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Subject: FishNews - May 27, 2015 - Pollock Surveys in Alaska, Oil Spill Effects in the Gulf of Mexico, MRIP Transition, Sanctuary Advisory Council Seats, and More

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May 27, 2015

HIGHLIGHTS

EVENTS

[June 1-9](#)

North Pacific Fishery Management Council meeting in Sitka, Alaska.

[June 2-3](#)

Two public meetings of **advisory committees to the U.S. Section to the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission** in La Jolla, California.

[June 4](#)

Webinar to collect public input on **principles to determine fish species at risk** of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and seafood fraud.



For Pollock Surveys in Alaska, Things Are Looking Up

Scientists have surveyed pollock in Alaska's Shelikof Strait for decades using ship-based sonar to bounce sound waves off the backs of fish, identifying different species by their unique echo. This year, scientists are experimenting with seafloor-mounted sonar systems that monitor fish in the water column above.

Oil Spill Contributed to High Number of Dolphin Deaths

As part of an unusual mortality event investigation, a team of scientists has discovered that dead bottlenose dolphins

June 8-11

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council meeting in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

June 8-12

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council meeting in Key West, Florida.

June 8-12

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council meeting in Key West, Florida.

June 10

Rescheduled free
Protected Species Safe Handling, Release, and Identification workshop in Kenner, Louisiana.

June 10-16

Pacific Fishery Management Council meeting in Spokane, Washington.

June 15-18

Western Pacific Fishery Management Council meeting in Honolulu.

June 16-18

New England Fishery Management Council meeting in Newport, Rhode Island.

June 22-25

Council Coordination Committee meeting in Key West, Florida.

ANNOUNCEMENTS**May 29**

Proposals due for funding to conduct a **Regional**

stranded in the northern Gulf of Mexico since the start of the 2010 *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill have lung and adrenal lesions consistent with petroleum product exposure.

NOAA Fisheries Seeks Public Comment on Managing Recreational Data Transitions

By **June 26**, please submit your comments to nmfs.mrip@noaa.gov on a guidance document to ensure future recreational survey improvements minimize disruptions to fishery science, stock assessment and management decisions. The proposal would formalize a standardized process for transitioning to any new and improved data collection method.

Sanctuary Advisory Councils Seek Rec Fishermen

NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries seeks applicants with recreational fishing expertise to fill vacant seats on its advisory councils for [Flower Garden Banks](#), [Monitor](#), and [Stellwagen Bank](#) National Marine Sanctuaries. Applications are due to the appropriate sanctuary council by **June 30**.

Reminder: Principles to Determine 'At Risk' Species

By **June 8**, please submit your comments on the principles to be used in determining fish species at risk of illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing and seafood fraud. The final webinar to collect public input will be held June 4.

Alaska**Species in the Spotlight: Cook Inlet Beluga Whale**

Learn more about the Cook Inlet beluga whale, one of NOAA Fisheries' eight [Species in the Spotlight](#).

Juneau Whale Watch Business Pays Harassment Fine

A local whale watching tour company has paid a fine to NOAA Fisheries for violations of the Marine Mammal Protection Act and Endangered Species Act that occurred in April 2013. The company accepted responsibility for the violations and has joined a new, voluntary program, [Whale SENSE](#), that NOAA Fisheries is introducing in Juneau this year to promote responsible whale watching.

Maps from 1930s Help Find Potential Fish Habitat

Scientists at the Alaska Fisheries Science Center are using technology to translate detailed survey maps from the 1930s into three-dimensional digitized layers of data. These old maps, available for many nearshore areas of Alaska, provide valuable data about seafloor sediment type and locations of features such as rocky reefs and kelp beds. Scientists can use these details to identify probable preferred fish habitat.

Human Use Spatial Data Synthesis depicting intensity of human use in the Mid-Atlantic Ocean, sponsored by the [Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean \(MARCO\)](#).

June 3

Applications due for **FY 2015 NIFA Aquaculture Research Grants**.

June 4

Nominations due for the two non-NOAA **U.S. Commissioners to the International Pacific Halibut Commission**.

June 8

Comments due on **principles to determine fish species at risk** of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and seafood fraud.

June 12

Proposals due for funding to advance **Mid-Atlantic priorities for climate change adaptation**, sponsored by MARCO.

June 30

Applications due to three **National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Councils** (Flower Garden Banks, Stellwagen Bank, and Monitor) for open seats representing recreational fishing interests.

July 2

Proposals due for **Coastal Ecosystem Resiliency Grants**.

FEDERAL REGISTER

West Coast

Rare San Diego Sighting of False Killer Whales

In February, approximately 30 to 40 false killer whales were spotted near the edge of La Jolla canyon, a highly unusual sighting for the San Diego area. Rarely seen so far north, the whales probably followed the warmer-than-usual ocean temperatures occurring along the Pacific Coast this year.

Sardine Specifications - Open for Public Comment

By **June 5**, please submit your comments on proposed annual management measures and harvest specifications for the northern subpopulation of Pacific sardine for the 2015-2016 fishing season. Because the current sardine biomass estimate is below the cutoff threshold, the proposed rule prohibits non-tribal directed sardine commercial fishing.

Highly Migratory Species Exempted Fishing Permits - Open for Public Comment

By **June 22**, please submit your comments on four applications for exempted fishing permits. The applications seek 2-year exemptions from various prohibitions under the West Coast Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan to test the use of deep-set buoy gear and longline gear to fish for swordfish and other highly migratory species.

Pacific Islands

Species in the Spotlight: Hawaiian Monk Seal

NOAA Ship *Hi'ialakai* set sail on May 18 for a 22-day mission to the northwestern Hawaiian islands to study the endangered Hawaiian monk seal, one of NOAA Fisheries' eight [Species in the Spotlight](#). Every year, scientists from the Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center monitor the monk seals' populations by working out of seasonal field camps and conducting support voyages to more remote locations.

NOAA Helps Fight Reef Predator in American Samoa

Crown-of-thorns starfish are voracious predators of live corals. In recent years, population explosions of the crown-of-thorns starfish, likely caused by excess nutrients in runoff, have had long-term negative effects on reef habitats. In American Samoa, divers working with NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program are removing the starfish to save the reefs.

Southeast

Dolphin SMART Program Welcomes New Businesses

NOAA Fisheries and partners welcome two Florida businesses

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](#).

to [Dolphin SMART](#), a program that recognizes businesses that commit to responsible dolphin viewing practices and dolphin conservation education. There are now 18 recognized businesses in Florida and Hawaii in the steadily growing Dolphin SMART program.

South Atlantic Update Spring 2015

The latest issue of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's newsletter, *South Atlantic Update*, is now available online. Read up on issues to be covered in the June council meeting, including a Joint South Florida Issues Amendment, electronic reporting for charter boats, and trial spawning special management zones.

Greater Atlantic

Model Predicts Fish Population Response to Dams

NOAA researchers have developed a model to assess how dams affect the viability of fish populations that must travel between fresh and marine waters during their lifetimes. The model can also test the effects of varying other parameters, allowing managers to explore the predicted impacts of improving fish passage, removing dams, or reducing mortality at sea.

Whale SENSE Atlantic Leads Whale Watching Industry in Responsible Direction

Whale watch season is off to a great start in the Northeast, with humpback, minke, and fin whales feeding, resting, and socializing in the area. Whale SENSE, a voluntary responsible whale watching program of which NOAA is a sponsor, certifies whale watching businesses that allow visitors a great experience without interfering with the whales' natural behaviors.

Visiting Belugas Venture into New York Waters

A trio of young beluga whales, first spotted off of Narragansett on May 9, have been touring New England waters for the past 3 weeks. They were most recently spotted in Long Island Sound. NOAA Fisheries reminds boaters to look out and keep a safe distance.

Endangered Species Day at Woods Hole Aquarium

Hundreds of visitors participated in the Endangered Species Day activities at the Northeast Fisheries Science Center's Woods Hole Science Aquarium, May 15-16. NOAA Fisheries is giving special attention over the coming year to Gulf of Maine Atlantic salmon, and seven other endangered populations of marine species, through our [Species in the Spotlight](#) campaign.

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