

listed species incidental to, and not the purpose of, otherwise lawful activities. Section 10(a)(1)(B) of the ESA provides for authorizing incidental take of listed species. NMFS regulations governing permits for threatened and endangered species are promulgated at 50 CFR 222.307.

Species Covered in This Notice

The following species are included in the conservation plan and Permit application: loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*), green (*Chelonia mydas*), and Kemp's ridley (*Lepidochelys kempii*) sea turtles.

Background

GSML is a non-profit scientific and educational institution that holds an IRS 501(c)3 certificate of tax exemption and conducts sea turtle research and conservation activities. GSML uses small trawls (under 500 sq. ft. (46.5 sq. m)) without turtle excluder devices (TEDs) to collect marine fish, invertebrates and algae. Trawl times are less than 30 minutes in duration. GSML sells the marine organisms it catches to public aquariums, schools, research laboratories, and biomedical institutions. It utilizes the revenue to support its environmental education and sea turtle protection programs. The issuance of a Permit will allow for the continued harvest of marine fish, invertebrates and algae by GSML.

This application includes the Kemp's ridley, green and loggerhead sea turtles. This fishing activity does not target sea turtles, and while thus far GSML has not taken any turtles with the fishing gear it now uses, a take of one turtle every 3 years is anticipated. No mortalities are expected should this take occur.

The types of activities and effects that are considered under the ESA section 10 permitting process vary in complexity and degree of impact. Despite authorization of some small level of incidental take, the action authorized under a low-effect permit has a minor or negligible effect on the species covered in the permit. The determination of whether an incidental take permit qualifies for the low-effect category must be based on its anticipated impacts prior to implementation of the mitigation plan. Low-effect incidental take permits are categorically excluded from NEPA. NMFS has determined that this Permit (1417) qualifies for the low-effect category. Only one turtle is anticipated to be taken every 3 years, and these takes are expected to be non-lethal and result in zero injury.

Conservation Plan

The conservation plan prepared by GSML describes measures designed to minimize and mitigate the impacts of any incidental takes of ESA-listed sea turtles. It includes provisions to ensure that any captured sea turtles in need of resuscitation are provided such care, per NMFS guidelines. Additionally, any animals needing medical attention or rehabilitation will be cared for by authorized persons and facilities.

The conservation plan will mitigate the impacts of any incidental takes of ESA-listed sea turtles by helping turtles that have been put at risk or harmed due to interactions with other fisheries in the area. Specifically, GSML will remove any turtles it encounters ensnared in fishing lines, nets, and trap ropes. If any of these sea turtles require care, GSML will transport them to a rehabilitation facility.

This conservation plan will be funded through GSML revenues derived from the sale of the marine fish, invertebrates, and algae collected from trawling, donations from membership in its aquarium, and from grants and contracts.

This notice is provided pursuant to section 10(c) of the ESA and the National Environmental Policy Act regulations (40 CFR 1506.6). NMFS will evaluate the application, associated documents, and submitted comments to determine whether the application meets the requirements of the ESA Section 10(a) permitting process. If it is determined that the requirements are met, a permit will be issued for incidental takes of ESA-listed sea turtles under the jurisdiction of NMFS. The final permit determinations will not be completed until after the end of the 30-day comment period and will fully consider all public comments received during the comment period. NMFS will publish a record of its final action in the **Federal Register**.

Dated: February 10, 2003.

Phil Williams,

Chief, Endangered Species Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 021003C]

New England Fishery Management Council; Public Meetings

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

ACTION: Notice of public meetings.

SUMMARY: The New England Fishery Management Council (Council) is scheduling a public meeting of its Groundfish and Habitat Oversight Committee in March, 2003 to consider actions affecting New England fisheries in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ). Recommendations from these groups will be brought to the full Council for formal consideration and action, if appropriate.

DATES: These meetings will be held March 3 and 4, 2003. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for specific dates and times.

ADDRESSES: The meetings will be held in Providence, RI. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for specific locations.

Council address: New England Fishery Management Council, 50 Water Street, Mill 2, Newburyport, MA 01950.

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

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Meeting Dates and Agendas

Monday, March 3, 2003 at 9:30 a.m.
Groundfish Oversight Committee Meeting.

Location: Providence Biltmore, 11 Dorrance Street, Providence, MA 02903; telephone: (401) 421-0700.

The Groundfish Oversight Committee will continue development of Amendment 13 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan (FMP). The committee anticipates receiving a preliminary summary of the recent Peer Review Workshop at this meeting. This summary may include recommendations from the reviewers on the science underlying the development of Amendment 13. Based in large measure on those recommendations, the committee will consider adjustments to proposed status determination criteria, rebuilding trajectories and timelines as well as changes to the management measures in the Amendment. Changes to the measures could include revisions in the use of days-at-sea, gear, closed