

Fishery Conservation and Management

§ 648.260

members, present and voting, to the Regional Administrator. The Councils' recommendation must include supporting rationale, an analysis of impacts and, if management measures are recommended, a recommendation to the Regional Administrator on whether to issue the management measures as a final rule. If the Councils recommend that the management measures should be issued as a final rule, they must consider at least the following factors and provide support and analysis for each factor considered:

(i) Whether the availability of data on which the recommended management measures are based allows for adequate time to publish a proposed rule and whether regulations have to be in place for an entire harvest/fishing season;

(ii) Whether there has been adequate notice and opportunity for participation by the public and members of the affected industry in the development of the Councils' recommended management measures;

(iii) Whether there is an immediate need to protect the resource; and

(iv) Whether there will be a continuing evaluation of management measures adopted following their implementation as a final rule;

(3) *NMFS action.* If the Councils' recommendation includes adjustments or additions to management measures, then:

(i) If NMFS concurs with the Councils' recommended management measures and determines that the recommended management measures should be issued as a final rule based on the factors specified in paragraph (b)(2) of this section, then the measures will be issued as a final rule in the FEDERAL REGISTER.

(ii) If NMFS concurs with the Councils' recommendation and determines that the recommended management measures should be published first as a proposed rule, then the measures will be published as a proposed rule in the FEDERAL REGISTER. After additional public comment, if NMFS concurs with the Councils' recommendation, then the measures will be issued as a final rule in the FEDERAL REGISTER.

(iii) If NMFS does not concur, the Councils will be notified in writing of the reasons for the non-concurrence.

(iv) Framework actions can be taken only in the case where both Councils approve the proposed measure.

(b) *Emergency action.* Nothing in this section is meant to derogate from the authority of the Secretary to take emergency action under section 305(e) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

[76 FR 60643, Sept. 29, 2011, as amended at 76 FR 81850, Dec. 29, 2011]

Subpart M—Management Measures for the Atlantic Deep-Sea Red Crab Fishery

SOURCE: 67 FR 63233, Oct. 10, 2002, unless otherwise noted.

§ 648.260 Specifications.

(a) *Annual review and specifications process.* The Council, the Red Crab Plan Development Team (PDT), and the Red Crab Advisory Panel shall monitor the status of the red crab fishery and resource.

(1) The Red Crab PDT shall meet at least once annually during the intervening years between Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) Reports, described in paragraph (b) of this section, to review the status of the stock and the fishery. Based on such review, the PDT shall provide a report to the Council on any changes or new information about the red crab stock and/or fishery, and it shall recommend whether the specifications for the upcoming year(s) need to be modified. At a minimum, this review shall include a review of at least the following data, if available: Commercial catch data; current estimates of fishing mortality and catch-per-unit-effort (CPUE); stock status; recent estimates of recruitment; virtual population analysis results and other estimates of stock size; sea sampling, port sampling, and survey data or, if sea sampling data are unavailable, length frequency information from port sampling and/or surveys; impact of other fisheries on the mortality of red crabs; and any other relevant information.

(2) If new and/or additional information becomes available, the Red Crab

PDT shall consider it during this annual review. Based on this review, the Red Crab PDT shall provide guidance to the Red Crab Committee and the Council regarding the need to adjust measures in the Red Crab FMP to better achieve the FMP's objectives. After considering guidance, the Council may submit to NMFS its recommendations for changes to management measures, as appropriate, through the specifications process described in this section, the framework process specified in § 648.261, or through an amendment to the FMP.

(3) Based on the annual review, described above, and/or the SAFE Report described in paragraph (b) of this section, recommendations for acceptable biological catch (ABC) from the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), and any other relevant information, the Red Crab PDT shall recommend to the Red Crab Committee and Council the following specifications for harvest of red crab: an annual catch limit (ACL) set less than or equal to ABC; and total allowable landings (TAL) necessary to meet the objectives of the FMP in each red crab fishing year, specified for a period of up to 3 fishing years.

(4) The PDT, after its review of the available information on the status of the stock and the fishery, may recommend to the Council any measures necessary to assure that the specifications will not be exceeded, as well as changes to the appropriate specifications.

(5) Taking into account the annual review and/or SAFE Report described in paragraph (b) of this section, the advice of the SSC, and any other relevant information, the Red Crab PDT may also recommend to the Red Crab Committee and Council changes to stock status determination criteria and associated thresholds based on the best scientific information available, including information from peer-reviewed stock assessments of red crab. These adjustments may be included in the Council's specifications for the red crab fishery.

(6) *Council recommendation*—(i) The Council shall review the recommendations of the Red Crab PDT, Red Crab Committee, and SSC, any public comment received thereon, and any other

relevant information, and make a recommendation to the Regional Administrator on appropriate specifications and any measures necessary to assure that the specifications will not be exceeded.

(ii) The Council's recommendation must include supporting documentation, as appropriate, concerning the environmental, economic, and social impacts of the recommendations. The Regional Administrator shall consider the recommendations and publish a rule in the FEDERAL REGISTER proposing specifications and associated measures, consistent with the Administrative Procedure Act.

(iii) The Regional Administrator may propose specifications different than those recommended by the Council. If the specifications published in the FEDERAL REGISTER differ from those recommended by the Council, the reasons for any differences must be clearly stated and the revised specifications must satisfy the criteria set forth in this section, the FMP, and other applicable laws.

(iv) If the final specifications are not published in the FEDERAL REGISTER for the start of the fishing year, the previous year's specifications shall remain in effect until superseded by the final rule implementing the current year's specifications, to ensure that there is no lapse in regulations while new specifications are completed.

(b) *SAFE Report*. (1) The Red Crab PDT shall prepare a SAFE Report at least every 3 yr. Based on the SAFE Report, the Red Crab PDT shall develop and present to the Council recommended specifications as defined in paragraph (a) of this section for up to 3 fishing years. The SAFE Report shall be the primary vehicle for the presentation of all updated biological and socio-economic information regarding the red crab fishery. The SAFE Report shall provide source data for any adjustments to the management measures that may be needed to continue to meet the goals and objectives of the FMP.

(2) In any year in which a SAFE Report is not completed by the Red Crab PDT, the annual review process described in paragraph (a) of this section

Fishery Conservation and Management

§ 648.261

shall be used to recommend any necessary adjustments to specifications and/or management measures in the FMP.

[76 FR 60383, Sept. 29, 2011, as amended at 76 FR 81850, Dec. 29, 2011]

§ 648.261 Framework adjustment process.

(a) To implement a framework adjustment for the Red Crab FMP, the Council shall develop and analyze proposed actions over the span of at least two Council meetings and provide advance public notice of the availability of both the proposals and the analyses. Opportunity to provide written and oral comments shall be provided throughout the process before the Council submits its recommendations to the Regional Administrator.

(1) In response to an annual review of the status of the fishery or the resource by the Red Crab PDT, or at any other time, the Council may recommend adjustments to any of the measures proposed by the Red Crab FMP. The Red Crab Oversight Committee may request that the Council initiate a framework adjustment. Framework adjustments shall require one initial meeting (the agenda must include notification of the impending proposal for a framework adjustment) and one final Council meeting. After a management action has been initiated, the Council shall develop and analyze appropriate management actions within the scope identified below. The Council may refer the proposed adjustments to the Red Crab Committee for further deliberation and review. Upon receiving the recommendations of the Oversight Committee, the Council shall publish notice of its intent to take action and provide the public with any relevant analyses and opportunity to comment on any possible actions. After receiving public comment, the Council must take action (to approve, modify, disapprove, or table) on the recommendation at the Council meeting following the meeting at which it first received the recommendations. Documentation and analyses for the framework adjustment shall be available at least 2 weeks before the final meeting.

(2) After developing management actions and receiving public testimony, the Council may make a recommendation to the Regional Administrator. The Council's recommendation shall include supporting rationale, an analysis of impacts required under paragraph (a)(1) of this section and a recommendation to the Regional Administrator on whether to issue the management measures as a final rule. If the Council recommends that the management measures should be issued directly as a final rule, the Council shall consider at least the following factors and provide support and analysis for each factor considered:

(i) Whether the availability of data on which the recommended management measures are based allows for adequate time to publish a proposed rule, and whether regulations have to be in place for an entire harvest/fishing season;

(ii) Whether there has been adequate notice and opportunity for participation by the public and members of the affected industry in the development of the Council's recommended management measures;

(iii) Whether there is an immediate need to protect the resource or to impose management measures to resolve gear conflicts;

(iv) Whether there will be a continuing evaluation of management measures adopted following their implementation as a final rule.

(3) If the Regional Administrator concurs with the Council's recommended management measures, they shall be published in the FEDERAL REGISTER. If the Council's recommendation is first published as a proposed rule and the Regional Administrator concurs with the Council's recommendation after receiving additional public comment, the measures shall then be published as a final rule in the FEDERAL REGISTER.

(4) If the Regional Administrator approves the Council's recommendations, the Secretary may, for good cause found under the standard of the Administrative Procedure Act, waive the requirement for a proposed rule and opportunity for public comment in the FEDERAL REGISTER. The Secretary, in so doing, shall publish only the final