



NMFS Announces Public Hearings for Draft Amendment 7 (Bluefin Tuna Management Measures)

NMFS will publish a proposed rule for Draft Amendment 7 to the 2006 Consolidated Atlantic Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Fishery Management Plan (FMP) to control incidental catch (bluefin landings and dead discards) in the pelagic longline fishery, enhance reporting in all categories, and ensure U.S. compliance with the ICCAT-recommended quota. As described in the proposed rule, the proposed measures include: 1) *Allocation measures* that would make modifications to how the U.S. bluefin quota is allocated domestically among the quota categories; 2) *Area-Based measures* that would implement restrictions on the use of pelagic longline gear in various gear restricted areas, or provide conditional access to current pelagic longline closed areas; 3) *Bluefin Quota Controls* that would strictly limit the total incidental catch (landings and dead discards) of bluefin in the Longline category by implementing an Individual Bluefin Quota permit program; 4) *Enhance Reporting Measures* that would implement a variety of new bluefin reporting requirements for all categories; and 5) *Other Measures* that would make modifications to the rules that control how the various quota categories utilize quota (i.e., provide additional flexibilities for inseason adjustment of the General category quota and Harpoon category retention limits; allocation of a portion of the Angling category Trophy South subquota to the Gulf of Mexico); and implement a northern albacore tuna quota.

NMFS will consult on the proposed rule and Draft Amendment 7 with the HMS Advisory Panel at its meeting scheduled September 9 – 12, 2013, on the proposed rule and Draft Amendment 7. There will be opportunities for public comment during open sessions held each day of the Advisory Panel meeting. See the following website for additional details on the Advisory Panel meeting, including the agenda, presentations and outreach materials (typically available the week before the meeting):

http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/Advisory%20Panels/Advisory_Panel.htm

Additionally, NMFS will hold a total of ten public hearings along the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico coasts to provide the opportunity for public comment on the measures described in the proposed rule and Draft Amendment 7. See Table 1 for times, dates, and location of hearings. NMFS has also requested time on the meeting agendas of the relevant Regional Fishery Management Councils (i.e., the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, Mid-Atlantic, and New England Fishery Management Councils) to present information on the proposed rule and Draft Amendment 7. Information on the date and time of those presentations will be provided on the appropriate council agendas.

Table 1. Dates, times, and locations of upcoming public hearings.

Venue	Date/Time	Meeting Locations	Location Contact Information
Public Hearing in association with the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council meeting)	August 28, 2013 6 p.m. – 10 p.m.	San Antonio, TX	Hilton Palacio Del Rio 200 S. Alamo San Antonio, TX 78205 (210) 222-1400
Public Hearing	September 4, 2013 6 p.m. – 10 p.m.	Gloucester, MA	National Marine Fisheries Service, Northeast Regional Office 55 Great Republic Drive Gloucester, MA 01930
Public Hearing	September 18, 2013 6 p.m. – 10 p.m.	Manteo, NC	Community Auditorium College of the Albemarle 132 Russell Twiford Road Manteo, NC 27954 (252) 473-2264
Public Hearing	September 19, 2013 6 p.m. – 10 p.m.	Charleston, SC	Center for Coastal and Environmental Health and Biomolecular Research – National Ocean Service 219 Fort Johnson Road Charleston, SC 29412
Public Hearing	September 24, 2013 6 p.m. – 10 p.m.	Belle Chasse, LA	Plaquemines Parish Government Community Center (Belle Chasse Auditorium) 8398 Hwy. 23, Belle Chasse, LA 70037 (504) 208-1320
Public Hearing	September 26, 2013 6 p.m. – 10 p.m.	Portland, ME	Gulf of Maine Research Institute 350 Commercial Street Portland, ME 04901 (207) 772-2321
Public Hearing	September 30, 2013 6 p.m. – 10 p.m.	Panama City, FL	Bay County Public Library 898 W. 11th St. Panama City, FL 32401 (850) 552-2100
Public Hearing	October 1, 2013 6 p.m. – 10 p.m.	Fort Pierce, FL	Days Inn Fort Pierce 3224 U.S. 1 Fort Pierce, FL 34982 (772) 465-7000
Public Hearing	October 2, 2013 6 p.m. – 10 p.m.	St. Petersburg, FL	National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office 263 13th Avenue South Saint Petersburg, FL 33701 (727) 824-5301
Public Hearing	October 8, 2013 6 p.m. – 10 p.m.	Toms River, NJ	Ocean County Public Administration Building Freeholders Meeting Room (119) 101 Hooper Ave Toms River, NJ 08754 (732) 929-2147

The comment period for Draft Amendment 7 ends on October 23, 2013. Written public comments can be submitted electronically or by mail. Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>. To submit comments via the e-Rulemaking Portal, first click the “submit a comment” icon, then enter NOAA-NMFS-2013-0101 in the keyword search. Locate the document you wish to comment on from the resulting list and click on the “Submit a Comment” icon on the right of that line.

Submit written comments to Thomas Warren, National Marine Fisheries Service, 55 Great Republic Drive, F/SF1, Suite 02-200, Gloucester, MA 01930. Please mark the outside of the envelope “Comments on the Draft Amendment 7 to the 2006 Consolidated HMS FMP.”

The public is reminded that NMFS expects participants at public hearings and the HMS Advisory Panel meeting to conduct themselves appropriately. At the beginning of each meeting, a representative of NMFS will explain the ground rules (e.g., alcohol is prohibited from the meeting room; attendees will be called to give their comments in the order in which they registered to speak; each attendee will have an equal amount of time to speak; attendees may not interrupt one another; etc.). NMFS representatives will structure the meetings so that all attending members of the public will be able to comment, if they so choose, regardless of the controversial nature of the subject(s). Attendees are expected to respect the ground rules, and those that do not will be asked to leave the meeting.

This notice is a courtesy to HMS fishery participants to help keep you informed about the fishery. For further information, contact Thomas Warren or Brad McHale at 978-281-9260, or Jennifer Cudney or Craig Cockrell at 301-427-8503. This information will also be posted on the HMS website at: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms>.

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