

From: NOAA Fisheries <editor.fishnews@noaa.gov>

To: ssherman40 <ssherman40@aol.com>

Subject: FishNews - February 27, 2014 - Disaster Funding Announced, Congressional Hearings, Ivory Smuggling Ring Dismantled, New Habitat Focus Area, Bycatch Reduction Grants, Observer Qualification Criteria, and Head of Fisheries joins the Twitter-sphere

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February 27, 2014

HIGHLIGHTS

EVENTS

[March 3-7](#)

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council meeting in Savannah, Georgia.

[March 4-5](#)

Spring Species Working Group Meeting of the Advisory Committee to the U.S. Section to ICCAT, open to the public.

[March 4-25](#)

Seminar in NOAA Fisheries' RACE Seminar Series at NOAA Western Regional Center in Seattle, Washington.

[March 7-13](#)

Pacific Fishery Management Council

NOAA Fisheries Director Joins Twittersphere

To all Twitter users, please join us in welcoming Eileen Sobeck, director of NOAA Fisheries, to Twitter [@Eileen_NOAAFish](#). Confession-she's a complete newbie to Twitter, but we suspect she'll tweet like a pro before long.



Six Fisheries to Receive Disaster Relief Funds

On Wednesday, NOAA Fisheries announced that \$75 million appropriated by Congress as part of the Fiscal Year 2014 federal budget will be allocated to six fisheries across the country that were declared fishery disasters by the Department of Commerce in 2012 and 2013. Fisheries receiving allocations from the disaster relief fund include commercial fisheries in American Samoa following the tsunami of 2009; commercial fisheries in Mississippi following the Mississippi River flood of 2011; the New England multispecies groundfish fishery for the 2013 season; Alaska's Chinook salmon fishery for 2011 and

meeting in Sacramento, California.

March 10-24

Ten **public hearings on red snapper allocation** hosted by Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council in each Gulf state and online.

March 17-21

Western Pacific Fishery Management Council meeting in Saipan (March 17-18) and Guam (March 20-21).

March 19-20

Two free **Protected Species Safe Handling, Release, and Identification workshops** in Houston, Texas, and Port St. Lucie, Florida.

March 20

Free **Atlantic Shark Identification workshop** in Fort Pierce, Florida.

March 25-26

Northwest Fisheries Science Center's 4th Science Symposium in Seattle, Washington. Free and open to the public; register by **February 28**.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

February 28

Final date to submit application for Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center's **Young Scientist Opportunity**.

March 21

Pre-proposals due for **Bycatch Reduction Engineering Program grants**.

2012; the Florida oyster fishery in the Gulf of Mexico due to a drought in 2012; and fisheries in New York and New Jersey following Hurricane Sandy in 2012.

A Big Week on the Hill - Fisheries Officials Testify Before Three Committees

This is a heavy week for NOAA Fisheries on the Hill. Two Magnuson-Stevens reauthorization hearings will be held. The first one is today, February 27, with our Alaska Regional Administrator, Jim Balsiger, appearing before the [Senate Commerce Committee hearing](#) on North Pacific fisheries. On Friday our Pacific Islands Fishery Science Center Director, Sam Pooley, will testify on Pacific Islands fisheries science in front of the [House Natural Resources Committee](#). Also today, Sam Rauch, Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs at Fisheries, will testify on the Endangered Species Act Implementation in front of the [House Oversight and Government Reform Committee](#).

International Ivory Smuggling Ring Dismantled

A multiyear investigation involving NOAA's Office of Law Enforcement, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Environment Canada has led to the dismantling of an international ivory smuggling ring. Three co-defendants from Tennessee and New Jersey have been arrested in connection with illegal trafficking of narwhal tusks.

New Great Lakes Habitat Focus Areas

NOAA selected [two sites in the Great Lakes region](#) as the next Habitat Focus Areas under NOAA's Habitat Blueprint. [Muskegon Lake](#) in Michigan and the [St. Louis River estuary](#) in Wisconsin and Minnesota were chosen as sites where NOAA will prioritize its agency-wide resources to address habitat challenges.

Bycatch Reduction Engineering - Call for Proposals

NOAA Fisheries is now accepting applications for the 2014 Bycatch Reduction Engineering Program (BREP) grant awards. Approximately \$2.5 million could be made available for projects that address a variety of topics in bycatch research. Pre-proposals are due by **March 21** with full applications due by **April 30**.

Observer Qualifications - Open for Public Comment

By **March 26**, submit your comments on criteria to determine if fishery observers in an observer program are qualified and authorized to certify that a tuna fishing operation is "dolphin-safe."

Marine Mammal Populations Warrant Review - Open for Public Comment

NOAA Fisheries found that a petition to list two species and three population segments of foreign marine mammals under

FEDERAL REGISTER ACTIONS

[Click here](#) for a list of only those actions open for public comment. Scroll search for National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

For a list of all daily actions, check the Federal Register [online](#).

the Endangered Species Act presented sufficient evidence to warrant four status reviews. By **April 22**, submit scientific and commercial information pertaining to Hector's dolphin (*Cephalorhynchus hectori*) and three subpopulations of other cetaceans.

Ten Species of Skates, Rays, and Bony Fishes Warrant Review - Open for Public Comment

NOAA Fisheries found that a petition to list 10 species of skates and rays and 15 species of bony fishes under the Endangered Species Act presented sufficient evidence to warrant status reviews for five of the skate and ray species and five of the bony fishes. Please submit scientific and commercial evidence pertaining to these 10 species by **April 25**.

Greater Atlantic

Regional Office Text Alerts Available

You can now choose to receive regulatory alerts from NOAA Fisheries' Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO) via text messages. Alerts will include information about emergency actions, area openings and closings, and possession limit adjustments. Sign up [here](#).

Fewer Hypothermic Sea Turtles in 2013

Despite the cold weather and snow this winter, fewer sea turtles were stranded due to "cold-stunning" along the U.S. North Atlantic coast in 2013 than in 2012, a record year for cold-stuns. Stranded sea turtles found alive are brought to a rehabilitation facility where they can recover and eventually be released into warm water.

Meet a Port Agent: Walt Anoushian

Port agents are NOAA Fisheries field staff who provide technical assistance to fishermen and dealers. Meet Walt Anoushian, a port agent whose region includes New Bedford and Port Judith.

Southeast

February Issue of Gulf Fishery News

The latest issue of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council's newsletter is now available. Articles cover recent recreational angler listening sessions, the Marine Resources Education Program for fishermen, new headboat reporting requirements, and details for upcoming red snapper allocation public hearings.

West Coast

Science Center Forensic Analysis Helps Close Sea Turtle Poaching Case

Scientists in NOAA's Marine Forensics Laboratory, now part of the Northwest Fisheries Science Center, analyzed samples of sea turtle meat and carapaces confiscated during an undercover investigation conducted jointly by NOAA's Office of Law Enforcement and the FBI. Their analysis helped convict a Puerto Rican citizen for the illegal sale of sea turtle parts.

Tuna Vessel Monitoring System - Correction

By **March 10**, submit your comments on proposed requirements for a satellite-based vessel monitoring system for U.S. commercial fishing vessels that target tunas in the Eastern Pacific. This action corrects the web address for submitting public comments in a notice that published on February 6.

Pacific Coast Groundfish Observers - Open for Public Comment

By **March 21**, submit your comments on proposed revisions to the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery regulations pertaining to certified catch monitors and certified observers. The action also specifies permitting requirements for providers of monitoring and observing services, updates responsibilities regarding observer safety, and modifies other administrative and housekeeping measures.

Alaska

NOAA Tightens Halibut Bycatch Limits

NOAA Fisheries sets annual limits to minimize halibut bycatch in the Gulf of Alaska groundfish fisheries, and those limits are divided among groundfish sectors. Amendment 95 will gradually tighten these limits for two sectors: hook-and-line vessels and trawl vessels.

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