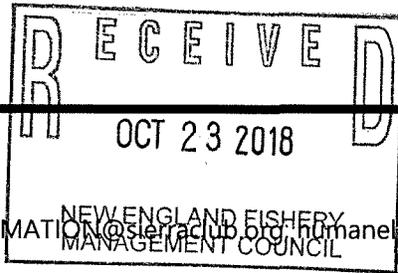


Small Mesh Multispecies
Amendment 22 Supplemental
comments received on or before
November, 23, 2018

Sherie Goutier



From: jean public <jeanpublic1@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, October 23, 2018 4:41 PM
To: comments; The Pew Charitable Trusts; INFORMATION@seiracub.org; humane; PETA Info
Subject: Re: shut them all down - no more of this type of fishing

public comment on federal register

you take comments only from fish profiteers so that you are taking biased profiteering comments. you need to remember that all the fish belong to 328 million americans not just the few profiteers who come to speak. you are managing for species destruction and extinction and failing to take the steps necessary to manage the population. for this lousy work this agency deserves an f minus for its work. you need to cut the quotas now. this comment is for the public record cut the quotas by 50% now. please receipt. jean public
jean_public1@gmail.com

On Tue, Oct 23, 2018 at 9:28 AM jean public <jeanpublic1@gmail.com> wrote:
[Federal Register Volume 83, Number 205 (Tuesday, October 23, 2018)]
[Proposed Rules]
[Pages 53440-53441]
From the Federal Register Online via the Government Publishing Office [www.gpo.gov]
[FR Doc No: 2018-23123]

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 648

RIN 0648-XG543

Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act
Provisions; Small-Mesh Multispecies Fishery; Public Comment Period for
Amendment 22 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan

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

ACTION: Request for comments.

SUMMARY: The New England Fishery Management Council requests public
comment on Amendment 22 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery
Management Plan, including a Draft Environmental Impact Statement. To
meet the purpose and need, this amendment proposes alternatives that
would initiate a limited access program for the small-mesh multispecies
fishery, adjust whiting and red hake possession limits, and modify
permit types and characteristics to make them consistent with limited
access.

The Council recently solicited comments and held a series of public

aa 10/26/18

hearings on the draft amendment. Due to an inconsistency in the information available during the comment period, the Council will solicit comments for an additional 30 days and hold an informational webinar to explain the data inconsistency and review the alternatives in the amendment and Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

DATES: We must receive written comments on or before November 23, 2018. The informational webinar will take place on Wednesday, November 14, 2018 at 3 p.m. at the following web address: <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/843126117>, or by telephone at (872) 240-3311, using Access Code 43-126-117.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments on this document, identified by NOAA-NMFS-2013-0169 by any of the following methods:

[ssquf] Electronic Submission: Submit all electronic public comments directly to the Council at comments@nefmc.org or by fax to (978) 465-3116, with ``Comments on Whiting Amendment 22'' on the subject line.

[ssquf] Mail: Submit written comments to Thomas A. Nies, Executive Director,

[[Page 53441]]

New England Fishery Management Council, 50 Water Street, Mill 2, Newburyport, MA 01950. Mark the outside of the envelope, ``Comments on Whiting Amendment 22.''

Instructions: You must submit comments by one of the above methods to ensure that the comments are received, documented, and considered by Council. The Council may not consider comments sent by any other method, to any other address or individual, or received after the end of the comment period. All comments received are a part of the public record and will generally be posted for public viewing on the Council's website at www.nefmc.org without change. All personal identifying information (e.g., name, address, etc.) submitted voluntarily by the sender will be publicly accessible. Do not submit confidential business information, or otherwise sensitive or protected information. The Council will accept attachments to electronic comments only in Microsoft Word or Excel, WordPerfect, or Adobe PDF file formats.

The hearing documents are accessible electronically via the internet at <https://www.nefmc.org/library/amendment-22> or by request to Thomas A. Nies, Executive Director, New England Fishery Management Council, 50 Water Street, Mill 2, Newburyport, MA 01950, telephone (978) 465-0492.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Andrew Applegate, Senior Fisheries Analyst, (978) 465-0492, ext. 114.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The small-mesh multispecies complex consists of five stocks: Northern silver hake, southern silver hake, and offshore hake, all collectively referred to as whiting; along with northern and southern red hake. The New England Fishery Management Council (Council) manages these stocks as part of the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan (FMP). Fishermen targeting whiting and hake use small-mesh trawl gear. The Council manages the fishery through multiple small-mesh exemptions to the northeast multispecies (also called groundfish) regulations. The small-mesh multispecies fishery is open access, meaning any vessel may obtain a permit to fish with small-mesh gear to target whiting and hake.

Based on specifications set forth by the Council, NMFS sets annual catch levels for each of the small-mesh multispecies stocks. The fishery routinely harvests a small fraction of the allowable silver hake landings each year, due to high bycatch levels of red hake that reduce the possession limits to incidental levels once a certain percentage of the red hake annual catch limits are reached. Northern whiting and hake stocks are healthy, but southern red hake is overfished and experiencing overfishing. Southern whiting biomass has been declining for several years and is below the target, but is not considered overfished.

Although the fishery does not harvest optimum yield, there are concerns that it could become more difficult to manage if continued open access results in bycatch levels could prematurely close the directed small-mesh multispecies fishery. In response, the Council developed Amendment 22 to the FMP. The amendment considers multiple alternatives for a limited access program, along with various options for possession limits and permit conditions should the Council ultimately choose to limit access in the fishery. The Council's preferred alternative is to maintain open access.

Amendment 22 includes a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), which analyzes the impacts of the various management alternatives. In July of 2018, the Council hosted a series of public hearings and solicited comments on the DEIS and amendment. Along with the DEIS, the Council prepared a separate public hearing document to summarize the impacts of alternatives, which included the estimated number of vessels that would qualify under each limited access alternative. After the public hearings, and while discussing potential final action, the Council discovered a discrepancy between the numbers in the public hearing document and the DEIS. Upon further investigation, it concluded that the DEIS analyses were based on the correct information, while the information in the summary section of the DEIS and the public hearing document were based on preliminary analyses that had been conducted in early development of the amendment. The correct results were available to the public and Council when the Council approved the range of alternatives in June 2017 and chose preferred alternatives in December 2017.

Given the discrepancy between the summary information and the DEIS, the Council announced that it will provide the public with an additional 30-day comment period and hold an informational webinar using the most up-to-date information to explain the data discrepancy and afford additional opportunity for comment.

The Council will accept comments until 1 p.m. on November 23, 2018. See the DATES section for the timing of the webinar and how you may participate. The Council's Small-Mesh Fishery Committee and Advisory Panel will review the public comments and make recommendations for action to the Council. The Council will consider these recommendations and take final action on Amendment 22 during its December 2018 meeting.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 et seq.; 16 U.S.C. 5101 et seq.

Dated: October 17, 2018.

Karen H. Abrams,
Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine
Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 2018-23123 Filed 10-22-18; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-P

David T. Goethel
23 Ridgeview Terr
Hampton, NH

November 3, 2018

Amendment 22 Comments

Tom Nies
Executive Director
NEFMC
50 Water St.
Newburyport, Ma. 01950

Dear Tom,

Fellow advisors, committee members and council members, I am unable to attend the Whiting advisors meeting because of a previous commitment on that date. Please consider my comments as both an advisor and member of the public.

Is limited access necessary and if so, why?

Limited access is necessary because nearly all mid-Atlantic and New England fisheries are currently limited access and the only place for new access to go is into the few remaining open fisheries. Time and again stock assessments have failed to accurately predict the status of stocks. Part of this is the inherent lag time between observations and assessments. Thus, stocks that appear healthy may be declining, and stocks that are increasing have unnecessarily restrictive measures. This problem is exacerbated by not knowing the potential number of fishermen in the fishery. Second, the council process itself has proved incapable of timely acting to limit access in a declining fishery, qualifying too many permits and dealing with the fallout for years later. The time to limit access is when a fishery is healthy, and the number of participants is relatively stable.

Only a fraction of the whiting quota is landed, and red hake issues can be solved with gear technology.

The first part of this statement is true, at the moment, but the unique biology of whiting should be considered. Whiting are one of the few fish that are both carnivorous and cannibalistic. Thus, their population undergoes wide population swings. Basically, when there are a lot of large whiting recruitment is poor because they eat the recruits. Conversely when a large cohort of adult fish age out of the population recruitment spikes and the process begins all over again. Stock assessments have problems interpreting this phenomenon alternating between overly optimistic picture when large fish are present and calling it an age truncated stock when the older fish disappear. One should not assume the high current biomass estimates will last into the future.

Red hake are a problem in the fishery. People arguing for status quo dismiss the issue of red hake saying closures or gear technology will solve the problem. Red hake and whiting occur together and closing areas means there will be no whiting fishery. As for gear technology, you can fine tune a raised footrope trawl to eliminate some red hake, but go even a little too far, and you eliminate the whiting too. I have

worked on gear technology issues for years and had moderate success such as the topless shrimp trawl. I know of no way to eliminate red hake from the catch as they both charge the twine in the same places and freely comingle on the grounds. People who make statements about gear solutions should be questioned carefully to determine ulterior motives for keeping the fishery open access.

What limited access option is the best and why?

I support option 4 for two reasons. First it has a relatively low threshold which can be met by anyone who has taken a nominal interest in the fishery. Second it will qualify the most current participants with hopefully improved landing records. The further you go back in time, the poorer the records. One of our failures with limited access programs has been qualifying vessels too far in the past. Often these participants are no longer in the fishery and you are essentially qualifying a pool of latent effort which will thwart the effectiveness of the program in the future. I believe we can go beyond the 2012 control date up to 2016 because other than southern red hake overfishing is not occurring. Finally, the council should not get hung up on the absolute number of boats expected to qualify. Fishermen all know they need to preserve records for tax purposes for a good period of the qualifying time and should be able to prove their landings through an appeal if they do not agree with NMFS data. Those who have sold fish for cash or other considerations are not the councils concern.

What should trip limits be for tier 2 permits?

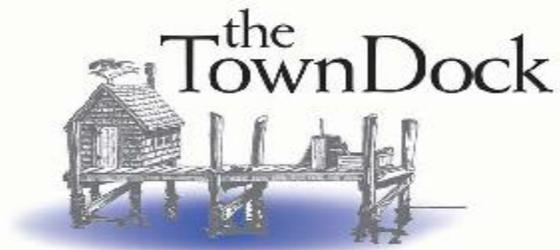
I recommend keeping trip limits for both tier 1 and 2 vessels the same, at this time, because overfishing is not occurring on whiting. Red hake trip limits will have to be adjusted, but with limited access at least you will know the number of participants.

In conclusion I want council members to know that these are my thoughts on what is best for the fishery in the future. I am now 65 and by the time this amendment is completed I will likely be very close to retirement. Let us learn from our past mistakes and get the small mesh multispecies fishery right moving forward.

Thank you for your consideration,

David Goethel

F/V Ellen Diane



November 23, 2018

Thomas Nies, Executive Director
New England Fishery Management Council
50 Water Street, Mill 2
Newburyport, MA 01950

Dear Director Nies,

Thank you for the additional time provided to submit comments on Amendment 22. We at the Town Dock still support “No Action” regarding the Whiting Limited Access Amendment and all our concerns stated in our original comment submitted this past August still stand.

Further analysis of Amendment 22 has revealed that the number of vessels that would qualify to remain in the fishery has been drastically reduced from what was initially presented. In addition, the bycatch issue, which was the major driver of this Amendment, has *still* not been addressed. We still believe that this, and the elimination of the K permits should have been the first step taken. Instead, the focus has been to reduce the number of participants in a fishery that doesn't come anywhere close to reaching its quota.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Katie Almeida
Fishery Policy Analyst