

ALWTRT meetings included a "Northeast Inshore Lobster Trap/Pot" subgroup that met on May 19, 2003, in Portsmouth, NH; an "Offshore Trap/Pot" subgroup that met on June 17, 2003, in Gloucester, MA, and a "Southeast/Mid-Atlantic" subgroup that is expected to meet on June 23, 2003, in Philadelphia, PA. All ALWTRT meetings, including subgroup meetings, are open to the public. Recommendations and/or proposals from the full ALWTRT and subsequent subgroup meetings will be used to draft a management options document that will be distributed at scoping meetings.

### Management Options

This notice provides an opportunity for public involvement in identifying the scope of the issues to be addressed in the EIS. NMFS requests comments on management options, including those provided by the ALWTRT, for this action. Additionally, NMFS is seeking information on the range of impacts that should be considered for the various options. Background documents provided to the ALWTRT and general public in advance of the April 2003 meeting are available for review (see Electronic Access). A summary of options from the ALWTRT meetings will be made available prior to the scoping meetings (see Electronic Access). Comments received on this action will assist NMFS in determining the alternatives for rulemaking to reduce interactions of right, humpback, and fin whales with commercial fisheries.

The ALWTRP (50 CFR 229.32) is a multi-faceted plan that includes area closures, gear modification requirements in areas open to fixed gear fishing, Dynamic Area Management (DAM) and SAM programs, gear research to develop new modifications to current practices and/or fishing techniques, a right whale Sighting Advisory System, and a disentanglement program to free whales incidentally caught in fishing gear. Proposals to amend the ALWTRP that were discussed by the ALWTRT included, but were not limited to, eliminating or modifying the DAM program; expanding the SAM program by increasing the areas in time and space; modifying the current gear modifications in SAM and DAM areas by allowing for two buoy lines and polypropylene line on the bottom third of the buoy line; eliminating the DAM and SAM programs and implementing a phase-in period for broad-based gear modifications, including a requirement for sinking/neutral buoyant line in groundlines or reducing the line profile of groundlines; increased gear research

to reduce risk associated with buoy lines; consideration of regional and seasonal differences in fishing practices in the waters regulated under the ALWTRP; regulating other trap/pot fisheries (e.g. hagfish, Jonah crab, red crab, black sea bass, scup, tautog, shrimp, conch/whelk) under the ALWTRP; exempting waters both by area and depth based on lack of whale sightings in these areas, or unlikelihood that whales dive to deep depths; consideration of "special areas" where additional time is needed to phase-in sinking/neutral buoyant line in groundlines or reducing the line profile of groundlines due to rocky bottom areas; clarifications to the ALWTRP regulatory language; revised gear marking scheme; increased gear research to reduce risk associated with buoy lines; and expanded ALWTRP outreach.

Within the comment period established by this notice (see DATES), NMFS will hold six public scoping meetings to gather public comment on the development and implementation of new management measures for the ALWTRP.

### Schedule of Public Scoping Meetings

The dates, times, and locations of the meetings are scheduled as follows:

1. *Monday, July 7, 2003 - Fairhaven, MA, 6–9 p.m.*

Holiday Inn, 110 Middle Street, Fairhaven, MA 02719

2. *Wednesday, July 9, 2003 - Cape May Court House, NJ, 6–9 p.m.*

Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Cape May County, 355 Court House/ South Dennis Road (Route 657), Cape May Court House, NJ

3. *Thursday, July 10, 2003 - Washington, NC, 6–9 p.m.*

North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries, Pamlico District Office, 943 Washington Square Mall, Washington, NC 27889

4. *Monday, July 14, 2003 - Portland, ME, 6–9 p.m.*

Holiday Inn - Portland by the Bay, 88 Spring Street, Portland, ME 04101

5. *Tuesday, July 15, 2003 - Ellsworth, ME, 6–9 p.m.*

Holiday Inn, 215 High Street, Ellsworth, ME 04505

6. *Thursday, July 17, 2003 - Ft. Pierce, FL, 6–9 p.m.*

Holiday Inn, Okeechobee Road, Ft. Pierce, FL 34950

### Special Accommodations

These meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Request for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Diane Borggaard 978 - 281-9328.

Dated: June 24, 2003.

**Laurie K. Allen,**

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

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[Docket No. 030602141-3141-01; I.D. 061703A]

RIN 0648-ZB55

### Availability of Grant Funds for Fiscal Year 2004

**AGENCY:** National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce (DOC).

**ACTION:** Omnibus Notice Announcing the Availability of Grant Funds for Fiscal Year 2004.

**SUMMARY:** The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) announces the availability of grant funds for Fiscal Year 2004. The purpose of this notice is to provide the general public with a single source of program and application information related to the Agency's competitive grant offerings, and it contains the information about those programs required to be published in the **Federal Register**. This omnibus notice is designed to replace the multiple **Federal Register** notices that traditionally advertised the availability of NOAA's discretionary funds for its various programs. It should be noted that additional program initiatives unanticipated at the time of the publication of this notice may be announced through both subsequent **Federal Register** notices and the NOAA web site: <http://www.ofa.noaa.gov/~amd/SOLINDEX.HTML>.

**DATES:** Proposals must be received by the date and time indicated under each program listing in the **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** section.

**ADDRESSES:** Proposals must be submitted to the addresses listed in the **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** section for each program.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** For a copy of the full funding opportunity