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Subject: FishNews - April 8, 2015 - Electronic Monitoring System Installation, Unmanned Aircraft Systems and Protected Species, Ghost Fishing Report, and More

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April 8, 2015

HIGHLIGHTS

EVENTS

April 9

Second day of spring meeting of the **Species Working Group of the Advisory Committee** to the U.S. Section to the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas.

April 9

Free **Atlantic Shark Identification workshop** in Wilmington, North Carolina.

April 9-14

North Pacific Fishery Management Council meeting in Anchorage, Alaska.



Electronic Monitoring Systems for Pelagic Longline Fishing Vessels - April 20 Deadline for Funds

Starting June 1, 2015, a vessel with an Atlantic Tunas Longline category permit may not depart on a fishing trip with pelagic longline gear on board unless it has an installed, operable, and certified electronic monitoring system. Vessel owners who would like to take advantage of NOAA Fisheries funds available for paid installation must give notice by **April 20**. See the link above for details on requesting those funds and other vital information about electronic monitoring system installation.

Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan - Correction

By **April 20**, please submit your comments on proposed

[April 10-16](#)
**Pacific Fishery
Management Council
meeting** in
Rohnert Park, California.

[April 13](#)
**Workshop on Spawning
Special Management
Zones** in the South
Atlantic region, to be held
in North Charleston, South
Carolina.

[April 13 and 28](#)
Two free **Protected
Species Safe Handling,
Release, and
Identification workshops**
in Port St. Lucie, Florida,
and Kenner, Louisiana.

[April 13-26](#)
**Northeast Fisheries
Science Center
Protected Species
Science Review** in
Woods Hole,
Massachusetts, open to
the public.

[April 13-28](#)
Seven **scoping
workshops** hosted by the
Gulf of Mexico Fishery
Management Council to
discuss two **proposed
mackerel amendments**.

[April 14-16](#)
**Mid-Atlantic Fishery
Management Council
meeting** in Long Branch,
New Jersey.

[April 15](#)
Free Sea Grant
**workshop on Marine
Finfish Aquaculture in
North Carolina** in
Morehead City, North
Carolina.

changes to the regulations implementing the Atlantic Large
Whale Take Reduction Plan. The original notice listed the
wrong address for submitting comments on these proposed
changes; this notice corrects the error.

Ensuring Best Unmanned Aircraft Practices Around Marine Protected Species

Unmanned aircraft systems -also known as model aircraft or
drones-provide new ways to photograph or film wildlife and
natural landscapes. However, if they are not used
appropriately, these devices can be disruptive and even
harmful to both people and animals. NOAA Fisheries reminds
recreational users to keep a safe aerial distance of at least
1,000 feet from marine mammals. Learn more about good
drone stewardship around marine animals.

Report: What We Know About "Ghost Fishing"

NOAA's Marine Debris Program, in partnership with the
National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science, published a report
last week that assesses the current state of science on "ghost
fishing" and the derelict fishing gear that causes it. Derelict
fishing nets can trap fish for years and, if those fish are of
commercial value, "ghost fishing" may lead to a significant loss
of revenue for fishermen.

Early Warning System for Harmful Algal Blooms

NOAA partnered with NASA, the Environmental Protection
Agency, and the U.S. Geological Survey to transform satellite
data on ocean biology into information that can help protect
Americans from harmful freshwater algal blooms. The new
multi-agency research effort is designed as an early-warning
system for toxic and nuisance algal blooms.

Pacific Islands

Understanding the Food Web in the North Pacific Subtropical Frontal Region

NOAA Ship *Oscar Elton Sette* is underway to survey the
central North Pacific subtropical frontal zone. Scientists from
the Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center and the University
of Hawaii are surveying the physical and biological
environment hundreds of miles north of Oahu to better
understand the food web supporting important fish species.

Marine Conservation Plan for American Samoa

NOAA Fisheries announces the approval of a marine
conservation plan for American Samoa. The plan is effective
through March 31, 2018.

Southeast

April 20-23

Six **public hearings on Spawning Special Management Zones** in the South Atlantic region, to be held in South Carolina, North Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.

April 21-22

Caribbean Fishery Management Council meeting in St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands.

April 21-23

New England Fishery Management Council meeting in Mystic, Connecticut.

April 27-29

Two public meetings - in Seattle and Port Angeles, Washington - on the **Draft Environmental Impact Statement regarding the Makah Tribe's request** to hunt Eastern North Pacific gray whales.

ANNOUNCEMENTS**April 10**

Applications due for open seats on **Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council Scientific and Statistical Committees**.

April 13

Proposals due for National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's **Electronic Monitoring and Reporting Grant Program**.

April 16

Pre-proposals due for **Bycatch**

Snowy Grouper Rule - Open for Public Comment

By **May 8**, please [submit your comments](#) on proposed regulations to implement Amendment 20 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region. The proposed rule would revise the snowy grouper annual catch limits, commercial trip limit, and recreational fishing season.

Snapper-Grouper Special Management Zones - Open for Public Comment

By **May 8**, please submit your comments on Amendment 36 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region. NOAA Fisheries intends to prepare a draft environmental impact statement analyzing the range of management alternatives in this amendment, which considers implementing special management zones.

South Atlantic Council Seeks Input on Special Management Zones

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council is holding a series of public hearings and a workshop to collect input on areas that could be considered for designation as Spawning Special Management Zones in federal waters off the coasts of the Carolinas, Georgia, and Florida. These management zones are being considered as part of Amendment 36 to the Snapper-Grouper Fishery Management Plan.

Gulf of Mexico Bryde's Whale - Open for Comment

NOAA Fisheries announced a 90-day finding on a petition to list the Gulf of Mexico Bryde's whale (*Balaenoptera edeni*) as an endangered distinct population segment under the Endangered Species Act. We found that the petition presented sufficient evidence to warrant a status review. Please submit scientific and commercial information pertaining to this species by **June 5**.

South Atlantic Council Seeks Scientific Advisors

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council is soliciting applications from scientists interested in serving on its Scientific and Statistical Committee and the committee's Socio-Economic Panel. The Council will review applicants at its June meeting. Applications are due **April 19**.

Overview of South Atlantic Council Upcoming Meetings

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council will hold several advisory panel meetings as well as a meeting of the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee in the coming weeks. Meetings will cover snapper-grouper, mackerel, and shrimp fisheries, as well as policies affecting essential fish habitat and ecosystem-based management. All meetings will be held in North Charleston, South Carolina, and will be available online via live webinar.

Reduction Engineering Program grants.

April 19

Applications due for open seat on **South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Scientific and Statistical Committee.**

April 23

Proposals due for **Fishing for Energy funding to reduce the impacts of derelict fishing gear.**

April 27

Applications due for 2015 NOAA Sea Grant **Aquaculture Extension and Technology Transfer** funding.

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](#).

Greater Atlantic

"Living Shorelines" Approach to Erosion Protection

"Living shoreline" projects, which use a mixture of structural and organic materials to guard a shoreline against erosion, have been gaining popularity in the Mid-Atlantic region as an alternative to traditional hard structure shoreline armoring. A recent example along the lower James River in Virginia incorporates living shoreline elements.

Small-Mesh Multispecies Specifications - Open for Public Comment

By **April 23**, please submit your comments on actions setting the small-mesh multispecies specifications for the 2015-2017 fishing years, clarifying what measures can be modified in a specifications package, and correcting the accountability measures for northern red hake. These actions are intended to set catch and possession limits for upcoming fishing years and to reduce the risk of continued overfishing of red hake.

Groundfish Exempted Fishing Permit - Open for Public Comment

By **April 23**, please submit your comments on an application for an Exempted Fishing Permit from Atlantic Trawlers Fishing, Inc. The permit would allow up to three commercial fishing vessels to conduct exploratory fishing in year-round groundfish closed areas to obtain fishery-dependent catch data.

Saint John River Shortnose Sturgeon - Open for Public Comment

NOAA Fisheries found that a petition to identify the Saint John River population of shortnose sturgeon (*Acipenser brevirostrum*) as a distinct population segment and to delist this population under the Endangered Species Act presents sufficient evidence to warrant a status review. Please submit scientific and commercial information pertaining to this petition by **June 5**.

First Right Whale Mother/Calf Pair Sighting of Season

The Northeast Fisheries Science Center's aerial survey group sighted the first right whale mother and calf pair this season in waters near Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts. This is the mother whale's fourth calf. The sighting triggered a Dynamic Management Area-a temporary, voluntary vessel speed restriction zone designed to protect the whales.

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