possession limits are in support of a project that proposes to characterize bycatch in the Southern New England scallop fishery. This project is titled "Bycatch Characterization in the Southern New England Sea Scallop Fishery," (12-SCA-12) and has been selected to be funded under the 2012 scallop RSA program. Because catch sampling of bycatch will occur during commercial fishing operations, Fisheries Specialists requested temporary exemptions from size and possession limits of potential bycatch species. For additional information, contact Christopher Biegel (978-281-93112, christopher.biegel@noaa.gov).

In response to the 2012 Sea Scallop RSA Program request for proposals, NMFS received a proposal from VIMS, entitled, "An Assessment of Sea Scallop Abundance and Distribution in the Hudson Canyon Closed Area and Adjacent Inshore Areas" (12-SCA-13). In support of this project, VIMS submitted an LOA request on March 22, 2012. Under this award, VIMS proposes to conduct a survey of scallop spatial distribution and abundance, finfish bycatch rates, and scallop meat yields in the Hudson Canyon Access Area (HCAA) and adjacent inshore areas utilizing both the NMFS survey dredge and the Coonamessett Farm (CFFI) Turtle Deflector Dredge (TDD). The primary objective of this study will be to estimate exploitable biomass for the HCAA and to supplement survey information from the aforementioned open area gathered during a 2011 VIMS scallop survey. For additional information, contact Christopher Biegel (978-281-93112, christopher.biegel@noaa.gov).

In response to the 2012 Sea Scallop RSA Program request for proposals, the NMFS received a proposal from CFFI, in collaboration with VIMS, entitled, "Testing of Scallop Dredge Bag Design Changes for Flatfish Bycatch Reduction" (12-SCA-05). In support of this project, VIMS submitted an LOA request on March 6, 2012. Under this award, VIMS and CFFI propose to continue to test modified dredge bag designs to the CFFI TDD and a low profile dredge. All trips will occur between July 1, 2012, and January 31, 2013. The vessels will conduct their research tows in the scallop access areas within groundfish Closed Area I and/or Closed Area II and adjacent open areas. For additional information, contact Christopher Biegel (978-281-93112, christopher.biegel@noaa.gov).

In response to the 2012 Sea Scallop RSA Program request for proposals, NMFS received a proposal from CFFI, in collaboration with VIMS, entitled, "Seasonal Bycatch Survey of the Georges Bank Scallop Fishery" (12-SCA-06). In support of this project, VIMS submitted an LOA request on March 6, 2012. Under this award, CFFI/VIMS propose to continue the examination of temporal and spatial influences on bycatch of groundfish species, specifically yellowtail flounder, in the Atlantic sea scallop fishery on Georges Bank and Southern New England. The primary objective is to quantify yellowtail flounder bycatch rates in comparison to scallop meat yield, with the goal of optimizing the harvest of scallops while minimizing impacts to the yellowtail flounder stock. This task will be accomplished through a year-long, site-specific survey. For additional information, contact Christopher Biegel (978-281-93112, christopher.biegel@noaa.gov).

Research Document Application Review Completed

The Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) was issued an letter of acknowledgement (LOA) on February 17, 2012, that acknowledges that the 2011 Northeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (NEAMAP) trawl survey meets the definition of a scientific research vessel conducting a scientific research activity. The NEAMAP near-shore trawl survey, which is supported under the 2012 Mid-Atlantic Research Set-Aside Program, samples Mid-Atlantic and Southern New England waters that are not sampled by NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). VIMS was also issued an exempted fishing permit (EFP) application to authorize vessels to harvest mid-Atlantic RSA quota in excess of possession limits and during Federal fishery closures. Proceeds generated from the harvest of RSA quota would be used to fund the survey program and compensate the vessel harvesting the RSA quota. For additional information, contact Carly Bari ([978-281-9326](tel:978-281-9326), carly.bari@noaa.gov).

The University of Rhode Island, in collaboration with Charles Borden, were issued an EFP on January 26, 2012, in support of two 2012 Mid-Atlantic RSA funded projects. Both projects are fixed gear hard bottom pot surveys for scup and black sea bass in southern New England and Mid-Atlantic waters. The EFP exempts the minimum scup and black sea bass escape vent sizes; minimum scup and black sea bass size limits for data collection purposes; and summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, longfin squid, and bluefish quota closures and possession limits for compensation fishing purposes. Proceeds generated from the harvest of RSA quota will be used to fund the survey program and compensate the vessel harvesting the RSA quota. For additional information, contact Carly Bari ([978-281-9326](tel:978-281-9326), carly.bari@noaa.gov).

Wallace & Associates on behalf of Truex Enterprises were issued an EFP to harvest Atlantic surfclams and ocean quahogs from the Georges Bank (GB) Closure Area. This EFP would allow Truex Enterprises to test the effectiveness of at-sea and dockside shellfish sampling protocols that are necessary to facilitate the harvesting of Atlantic surfclams from a portion of GB that is currently closed due to the historical presence of the toxins (primarily saxotoxin) that are known to cause paralytic shellfish poisoning in humans. The EFP exempts three vessels from the GB Closure Area. The purpose and goal of the project would allow for continued research to assess not only the performance of the approved protocol, but also to allow for sample collection and testing through another year to gain additional data where toxin levels may be higher than were present during the pilot phase of the study. Atlantic surfclams would be commercially harvested under this EFP, predominantly. For additional information contact Jason Berthiaume at 978-281-9177, or Jason.Berthiaume@noaa.gov.

The University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, School for Marine Science and Technology (SMAST) was issued an LOA on January 26, 2012, that acknowledges a project that tests a modified sweep that is designed to reduce the catch of Southern New England (SNE) winter flounder in the large mesh groundfish fishery. The sweep has "windows" that are intended to allow flatfish to escape while retaining target catch. Fish caught incidentally to the research may be sold commercially. For additional information contact Brett Alger at (978) 675-2153, or Brett.Alger@noaa.gov

The University of New Hampshire was issued an LOA on February 27, 2012. The project, which is funded by the National Sea Grant program, involves harvesting winter flounder broodstock from Federal waters South of Martha's Vineyard to be retained for a brooding and stock enhancement study. Once captured, the broodstock will be transported to a hatchery and allowed to spawn naturally. Afterwards, all spawned-out adults will be released back into Vineyard Sound or the point of capture. From these broodstock, the researchers will rear and tag up to 75,000 juvenile winter flounder for pilot-scale releases. In addition, they will test and compare two different culture strategies and two different release strategies. They will evaluate the overall successfulness of the releases by estimating the mortality (survival) of released fish, describing the diet transition in released fish, and studying the movements of released fish. No fish will be landed for sale. For additional information contact Travis Ford at (978) 281-9233, or Travis.Ford@noaa.gov

The U.S Fish and Wildlife Service was issued an LOA on February 9, 2012, to complete the winter component of a coast-wide striped bass tagging program. The vessels participating in the study are using hook and line gear to tag

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striped bass off the coasts of Virginia and North Carolina to assess the annual mortality of striped bass due to fishing, as well as derive information on movement and migration, age and growth, and habitat use. Although the target species of this fishery-independent tagging program is striped bass, other species of interest may be tagged or sampled for biological information. No fish will be landed for sale. For additional information contact Ryan Silva at (978) 281-9326, or Ryan.Silva@noaa.gov

Normandeau Associates, Inc. was issued an LOA on March 6, 2012 that acknowledges an ongoing winter flounder stock assessment study. This study will build on previous work and continue to obtain data on the number of adult winter flounder in the local spawning area near the Pilgrim Nuclear Power Station in Western Cape Cod Bay. The data will be used to generate a population model for this area. The vessel will not retain any regulated finfish or lobster. However, a portion of the longhorn sculpin catch will be retained and landed for sale. For additional information contact Brett Alger at (978) 675-2153, or Brett.Alger@noaa.gov

The Northeast Fisheries Science Center submitted an application for an EFP on February 28, 2012, for the 2012 Study Fleet Program. The EFP would exempt federally permitted commercial fishing vessels from the following regulations while participating in the Study Fleet Program: Minimum fish size restrictions; fish possession limits, not including species protected under the Endangered Species Act (ESA); and gear-specific fish possession restrictions for the purpose of at-sea sampling. The EFP is currently published in the Federal Register (77 FR 20792) and is open for comment until April 23, 2012. For additional information contact Brett Alger at (978) 675-2153, or Brett.Alger@noaa.gov

Shoals Marine Laboratory submitted an application on February 14, 2012, for a re-authorization of their EEAA to conduct education fishing activities for undergraduate education with marine sciences. Activities that occur on any of the Shoals Marine Laboratory's four vessels EEAA will be conducted to support the Laboratory's academic programs. Fishing activity conducted onboard any vessel will occur primarily at locations within a 100-mile radius of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and within 6 nautical miles of the shore. Any species captured that is not currently listed as endangered or threatened could be retained for further study at the Shoals Marine Laboratory. For additional information contact Brett Alger at (978) 675-2153, or Brett.Alger@noaa.gov

The Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries, in collaboration with the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, School for Marine Science and Technology, was issued an LOA on March 26, 2012. The goal of the study is to collect information to improve the understanding of the GOM cod inshore spawning stock and document spawning site fidelity and connectivity among three known subpopulations. The work involves the tagging, collection, and sampling of cod within the GOM Cod Spawning Protection Area (Whaleback area). Work will be conducted over a 2-year period. Research will begin on April 1, 2012, and end June 30, 2012, and then restart again in 2013 during the same time period. All work will be conducted from the MA DMF research vessel *Alosa* (MS 301) and no fish will be landed for sale. For additional information contact Travis Ford at (978) 281-9233, or Travis.Ford@noaa.gov.

Rutgers University was issued an LOA on April 2, 2012, to extend a black sea bass sex and size distribution study. The objective of this project is to provide data for the stock assessment of black sea bass. This project was funded in 2011 under the Mid-Atlantic Research Set-Aside program, but the researchers were unable to fully achieve their research goals and, therefore, have requested an extension for 2012. The study is designed to monitor changes in the sex and age-at-size distribution of black sea bass at three sites off southern New Jersey during the spawning season (May through August). Tagging and sampling will be conducted on dedicated research trips for four periods using both trap and hook-and-line fishing gear. No fish will be landed for sale. Participating for-hire vessels may not carry customers during tagging activities while operating under this LOA. For additional information, contact Carly Bari ([978-281-9326](tel:978-281-9326), carly.bari@noaa.gov).