

whole, reflects an appropriate and equitable balance and mix of interests given the responsibilities of each AP. Criteria for membership include one or more of the following: (a) experience in the recreational fishing industry involved in catching swordfish, tunas, billfish, or sharks; (b) experience in the commercial fishing industry for HMS; (c) experience in fishery-related industries (marinas, bait and tackle shops); (d) experience in the scientific community working with HMS; (e) representation of a private, non-governmental, regional, (non-Federal) state, national, or international organization representing marine fisheries, environmental, governmental or academic interests dealing with HMS.

Five additional members of the AP include one voting representative each of the New England Fishery Management Council, the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, and the Caribbean Fishery Management Council. The AP also includes 22 *ex-officio* participants: 20 representatives of the constituent states and two representatives of the constituent interstate commissions: the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission.

NMFS will provide the necessary administrative support, including technical assistance, for the AP. However, NMFS will not compensate participants with monetary support of any kind. Depending on availability of funds, members may be reimbursed for travel costs related to the AP meetings.

C. Meeting Schedule

Meetings of each AP will be held as frequently as necessary but are routinely held once each year in the Spring. Often the meetings are held jointly, and may be held in conjunction with other advisory panel meetings or public hearings.

The HMS AP meeting on September 30, 2003, will focus on Atlantic shark management. NMFS published a proposed rule and notice of availability of Draft Amendment 1 to the HMS FMP on August 1, 2003 (68 FR 45196). The 60-day comment period ends on September 30, 2003. Since the alternatives presented in Draft Amendment 1 apply only to management measures for Atlantic sharks, the HMS AP discussion will be limited to Atlantic shark management. There will be time for the public to comment on shark management at the end of the meeting.

The joint HMS-Billfish AP meeting in February 2004 will focus on management alternatives for Atlantic tunas, swordfish, sharks, and billfish. On July 9, 2003, NMFS published a notice of intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for Amendment 2 to the HMS FMP and Amendment 2 to the Billfish FMP (68 FR 40907). Amendment 2 to the HMS FMP is intended to address issues regarding quota allocation of Atlantic bluefin tuna, swordfish, and sharks among and within domestic fishing categories, examine management alternatives to improve and streamline the current HMS limited access permit program, conduct a 5-year review of HMS essential fish habitat (EFH) identifications, and address exempted fishing and scientific research permitting issues consistent with rebuilding plans, the Magnuson-Stevens Act, Atlantic Tunas Convention Act (ATCA), and other relevant Federal laws. Amendment 2 to the Billfish FMP is intended to conduct a 5-year review of Atlantic billfish EFH identifications and address other issues as appropriate, consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Act, ATCA, and other relevant Federal laws.

Special Accommodations

These meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Othel Freeman or Carol Douglas (*see FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT*) at least 7 days prior to the meeting.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 971 *et seq.* and 1801 *et seq.*

Date: August 21, 2003.

Bruce C. Morehead,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 060903A]

Notice of Availability of Draft Stock Assessment Reports

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

ACTION: Notice of availability; request for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS revised the Alaska, Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico, and Pacific marine mammal stock assessment reports (SARs) in accordance with the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA). Draft 2003 reports are available for public review and comment.

DATES: Comments must be received by November 25, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Send comments or requests for copies of reports to: Chief, Marine Mammal Conservation Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910-3226, Attn: Stock Assessments. Comments may also be sent via facsimile (fax) to 301-713-0376. NMFS will not accept comments submitted via e-mail or Internet.

Copies of the Alaska Regional SARs may be requested from Robyn Angliss, Alaska Fisheries Science Center, NMFS, 7600 Sand Point Way, NE BIN 15700, Seattle, WA 98115-0070.

Copies of the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Regional SARs may be requested from Janeen Quintal, Northeast Fisheries Science Center, 166 Water St., Woods Hole, MA 02543 or Steven Swartz, Southeast Fisheries Science Center, 75 Virginia Beach Dr., Miami, FL 33149.

Copies of the Pacific Regional SARs may be requested from Cathy Campbell, Southwest Regional Office, NMFS, 501 West Ocean Boulevard, Long Beach, CA 90802-4213.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Tom Eagle, Office of Protected Resources, 301-713-2322, ext. 105, e-mail Tom.Eagle@noaa.gov; Robyn Angliss 206-526-4032, e-mail Robyn.Angliss@noaa.gov, regarding Alaska regional stock assessments; Janeen Quintal, 508-495-2252, e-mail Janeen.Quintal@noaa.gov, regarding Northwest Atlantic regional stock assessments; Steven Swartz, 305-361-4487, e-mail Steven.Swartz@noaa.gov, regarding Mid-Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico regional stock assessments; or Cathy Campbell, 562-280-4060, e-mail Cathy.E.Campbell@noaa.gov, regarding Pacific regional stock assessments.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Electronic Access

All stock assessment reports and the guidelines for preparing them are available via the Internet at http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/prot_res/PR2/Stock_Assessment_Program/sars.html.