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Bulletin

NOAA Fisheries seeks comments on proposed revisions to the National Standard guidelines for federal fisheries management

NOAA Fisheries is seeking public comment on a proposal to revise the guidelines for National Standard 1, 3 and 7 of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. The National Standard guidelines assist the eight regional fishery management councils and NOAA Fisheries in developing effective fishery management plans.

“The proposed revisions clarify and streamline the National Standard guidelines, address concerns raised by partners and stakeholders during the implementation of annual catch limits and accountability measures, and provide flexibility to address fishery management issues,” said Eileen Sobeck, assistant NOAA administrator for NOAA Fisheries. “The proposed revisions, if implemented, will result in better-managed and more sustainable fisheries.”

The National Standard 1 guidelines provide guidance on preventing overfishing while achieving the optimum yield (the amount of fish which will provide the greatest overall benefit to the Nation, particularly with respect to food production and recreational opportunities) from each U.S. fishery. The National Standard 3 guidelines provide guidance on managing a stock as a unit throughout its range, and the National Standard 7 guidelines address minimizing costs and avoid duplication in fisheries management.

The proposed revisions do not establish new requirements or require councils to revise their current fishery management plans. Rather, they offer additional clarity and potential flexibility in meeting current Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act mandates.

The proposed revisions include:

- Increasing flexibility in setting timelines for rebuilding programs;
- Providing flexibility for better managing data-limited stocks;
- Clarifying guidance on which stocks require conservation and management;
- Enhancing current efforts by the councils to apply ecosystem approaches to management;
- Providing for more stable fisheries through guidance on multiyear overfishing determinations, phasing in results of new stock assessments and the carryover of the unused portion of annual catch limits to subsequent years;
- Adding a definition for “depleted stocks” to recognize non-fishing-related impacts to fish stocks, and;
- Recommending the councils re-evaluate the objectives of fishery management plans, to ensure they reflect the changing needs of the fishery, including allocation of fishery resources.

Public comments on the proposed rule are due June 30, 2015.

To learn more and read the proposed rule as well as to submit comments, visit:
http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/laws_policies/national_standards/ns1_revisions.html

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