

Commerce (Secretary). Written comments are requested from the public.

DATES: Written comments must be received on or before March 31, 1994.

ADDRESSES: Comments must be mailed to the Southeast Regional Office, NMFS, 9450 Koger Boulevard, St. Petersburg, FL 33702.

Requests for copies of Amendment 6, which includes a regulatory impact review/initial regulatory flexibility analysis and an environmental assessment, should be sent to the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, 1 Southpark Circle, suite 306, Charleston, SC 29407-4699; FAX 803-769-4520.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:
Peter J. Eldridge, 813-893-3161.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson Act) requires that a council-prepared amendment to a fishery management plan be submitted to the Secretary for review and approval, disapproval, or partial disapproval. The Magnuson Act also requires that the Secretary, upon receiving an amendment, immediately publish a notice that the amendment is available for public review and comment. The Secretary will consider public comment in determining approvability of the amendment.

Amendment 6 proposes to: (1) Establish quotas and trip limits for snowy grouper and golden tilefish—quotas would be reduced in equal amounts in each of 3 years beginning with 1994; (2) impose a trip limit of one warsaw grouper and one speckled hind per vessel and prohibit sale of these species; (3) include tilefish species in the current grouper bag limit; (4) require that vessel logbooks be submitted by all permitted vessels; and (5) close the Oculina Bank habitat area of particular concern to fishing for snapper-grouper species and prohibit fishing while anchored in that area.

Proposed regulations to implement Amendment 6 are scheduled for publication within 15 days.

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

Dated: February 1, 1994.

Joe P. Clem,

Chief, Plans and Regulations Division,
National Marine Fisheries Service.

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50 CFR Part 651

[I.D. 020194]

Northeast Multispecies Fishery

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

ACTION: Notice of availability of a Secretarial amendment to a fishery management plan and request for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces that, acting on behalf of the Secretary of Commerce (Secretary), it has prepared a Secretarial amendment (Amendment 6) to the Fishery Management Plan for the Northeast Multispecies Fishery (FMP) and is making it available for public review and comment. Written comments are requested from the public.

DATES: Written comments on the amendment must be received on or before March 26, 1994.

ADDRESSES: Copies of the Secretarial Amendment/Environmental Assessment/Regulatory Impact Review may be obtained from Richard B. Roe, Director, Northeast Region, National Marine Fisheries Service, Northeast Regional Office, National Marine Fisheries Service, One Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930. Comments should be sent to the same address; please mark the envelope "Multispecies Secretarial Amendment Comments."

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:
Richard Seamans, 508-281-9244.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Amendment 6 was prepared by NMFS under authority of section 304(c)(1)(B) of the Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson Act), which provides for the Secretary to prepare an FMP or FMP amendment when the appropriate Council does not submit a revised amendment to replace a disapproved portion of an FMP amendment. The Secretary does not intend to implement this amendment unless absolutely necessary.

In response to a severely overfished condition of haddock, cod, and yellowtail flounder, the Council submitted Amendment 5 to the FMP, which was approved January 3, 1994, except for two measures that were disapproved on September 30, 1993. The two disapproved measures were a 5,000-pound (2,268-kg) possession limit for haddock and an exemption to the FMP regulations for winter flounder when fishing in state waters. The 5,000-pound (2,268-kg) possession limit for haddock was disapproved because the

Secretary determined it was inadequate to protect haddock stocks on the Georges Bank and in the Gulf of Maine, which are at historically low levels of abundance.

An emergency rule was implemented effective from January 3, 1994, through April 2, 1994 (59 FR 26, January 3, 1994), that contains the following measures: (1) A possession limit for haddock for all vessels permitted under the multispecies fishery, except scallop dredge vessels, which are prohibited from possessing or landing haddock; (2) a closure of the Closed Area II to all vessels except scallop dredge vessels and lobster pot vessels from January through May; (3) an expansion of Closed Area II by 20 minutes longitude west and 15 minutes latitude south, along its western and southern boundaries; (4) a suspension of the February through May closure of Closed Area I to all vessels except those using sink gillnet gear; (5) a prohibition on transfer of fish at sea; and (6) a ban on pair trawling in the multispecies fishery.

Amendment 5 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Northeast Multispecies Fishery was approved on January 3, 1994, and has several measures also contained in the emergency rule. Since Amendment 5 is scheduled for implementation before the current emergency rule expires on April 2, 1994, those measures are not contained in proposed Amendment 6. Measures contained in Amendment 5 that are not contained in proposed Amendment 6 are: (1) An expansion of the size of Closed Area II; (2) a suspension of the closure of Closed Area I to all vessels except vessels using sink gillnet gear; (3) a prohibition on the transfer of fish at sea; and (4) a ban on pair trawling.

Proposed Amendment 6 contains two measures: (1) A 500-pound (226.8-kg) possession limit for haddock, for all vessels permitted under the multispecies fishery, except sea scallop dredge vessels which are prohibited from possessing or landing haddock, and (2) a closure of Closed Area II to all vessels, except lobster pot vessels and scallop dredge vessels, from January through June, on an annual basis.

NMFS is interested in receiving comments on Amendment 6, the EA and RIR and will consider all public comments before a decision is made whether or not to approve the Amendment. Proposed regulations to implement Amendment 6 will be published within 15 days after the submission of the amendment to the New England Fishery Management Council for its consideration and

comment as required under section
304(c)(2)(A)(iii) of the Magnuson Act.

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

Dated: February 1, 1994.

David S. Crestin,

*Acting Director, Office of Fisheries
Conservation and Management, National
Marine Fisheries Service.*

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