

possession limit may have positive impacts by providing the market a regular product supply, and avoiding market gluts and price fluctuations.

It is expected that the rollover of unused quota from Winter I to Winter II would reduce social burdens associated with early closures that may occur under the current system for managing scup, as it would preserve fishing opportunities that would not be available if the scup fishery was closed. By extension, it is expected that maintaining fishing opportunities would have a positive impact on the ports and communities associated with the vessels participating in this fishery.

The Council determined that the impacts of the combination of Winter I and Winter II into one period would be similar to those for the action implemented. However, under this alternative, it is possible that the entire quota could be harvested during Winter I. If this were to occur, fishermen would not be able to fish for scup during the Winter II period, potentially disrupting product supply, increasing discards, and contributing to price fluctuations, as well as severely constraining fishing opportunities for those fishermen that depend upon access to the Winter II quota period fishery. The Council selected the action being implemented under this final rule because it would provide the maximum economic benefit to the fishing industry by ensuring that any unused Winter I period scup quota would be made available in the Winter II period.

The change to the quota counting procedures is not expected to affect overall scup landings, as total landings would continue to be restricted to the annual commercial quota. It is possible that, if the Winter I fishery were closed and inshore fishermen were allowed to land and sell scup, scup prices could increase. However, given the short length of time that inshore fishermen would have to land any scup harvested during a Winter I closure, i.e., April 15 through April 30, it is not expected that the scup price would be significantly affected. Nevertheless, selling scup harvested by inshore fisheries prior to May 1 during a Winter I closure would likely provide economic and social benefits to inshore fisheries. It is possible that the preferred alternative could result in the Summer period quota being harvested earlier. This would depend on the amount of the Summer quota, numbers of fishermen that may participate in an early summer fishery, and/or the amount of scup that could potentially be landed after April 15 and prior to May 1 in the event of a Winter I closure. However, due to lack

of information on these factors, this was not analyzed in detail.

#### *Small Entity Compliance Guide*

Section 212 of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act of 1996 states that, for each rule or group of related rules for which an agency is required to prepare a FRFA, the agency shall publish one or more guides to assist small entities in complying with the rule, and shall designate such publications as "small entity compliance guides." The agency shall explain the actions a small entity is required to take to comply with a rule or group of rules. As part of this rulemaking process, a small entity compliance guide (the guide) was prepared. Copies of the guide will be sent to all holders of commercial Federal scup fishery permits. The guide will be available on the Internet at <http://www.nero.noaa.gov>. Copies of the guide can also be obtained from the Regional Administrator (see ADDRESSES).

#### **List of Subjects in 50 CFR Part 648**

Fishing, Fisheries, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements.

Dated: October 29, 2003.

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■ For the reasons stated in the preamble, 50 CFR part 648 is amended as follows:

#### **PART 648—FISHERIES OF THE NORTHEASTERN UNITED STATES**

■ 1. The authority citation for part 648 continues to read as follows:

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

■ 2. In § 648.120, paragraphs (b)(2), (b)(4), and (c) are revised; paragraph (d)(3) is redesignated as paragraph (d)(4) and the introductory text is revised; and new paragraphs (d)(3) and (d)(5) are added to read as follows:

#### **§ 648.120 Catch quotas and other restrictions.**

\* \* \* \* \*

(b) \* \* \*

(2) Possession limits for the Winter I and Winter II periods, including possession limits that result from potential rollover of quota from Winter I to Winter II. The possession limit is the maximum quantity of scup that is allowed to be landed within a 24-hour period (calendar day).

\* \* \* \* \*

(4) All scup landed for sale in any state during a quota period shall be applied against the coastwide

commercial quota for that period, regardless of where the scup were harvested, except as provided in paragraph (d)(5) of this section.

\* \* \* \* \*

(c) *Annual fishing measures.* The Demersal Species Committee shall review the recommendations of the Scup Monitoring Committee. Based on these recommendations and any public comment, the Demersal Species Committee shall recommend to the MAFMC measures necessary to assure that the specified exploitation rate will not be exceeded. The MAFMC's recommendation must include supporting documentation, as appropriate, concerning the environmental and economic impacts of the recommendations. The Regional Administrator shall review these recommendations and any recommendations of the Commission. After such review, NMFS will publish a proposed rule to implement a commercial quota in the **Federal Register**, specifying the amount of quota allocated to each of the three periods, possession limits for the Winter I and Winter II periods, including possession limits that result from potential rollover of quota from Winter I to Winter II, the percentage of landings attained during the Winter I fishery at which the possession limits will be reduced, a recreational harvest limit, and additional management measures for the commercial fishery. If the Regional Administrator determines that additional recreational measures are necessary to assure that the specified exploitation rate will not be exceeded, he or she will publish a proposed rule in the **Federal Register** to implement additional management measures for the recreational fishery. After considering public comment, the Regional Administrator will publish a final rule in the **Federal Register** to implement annual measures.

(d) \* \* \*

(3) The Regional Administrator will monitor the harvest of commercial quota for the Winter I period based on dealer reports, state data, and other available information and shall determine the total amount of scup landed during the Winter I period. In any year that the Regional Administrator determines that the landings of scup during Winter I are less than the Winter I quota for that year, he/she shall increase, through publication of a notification in the **Federal Register**, provided such rule complies with the requirements of the Administrative Procedure Act, the Winter II quota for that year by the amount of the Winter I underharvest.