



National Marine Fisheries Service  
Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office  
Sustainable Fisheries Division  
[www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov](http://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov)



# Status Report of Greater Atlantic Region Actions

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Prepared for the September 26-28, 2017  
Meeting of the  
New England Fishery Management Council

September 25, 2017

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## **New England Council Actions**

### **Small-Mesh Multispecies**

#### **Northern Red Hake Trip Limit Adjustment**

NMFS published a temporary rule in the Federal Register on August 10, 2017, (82 FR 37359) as notification that, effective August 7, 2017, the 2017 northern red hake commercial possession limit was reduced from 3,000 lb to 400 lb per trip. For additional information, please contact Michael Ruccio at (978) 281-9104, or email at Michael.Ruccio@noaa.gov.

### **Groundfish**

#### **Framework Adjustment 56**

On August 1, 2017, NMFS published the final rule for Framework 56 in the Federal Register (82 FR 35660). This action set 2017 specifications for three U.S./Canada stocks (Eastern Georges Bank (GB) cod, Eastern GB haddock, and GB yellowtail flounder), as well as 2017-2018 specifications for witch flounder. This action also established an allocation for northern windowpane flounder for the scallop fishery, revised the trigger for implementing the scallop fishery accountability measures (AMs) for both its GB yellowtail flounder allocation and its new northern windowpane flounder allocation, and increased the GB haddock catch allocation for the midwater trawl fishery.

NMFS also used Framework 56 to implement 2017 northern and southern windowpane flounder AMs, which were triggered due to 2015 overages for both stocks. The AMs were effective on August 1, 2017. We announced in Framework 56 that we were able to remove the northern and southern windowpane flounder AMs for groundfish trawl vessels after September 1, 2017, because 2016 catch was below the total annual catch limit for both stocks.

While NMFS was able to remove the accountability measures for the groundfish vessels through an existing regulatory process, we had to implement an emergency rule (below) to remove the southern windowpane flounder AMs for non-groundfish trawl vessels.

For additional information, please contact Aja Szumylo at (978) 281-9195, or email at Aja.Szumylo@noaa.gov.

#### **Emergency Removal of Southern Windowpane Accountability Measure**

On September 1, 2017, NMFS published an emergency rule in the Federal Register (82 FR 41564) to remove the 2017 southern windowpane flounder AM for non-groundfish trawl vessels that was triggered as a result of a 2015 quota overage. The comment period for this rule ends on October 2, 2017. For additional information, please contact Aja Szumylo at (978) 281-9195, or email at Aja.Szumylo@noaa.gov.

**2017 Recreational Measure for Gulf of Maine Cod and Haddock**

On July 27, 2017, NMFS published a final rule in the Federal Register (82 FR 24086) to set recreational management measures for Gulf of Maine cod and haddock for the remainder of the 2017 fishing year. This action prohibited recreational possession of cod, reduced the haddock bag limit, and implements a new closed season for haddock in the fall. The intended effect of this action is to reduce catch of cod and haddock in order to ensure that fishing year 2017 recreational catch limits are not exceeded. For additional information, please contact Emily Keiley at (978) 281-9116 or email at [Emily.Keiley@noaa.gov](mailto:Emily.Keiley@noaa.gov).

**Approval of Modifications to a Regulatory Exemption for Groundfish Sectors (Final Sector Rule)**

On August 18, 2017, NMFS published a final rule in the Federal Register (82 FR 39363) to approve changes to the small-mesh exemption area for groundfish sectors. We proposed changes to the exemption area in the interim final sector rule. This action increased the area where sector vessels may use the exemption, but excluded areas overlapping with the windowpane flounder AM areas. For additional information, please contact Kyle Molton at (978) 281-9236 or email at [Kyle.Molton@noaa.gov](mailto:Kyle.Molton@noaa.gov).

**Reimbursement of Sector At-Sea Monitoring Costs**

For the 2017 fishing year, NMFS has continued to offset a portion of industry's costs for the groundfish at-sea monitoring program through a cooperative agreement with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. The ASMFC is reimbursing sectors for 60 percent of their ASM and electronic monitoring costs for sector trips beginning on or after May 1, 2017. We are actively monitoring and evaluating the spend-down of available funds consistent with projected effort for the remainder of the fishing year. For additional information, please contact Liz Sullivan at (978) 282-8493 or email at [Liz.Sullivan@noaa.gov](mailto:Liz.Sullivan@noaa.gov).

## **Scallops**

None at this time

## **Monkfish**

**Framework Adjustment 10 to the Monkfish Fishery Management Plan**

NMFS approved Framework 10 through a final rule in the Federal Register (82 FR 32145) on July 12, 2017. Framework 10 sets monkfish specifications for fishing years 2017-2019 (May 1, 2017, through April 30, 2020). It also increases days-at-sea allocations and trip limits to provide additional operational flexibility and fishing opportunities. For additional information, please contact the Sustainable Fisheries Division at (978) 281-9315.

## **Herring**

None at this time

## **Skate**

### **Skate Framework 4**

This action would modify effort controls and possession limits to reduce the risk of the skate bait fishery from closing down as it did in fishing year 2016. Several measures are proposed to de-couple the skate wing and bait inseason trip limit triggers that control catch, and provide a more consistent supply of skate bait to the lobster fishery. The proposed rule is currently in development. For additional information, please contact Michael Ruccio at (978) 281-9104, or email at [Michael.Ruccio@noaa.gov](mailto:Michael.Ruccio@noaa.gov).

## **Atlantic Deep-Sea Red Crab**

None at this time

## **Mid-Atlantic Council Actions**

### **Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass**

#### **Massachusetts Commercial Summer Flounder Closure**

NMFS published a temporary rule in the Federal Register on July 21, 2017, (82 FR 33827) as notification that the 2017 commercial summer flounder quota allocated to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has been harvested, and the fishery is closed for the remainder of the fishing year. Vessels holding Federal commercial permits are prohibited from landing summer flounder, effective 0001 hours, July 20, 2017, for the remainder of the 2017 calendar year, unless additional quota becomes available through a transfer from another state. This closure was coordinated with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' closure of its commercial summer flounder fishery to state permitted vessels and dealers on July 19, 2017. For additional information, please contact Cynthia Hanson at (978) 281-9180, or email at [Cynthia.hanson@noaa.gov](mailto:Cynthia.hanson@noaa.gov).

### **Surfclam and Ocean Quahog**

#### **Surfclam and Ocean Quahog ITQ Cost Recovery**

On May 10, 2017, NMFS announced the 2017 cost recovery tag fees for the surfclam and ocean quahog individual transferable quota (ITQ) fisheries. This is the start of the new cost recovery program for the surfclam and ocean quahog ITQ fisheries. The 2017 tag fees are \$0.32 per surfclam tag and \$0.20 per ocean quahog tag. The fee to the ITQ shareholder will be based on how many cage tag numbers initial allocated to each shareholder are used to land clams, even if some or all of those tags are leased or otherwise transferred to another individual who uses them to land clams. NMFS will issue ITQ shareholders a single bill in March 2018 based on all of the cage tags used during 2017. Shareholders who do not use any tags will not receive a bill. The tag fee announcement is available online at:

[www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/sustainable/species/clam/](http://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/sustainable/species/clam/). For additional information, please contact Doug Potts at 978-281-9341 or [Douglas.Potts@noaa.gov](mailto:Douglas.Potts@noaa.gov).

**2018-2020 Surfclam and Ocean Quahog Specifications**

This action would implement surfclam and ocean quahog specifications for fishing years 2018 through 2020. The proposed commercial quotas are status quo, continuing measures in place from previous years. We are currently preparing a proposed rule to seek public comment on the action. For additional information, please contact Michael Ruccio at (978) 281-9104, or email at [Michael.Ruccio@noaa.gov](mailto:Michael.Ruccio@noaa.gov).

**Atlantic Bluefish**

None at this time

**Spiny Dogfish**

None at this time

**Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish**

**Closure of the Directed *Illex* Squid Fishery for the Remainder of the 2017 Season**

NMFS published a temporary rule in the Federal Register on September 11, 2017, (82 FR 42610) as notification that 95% of the 2017 *Illex* squid quota is projected to be harvested by September 15, 2017, and the directed fishery is closed for the remainder of the fishing year. Vessels holding Federal *Illex* moratorium permits are prohibited from landing no more than the incidental limit of 10,000 lb. of *Illex* squid, effective 0001 hours, September 15, 2017, for the remainder of the 2017 calendar year. For additional information, please contact Alyson Pitts at 978-281-9352 or email at [alyson.pitts@noaa.gov](mailto:alyson.pitts@noaa.gov)

**Tilefish**

**Tilefish Framework 2**

This action would modify the incidental possession limit, clarify allowed gear for recreational fishing, and make several improvements to the tilefish individual fishing quota (IFQ) program. We are currently preparing a proposed rule to seek public comment on the action. For additional information, please contact Doug Potts at 978-281-9341 or [Douglas.Potts@noaa.gov](mailto:Douglas.Potts@noaa.gov).

**Golden Tilefish Specifications 2018-2020**

This action would identify separate quotas for the individual fishing quota and incidental fisheries, and implement golden tilefish specifications for fishing years 2018 through 2020. These specifications represent an approximately 14-percent reduction in overall commercial quota from 2017 to ensure overfishing does not occur. Three comments were received on the proposed rule, but no changes have been made to the specifications as a result of these comments. We are currently preparing a final rule to implement this action.. For additional information, please contact Cynthia Hanson at (978) 281-9180, or email at [Cynthia.hanson@noaa.gov](mailto:Cynthia.hanson@noaa.gov).

## Other Actions

### Paperwork Reduction Act

#### **Comment Period for Information Collection for the Greater Atlantic Region Vessel Identification Requirements**

NFMS published a notice in the Federal Register on April 17, 2017, (82 FR 32175) announcing a 60-day comment period on a proposed extension to the Greater Atlantic Region Gear Identification collection of information as part of its continuing effort to reduce paperwork and respondent burden. Regulations require that owners of vessels over 25 ft in registered length that have Federal permits to fish in the Greater Atlantic Region display the vessel's name and official number. The name and number must be of a specific size at specified locations to be clearly visible from enforcement vessels and aircraft. The display of the identifying characters aids in fishery law enforcement. The public comment period is currently open, and ends on September 11, 2017. For additional information, please contact Cynthia Hanson at (978) 281-9180, or email at [Cynthia.hanson@noaa.gov](mailto:Cynthia.hanson@noaa.gov).

### Forage Species

#### **Final Rule for the Unmanaged Forage Fish Omnibus Amendment**

NMFS published a final rule for the Unmanaged Forage Fish Omnibus Amendment in the Federal Register on August 28, 2017, (82 FR 40721). This amendment implemented an annual landing limit and possession limits for Atlantic chub mackerel and certain forage fish species and species groups within Mid-Atlantic Federal waters, permit and reporting requirements, a transiting provision, and a list of allowable framework measures. We disapproved the inclusion of bullet and frigate mackerel as forage fish under this action because the best available scientific information did not support the determination that these species are forage for species managed by the Mid-Atlantic Council. For additional information, please contact Douglas Christel at (978) 281-9141 or email at [douglas.christel@noaa.gov](mailto:douglas.christel@noaa.gov).

### Lobster

None at this time

### Jonah Crab

None at this time

### Blueline Tilefish

#### **Blueline Tilefish Amendment**

NMFS published a Notice of Availability in the Federal Register on June 14, 2017, (82 FR 27223) and a proposed rule on June 28, 2017 (82 FR 29263) for Tilefish Amendment 6. This amendment would add blueline tilefish to the Tilefish Fishery Management Plan and establish management measures for the resource in the Mid-Atlantic. The comment period on the proposed rule has closed, but we are accepting comments on the notice of availability through August 14, 2017. For additional information, please contact Doug Potts at 978-281-9341 or email at [Douglas.Potts@noaa.gov](mailto:Douglas.Potts@noaa.gov).

## **Industry Funded Monitoring Omnibus Amendment**

None at this time

## **Electronic Vessel Trip Report Omnibus Framework**

NMFS published a final rule on September 11, 2017, that implements a requirement for charter and party vessels that hold a Federal permit to fish for species managed by a Mid-Atlantic Council FMP, while on a trip carrying passengers for hire, to submit VTRs by electronic means. Vessels must submit these reports within 48 hours following the completion of a fishing trip. This action will be effective on trips occurring on or after March 12, 2018. For additional information, please contact Dan Luers at 978-282-8457 or [Daniel.Luers@noaa.gov](mailto:Daniel.Luers@noaa.gov).

## **Omnibus Acceptable Biological Catch Framework**

### **Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council; Omnibus Acceptable Biological Catch Framework Adjustment**

NMFS published a proposed rule in the Federal Register on July 19, 2017, (82 FR 33036) that would provide consistency with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's risk policy for the Scientific and Statistical Committee to recommend constant multi-year ABCs if the overfishing probability average adheres to the appropriate risk policy overfishing probability goal. This action would also automatically incorporate new or updated status determination criteria at the conclusion of stock assessment peer-reviews for the Atlantic Bluefish, Golden Tilefish, and Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish Fishery Management Plans (FMPs). In addition, this action would add regulatory language clarifying the assessment level designations for the Council's ABC control rule. The comment period for this proposed rule closed on August 18, 2017. We are currently preparing a final rule for implementation of this action. For additional information, please contact Michael Ruccio at (978) 281-9104, or email at [Michael.Ruccio@noaa.gov](mailto:Michael.Ruccio@noaa.gov).

## **Cost Recovery Programs**

### **Cost Recovery Transition to CRS**

The Regional Office is working to transition some aspects of cost recovery billing and collections for our catch share programs (LAGC Scallop IFQ, Tilefish IFQ, and Surfclam and Ocean Quahog ITQ) to Central Receivables Service (CRS). CRS is a free service of the Treasury Dept. that assists other federal agencies to issue bills and collect past-due funds. This transition should help streamline our process and reduce some administrative costs currently charged to the industry. We are still finalizing some aspects of this change, and the transition **will not** affect the upcoming LAGC Scallop IFQ bills scheduled for November. When we finalize the new system, we will have a larger outreach effort to make sure the Council and the industry know exactly what these changes mean for them. For additional information, contact Doug Potts at 978-281-9341. For additional information, please contact Doug Potts at 978-281-9341 or email at [Douglas.Potts@noaa.gov](mailto:Douglas.Potts@noaa.gov).



## **Protected Resources Actions**

### **An update on Atlantic sturgeon critical habitat**

Five distinct population segments (DPS) of Atlantic sturgeon were listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in 2012. The ESA requires that we designate critical habitat at the time of listing, unless it is not then determinable, in which case we must designate critical habitat within a year of the species listing. At the time of listing, we found that critical habitat was not determinable. The Delaware Riverkeeper and NRDC sued NMFS in 2014 for failing to designate critical habitat. In accordance with a court consent decree, we issued proposed critical habitat designations for the five DPSs on June 3, 2016, (81 FR 35701 and 81 FR 36078). The public comment period was open for 105-days. We published a final rule designating critical habitat for all five DPSs on August 17, 2017, (82 FR 39160). All of the designated critical habitat is within rivers along the US Atlantic Coast; there is no critical habitat designated in marine waters. The critical habitat designation does not create preserves or refuges and does not come with any prohibitions on in-water activities, including fishing and boating. Rather, it means that Federal agencies must consider the effects of actions they authorize, fund or carry out on the critical habitat through the ESA section 7 consultation process. We do not anticipate any impacts to fisheries managed by the councils to result from the critical habitat designation. Information on the final rule, including maps of the areas designated, is available at:

<https://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/protected/atlsturgeon/index.html>.

Questions regarding the designation can be directed to Lynn Lankshear, GARFO Atlantic sturgeon coordinator at (978-282-8473 or [Lynn.Lankshear@noaa.gov](mailto:Lynn.Lankshear@noaa.gov)) or Julie Crocker, GARFO ESA Fish Recovery Coordinator at (978-282-8480 or [Julie.Crocker@noaa.gov](mailto:Julie.Crocker@noaa.gov)).

## **Research Permits and Acknowledgments - Applications Under Review**

On March 7, 2017, NMFS received an initial Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) request from the Environmental Defense Fund and Gulf of Maine Research Institute to test a maximized retention electronic monitoring (EM) program. A revised and complete EFP request was submitted on April 17, 2017. The application requests that participating vessels be exempt from commercial minimum fish sizes and be required to retain all allocated groundfish catch, regardless of size. Vessels would run EM on 100 percent of trips, and the video footage would be used to verify compliance with retention requirements. Catch would be sampled through a dockside monitoring program for all EFP trips. The applicants also requested that participating vessels be granted access to closed areas and be exempt from minimum mesh size requirements for trawl gear. For additional information, please contact Claire Fitz-Gerald at (978)281-9255, or email at [claire.fitzgerald@gmail.com](mailto:claire.fitzgerald@gmail.com).

On April 27, 2017, NMFS received a complete EFP application from the Gulf of Maine Research Institute (GMRI) to test an experimental, off-bottom trawl net outfitted with 5.1-inch, or 4.5-inch codend mesh to target haddock and redfish. The EFP would allow researchers to test the experimental net during commercial fishing operations. This project was funded through the 2015 Saltonstall-Kennedy Grant Program. Testing of the off-bottom trawl would occur August-December 2017. For additional information, please contact Emily Keiley at (978) 281-9116 or email at [Emily.Keiley@noaa.gov](mailto:Emily.Keiley@noaa.gov).

On August 14, 2017, NMFS received an EFP application from the Coonamessett Farm Foundation to test the selectivity of raised webbing and 6.0-inch gillnets in the commercial haddock fishery. The applicant has requested access to Closed Area I and an exemption from the minimum mesh regulations to facilitate their research. This project was funded through the Bycatch Reduction Engineering Program. For additional information, please contact Kyle Molton at (978) 281-9236 or email at [Kyle.Molton@noaa.gov](mailto:Kyle.Molton@noaa.gov).

On August 10, 2017, NMFS received a complete renewal application from the Commercial Fisheries Research Foundation (CFRF) for their EFP to conduct a fleet-based study on the abundance and distribution of juvenile American lobster in Lobster Management Areas 2 and 3. This renewal also expanded the project to include Jonah crab as a target species and shift the survey area to include lobster management areas 4 and 5 as well. Under this EFP, each of the 18 participating vessels would be allowed to fish up to 3 modified traps in excess of its Federal trap allocation, for no more than 54 ventless traps in the water at any given time. For additional information, please contact Cynthia Hanson at (978) 281-9180, or email at [Cynthia.hanson@noaa.gov](mailto:Cynthia.hanson@noaa.gov).

## **Research Permits and Acknowledgments - Application Review Completed**

NMFS issued a Letter of Acknowledgement (LOA) to the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (MA DMF), on August 3, 2017, to test an experimental, off-bottom trawl net. This project was funded through the 2015 Saltonstall-Kennedy Grant Program. For additional information, please contact Emily Keiley at (978) 281-9116 or email at [Emily.Keiley@noaa.gov](mailto:Emily.Keiley@noaa.gov).

NMFS issued an LOA to GMRI on August 1, 2017, in support of a study on the age structure of Atlantic cod inside and outside of the Cashes Ledge closed area. This project is funded by the Saltonstall-Kennedy Grant Program. Cod will be collected at 21 sites during a total of four research trips. For additional information, please contact Emily Keiley at (978) 281-9116 or email at [Emily.Keiley@noaa.gov](mailto:Emily.Keiley@noaa.gov).

NMFS issued an LOA to the University of New Hampshire on September 14, 2017, to test a traditional trawl outfitted with a deflector panel. The addition of the deflector panel results in a low profile opening, which has been designed to target flounder, while reducing the incidental catch of cod and other roundfish. This project is funded by the NMFS Bycatch Reduction Engineering Program. For additional information please contact Emily Keiley at (978) 281-9116 or email at [Emily.Keiley@noaa.gov](mailto:Emily.Keiley@noaa.gov).

On July 21, 2017, NMFS issued a scientific research permit (SRP) to the Northeast Fisheries Science Center in support of a research project to estimate the capture efficiency of the Center's survey bottom trawl. A chartered commercial fishing vessel will conduct survey work using a twin trawl rig in southern New England and mid-Atlantic Bight waters from August 7–27, 2017. For additional information, please contact Spencer Talmage at (978) 281-9232 or email at [Spencer.Talmage@noaa.gov](mailto:Spencer.Talmage@noaa.gov).

On July 25, 2017, NMFS issued an extension of an LOA to the Maine Department of Marine Resources in support of a tagging study of adult halibut. The participating commercial fishing vessels will use longline gear in the Gulf of Maine to catch and tag halibut through September 30, 2017. For additional information, please contact Kyle Molton at (978) 281-9236 or email at [Kyle.Molton@noaa.gov](mailto:Kyle.Molton@noaa.gov).

On August 15, 2017, NMFS issued an LOA to the Maine Department of Marine Resources in support of the Maine and New Hampshire inshore trawl survey. A chartered commercial fishing vessel will conduct survey work in nearshore waters of the Gulf of Maine during the fall of 2017 and the spring of 2018. For additional information, please contact Kyle Molton at (978) 281-9236 or email at [Kyle.Molton@noaa.gov](mailto:Kyle.Molton@noaa.gov).

On August 31, 2017, NMFS issued an EFP to the Cape Cod Commercial Fishermen's Alliance to conduct a 100 percent electronic monitoring project. This EFP expands upon an existing EFP awarded to The Nature Conservancy in fishing year 2016. Data collected through this EFP will be used to further explore an audit-based EM model, in which vessel captains report discarded catch in an electronic logbook, and a subset of EM video footage is reviewed for verification purposes. Participating vessels will use EM on 100 percent of sector trips and must adhere to catch handling and reporting requirements at-sea. Vessels fishing under this EFP may use hook gear in the Western Gulf of Maine and Cashes Ledge Closure Areas, and both hook gear and sink gillnets in Closed Areas I and II. For additional information, please contact Claire Fitz-Gerald at (978) 281-9255, or email at [claire.fitz-gerald@noaa.gov](mailto:claire.fitz-gerald@noaa.gov).

On July 20, 2017, NMFS issued an EFP to the Commercial Fisheries Research Foundation (CFRF) for their Southern New England Cooperative Ventless Trap Survey, which they are conducting in cooperation with the University of Rhode Island to better understand the distribution and habitat use of American lobster and Jonah crab in the RI/MA Wind Energy Area in Lobster Management Area 2. This EFP is a cooperative expansion of a Letter of Acknowledgement project (issued on May 10, 2017), in order to allow the participation of CFRF, and will expire on November 30, 2017. For additional information, please contact Cynthia Hanson at (978) 281-9180, or email at [Cynthia.hanson@noaa.gov](mailto:Cynthia.hanson@noaa.gov).

On July 7, 2017, NMFS issued a revision to an EFP originally issued to the Commercial Fisheries Research Foundation (CFRF) on November 21, 2016; extending the project period nine months, and adding the F/V Johnny B. The extension is not an expansion of effort or scope, but an attempt to reach the initial sampling data target that was not reached due to unforeseen financial and scheduling obstacles. The captain of the new additional vessel is already a current fleet participant, and because sampling effort in this project applies to each individual captain and not a particular vessel, this addition will not alter the sampling maximums for the research fleet. The sampling protocol, requested Federal exemptions, and overall project remain the same. The new expiration date of this project is April 30, 2018. For additional information, please contact Cynthia Hanson at (978) 281-9180, or email at [Cynthia.hanson@noaa.gov](mailto:Cynthia.hanson@noaa.gov).

On July 6, 2017, NMFS issued an EFP to the Coonamessett Farm Foundation to conduct a scallop resource survey in the Northern Gulf of Maine Scallop Management Area. The vessel will deploy both the HabCam video survey, as well as the NMFS survey dredge for 10 tows. For additional information, please contact Shannah Jaburek at (978) 282-8456 or email at [Shannah.jaburek@noaa.gov](mailto:Shannah.jaburek@noaa.gov).

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On August 7, 2017, NMFS issued an EFP revision to the CFRF for their fleet-based study on the abundance and distribution of juvenile American lobster in Lobster Management Areas 2 and 3. This revision added two vessels to the research fleet and removed one, bringing the total number of vessels to 18. For additional information, please contact Cynthia Hanson at (978) 281-9180, or email at [Cynthia.hanson@noaa.gov](mailto:Cynthia.hanson@noaa.gov).

On August 15, 2017, NMFS issued a short-term extension to the CFRF's fleet-based EFP studying the abundance and distribution of juvenile American lobster in Lobster Management Areas 2 and 3. This extension would allow time for a full EFP renewal without an interruption in the research. The sampling protocol, participating vessels, requested Federal exemptions, and overall project remain the same. The new expiration date of this EFP is November 24, 2017. For additional information, please contact Cynthia Hanson at (978) 281-9180, or email at [Cynthia.hanson@noaa.gov](mailto:Cynthia.hanson@noaa.gov).

On August 15, 2017, NMFS issued an LOA to INSPIRE Environmental for the final year of the Deepwater Wind Block Island Wind Farm Trawl Survey. This project is in its fifth year, and works to characterize the fishery resources in the area of the Block Island wind farm before, during, and after construction of the turbines. For additional information, please contact Cynthia Hanson at (978) 281-9180, or email at [Cynthia.hanson@noaa.gov](mailto:Cynthia.hanson@noaa.gov).

On September 1, 2017, NMFS issued an LOA to Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in support of its annual horseshoe crab abundance monitoring survey. The participating commercial vessel will conduct approximately 70 collection trawls over 20 trips from September 2017 through the end of December 2017. Trawling is conducted using a commercial flounder trawl during both daytime and nighttime hours, with tows lasting 15 minutes each. Horseshoe crabs from each tow will be counted, measured, and identified to sex and maturity stage before being immediately released back into the area of capture. Cynthia Hanson at (978) 281-9180, or email at [Cynthia.hanson@noaa.gov](mailto:Cynthia.hanson@noaa.gov).

On September 6, 2017, NMFS issued two SRPs to the Northeast Fisheries Science Center for a pair of studies evaluating the target catch retention of trawls equipped with cable turtle excluder devices (TEDs) compared to standard trawls (without the TEDs) in both the longfin squid and summer flounder fisheries. These SRPs allow one commercial trawl vessel (F/V Karen Elizabeth, #410326) with NEFSC scientific personnel onboard to conduct each study using a twin trawl and paired comparative experimental design from September 2017 through October 2018. The participating vessel is allowed to sell normal/legal catch consistent with their permits during the studies as compensation, and all undersized or non-permitted will be returned to the water after being recorded. For additional information, please contact Cynthia Hanson at (978) 281-9180, or email at [Cynthia.hanson@noaa.gov](mailto:Cynthia.hanson@noaa.gov).