

Multispecies FMP), and the bluefin tuna fishery off the coast of New Jersey during the month of June. In the case of billfish and undersized swordfish, time/area closures for the pelagic longline fishery appear to show promise as interaction with billfish and undersized swordfish bycatch tend to occur in discernable patterns.

The draft HMS FMP and Atlantic billfish FMP amendment included a preferred alternative for time/area closure in the Florida Straits (26° to 28° N. lat., 78° to 81° W. long.) to pelagic longline fishing activity during the months of July, August, and September as part of a management strategy to reduce bycatch of undersized swordfish and Atlantic billfish. NMFS received many written and verbal comments on this proposed closure. The majority of comments received questioned the effectiveness of the Florida Straits closure based on the small size of the selected area relative to the range of the target species within the U.S. EEZ and Atlantic Ocean. In the final HMS FMP, NMFS agreed that this closure would likely be ineffective, and that NMFS would consider, under the framework provisions of the HMS FMP, a larger area or areas. Because of the potential magnitude of the economic and social impacts that would likely result from a more extensive time/area closure, NMFS delayed implementation until completion of further analyses and consultation with the Highly Migratory Species and Atlantic Billfish Advisory Panels (AP's).

On June 10 and 11, 1999, NMFS met with the HMS and Billfish APs to discuss the issue of expanded time/area closures. NMFS has prepared a draft Technical Memorandum that provides a preliminary discussion of the information, methods, and procedures used to identify and analyze alternative time/area closures for U.S. pelagic longlines operating in the Atlantic Ocean. A copy of the HMS Time/Area Technical Memorandum is currently available (see ADDRESSES).

#### Management Measures Under Consideration

NMFS will consider various spatial and temporal closures of waters along the continental U.S. Atlantic coast, including the Gulf of Mexico, to U.S. pelagic longlines. Analyses will likely be limited to areas generally within the U.S. EEZ where most of the incidental catch of species not sought occurs. It is anticipated that the spatial boundaries for time/area closures will follow specific latitudes or longitudes, as appropriate, to facilitate practical application of potential closures to both

commercial vessels and enforcement entities. NMFS will also consider the impacts under various assumptions regarding displaced fishing effort, in order to fully evaluate environmental, social, economic and biological impacts of the alternatives.

NMFS has determined that preparation of an SEIS is appropriate because of the potentially significant impact of regulations on the human environment. Based on discussions with the APs, NMFS is preparing a SEIS to fully assess potential impacts on the natural and human environment of various time/area closure alternatives to reduce bycatch of undersized swordfish, Atlantic billfish, other overfished or approaching overfished HMS, and protected species, from U.S. Atlantic pelagic longlines.

#### Timing of the Analysis and Tentative Decisionmaking Schedule

The public will be provided ample opportunity for written and verbal comments following the publication of the proposed rule. NMFS anticipates that a proposed rule outlining a time/area fishery closure for pelagic longlines will be completed by mid-December, 1999, with a final rule completed by May 1, 2000.

Dated: October 27, 1999.

**Gary C. Matlock,**

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

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 102599B]

#### South Atlantic 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 South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's (Council) Marine Reserves Advisory Panel will meet in Charleston, SC.

**DATES:** The Marine Reserves Advisory Panel meeting will be held on November 17, 1999, from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and on November 18, 1999, from 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

**ADDRESSES:** The meetings will be held at the Town and Country Inn, 2008 Savannah Highway, Charleston, SC 29407; telephone: 843-571-1000.

*Council address:* South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, One Southpark Circle, Suite 306, Charleston, SC 29407-4699.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Kim Iverson, telephone: (843) 571-4366; fax: (843) 769-4520; email: kim.iverson@noaa.gov.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The advisory panel will review and provide comments and guidance on the following documents: the initial draft of "Why Consider Marine Reserves"; "The Use of Marine Reserves in the South Atlantic Council's Area of Authority"; and the draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the South Atlantic Council and the Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary.

Although non-emergency issues may come before this Panel for discussion, in accordance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, those issues may not be the subject of formal action during these meetings. Action will be restricted to those issues specifically listed in this notice and any issues arising after publication of this notice that require emergency action under section 305(c) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, provided the public has been notified of the Council's intent to take final action to address the emergency.

#### Special Accommodations

These meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to the Council office (see ADDRESSES) by November 3, 1999.

Dated: October 27, 1999.

**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. 102699F]

#### Marine Mammals; File No. 782-1532-00

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

**ACTION:** Receipt of application.

**SUMMARY:** Notice is hereby given that the National Marine Mammal Laboratory, Alaska Fisheries Science