UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
PROGRAM PLANNING AND INTEGRATION
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

JUN - 2 2014

To All Interested Government Agencies and Public Groups:

Under the National Environmental Policy Act, an environmental review has been performed on the following action.

TITLE: 2014 Atlantic Bluefish Specifications

LOCATION: Exclusive Economic Zone off the U.S. east coast

SUMMARY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) issues final specifications for the 2014 Atlantic bluefish fishery, including state-by-state commercial quotas, a recreational harvest limit, and recreational possession limits for Atlantic bluefish off the east coast of the United States. The intent of these specifications is to establish allowable 2014 harvest levels and possession limits to attain the target fishing mortality rate, consistent with the Atlantic Bluefish Fishery Management Plan. The specifications are not anticipated to result in any significant impacts on target and non-target fishery resources, protected resources, habitat, or the affected human communities.

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL: John K. Bullard
Regional Administrator, Greater Atlantic Region
National Marine Fisheries Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930
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The environmental review process led us to conclude that this action will not have a significant impact on the environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement was not prepared. A copy of the finding of no significant impact (FONSI), including the supplemental environmental assessment (SEA), is enclosed for your information.

Although NOAA is not soliciting comments on this completed supplemental EA/FONSI, we will consider any comments submitted that would assist us in preparing future NEPA documents. Please submit any written comments to the Responsible Official named above.

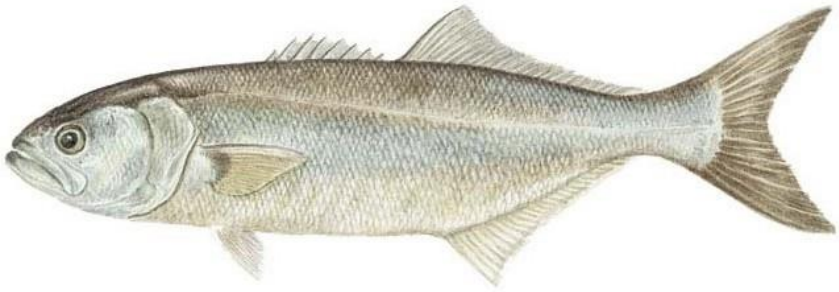
Sincerely,

Patricia A. Montanio
NOAA NEPA Coordinator

Enclosure

Supplemental Environmental Assessment
Revised Management Measures for Bluefish for 2014

Supplements the Environmental Assessment
for the 2013-2014 Bluefish Specifications



January 2014

Prepared by the
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council
in cooperation with the
National Marine Fisheries Service

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The bluefish fishery is managed cooperatively by the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) under the Bluefish Fishery Management Plan (FMP). On May 7, 2013, NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), on behalf of the U.S. Secretary of Commerce (Secretary), issued final specifications for the 2013 and 2014 bluefish fishery, including annual catch limits (ACL), total allowable landings (TAL), commercial quotas and recreational harvest limits (RHL), a research set aside (RSA) allocation percentage, and a recreational possession limit. For 2014, the action established the 2014 ACL as 27.057 M lb, the recreational TAL as 18.846 M lb, the commercial TAL as 4.600 M lb, the RHL as 14.069 M lb, the commercial quota as 8.674 M lb, the RSA allocation percentage (3%) and the recreational possession limit as 15 fish based on the best available scientific information at the time.

Subsequently, an updated review of bluefish stock conditions by the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) resulted in a revision of their previously recommended allowable biological catch (ABC) for 2014. Specifically, the SSC's ABC recommendation was modified from 27.057 M lb downward to 24.432 M lb. As a result, the management measures based on ABC (all measures except the recreational possession limit) were affected.

In October 2013, the Council and Commission responded to the SSC's review by recommending revised management measures for 2014. The Council recommended the 2014 ACL be revised to 24.432 M lb, the recreational TAL to 16.927 M lb, the commercial TAL to 4.153 M lb, the RHL to 13.587 M lb, the commercial quota to 7.494 M lb. The Council did not recommend revising the RSA allocation percentage (3%) or the recreational possession limit for 2014.

The impacts of the proposed action are described in Section 6.0. In summary, the proposed action is expected to have a slight positive impact on the bluefish resource in comparison to taking no action because the potential for exceeding the revised ABC is diminished. In addition, this action is expected to have a neutral impact on non-target species, protected species, and habitat in comparison to taking no action because it would not likely change or shift the distribution of total fishing effort in the bluefish fishery. The proposed action is also expected have a slight positive impact on human communities because it is less likely to trigger accountability measures in a subsequent year than is taking no action.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ABC	Acceptable Biological Catch
ACL	Annual Catch Limit
ACT	Annual Catch Target
ALWTRP	Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan
AM	Accountability Measure
ASAP	Age Structured Assessment Program
ASMFC	Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
CEA	Cumulative Effects Assessment
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CV	Coefficient of Variation
CZMA	Coastal Zone Management Act
DPS	Distinct Population Segment
DPSWG	Data Poor Stocks Working Group
EA	Environmental Assessment
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EFH	Essential Fish Habitat
EFP	Exempted Fishing Permit
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EO	Executive Order
ESA	Endangered Species Act of 1973
F	Fishing Mortality Rate
FR	Federal Register
FMP	Fishery Management Plan
FONSI	Finding of No Significant Impact
GARFO	Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office
HPTRP	Harbor Porpoise Take Reduction Plan
IRFA	Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis
LNG	Liquefied Natural Gas
LOF	List of Fisheries
LWTRP	Large Whale Take Reduction Plan
MAFMC	Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council
MC	Monitoring Committee
MMPA	Marine Mammal Protection Act
MRFSS	Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistical Survey
MSA	Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act
MSY	Maximum Sustainable Yield
NAO	NOAA Administrative Order
NEFSC	Northeast Fisheries Science Center
NEFOP	Northeast Fisheries Observer Program
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NMFS	National Marine Fisheries Service
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
OFL	Overfishing Limit
OY	Optimal Yield
PRA	Paperwork Reduction Act
RFA	Regulatory Flexibility Act
RIR	Regulatory Impact Review
RSA	Research Set-Aside
SARC	Stock Assessment Review Committee
SAW	Stock Assessment Workshop
SFA	Sustainable Fisheries Act
SBA	Small Business Administration
SSB	Spawning Stock Biomass
SSC	Scientific and Statistical Committee
TAL	Total Allowable Landings
TED	Turtle Excluder Device
US	United States
VECs	Valued Ecosystem Components
VTR	Vessel Trip Report

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Council has prepared this supplemental analysis to evaluate potential impacts that would result from the proposed action to approve revised bluefish management measures for fishing year 2014 (January 1, 2014 – December 31, 2014). In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), NMFS previously evaluated the potential impacts of bluefish management measures for 2014 in an Environmental Assessment (EA) submitted to NMFS by the Council (MAFMC 2013a). That EA analyzed the impacts of a suite of management measures approved by the Council, including a range of annual catch limits (ACLs), annual catch targets (ACTs), total allowable landings (TALs), recreational harvest limits (RHLs), commercial quotas and possession limits for the bluefish fishery. The conclusion reached in the EA was that the preferred measures would not significantly impact the quality of the human environment. All beneficial and adverse impacts of the action were evaluated in the original 2013-2014 bluefish specifications EA (MAFMC 2013a) resulting in the conclusion of no significant impacts. This supplemental EA presents impact information on the physical, biological, habitat, and socio-economic ecosystem components that would result from approving revised management measures for bluefish as described herein. This document is not a stand-alone document, but rather a supplemental EA, intended to be utilized in conjunction with the attached EA (MAFMC 2013a).

The supplemental EA updates the previously approved EA (April 15, 2013; attached) that analyzed the 2013-2014 specifications for bluefish. These specifications were published by NOAA's National Marine Fisheries service (NMFS) in the Federal Register (78 FR 26523) and became effective on May 7, 2013. The final rule established the 2013-2014 bluefish specifications based on the Council's preferred Alternative 1. However, at the Council's October 2013 meeting, the Council approved a motion to decrease the 2014 annual catch limit (ACL) from 12,273 mt to 11,082 mt. This action was taken to prevent potential negative impacts on the bluefish stock should the full harvest limits be realized. A supplemental EA is being prepared because the proposed revised ACL is within the range previously analyzed in the 2013-2014 specifications EA.

2.0 BACKGROUND

The bluefish fisheries in U.S. waters of the western Atlantic Ocean are managed under the Bluefish FMP that was prepared cooperatively by the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission). The plan was approved by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) in March 1990 and adopted by the Commission in October 1989. The FMP was amended in 1999 to bring it into compliance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) and the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act (ACFCMA). Following the 2007 reauthorization of the MSA, the FMP was amended through Amendment 3 to the FMP (MAFMC 2011) in order to implement an ACL and accountability measures for the bluefish fishery and further amended through Amendment 4 (MAFMC 2013b) in order to refine the accountability measures that apply to the recreational bluefish fishery.

Figure 1 provides a diagram of the process for determining annual bluefish management measures from MAFMC (2011). Accordingly, the SSC first identifies the catch level above which overfishing is occurring (overfishing limit or OFL) as well as the catch below OFL, called acceptable biological catch or ABC, that adequately accounts for scientific uncertainty in the estimate of OFL and the condition of the stock. Next, the MC determines the annual catch limit (ACL) which, if exceeded, would trigger accountability measures (AMs) such as reductions in future year landings. The MC also recommends a catch level at or below ACL called the annual catch target (ACT) that accounts for uncertainty in the efficacy of the management measures. For bluefish, the ACT is split 83 / 17 % into recreational and commercial ACTs, respectively, and the discarded (as opposed to landed) component of that catch is deducted to arrive at recreational and commercial total allowable landings (TAL). In the final steps, if desired, the Council may dedicate up to 3 % of those landings for scientific research as a research set-aside (RSA). Additionally, landings above the expected recreational harvest can be "transferred" from the recreational to the commercial fishery as long as the final commercial quota does not exceed 10.5 M lb. Because these last steps represent a management preference, the specification of an RSA allowance and the transfer of landings to the commercial fishery are reflected in the Council's "preferred" management alternative.

On May 7, 2013, the NMFS, on behalf of the U.S. Secretary of Commerce, issued final specifications for the 2013 and 2014 bluefish fishery, including ACL, TAL, commercial quotas and RHL, and a recreational possession limit. For 2014, the action established the 2014 ACL as 27.057 M lb, the recreational TAL as 18.846 M lb, the commercial TAL as 4.600 M lb, the RHL as 14.504 M lb, the commercial quota as 8.674 M lb, RSA (3%), and the recreational possession limit as 15 fish based on the best available scientific information at the time.

Subsequently, an updated review of bluefish stock conditions by the Council's SSC resulted in a revision of their previously recommended ABC for 2014. Specifically, the SSC's ABC recommendation was modified from 27.057 M lb downward to 24.432 M lb. As a result, the management measures based on ABC (all measures except the recreational possession limit) were affected.

In October 2013, the Council and Commission responded to the SSC's review by recommending revised management measures for 2014. The Council recommended the 2014 ACL be revised to 24.432 M lb, the recreational TAL to 16.927 M lb, the commercial TAL to 4.153 M lb, the RHL to 13.587 M lb, the commercial quota to 7.494 M lb. The 3% RSA allowance and recreational possession limit for 2014 were not revised.

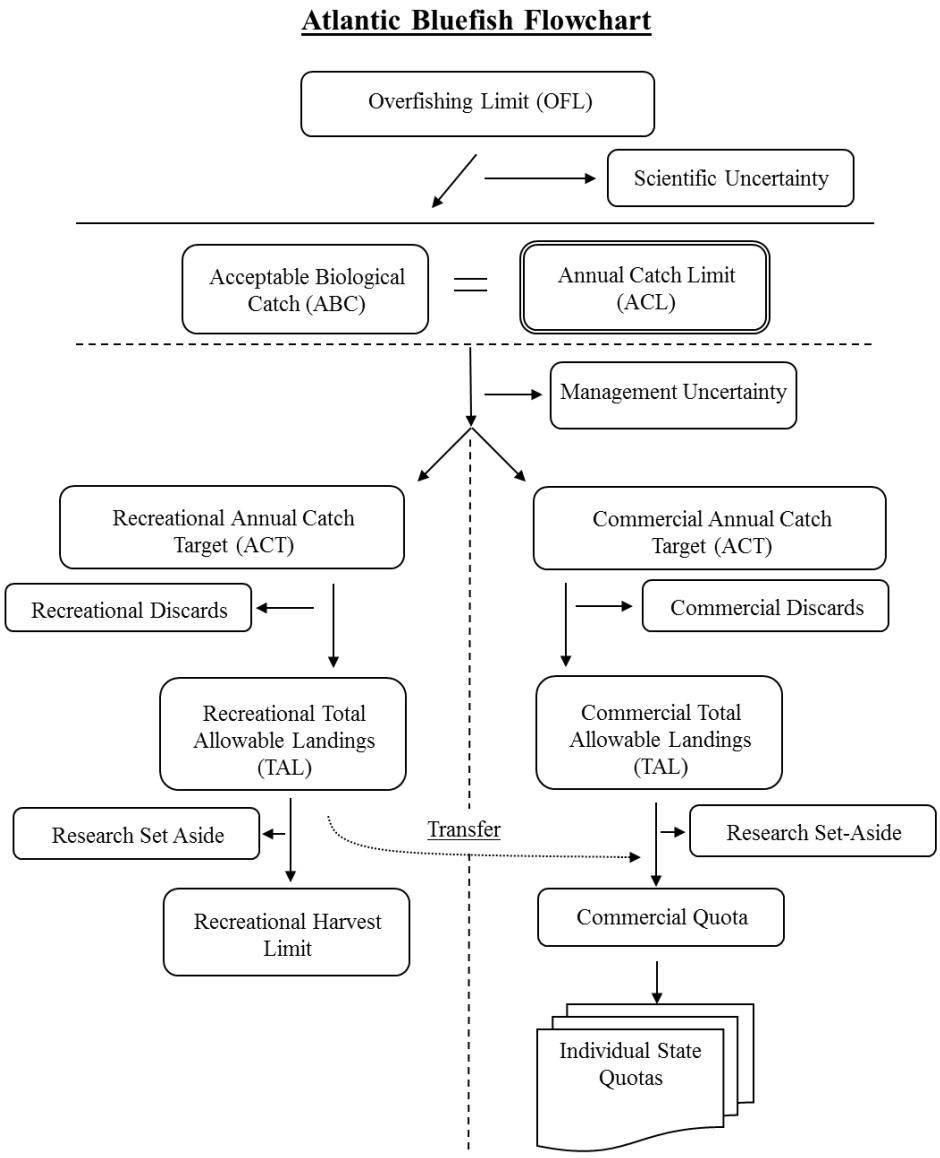

Figure 1. Specification process for bluefish as described in Amendment 3 to the Bluefish FMP (MAFMC 2011).

3.0 PURPOSE AND NEED OF THE ACTION

The purpose for this action is to implement a revised ACL (24.431 M lb) and associated management measures for the bluefish fishery for FY 2014 to ensure the bluefish stock is managed sustainably. The action is needed to incorporate new scientific information and advice from the SSC and avoid measures that, if fully realized, may result in total catch above the revised ABC recommendation for 2014. The purpose and need for this action reflect the recommendations of the Council and Commission and apply the best available scientific information to the management of the bluefish resource.

4.0 PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVE

4.1 No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative would allow the bluefish management measures analyzed and implemented under the previously approved specifications package (MAFMC 2013a) to remain in place. The ABC would be allocated as described in the EA for the final 2013-2014 Bluefish Specifications (MAFMC 2013a) and summarized below in Table 1. Specifically, under this alternative a transfer of 4.342M lb from the recreational to the commercial fishery would result in a commercial quota of 8.942 M lb and an RHL of 14.504 M lb. Reducing these limits for the RSA allowance (703,385 lbs) would result in a commercial quota of 8.674 M lb and an RHL of 14.069 M lb.

Table 1. Derivation of existing bluefish management measures for 2014. These measures would remain in place in 2014 under the No Action Alternative.

2014 Management Measure	Lbs	mt	Basis
ABC	27,057,333	12,273	derived from Council's Risk Policy
ACL	27,057,333	12,273	= ABC
Mgmt Uncertainty	0	0	per MC
Comm Discards	0	0	from assessment
Rec Discards	3,611,172	1,638	Three year 2009-2011 MRIP avg.
Comm ACT	4,599,747	2,086	(ACL - Mgmt Uncert) * 17%
Rec ACT	22,457,587	10,187	(ACL - Mgmt Uncert) * 83%
Comm TAL	4,599,747	2,086	Comm ACT - Disc
Rec TAL	18,846,415	8,549	Rec ACT - Disc
TAL (combined)	23,446,162	10,635	Comm + Rec TAL
Expected Recreational Landings	14,068,836	6382	2009-2011 average
Maximum Transfer	4,342,460	1,970	Calculated
pre-RSA Comm Quota	8,942,207	4,056	Comm TAL + transfer
pre-RSA RHL	14,503,955	6,579	Rec TAL - transfer
Comm RSA Deduction (3%)	268,266	122	3% of Comm Quota
Rec RSA Deduction (3%)	435,119	197	3% of RHL
Adjusted Comm Quota	8,673,941	3,934	Comm Quota - RSA
Adjusted RHL	14,068,836	6,382	RHL - RSA

4.1 Preferred Alternative - Revise 2014 Bluefish Measures

The Preferred Alternative would be based on the revised bluefish ABC recommendations of the SSC (12,273 mt; 24.432 M lb). The SSC reviewed a stock assessment update (NEFSC 2013) which incorporated the most recent scientific information on bluefish biomass (through 2012) allowed calculation of ABC based on the Council's risk policy. In light of the updated biomass estimate, the SSC agreed that an ABC of 24.432 M lb represented the best available scientific information and most appropriate catch level for bluefish at this time. The Council accepted this

recommendation at their October 2013 meeting. The ACL, ACT, and TALs would be specified as described in Table 2, consistent with the methods implemented by Amendment 3 (Figure 1). The measures also reflect new information from the assessment update on bluefish discards. The reduction in RHL and commercial quota is anticipated to prevent the revised ABC from being exceeded which would avoid triggering accountability measures and associated economic impacts in FY 2015. The values of the proposed Preferred and No Action alternatives are compared in Table 3 below.

Table 2. Derivation of proposed bluefish management measures for 2014. These measures would replace those currently specified for 2014.

2014 Management Measure	Lbs	mt	Basis
ABC	24,431,628	11,082	derived from Council's Risk Policy
ACL	24,431,628	11,082	= ABC
Mgmt Uncertainty	0	0	per MC
Comm Discards	0	0	from assessment
Rec Discards	3,351,026	1,520	Three year 2010-2012 MRIP avg.
Comm ACT	4,153,377	1,884	(ACL - Mgmt Uncert) * 17%
Rec ACT	20,278,251	9,198	(ACL - Mgmt Uncert) * 83%
Comm TAL	4,153,377	1,884	Comm ACT - Disc
Rec TAL	16,927,225	7,678	Rec ACT - Disc
TAL (combined)	21,080,602	9,562	Comm + Rec TAL
Expected Recreational Landings	13,179,234	5,978	2010-2012 average
Maximum Transfer	3,340,386	1,515	Calculated
pre-RSA Comm Quota	7,493,762	3,399	Comm TAL + transfer
pre-RSA RHL	13,586,839	6,163	Rec TAL - transfer
Comm RSA Deduction (3%)	224,813	102	3% of Comm Quota
Rec RSA Deduction (3%)	407,605	185	3% of RHL
Adjusted Comm Quota	7,268,949	3,297	Comm Quota - RSA
Adjusted RHL	13,179,234	5,978	RHL - RSA

Table 3. Comparison of the values under the proposed Preferred and No Action alternatives.

Measure	No Action	Proposed Action	Difference (lbs)	Difference (pct)
ABC	27,057,333	24,431,628	-2,625,706	-9.7%
ACL	27,057,333	24,431,628	-2,625,706	-9.7%
Mgmt Uncertainty	0	0	0	0
Comm Discards	0	0	0	0
Rec Discards	3,611,172	3,351,026	-260,145	-7.2%
Comm ACT	4,599,747	4,153,377	-446,370	-9.7%
Rec ACT	22,457,587	20,278,251	-2,179,336	-9.7%
Comm TAL	4,599,747	4,153,377	-446,370	-9.7%
Rec TAL	18,846,415	16,927,225	-1,919,190	-10.2%
TAL (combined)	23,446,162	21,080,602	-2,365,560	-10.1%
Expected Recreational Landings	14,068,836	13,179,234	-889,602	-6.3%
Maximum Transfer	4,342,460	3,340,386	-1,002,075	-23.1%
pre-RSA Comm Quota	8,942,207	7,493,762	-1,448,445	-16.2%
pre-RSA RHL	14,503,955	13,586,839	-917,115	-6.3%
Comm RSA Deduction (3%)	268,266	224,813	-43,453	-16.2%
Rec RSA Deduction (3%)	435,119	407,605	-27,513	-6.3%
Adjusted Comm Quota	8,673,941	7,268,949	-1,404,991	-16.2%
Adjusted RHL	14,068,836	13,179,234	-889,602	-6.3%

Table 4. State-by-state allocation of the 2014 commercial bluefish quota under the No Action and Preferred alternatives in pounds and adjusted for RSA.

State	% of Quota	No Action	Proposed Action
ME	0.6685	57,985	48,593
NH	0.4145	35,953	30,130
MA	6.7167	582,603	488,234
RI	6.8081	590,531	494,877
CT	1.2663	109,838	92,047
NY	10.3851	900,797	754,888
NJ	14.8162	1,285,148	1,076,982
DE	1.8782	162,914	136,525
MD	3.0018	260,374	218,199
VA	11.8795	1,030,421	863,515
NC	32.0608	2,780,935	2,330,483
SC	0.0352	3,053	2,559
GA	0.0095	824	691
FL	10.0597	872,572	731,235
Total	**100.0001**	**8,673,941**	**7,268,949**

5.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The geographic area and human component of the environment most affected by the proposed alternatives are the Mid-Atlantic region, and vessels fishing for bluefish in that area. The attached 2013-2014 bluefish specifications EA includes detailed descriptions of the valued ecosystem components (VECs) which comprise the affected environment. Discussion of physical environment/habitat is included in Section 6.2 of the attached EA and describes the primary geographic areas affected by the alternatives, habitat, and gear types. Target and non-target species are addressed in Section 6.1.3. The most recent updates to bluefish biomass from the assessment update are shown in Table 5. Essential Fish Habitat (EFH), including references to maps and external habitat documents are described in Section 6.2.2 of the attachment. Protected resources are addressed in Section 6.3. Human communities within the affected environment are addressed in Section 6.4, which includes an overview of the bluefish fishery.

Some changes to the description of the affected environment regarding protected resources have occurred since the approval of the 2013-2014 specifications. Specifically, alewife (*Alosa pseudoharengus*) and blueback herring (*Alosa aestivalis*) have been removed as ESA candidate species in the bluefish management area, while dusky shark (*Carcharhinus obscurus*) has been added.

Marine Mammals

Although large whale entanglements in bottom otter trawl and hook and line gear have been documented, these are rare events relative to gillnet entanglements, and are not expected to result in serious injury/mortality (SI/M). Based on results from entanglement analyses, the greatest risk to ESA-listed large whales from the bluefish fishery is entanglement in gillnet gear. As described in NMFS's 2013 Biological Opinion on the Bluefish and six other FMPs, 0-3 North Atlantic right whales, 0-8 humpback whales, 0-3 fin whales, and 0-2 sei whales are anticipated to experience serious injury/mortality (SI/M) annually as a result of entanglement in U.S. gillnet and trap/pot fishing gear. A subset of these gears (gillnets only) may be used to target bluefish. The annual number of large whale SI/Ms resulting from gillnet gear targeting bluefish cannot be estimated at this time, but is likely to be a fraction of the total annual SI/M estimates. Neither the bluefish fishery nor the other six fisheries addressed in the 2013 Biological Opinion were expected to jeopardize the continued existence of ESA-listed large whales.

Sea Turtles

Reports from Murray (2009) and Warden (2011) estimate that the average annual bycatch of loggerhead sea turtles in bottom otter trawl and sink gillnet gear used in the bluefish fishery is 52 individuals per year—4 per year in trawls (95% CI: 3-5) and 48 per year in gillnets (95% CI: 23-79)—based on NMFS Vessel Trip Report (VTR) data from 2005-2008 (for trawls) and 2002-2006 (for gillnets). NMFS's December 2013 Biological Opinion on the Bluefish and six other FMPs quantified and analyzed the effects of these annual captures (and any resulting mortalities) on loggerheads as well as the three other sea turtle species inhabiting the bluefish management area. Although efforts to survey recreational fishermen are ongoing, estimates of the level of sea turtle bycatch for the recreational (*i.e.,* hook and line) bluefish fishery are not currently available. Neither the bluefish fishery nor the other six fisheries addressed in the 2013 Biological Opinion were expected to jeopardize the continued existence of ESA-listed sea turtles.

Atlantic Sturgeon

NMFS has listed five Distinct Population Segments (DPS) of Atlantic sturgeon as threatened or endangered (Table 6). As a result of this listing, NMFS reinitiated consultation on seven fisheries, including the bluefish fishery and released a final Biological Opinion (BiOp) in December of 2013 (NMFS 2013). The BiOp concludes that the continued operation of the seven fisheries, including the bluefish fishery, over the next ten years may adversely affect, but is not likely to jeopardize, the continued existence of any of the DPSs of Atlantic sturgeon.

Damon-Randall et al. (2013) used NEFOP data in conjunction with genetic testing results to break down estimates of Atlantic sturgeon mortalities into the DPS(s) from which the sampled fish originated. The analysis indicates that Atlantic sturgeon bycatch mortality is composed of an estimated 11% from the Gulf of Maine DPS, 51% from the New York Bight DPS, 13% from the Chesapeake Bay DPS, 2% from the Carolina DPS, and 22% from the South Atlantic DPS. Atlantic sturgeon from Canada comprise 1% of the mortalities, although these sturgeon are not listed under the ESA. Reductions in bycatch mortality and the other sources of anthropogenic mortality may be required in order to fully recover Atlantic sturgeon.

Atlantic sturgeon from any of the five listed DPSs could occur in areas where the commercial bluefish fishery operates, and the species has been captured as bycatch in gear targeting bluefish. Of the gear types known to incidentally capture Atlantic sturgeon, sink gillnet gear poses the greatest known risk of mortality for sturgeon. Higher levels of sturgeon bycatch in sink gillnet fisheries is associated with depths of less than 40 meters, mesh sizes of greater than 10 inches, long (>24hr) soak times, and operations in the months of April and May (NMFS 2013). Although VTR data from 2012 indicate that 93 percent of directed commercial bluefish landings come from gillnets, the bluefish fishery tends to use smaller mesh (average ~5 inch), and short soak times (average ~6 hr), and according to Fishery Observer Program data. Because of these factors and the conclusion of the BiOp (NMFS 2013) the bluefish fishery in 2014 is not expected to jeopardize the identified DPSs of Atlantic sturgeon.

Table 5. Biomass at age (mt) for bluefish as estimated from the stock assessment model (NEFSC 2013).

Year	Age							**Total**
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+	
2000	1,599	4,344	7,814	8,962	12,757	13,407	49,990	**98,873**
2001	1,839	2,993	7,759	12,046	13,848	13,457	44,041	**95,982**
2002	1,490	5,247	5,452	12,441	15,855	12,815	45,960	**99,260**
2003	1,210	4,543	10,346	9,698	17,506	16,579	45,328	**105,209**
2004	389	3,476	8,805	14,808	11,737	17,276	45,291	**101,782**
2005	1,562	2,462	7,487	12,549	20,660	12,393	61,040	**118,153**
2006	3,275	4,725	7,010	12,613	17,175	22,034	55,982	**122,813**
2007	503	6,730	9,889	10,389	16,951	16,417	61,052	**121,931**
2008	1,987	2,395	13,040	14,600	13,156	17,557	57,149	**119,884**
2009	507	4,615	7,436	22,199	19,152	12,685	60,888	**127,483**
2010	859	1,898	8,609	10,823	28,601	19,710	60,054	**130,554**
2011	674	2,327	4,266	10,799	11,794	30,018	67,253	**127,129**
2012	389	2,324	4,948	5,937	14,991	14,542	82,677	**125,808**

Table 6. Species currently or pending listing under the ESA that co-occur with the bluefish management unit.

Species	Common name	Scientific Name	Status
Cetaceans	Northern right	*Eubalaena glacialis*	Endangered
	Humpback	*Megaptera novaeangliae*	Endangered
	Fin	*Balaenoptera physalus*	Endangered
	Blue	*Balaenoptera musculus*	Endangered
	Sei	*Balaenoptera borealis*	Endangered
	Sperm	*Physeter macrocephalus*	Endangered
Sea Turtles	Leatherback	*Dermochelys coriacea*	Endangered
	Kemp's ridley	*Lepidochelys kempii*	Endangered
	Green[1]	*Chelonia mydas*	Threatened
	Hawksbill	*Eretmochelys imbricata*	Endangered
	Loggerhead[2]	*Caretta caretta*	Threatened
Fishes	Shortnose sturgeon	*Acipenser brevirostrum*	Endangered
	Atlantic salmon	*Salmo salar*	Endangered
	Smalltooth sawfish	*Pristis pectinata*	Endangered
	Atlantic sturgeon[3]	*Acipenser oxyrinchus*	Endangered; Threatened
	Cusk	*Brosme brosme*	Candidate
	Dusky shark	*Carcharhinus obscurus*	Candidate

[1] Florida & Mexico's Pacific coast breeding populations are endangered; populations in all other areas listed as threatened.
[2] Northwest Atlantic distinct population segment (DPS) of loggerhead turtles.
[3] The Gulf of Maine DPS is listed as threatened, while the New York Bight, Chesapeake Bay, Carolina, and South Atlantic populations are listed as endangered.

6.0 IMPACTS OF THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE AND NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

6.1 Direct and Indirect Impacts of the Preferred Alternative and No-Action Alternative

As reported to the Council at its October 2013 meeting, the bluefish fishery has underperformed by an average of 28% in recent years (Table 7). In a fishery where landings are more likely to be constrained by overall harvest limits, changes in those limits would be more likely to affect fishing effort and, therefore, interactions between fishing gear and habitat, non-target species or protected species. Because the underperformance of the bluefish recreational and commercial fisheries suggests that factors other than established limits are constraining harvest, it is not expected that a 10% reduction in the combined recreational and commercial TALs under the preferred alternative will directly affect overall effort or the indirect impacts of that effort.

Table 7. Summary of bluefish management measures and fishery performance, 2008 - 2012.

Management Measures	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Average
Combined TALs (M lb)	28.156	29.356	29.264	27.293	28.267	28.467
Comm. Quota (M lb)	7.705	9.828	10.213	9.375	10.317	9.488
Comm. Landings (M lb)	5.968	6.99	7.069	5.082	4.93	6.008
Rec. Harvest Limit	20.451	19.528	18.631	17.813	17.457	18.776
Rec. Landings (M lb)	18.9	13.583	18.042	11.499	10.684	14.542
Rec. Possession Limit	15	15	15	15	15	15
Total Landings	24.868	20.573	25.111	16.581	15.614	20.549
Overage/Underage (M lb)	-3.288	-8.826	-4.153	-10.712	-12.653	-7.926
Overage/Underage (Pct)	-11.7%	-30.1%	-14.2%	-39.2%	-44.8%	-28.00%

6.1.1 Target Species

No Action

Under the No Action Alternative, bluefish catch limits would be those implemented by the 2013-2014 specifications. The direct and indirect impacts of those limits on bluefish are described in Section 7.1 of the specifications EA. Because a revised biomass estimate resulted in modification of the SSC's ABC recommendation for 2014, the existing harvest limits, if fully realized, are not as appropriate for maintaining sustainable harvest as are the limits under the preferred alternative. The No Action would not result in overfishing since it is below the revised OFL. However, the No Action is above the revised ABC. The probability that the ABC would be exceeded is remote because the fishery has not been constrained by overall

harvest limits. Therefore, the No Action may have slight negative impacts on the target species since there is a remote risk that the No Action harvest limits would be achieved.

Preferred Alternative

The intent of the ACL and harvest limits is to constrain bluefish catch to a level that will result in continuation of sustainable harvest consistent with the objectives of the FMP. Under the Preferred Alternative, bluefish harvest limits would be less than those implemented by the 2013-2014 specifications EA. Because the harvest limits are adjusted to account for a decreased biomass estimate, they are expected to result in lower fishing mortality than under the No Action Alternative. The recommended ABC of 24.432 M lb reflects the best available scientific information, and more accurately reflects the latest data on bluefish biomass, landings, and discards, as compared to the No Action Alternative. Since the fishery has not been constrained by overall harvest limits, landings patterns are not expected to differ from the No Action Alternative. In summary, while the catch limits are lower under the Preferred Alternative, the limits should result in negligible impacts on the bluefish stock and should continue to promote sustainable harvest of the species.

6.1.2 Non-Target Species and Bycatch

No Action

The direct and indirect impacts of the No Action Alternative on non-target species are described in Section 7.1 of the 2013-2014 specifications EA. Bluefish is primarily a rod and reel recreational fishery and the commercial fishery for bluefish is primarily prosecuted with gillnets (93.4%) and hook and line gear. The commercial fishery often harvests mixed species, including bonito, Atlantic croaker, weakfish, spiny dogfish, and other species. Given the mixed species nature of the bluefish commercial fishery, incidental catch of non-target species does occur to species that co-occur with bluefish. Despite the apparent high quota under the No Action, fishing effort would not be expected to change because the fishery has not been constrained by the overall harvest limits. Therefore, the No Action would have neutral impacts on non-target species and by-catch.

Preferred Alternative

As described above, the reduced bluefish catch limits proposed in this action are not likely to result in an increase or decrease in fishing effort. Additionally, the action is also not likely to result in any spatial or temporal shifts in fishing effort that might increase bycatch of non-target species. Therefore, compared to the No Action Alternative, the Preferred Alternative is expected to have neutral impacts on non-target species.

6.1.3 Protected Resources

No Action

Under the No Action Alternative, bluefish catch limits would be those proposed in the specifications EA (Section 5.3). That EA indicated that the magnitude and distribution of effort associated the No Action alternative would not result in significant impacts to protected resources. Therefore, the No Action would have neutral impacts on protected resources.

Preferred Alternative

As described above, the reduced bluefish catch limits proposed in this action are not likely to result in an increase or decrease in fishing effort. Additionally, the action is also not likely to result in any spatial or temporal shifts in fishing effort that might increase interactions with protected resources. Gear impacts on protected resources associated with the bluefish fishery are described in section 6.3.2 of the specifications EA and the Preferred Alternative includes no changes to effort associated with these gear types. Therefore, compared to the No Action Alternative, the Preferred Alternative is expected to have neutral impacts on protected resources.

6.1.4 Human Communities/Economic/Social Environment

No Action

Under the No Action Alternative, bluefish harvest limits would be those proposed by the specifications EA (Section 5.3). That EA determined that the action would have positive economic and social benefits, mainly by maintaining fishing opportunity to the commercial and recreational fisheries for bluefish throughout the fishing year. However, given the updated biomass estimate and revised ABC determination by the SSC, the harvest limits under the No Action Alternative are now associated with slight negative impacts on human communities since there is a remote risk that they would allow the revised ABC to be exceeded. This outcome would trigger accountability measures which may reduce fishing opportunity in a subsequent year, as described in the specifications EA.

Preferred Alternative

Under the Preferred Alternative, bluefish catch limits would be lower than those implemented under the specifications EA. While the overall 2014 combined TALs (21.081 M lb) under the Preferred Alternative are lower (10.1%) than the currently specified combined TALs for 2014 (23.446 M lb), they are substantially higher (35.0%) than recent coast-wide landings (15.614 M lb in 2012).

The greatest annual commercial fishery landings over the past five years were 7.069 M lb in 2010 (Table 3) and the revised commercial quota is 7.269 M lb. It is, therefore, considered unlikely that the revised quota will constrain the commercial fishery. Unless market conditions change substantially in 2014, it would be expected that commercial bluefish landings will approximate the 2012 landings (6.008 M lb), and this would maintain ex-vessel revenues from bluefish in 2014.

While the proposed recreational harvest limit under preferred Alternative 1 is lower than the limit implemented in 2012, the projected recreational landings for 2014 (13.179 M lb) are the basis for the proposed limit under this alternative (13.179 M lb). The Preferred Alternative is likely to result in the same level of recreational satisfaction when compared to the status quo alternative since no reduction in fishing opportunity is associated with either alternative. It is expected that positive social and economic impacts will continue to be realized in the long-term, as the stock continues to be managed at sustainable levels.

In summary, the Preferred Alternative would have slight positive economic and social benefits compared to the No Action. This is mainly because fishing opportunity to the commercial and recreational fisheries for bluefish will be maintained throughout the fishing year and because the Preferred Alternative is less likely to trigger accountability measures in a subsequent year.

6.2 Cumulative Effects Analysis

A cumulative effects analysis (CEA) is required by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) (40 CFR part 1508.7). The purpose of CEA is to consider the combined effects of many actions on the human environment over time that would be missed if each action were evaluated separately. CEQ guidelines recognize that it is not practical to analyze the cumulative effects of an action from every conceivable perspective, but rather, the intent is to focus on those effects that are truly meaningful. A formal cumulative impact assessment is not necessarily required as part of an EA under NEPA as long as the significance of cumulative impacts have been considered (U.S. EPA 1999). The following remarks address the significance of the expected cumulative impacts as they relate to the federally managed bluefish fishery.

This CEA assesses the combined impact of the direct and indirect effects of the proposed bluefish harvest limits with the impact from the past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future fishing actions, as well as factors external to the bluefish fishery that affect the various components of the human environment. This analysis is focused on the VECs (see below) and because this action is supplementing the specifications EA, it relies heavily on the analysis contained in the attached EA (Section 7.6).

Valued Ecosystem Components (VECs):

1. Managed resource (bluefish)
2. Non-target species
3. Habitat including EFH for the managed resource and non-target species
4. Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed and Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) protected species

5. Human communities

Geographic Boundaries

The analysis of impacts focuses on actions related to the harvest of bluefish. The core geographic scope for each of the VECs is focused on the Western Atlantic Ocean (section 6.0 of the attached EA). The core geographic scopes for the managed resources are the range of the management units (section 6.1 of the attached EA). For non-target species, those ranges may be expanded and would depend on the biological range of each individual non-target species in the Western Atlantic Ocean. For habitat, the core geographic scope is focused on EFH within the EEZ but includes all habitat utilized by bluefish and non-target species in the Western Atlantic Ocean. The core geographic scope for endangered and protected resources can be considered the overall range of these VECs in the Western Atlantic Ocean. For human communities, the core geographic boundaries are defined as those U.S. fishing communities directly involved in the harvest or processing of the managed resources, which were found to occur in coastal states from Maine through North Carolina (section 6.4 of the attached EA).

Temporal Boundaries

The temporal scope of past and present actions for VECs is primarily focused on actions that have occurred after FMP implementation (1990). For endangered and other protected resources, the scope of past and present actions is on a species-by-species basis (section 6.3 of the attached EA) and is largely focused on the 1980s and 1990s through the present, when NMFS began generating stock assessments for marine mammals and sea turtles that inhabit waters of the U.S. EEZ. The temporal scope of future actions for all five VECs extends about two years (2016) into the future. This period was chosen because it is the effective length of the action.

6.2.1 Summary of Direct/Indirect Impacts of the Proposed Action

The direct and indirect effects on the VECs of the proposed action (Preferred Alternative) in this supplemental EA compared to the No Action Alternative are summarized in Table 7 below. The nomenclature used is the following:

Managed Resource: positive = actions that increase stock size; negative = actions that decrease stock size;

Non-Target Species: positive = actions that decrease bycatch likelihood; negative = actions that increase bycatch likelihood;

Habitat: positive = actions that improve or reduce disturbance of habitat; negative = actions that degrade or increase disturbance of habitat;

Protected Resources: positive = actions that decrease likelihood of fishery interactions; negative = actions that increase likelihood of fishery interactions;

Human Communities: positive = actions that increase revenue and well-being of fishermen and/or associated businesses; negative = actions that decrease revenue and well-being of fishermen and/or associated businesses

Table 8. Summary of Direct and Indirect Effects of the Alternatives.

Alternative	Valued Ecosystem Components (VECs)				
	Managed Resource	**Non-Target Species**	**Habitat**	**Protected Resources**	**Human Communities**
No-Action Alternative	slight negative	negligible	negligible	negligible	slight negative
Proposed Alternative	slight positive	negligible	negligible	negligible	slight positive

Impacts to the human environment from the proposed action were assessed and found to be negligible to positive. In general, the smaller allowable bluefish landings limits are not likely to result in considerable reductions in fishing effort. Fishing effort for bluefish is not largely controlled by harvest limits. Because the bluefish FMP is jointly managed by NMFS and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, the individual states set recreational and commercial regulations that largely control fishing effort for bluefish. The amount of fishing effort in the fishery in 2014 is likely to be similar 2012 effort and will be within the scope of fishing effort analyzed in the attached 2013-2014 specifications EA.

6.2.2 Actions Other Than Those Proposed in this Amendment

The impacts of each of the alternatives considered in this specifications document are given in section 7.1 through 7.4 of the attached EA. Table 8, copied here from that EA presents meaningful past (P), present (Pr), or reasonably foreseeable future (RFF) actions to be considered other than those actions being considered in this specifications document. These impacts are described in chronological order and qualitatively, as the actual impacts of these actions are too complex to be quantified in a meaningful way. When any of these abbreviations occur together (i.e., P, Pr, RFF), it indicates that some past actions are still relevant to the present and/or future actions.

Past and Present Actions

The historical management practices of the Council have resulted in positive impacts on the health of the bluefish stock (section 6.1 of the attached EA). Actions have been taken to manage the commercial and recreational fisheries for this species through amendment actions. In addition, the annual specifications process is intended to provide the opportunity for the Council and NMFS to regularly assess the status of the fishery and to make necessary adjustments to ensure that there is a reasonable expectation of meeting the objectives of the FMP. The statutory basis for federal fisheries management is the MSA. To the degree with which this regulatory regime is complied, the cumulative impacts of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future federal fishery management actions on the VECs should generally be associated with positive long-term outcomes. Constraining fishing effort through regulatory actions can often have negative short-term socioeconomic impacts. These impacts are usually necessary to bring about

long-term sustainability of a given resource, and as such, should, in the long-term, promote positive effects on human communities, especially those that are economically dependent upon the bluefish stock.

Non-fishing activities that introduce chemical pollutants, sewage, changes in water temperature, salinity, dissolved oxygen, and suspended sediment into the marine environment pose a risk to all of the identified VECs. Human-induced non-fishing activities tend to be localized in nearshore areas and marine project areas where they occur. Examples of these activities include, but are not limited to agriculture, port maintenance, beach nourishment, coastal development, marine transportation, marine mining, dredging and the disposal of dredged material. Wherever these activities co-occur, they are likely to work additively or synergistically to decrease habitat quality and, as such, may indirectly constrain the sustainability of the managed resources, non-target species, and protected resources. Decreased habitat suitability would tend to reduce the tolerance of these VECs to the impacts of fishing effort. Mitigation of this outcome through regulations that would reduce fishing effort could then negatively impact human communities. The overall impact to the affected species and its habitat on a population level is unknown, but likely neutral to low negative, since a large portion of this species has a limited or minor exposure to these local non-fishing perturbations.

In addition to guidelines mandated by the MSA, NMFS reviews these types of effects through the review processes required by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act and Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act for certain activities that are regulated by federal, state, and local authorities. The jurisdiction of these activities is in "waters of the U.S." and includes both riverine and marine habitats.

Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions

For many of the proposed non-fishing activities to be permitted under other federal agencies (such as beach nourishment, offshore wind facilities, etc.), those agencies would conduct examinations of potential impacts on the VECs. The MSA (50 CFR 600.930) imposes an obligation on other federal agencies to consult with the Secretary of Commerce on actions that may adversely affect EFH. The eight Fishery Management Councils are engaged in this review process by making comments and recommendations on any federal or state action that may affect habitat, including EFH, for their managed species and by commenting on actions likely to substantially affect habitat, including EFH.

In addition, under the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (Section 662), “whenever the waters of any stream or other body of water are proposed or authorized to be impounded, diverted, the channel deepened, or the stream or other body of water otherwise controlled or modified for any purpose whatever, including navigation and drainage, by any department or agency of the U.S., or by any public or private agency under federal permit or license, such department or agency first shall consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Department of the Interior, and with the head of the agency exercising administration over the wildlife resources of the particular state wherein the” activity is taking place. This act provides another avenue for review of actions by other federal and state agencies that may impact resources that NMFS manages in the reasonably foreseeable future.

In addition, NMFS and the USFWS share responsibility for implementing the ESA. ESA requires NMFS to designate "critical habitat" for any species it lists under the ESA (i.e., areas that contain physical or biological features essential to conservation, which may require special management considerations or protection) and to develop and implement recovery plans for threatened and endangered species. The ESA provides another avenue for NMFS to review actions by other entities that may impact endangered and protected resources whose management units are under NMFS' jurisdiction.

6.2.3 Magnitude and Significance of Cumulative Effects

In determining the magnitude and significance of the cumulative effects, the additive and synergistic effects of the proposed action, as well as past, present, and future actions, must be taken into account. The following section discusses the effects of these actions on each of the VECs.

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Table 9. Impacts of Past (P), Present (Pr), and Reasonably Foreseeable Future (RFF) Actions on the five VECs (not including those actions considered in this specifications document).

Action	Description	Impacts on Managed Resource	Impacts on Non-target Species	Impacts on Habitat and EFH	Impacts on Protected Species	Impacts on Human Communities
[P, Pr] Original FMP and subsequent Amendments and Frameworks to the FMP	Established commercial and recreational management measures	**Indirect Positive** Regulatory tool available to rebuild and manage stocks	**Indirect Positive** Reduced fishing effort	**Indirect Positive** Reduced fishing effort	**Indirect Positive** Reduced fishing effort	**Indirect Positive** Benefited domestic businesses
[P, Pr] Bluefish Specifications	Establish annual quotas, RHLs, other fishery regulations (commercial and recreational)	**Indirect Positive** Regulatory tool to specify catch limits, and other regulation; allows response to annual stock updates	**Indirect Positive** Reduced effort levels and gear requirements	**Indirect Positive** Reduced effort levels and gear requirements	**Indirect Positive** Reduced effort levels and gear requirements	**Indirect Positive** Benefited domestic businesses
[P, Pr] Developed and Applied Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology	Established acceptable level of precision and accuracy for monitoring of bycatch in fisheries	**Neutral** May improve data quality for monitoring total removals of managed resource	**Neutral** May improve data quality for monitoring removals of non-target species	**Neutral** Will not affect distribution of effort	**Neutral** May increase observer coverage and will not affect distribution of effort	**Potentially Indirect Negative** May impose an inconvenience on vessel operations
[Pr, RFF] Omnibus Amendment ACLs/AMs Implemented	Establish ACLs and AMs for managed resource	**Potentially Indirect Positive** Pending full analysis	**Potentially Indirect Positive** Pending full analysis	**Potentially Indirect Positive** Pending full analysis	**Potentially Indirect Positive** Pending full analysis	**Potentially Indirect Positive** Pending full analysis
[Pr, RFF] Omnibus Recreational AM Amendment Implemented	Modify AMs for managed resource recreational fishery	**Potentially Indirect Positive** Pending full analysis	**Potentially Indirect Positive** Pending full analysis	**Potentially Indirect Positive** Pending full analysis	**Potentially Indirect Positive** Pending full analysis	**Potentially Indirect Positive** Pending full analysis
[P, Pr, RFF] Agricultural runoff	Nutrients applied to agricultural land are introduced into aquatic systems	**Indirect Negative** Reduced habitat quality	**Indirect Negative** Reduced habitat quality	**Direct Negative** Reduced habitat quality	**Indirect Negative** Reduced habitat quality	**Indirect Negative** Reduced habitat quality negatively affects resource

Table 8 (Continued). Impacts of Past (P), Present (Pr), and Reasonably Foreseeable Future (RFF) Actions on the five VECs (not including those actions considered in this specifications document).

Action	Description	Impacts on Managed Resource	Impacts on Non-target Species	Impacts on Habitat and EFH	Impacts on Protected Species	Impacts on Human Communities
P, Pr, RFF Port maintenance	Dredging of coastal, port and harbor areas for port maintenance	**Uncertain – Likely Indirect Negative** Dependent on mitigation effects	**Uncertain – Likely Indirect Negative** Dependent on mitigation effects	**Uncertain – Likely Direct Negative** Dependent on mitigation effects	**Uncertain – Likely Indirect Negative** Dependent on mitigation effects	**Uncertain – Likely Mixed** Dependent on mitigation effects
P, Pr, RFF Offshore disposal of dredged materials	Disposal of dredged materials	**Indirect Negative** Reduced habitat quality	**Indirect Negative** Reduced habitat quality	**Direct Negative** Reduced habitat quality	**Indirect Negative** Reduced habitat quality	**Indirect Negative** Reduced habitat quality negatively affects resource viability
P, Pr, RFF Beach nourishment	Offshore mining of sand for beaches	**Indirect Negative** Localized decreases in habitat quality	**Indirect Negative** Localized decreases in habitat quality	**Direct Negative** Reduced habitat quality	**Indirect Negative** Localized decreases in habitat quality	**Mixed** Positive for mining companies, possibly negative for fishing industry
	Placement of sand to nourish beach shorelines	**Indirect Negative** Localized decreases in habitat quality	**Indirect Negative** Localized decreases in habitat quality	**Direct Negative** Reduced habitat quality	**Indirect Negative** Localized decreases in habitat quality	**Positive** Beachgoers expect sand; positive for tourism
P, Pr, RFF Marine transportation	Expansion of port facilities, vessel operations and recreational marinas	**Indirect Negative** Localized decreases in habitat quality	**Indirect Negative** Localized decreases in habitat quality	**Direct Negative** Reduced habitat quality	**Indirect Negative** Localized decreases in habitat quality	**Mixed** Positive for some interests, potential displacement for others
P, Pr, RFF Installation of pipelines, utility lines and cables	Transportation of oil, gas and energy through pipelines, utility lines and cables	**Uncertain – Likely Indirect Negative** Dependent on mitigation effects	**Uncertain – Likely Indirect Negative** Dependent on mitigation effects	**Uncertain – Likely Direct Negative** Reduced habitat quality	**Potentially Direct Negative** Dependent on mitigation effects	**Uncertain – Likely Mixed** Dependent on mitigation effects
P, Pr, RFF National Offshore Aquaculture Act of 2007	Bill that would grant DOC authority to issue permits for offshore aquaculture in federal waters	**Potentially Indirect Negative** Localized decreases in habitat quality possible	**Potentially Indirect Negative** Localized decreases in habitat quality possible	**Direct Negative** Localized decreases in habitat quality possible	**Potentially Indirect Negative** Localized decreases in habitat quality possible	**Uncertain – Likely Mixed** Costs/benefits remain unanalyzed

Table 8 (Continued). Impacts of Past (P), Present (Pr), and Reasonably Foreseeable Future (RFF) Actions on the five VECs (not including those actions considered in this specifications document).

Action	Description	Impacts on Managed Resource	Impacts on Non-target Species	Impacts on Habitat and EFH	Impacts on Protected Species	Impacts on Human Communities
[RFF] Offshore Wind Energy Facilities (within 3 years)	Construction of wind turbines to harness electrical power	**Uncertain – Likely Indirect Negative** Dependent on mitigation effects	**Uncertain – Likely Indirect Negative** Dependent on mitigation effects	**Potentially Direct Negative** Localized decreases in habitat quality possible	**Uncertain – Likely Indirect Negative** Dependent on mitigation effects	**Uncertain – Likely Mixed** Dependent on mitigation effects
[Pr, RFF] Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) terminals (within 3 years)	Transport natural gas via tanker to terminals offshore and	**Uncertain – Likely Indirect Negative** Dependent on mitigation effects	**Uncertain – Likely Indirect Negative** Dependent on mitigation effects	**Potentially Direct Negative** Localized decreases in habitat quality possible	**Uncertain – Likely Indirect Negative** Dependent on mitigation effects	**Uncertain – Likely Mixed** Dependent on mitigation effects
[RFF] Convening Gear Take Reduction Teams (within next 3 years)	Recommend measures to reduce mortality and injury to marine mammals	**Indirect Positive** Will improve data quality for monitoring total removals	**Indirect Positive** Reducing availability of gear could reduce bycatch	**Indirect Positive** Reducing availability of gear could reduce gear impacts	**Indirect Positive** Reducing availability of gear could reduce encounters	**Indirect Negative** Reducing availability of gear could reduce revenues
[RFF] Strategy for Sea Turtle Conservation for the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico Fisheries (w/in next 3 years)	May recommend strategies to prevent the bycatch of sea turtles in commercial fisheries operations	**Indirect Positive** Will improve data quality for monitoring total removals	**Indirect Positive** Reducing availability of gear could reduce bycatch	**Indirect Positive** Reducing availability of gear could reduce gear impacts	**Indirect Positive** Reducing availability of gear could reduce encounters	**Indirect Negative** Reducing availability of gear could reduce revenues

6.2.3.1 Managed Resources

Those past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, whose effects may impact the managed resources and the direction of those potential impacts, are summarized in Table 8. The indirectly negative actions described in Table 8 are localized in nearshore areas and marine project areas where they occur. Therefore, the magnitude of those impacts on the managed resource is expected to be limited due to a lack of exposure to the population at large. Agricultural runoff may be much broader in scope, and the impacts of nutrient inputs to the coastal system may be of a larger magnitude, although the impact on productivity of the managed resources is unquantifiable. As described above (section 7.5.4 of the attached EA), NMFS has several means under which it can review non-fishing actions of other federal or state agencies that may impact NMFS' managed resources prior to permitting or implementation of those projects. This serves to minimize the extent and magnitude of indirect negative impacts those actions could have on resources under NMFS' jurisdiction.

Past fishery management actions taken through the FMP and annual specification process have had a positive cumulative effect on the managed resource. It is anticipated that the future management actions, described in Table 10, will result in additional indirect positive effects on the managed resources through actions which reduce and monitor bycatch, protect habitat, and protect ecosystem services on which bluefish productivity depends. The 2012 fishing year was the first year of ACLs/AMs and catch accountability. This represents a major change to the management program and is expected to lead to improvements in resource sustainability over the long-term. These impacts could be broad in scope. Overall, the past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions that are truly meaningful to bluefish have had a positive cumulative effect.

Catch limits, commercial quotas and recreational harvest limits for the managed resource have been specified to ensure the stock is managed in a sustainable manner, and measures are consistent with the objectives of the FMP under the guidance of the MSA. The impacts from annual specification of management measures established in previous years on the managed resource are largely dependent on how effective those measures were in meeting their intended objectives (i.e., preventing overfishing, achieve optimal yield (OY)) and the extent to which mitigating measures were effective. The proposed action in this document would positively reinforce the past and anticipated positive cumulative effects on the bluefish stock, by achieving the objectives specified in the FMP. Therefore, the proposed action would not have any significant effect on the managed resources individually or in conjunction with other anthropogenic activities (see Table 10).

Table 10. Summary of the effects of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions on the managed resource.

Action	Past to the Present	Reasonably Foreseeable Future
Original FMP and subsequent Amendments and Frameworks to the FMP	**Indirect Positive**	
Bluefish Specifications	**Indirect Positive**	
Developed and Implement Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology	**Neutral**	
Amendment to address ACLs/AMs implemented		**Potentially Indirect Positive**
Agricultural runoff	**Indirect Negative**	
Port maintenance	**Uncertain – Likely Indirect Negative**	
Offshore disposal of dredged materials	**Indirect Negative**	
Beach nourishment – Offshore mining	**Indirect Negative**	
Beach nourishment – Sand placement	**Indirect Negative**	
Marine transportation	**Indirect Negative**	
Installation of pipelines, utility lines and cables	**Uncertain – Likely Indirect Negative**	
National Offshore Aquaculture Act of 2007	**Potentially Indirect Negative**	
Offshore Wind Energy Facilities (within 3 years)		**Uncertain – Likely Indirect Negative**
Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) terminals (within 3 years)		**Uncertain – Likely Indirect Negative**
Convening Gear Take Reduction Teams (within 3 years)		**Indirect Positive**
Strategy for Sea Turtle Conservation for the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico Fisheries (within next 3 years)		**Indirect Positive**
Summary of past, present, and future actions excluding those proposed in this specifications document	**Overall, actions have had, or will have, positive impacts on the managed resources * See section 7.5.5.1 for explanation.**	

6.2.3.2 Non-Target Species or Bycatch

Those past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, whose effects may impact non-target species and the direction of those potential impacts, are summarized in Table 9. The effects of indirectly negative actions described in Table 9 are localized in nearshore areas and marine project areas where they occur. Therefore, the magnitude of those impacts on non-target species is expected to be limited due to a lack of exposure to the population at large. Agricultural runoff may be much broader in scope, and the impacts of nutrient inputs to the coastal system may be of a larger magnitude, although the impact on productivity of non-target resources and the oceanic ecosystem is unquantifiable. As described above (section 7.5.4 of the attached EA), NMFS has several means under which it can review non-fishing actions of other federal or state agencies that may impact NMFS' managed resources prior to permitting or implementation of those projects. At this time, NMFS can consider impacts to non-target species (federally-managed or otherwise) and comment on potential impacts. This serves to minimize the extent and magnitude of indirect negative impacts those actions could have on resources within NMFS' jurisdiction.

Past fishery management actions taken through the FMP and annual specification process have had a positive cumulative effect on non-target species. Implementation and application of a standardized bycatch reporting methodology would have a particular impact on non-target species by improving the methods which can be used to assess the magnitude and extent of a potential bycatch problem. Better assessment of potential bycatch issues allows more effective and specific management measures to be developed to address a bycatch problem. It is anticipated that future management actions, described in Table 11, will result in additional indirect positive effects on non-target species through actions which reduce and monitor bycatch, protect habitat, and protect ecosystem services on which the productivity of many of these non-target resources depend. The impacts of these future actions could be broad in scope, and it should be noted the managed resource and non-target species are often coupled in that they utilize similar habitat areas and ecosystem resources on which they depend. Overall, the past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions that are truly meaningful have had a positive cumulative effect on non-target species.

Catch limits, commercial quotas and recreational harvest limits for the managed resource have been specified to ensure the stock is managed in a sustainable manner, and measures are consistent with the objectives of the FMP under the guidance of the MSA. The proposed actions in this document have impacts that range from neutral to positive or negative impacts, and would not change the past and anticipated positive cumulative effects on non-target species and thus, would not have any significant effect on these species individually or in conjunction with other anthropogenic activities (Table 11).

Table 11. Summary of the effects of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions on the non-target species.

Action	Past to the Present		Reasonably Foreseeable Future
Original FMP and subsequent Amendments and Frameworks to the FMP	**Indirect Positive**		
Bluefish Specifications	**Indirect Positive**		
Developed and Implement Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology	**Neutral**		
Amendment to address ACLs/AMs implemented		**Potentially Indirect Positive**	
Agricultural runoff	**Indirect Negative**		
Port maintenance	**Uncertain – Likely Indirect Negative**		
Offshore disposal of dredged materials	**Indirect Negative**		
Beach nourishment – Offshore mining	**Indirect Negative**		
Beach nourishment – Sand placement	**Indirect Negative**		
Marine transportation	**Indirect Negative**		
Installation of pipelines, utility lines and cables	**Uncertain – Likely Indirect Negative**		
National Offshore Aquaculture Act of 2007	**Potentially Indirect Negative**		
Offshore Wind Energy Facilities (within 3 years)			**Uncertain – Likely Indirect Negative**
Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) terminals (within 3 years)		**Uncertain – Likely Indirect Negative**	
Convening Gear Take Reduction Teams (within 3 years)			**Indirect Positive**
Strategy for Sea Turtle Conservation for the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico Fisheries (within next 3 years)			**Indirect Positive**
Summary of past, present, and future actions excluding those proposed in this specifications document	**Overall, actions have had, or will have, positive impacts on the non-target species** *** See section 7.5.5.2 for explanation.**		

6.2.3.3 Habitat (Including EFH)

Those past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, whose effects may impact habitat (including EFH) and the direction of those potential impacts, are summarized in Table 9. The direct and indirect negative actions described in Table 9 are localized in nearshore areas and marine project areas where they occur. Therefore, the magnitude of those impacts on habitat is expected to be limited due to a lack of exposure to habitat at large. Agricultural runoff may be much broader in scope, and the impacts of nutrient inputs to the coastal system may be of a larger magnitude, although the impact on habitat and EFH is unquantifiable. As described above (section 7.5.4 of the attached EA), NMFS has several means under which it can review non-fishing actions of other federal or state agencies that may impact NMFS' managed resources and the habitat on which they rely prior to permitting or implementation of those projects. This serves to minimize the extent and magnitude of direct and indirect negative impacts those actions could have on habitat utilized by resources under NMFS' jurisdiction.

Past fishery management actions taken through the FMP and annual specification process have had a positive cumulative effect on habitat and EFH. The actions have constrained fishing effort at a large scale and locally, and have implemented gear requirements, which may reduce habitat impacts. As required under these FMP actions, EFH and Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPCs) were designated for the managed resources. It is anticipated that the future management actions, described in Table 12, will result in additional direct or indirect positive effects on habitat through actions which protect EFH for federally-managed species and protect ecosystem services on which these species' productivity depends. These impacts could be broad in scope. All of the VECs are interrelated; therefore, the linkages among habitat quality and EFH, managed resources and non-target species productivity, and associated fishery yields should be considered. For habitat and EFH, there are direct and indirect negative effects from actions which may be localized or broad in scope; however, positive actions that have broad implications have been, and it is anticipated will continue to be, taken to improve the condition of habitat. There are some actions, which are beyond the scope of NMFS and Council management such as coastal population growth and climate changes, which may indirectly impact habitat and ecosystem productivity. Overall, the past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions that are truly meaningful to habitat have had a neutral to positive cumulative effect.

Catch limits, commercial quotas and recreational harvest limits for the managed resource have been specified to ensure the stock is managed in a sustainable manner, and measures are consistent with the objectives of the FMP under the guidance of the MSA. The proposed actions in this document would not change the past and anticipated cumulative effects on habitat and thus, would not have any significant effect on habitat individually or in conjunction with other anthropogenic activities (Table 12).

Table 12. Summary of the effects of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions on the habitat.

Action	Past to the Present		Reasonably Foreseeable Future
Original FMP and subsequent Amendments and Frameworks to the FMP	**Indirect Positive**		
Bluefish Specifications	**Indirect Positive**		
Developed and Implement Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology	**Neutral**		
Amendment to address ACLs/AMs implemented		**Potentially Indirect Positive**	
Agricultural runoff	**Direct Negative**		
Port maintenance	**Uncertain – Likely Direct Negative**		
Offshore disposal of dredged materials	**Direct Negative**		
Beach nourishment – Offshore mining	**Direct Negative**		
Beach nourishment – Sand placement	**Direct Negative**		
Marine transportation	**Direct Negative**		
Installation of pipelines, utility lines and cables	**Uncertain – Likely Direct Negative**		
National Offshore Aquaculture Act of 2007	**Direct Negative**		
Offshore Wind Energy Facilities (within 3 years)			**Potentially Direct Negative**
Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) terminals (within 3 years)		**Potentially Direct Negative**	
Convening Gear Take Reduction Teams (within 3 years)			**Indirect Positive**
Strategy for Sea Turtle Conservation for the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico Fisheries (within next 3 years)			**Indirect Positive**
Summary of past, present, and future actions excluding those proposed in this specifications document	**Overall, actions have had, or will have, neutral to positive impacts on habitat, including EFH * See section 7.5.5.3 for explanation.**		

6.2.3.4 ESA Listed and MMPA Protected Species

Those past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, whose effects may impact the protected resources and the direction of those potential impacts, are summarized in Table 9. The indirectly negative actions described in Table 9 are localized in nearshore areas and marine project areas where they occur. Therefore, the magnitude of those impacts on protected resources, relative to the range of many of the protected resources, is expected to be limited due to a lack of exposure to the population at large. Agricultural runoff may be much broader in scope, and the impacts of nutrient inputs to the coastal system may be of a larger magnitude, although the impact on protected resources either directly or indirectly is unquantifiable. As described above (section 7.5.4 of the attached EA), NMFS has several means, including ESA, under which it can review non-fishing actions of other federal or state agencies that may impact NMFS' protected resources prior to permitting or implementation of those projects. This serves to minimize the extent and magnitude of indirect negative impacts those actions could have on protected resources under NMFS' jurisdiction.

NMFS will implement any appropriate measures outlined in the Biological Opinion to mitigate harm to Atlantic sturgeon. Further, the encounter rates and mortalities for Atlantic sturgeon that have been calculated as part of the preliminary analysis of the Northeast Fisheries Observer Program data (as discussed in Sec 6.3.2 of the attached EA) include encounters and mortalities by the bluefish fishery. It is likely that rates of encounters and mortalities by the bluefish fishery will not increase from the approval of this action.

Past fishery management actions taken through the FMP and annual specification process have had a positive cumulative effect on ESA listed and MMPA protected species through the reduction of fishing effort (potential interactions) and implementation of gear requirements. It is anticipated that the future management actions, specifically those recommended by the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan and the development of strategies for sea turtle conservation described in Table 13, will result in additional indirect positive effects on the protected resources. These impacts could be broad in scope. Overall, the past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions that are truly meaningful to protected resources have had a positive cumulative effect.

Catch limits, commercial quotas and recreational harvest limits for the managed resource have been specified to ensure the stock is managed in a sustainable manner, and measures are consistent with the objectives of the FMP under the guidance of the MSA. The proposed actions in this document would not change the past and anticipated cumulative effects on ESA listed and MMPA protected species and thus, would not have any significant effect on protected resources individually or in conjunction with other anthropogenic activities (Table 13).

Table 13. Summary of the effects of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions on the protected resources.

Action	Past to the Present	Reasonably Foreseeable Future
Original FMP and subsequent Amendments and Frameworks to the FMP	**Indirect Positive**	
Bluefish Specifications	**Indirect Positive**	
Developed and Implement Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology	**Neutral**	
Amendment to address ACLs/AMs implemented		**Potentially Indirect Positive**
Agricultural runoff	**Indirect Negative**	
Port maintenance	**Uncertain – Likely Indirect Negative**	
Offshore disposal of dredged materials	**Indirect Negative**	
Beach nourishment – Offshore mining	**Indirect Negative**	
Beach nourishment – Sand placement	**Indirect Negative**	
Marine transportation	**Indirect Negative**	
Installation of pipelines, utility lines and cables	**Potentially Direct Negative**	
National Offshore Aquaculture Act of 2007	**Potentially Indirect Negative**	
Offshore Wind Energy Facilities (within 3 years)		**Uncertain – Likely Indirect Negative**
Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) terminals (within 3 years)		**Uncertain – Likely Indirect Negative**
Convening Gear Take Reduction Teams (within 3 years)		**Indirect Positive**
Strategy for Sea Turtle Conservation for the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico Fisheries (within next 3 years)		**Indirect Positive**
Summary of past, present, and future actions excluding those proposed in this specifications document	**Overall, actions have had, or will have, positive impacts on protected resources** *** See section 7.5.5.4 for explanation.**	

6.2.3.5 Human Communities

Those past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, whose effects may impact human communities and the direction of those potential impacts, are summarized in Table 9. The indirectly negative actions described in Table 9 are localized in nearshore areas and marine project areas where they occur. Therefore, the magnitude of those impacts on human communities is expected to be limited in scope. It may, however, displace fishermen from project areas. Agricultural runoff may be much broader in scope, and the impacts of nutrient inputs to the coastal system may be of a larger magnitude. This may result in indirect negative impacts on human communities by reducing resource availability; however, this effect is unquantifiable. As described above (section 7.5.4 of the attached EA), NMFS has several means under which it can review non-fishing actions of other federal or state agencies prior to permitting or implementation of those projects. This serves to minimize the extent and magnitude of indirect negative impacts those actions could have on human communities.

Past fishery management actions taken through the FMP and annual specification process have had both positive and negative cumulative effects by benefiting domestic fisheries through sustainable fishery management practices, while at the same time potentially reducing the availability of the resource to all participants. Sustainable management practices are, however, expected to yield broad positive impacts to fishermen, their communities, businesses, and the nation as a whole. It is anticipated that the future management actions, described in Table 14, will result in positive effects for human communities due to sustainable management practices, although additional indirect negative effects on the human communities could occur through management actions that may implement gear requirements or area closures and thus, reduce revenues. Overall, the past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions that are truly meaningful to human communities have had an overall positive cumulative effect.

Catch limits, commercial quotas and recreational harvest limits for the managed resource have been specified to ensure the stock is managed in a sustainable manner, and measures are consistent with the objectives of the FMP under the guidance of the MSA. The impacts from annual specification measures established in previous years on the managed resources are largely dependent on how effective those measures were in meeting their intended objectives and the extent to which mitigating measures were effective. Overages may alter the timing of commercial fishery revenues (revenues realized a year earlier), and there may be impacts on some fishermen caused by unexpected reductions in their opportunities to earn revenues in the commercial fisheries in the year during which the overages are deducted. Similarly recreational fisheries may have decreased harvest opportunities due to reduced harvest limits as a result of overages, or more restrictive recreational management measures that must be implemented (i.e., minimum fish size, possession limits, fishing seasons).

Despite the potential for neutral to positive short-term effects on human communities, the expectation is that there would be a positive long-term effect on human communities due to the long-term sustainability of bluefish. Overall, the proposed actions in this document would not change the past and anticipated cumulative effects on human communities and thus, would not have any significant effect on human communities individually, or in conjunction with other anthropogenic activities (Table 14).

Table 14. Summary of the effects of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions on human communities.

Action	Past to the Present		Reasonably Foreseeable Future
Original FMP and subsequent Amendments and Frameworks to the FMP	**Indirect Positive**		
Bluefish Specifications	**Indirect Positive**		
Developed and Implement Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology	**Potentially Indirect Negative**		
Amendment to address ACL/AMs implemented		**Potentially Indirect Positive**	
Agricultural runoff	**Indirect Negative**		
Port maintenance	**Uncertain – Likely Mixed**		
Offshore disposal of dredged materials	**Indirect Negative**		
Beach nourishment – Offshore mining	**Mixed**		
Beach nourishment – Sand placement	**Positive**		
Marine transportation	**Mixed**		
Installation of pipelines, utility lines and cables	**Uncertain – Likely Mixed**		
National Offshore Aquaculture Act of 2007	**Uncertain – Likely Mixed**		
Offshore Wind Energy Facilities (within 3 years)			**Uncertain – Likely Mixed**
Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) terminals (within 3 years)		**Uncertain – Likely Mixed**	
Convening Gear Take Reduction Teams (within 3 years)			**Indirect Negative**
Strategy for Sea Turtle Conservation for the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico Fisheries (within next 3 years)			**Indirect Negative**
Summary of past, present, and future actions excluding those proposed in this specifications document	**Overall, actions have had, or will have, positive impacts on human communities** *** See section 7.5.5.5 for explanation.**		

6.2.4 Preferred Action on all the VECS

The Council has identified its preferred action alternatives in section 4.0. The cumulative effects of the range of actions considered in this document can be considered to make a determination if significant cumulative effects are anticipated from the preferred action.

The direct and indirect impacts of the proposed action on the VECs are described in sections 7.1 through 7.4 of the attached EA. The magnitude and significance of the cumulative effects, which include the additive and synergistic effects of the proposed action, as well as past, present, and future actions, have been taken into account throughout this section. The action proposed in this annual specifications document builds off action taken in the original FMP and subsequent amendments and framework documents. When this action is considered in conjunction with all the other pressures placed on fisheries by past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, it is not expected to result in any significant impacts, positive or negative. Based on the information and analyses presented in these past FMP documents and this document, there are no significant cumulative effects associated with the action proposed in this document (Table 15).

Table 15. Magnitude and significance of the cumulative effects; the additive and synergistic effects of the preferred action, as well as past, present, and future actions.

VEC	Status in 2014	Net Impact of P, Pr, and RFF Actions	Impact of the Preferred Action	Significant Cumulative Effects
Managed Resource	Complex and variable (Section 6.1 of the attached EA)	Positive (Sections 6.2.2 and 6.2.3.1)	Slight Positive (Section 6.1.1)	**None**
Non-target Species	Complex and variable (Section 6.1 of the attached EA)	Positive (Sections 6.2.2 and 6.2.3.2)	Neutral (Section 6.1.2)	**None**
Habitat	Complex and variable (Section 6.2 of the attached EA)	Neutral to positive (Sections 6.2.2 and 6.2.3.3)	Neutral (Section 6.1.3)	**None**
Protected Resources	Complex and variable (Section 6.3 of the attached EA)	Positive (Sections 6.2.2 and 6.2.3.4)	Neutral (Section 6.1.4)	**None**
Human Communities	Complex and variable (Section 6.4 of the attached EA)	Positive (Sections 6.2.2 and 6.2.3.5)	Slight Positive (Section 6.1.5)	**None**

7.0 COMPLIANCE WITH APPLICABLE LAWS AND EXECUTIVE ORDERS

7.1 Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA)

7.1.1 National Standards

Section 301 of the MSA requires that FMPs contain conservation and management measures that are consistent with the ten National Standards. The most recent FMP amendments address how the management actions implemented comply with the National Standards. First and foremost, the Council continues to meet the obligations of National Standard 1 by adopting and implementing conservation and management measures that will continue to prevent overfishing, while achieving, on a continuing basis, the optimum yield for bluefish and the U.S. fishing industry. To achieve OY, both scientific and management uncertainty need to be addressed when establishing catch limits that are less than the OFL; therefore, the Council has developed recommendations that do not exceed the ABC recommendations of the SSC which have been developed to explicitly address scientific uncertainty. The Council uses the best scientific information available (National Standard 2) and manages this species throughout its range (National Standard 3). These management measures do not discriminate among residents of different states (National Standard 4), they do not have economic allocation as their sole purpose (National Standard 5), the measures account for variations in these fisheries (National Standard 6), they avoid unnecessary duplication (National Standard 7), they take into account the fishing communities (National Standard 8) and they promote safety at sea (National Standard 10). Finally, actions taken are consistent with National Standard 9, which addresses bycatch in fisheries. By continuing to meet the National Standards requirements of the MSA through future FMP amendments, framework actions, and the annual specification setting process, the Council will insure that cumulative impacts of these actions will remain positive overall for the ports and communities that depend on this fishery, the Nation as a whole, and certainly for the resources.

7.2 NEPA (FONSI)

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Administrative Order (NAO) 216-6 (May 20, 1999) contains criteria for determining the significance of the impacts of a proposed action. In addition, the Council on Environmental Quality regulations at 40 C.F.R. 1508.27 state that the significance of an action should be analyzed both in terms of "context" and "intensity." Each criterion listed below is relevant to making a finding of no significant impact and has been considered individually, as well as in combination with the others. The significance of this action is analyzed based on the NAO 216-6 criteria and CEQ's context and intensity criteria. These include:

1) Can the proposed action reasonably be expected to jeopardize the sustainability of any target species that may be affected by the action?

None of the proposed actions presented in this document are expected to jeopardize the sustainability of bluefish (section 6.0 of the supplemental EA). The preferred quota specification for this species is consistent with the FMP objectives. The proposed action will aid in the long-term sustainability of harvest from the bluefish stock (section 6.1 of the supplemental EA).

2) Can the proposed action reasonably be expected to jeopardize the sustainability of any non-target species?

The proposed action is not expected to jeopardize the sustainability of any non-target species. The bluefish fishery is primarily a recreational fishery and prosecuted using hook and line and handlines, and the proposed measures are not expected to alter these fishing methods or activities. None of the measures are expected to significantly alter fishing methods or activities or are expected to alter the spatial and/or temporal distribution of current fishing effort.

3) Can the proposed action reasonably be expected to cause substantial damage to the ocean and coastal habitats and/or essential fish habitat as defined under the Magnuson-Stevens Act and identified in FMPs?

The proposed action as described in section 4.0 of the supplemental EA is not expected to cause damage to the ocean, coastal habitats, and/or EFH as defined under the MSA and identified in the FMP. In general, bottom-tending mobile gear, primarily otter trawls, have the potential to adversely affect EFH for the species detailed in section 6.2 of the attached specifications original EA. However, the bluefish fishery is primarily a recreational fishery which is prosecuted using hook and line gear. In the commercial fishery, bluefish are caught as a targeted species primarily with bottom gill nets and incidentally to other species in bottom trawls. Bottom trawls are known to adversely impact benthic habitats. Under the proposed action, trawl fishing effort for bluefish not expected to increase. Neither these, nor any of the other measures included in the proposed action will have any adverse habitat impact.

4) Can the proposed action be reasonably expected to have a substantial adverse impact on public health or safety?

None of the measures alter the manner in which the industry conducts fishing activities for bluefish. Therefore, no changes in fishing behavior that would affect safety are anticipated. The overall effect of the proposed actions on bluefish, including the communities in which they operate, will not have a substantial adverse impact on public health or safety. NMFS has considered comments received concerning safety and public health issues.

5) Can the proposed action reasonably be expected to adversely affect endangered or threatened species, marine mammals, or critical habitat of these species?

The proposed action is not expected to significantly alter fishing methods or activities or alter the spatial and/or temporal distribution of current fishing effort (section 6.0 of the supplemental EA). Further, given the small decrease of the proposed action and the overall low effort in the commercial bluefish fishery, the proposed action is not expected to result in adverse impacts to the recently listed Atlantic sturgeon DPSs and other protected species. An updated Biological Opinion for the bluefish fishery fully evaluated the impacts of the fishery on Atlantic sturgeon, and concluded that the impacts of the bluefish fishery did not jeopardize Atlantic sturgeon and that no additional measures were needed to reduce the impact of the fishery on Atlantic sturgeon populations. Additionally, since the bluefish fishery is primarily a recreational fishery using rod

and reel that don't interact with marine mammals and sea turtles, no additional measures were needed to reduce the impact on populations of other endangered or threatened species. Therefore, the current action is not expected to affect endangered or threatened species or critical habitat in any manner not considered in previous consultations on the fishery. It has been determined that fishing activities conducted under this action will have no adverse impacts on endangered or threatened species, marine mammals, or their critical habitat.

6) Can the proposed action be expected to have a substantial impact on biodiversity and/or ecosystem function within the affected area (e.g., benthic productivity, predator-prey relationships, etc.)?

The proposed action is not expected to have a substantial impact on biodiversity and ecosystem function within the affected area. This action merely revises the annual commercial quota, recreational harvest limit, and RSA for the 2014 bluefish fishery. None of the measures are expected to alter fishing methods or activities or are expected to significantly increase fishing effort or the spatial and/or temporal distribution of current fishing effort.

7) Are significant social or economic impacts interrelated with natural or physical environmental effects?

The proposed action is not expected to have a significant social or economic impact, nor are the potential socio-economic impacts interrelated with natural or physical effects. None of the specifications are expected to significantly alter fishing methods or activities or are expected to alter the spatial and/or temporal distribution of current fishing effort (section 6.0 of the supplemental EA). Therefore, there are no significant social or economic impacts interrelated with natural or physical environmental effects.

8) Are the effects on the quality of the human environment likely to be highly controversial?

The impacts of the proposed measures on the human environment are described in section 6.0 of the supplemental EA. The proposed action merely revises the annual commercial quota, recreational harvest limit, and RSA for the 2014 bluefish fishery. The proposed action is based on measures contained in the FMP which have been in place for many years. In addition, the scientific information upon which the annual quotas are based has been peer-reviewed and is the most recent information available. The measures contained in this action are not expected to be highly controversial.

9) Can the proposed action reasonably be expected to result in substantial impacts to unique areas, such as historic or cultural resources, park land, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers or ecologically critical areas?

Although it is possible that historic or cultural resources such as shipwrecks could be present in the area where the bluefish fishery is prosecuted, vessels try to avoid fishing too close to wrecks due to the possible loss or entanglement of fishing gear. The proposed action is not likely to change fishing behavior with respect to unique areas. Therefore, it is not likely that the proposed action would result in substantial impacts to unique areas.

10) Are the effects on the human environment likely to be highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks?

The impacts of the proposed measures on the human environment are described in section 6.0 of the supplemental EA. The action merely revises the proposed annual commercial quota, recreational harvest limit, and RSA for the 2014 bluefish fishery. None of the specifications are expected to alter fishing methods or activities or are expected to significantly increase fishing effort or the spatial and/or temporal distribution of current fishing effort. The measures contained in this action are not expected to have highly uncertain, unique, or unknown risks on the human environment.

11) Is the proposed action related to other actions with individually insignificant, but cumulatively significant impacts?

As discussed in section 6.2 of the supplemental EA, the proposed action is not expected to have individually insignificant, but cumulatively significant impacts. The actions, together with past, present, and future actions, are not expected to result in significant cumulative impacts on the biological, physical, and human components of the environment.

12) Is the proposed action likely to adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural or historical resources?

Although there are shipwrecks present in areas where fishing occurs, including some registered on the National Register of Historic Places, vessels try to avoid fishing too close to wrecks due to the possible loss or entanglement of fishing gear. The proposed action is not likely to change fishing behavior with respect to historic resources. Therefore, it is not likely that the proposed action would adversely affect historic resources.

13) Can the proposed action reasonably be expected to result in the introduction or spread of a nonindigenous species?

This action proposes a commercial quota, recreational harvest limit, and RSA for the 2014 bluefish fishery. There is no evidence or indication that this fishery has ever resulted in the introduction or spread of nonindigenous species. None of the specifications are expected to significantly alter fishing methods or activities or are expected to alter the spatial and/or temporal distribution of current fishing effort. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that the proposed specifications would result in the introduction or spread of a non-indigenous species.

14) Is the proposed action likely to establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration?

This proposed action merely revises the proposed annual commercial quota, recreational harvest limit, and RSA for the 2014 bluefish fishery. None of the proposed specifications are expected to significantly increase fishing effort or alter the spatial and/or temporal distribution of current

fishing effort. In addition, these specifications are consistent with the bluefish FMP. None of these specifications result in significant effects nor do they represent a decision in principle about a future consideration.

15) Can the proposed action reasonably be expected to threaten a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment?

This proposed action merely revises the annual commercial quota, recreational harvest limit, and RSA for the 2014 bluefish fishery. None of the specifications are expected to alter fishing methods or activities such that they threaten a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment. In fact, the proposed measures have been found to be consistent with other applicable laws.

16) Can the proposed action reasonably be expected to result in cumulative adverse effects that could have a substantial effect on the target species or non-target species?

The impacts of the preferred alternatives on the biological, physical, and human components of the environment are described in section 6.0 of the supplemental EA. The cumulative effects of the proposed action on target and non-target species are detailed in section 6.2 of the supplemental EA. None of the proposed specifications are expected to increase fishing effort or alter the spatial and/or temporal distribution of current fishing effort. The synergistic interaction of improvements in the efficiency of the fishery through implementation of annual quotas based on the overfishing definitions contained in the FMP are expected to generate positive impacts overall, but the implementation of the proposed 2014 management measures are not expected to result in any cumulative adverse effects that would have a substantial effect on target or non-target species.

DETERMINATION

In view of the information presented in this document and the analysis contained in the supporting EA prepared for the 2014 bluefish fishery specifications, it is hereby determined that the proposed actions in this specification package will not significantly impact the quality of the human environment as described above and in the supplemental EA. In addition, all beneficial and adverse impacts of the proposed action have been addressed to reach the conclusion of no significant impacts. Accordingly, preparation of an EIS for this action is not necessary.

Regional Administrator for GARFO, NMFS, NOAA — *Date* 5/29/14

7.3 Endangered Species Act

Sections 6.1.3 of this EA and 7.3 of the attached EA should be referenced for an assessment of the impacts of the proposed action on endangered species and protected resources. None of the specifications proposed in this document are expected to alter fishing methods or activities. Therefore, this action is not expected to affect endangered or threatened species or critical habitat in any manner not considered in previous consultations on the fishery.

7.4 Marine Mammal Protection Act

Sections 6.1.3 of this EA and 7.3 of the attached EA should be referenced for an assessment of the impacts of the proposed action on marine mammals. None of the specifications proposed in this document are expected to alter fishing methods or activities. Therefore, this action is not expected to affect marine mammals or critical habitat in any manner not considered in previous consultations on the fishery.

7.5 Coastal Zone Management Act

The Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) of 1972, as amended, provides measures for ensuring stability of productive fishery habitat while striving to balance development pressures with social, economic, cultural, and other impacts on the coastal zone. It is recognized that responsible management of both coastal zones and fish stocks must involve mutually supportive goals. The Council has developed this specifications document and will submit it to NMFS; NMFS must determine whether this action is consistent to the maximum extent practicable with the CZM programs for each state (Maine through Florida).

7.6 Administrative Procedure Act

Sections 551-553 of the Federal Administrative Procedure Act establish procedural requirements applicable to informal rulemaking by federal agencies. The purpose is to ensure public access to the federal rulemaking process and to give the public notice and opportunity to comment before the agency promulgates new regulations.

The Administrative Procedure Act requires solicitation and review of public comments on actions taken in the development of an FMP and subsequent amendments and framework adjustments. Development of this specifications document provided many opportunities for public review, input, and access to the rulemaking process. This action and the proposed specifications document was developed through a multi-stage process that was open to review by affected members of the public. The public had the opportunity to review and comment on management measures during the SSC and MC meetings held on September 17-19, 2013 in Baltimore, MD and during the MAFMC meeting held on October 7-10, 2013 in Philadelphia, PA. In addition, the public will have further opportunity to comment on this specifications document once NMFS publishes a request for comments notice in the Federal Register (FR).

7.7 Section 515 (Data Quality Act)

Utility of Information Product

This action proposes annual commercial quotas and recreational harvest limits in 2014 for the bluefish fishery. This document and the attached specifications EA include: A description of the alternatives considered, the preferred action and rationale for selection, and any changes to the implementing regulations of the FMP. As such, this document enables the implementing agency (NMFS) to make a decision on implementation of annual specifications (i.e., management measures) and this document serves as a supporting document for the proposed rule.

The action contained within this specifications document was developed to be consistent with the FMP, MSA, and other applicable laws, through a multi-stage process that was open to review by affected members of the public. The public had the opportunity to review and comment on management measures during a number of public meetings (see section 7.6). In addition, the public will have further opportunity to comment on this specifications document once NMFS publishes a request for comments notice in the FR.

Integrity of Information Product

The information product meets the standards for integrity under the following types of documents: Other/Discussion (e.g., Confidentiality of Statistics of the MSA; NOAA Administrative Order 216-100, Protection of Confidential Fisheries Statistics; 50 CFR 229.11, Confidentiality of information collected under the Marine Mammal Protection Act).

Objectivity of Information Product

The category of information product that applies here is "Natural Resource Plans." This section (section 7.0) describes how this document was developed to be consistent with any applicable laws, including MSA with any of the applicable National Standards. The analyses used to develop the alternatives (i.e., policy choices) are based upon the best scientific information available and the most up to date information is used to develop the EA which evaluates the impacts of those alternatives (see section 6.0 for additional details). The specialists who worked with these core data sets and population assessment models are familiar with the most recent analytical techniques and are familiar with the available data and information relevant to the bluefish fishery.

The review process for this specifications document involves MAFMC, NEFSC, GARFO, and NMFS headquarters. The NEFSC technical review is conducted by senior level scientists with specialties in fisheries ecology, population dynamics and biology, as well as economics and social anthropology. The MAFMC review process involves public meetings at which affected stakeholders have the opportunity to comments on proposed management measures. Review by GARFO is conducted by those with expertise in fisheries management and policy, habitat conservation, protected resources, and compliance with the applicable law. Final approval of the specifications document and clearance of the rule is conducted by staff at NOAA Fisheries Headquarters, the Department of Commerce, and the U.S. Office of Management and Budget.

7.8 Paperwork Reduction Act

The Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) concerns the collection of information. The intent of the PRA is to minimize the federal paperwork burden for individuals, small businesses, state and local governments, and other persons as well as to maximize the usefulness of information collected by the Federal government. There are no changes to the existing reporting requirements previously approved under this FMP for vessel permits, dealer reporting, or vessel logbooks. This action does not contain a collection-of-information requirement for purposes of the PRA.

7.9 Impacts of the Plan Relative to Federalism/EO 13132

This specifications document does not contain policies with federalism implications sufficient to warrant preparation of a federalism assessment under Executive Order (EO) 13132.

7.10 Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis

Introduction

The Regulatory Flexibility Act (RFA) requires the Federal rulemaker to examine the impacts of proposed and existing rules on small businesses, small organizations, and small governmental jurisdictions. In reviewing the potential impacts of proposed regulations, the agency must either certify that the rule "will not, if promulgated, have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities." A determination of substantial depends on the context of the proposed action, the problem to be addressed, and the structure of the regulated industry. Standards for determining significance are discussed below. The proposed action in this supplemental EA would evaluate potential impacts that would result from revised bluefish management measures for fishing year 2014 (January 1, 2014 – December 31, 2014). The proposed action under this supplement EA recommends a revision the final specifications that were issued for 2014 for the bluefish fishery.

On May 7, 2013, NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), on behalf of the U.S. Secretary of Commerce (Secretary), issued final specifications for the 2013 and 2014 bluefish fishery, including annual catch limits (ACL), total allowable landings (TAL), commercial quotas and recreational harvest limits (RHL), a research set aside (RSA) allocation percentage, and a recreational possession limit. For 2014, the action established the 2014 ACL as 27.057 M lb, the recreational TAL as 18.846 M lb, the commercial TAL as 4.600 M lb, the RHL as 14.069 M lb, the commercial quota as 8.674 M lb, Under this supplemental EA, the 2014 ACL would be revised to 24.432 M lb, the recreational TAL to 16.927 M lb, the commercial TAL to 4.153 M lb, the RHL to 13.179 M lb, the commercial quota to 7.269 M lb (these RHLs and commercial quotas have been adjusted for RSA). No revisions to the RSA allocation percentage (3%) or the recreational possession limit for 2014 are proposed under this supplemental EA.

The overall proposed 2014 commercial quota (7.269 M lb) under the supplemental EA is lower (16.20%) than the 2014 commercial quota (8.674 M lb) issued in the final specification for bluefish in 2014; however, it is substantially higher than the coastwide landings of the base year

(2011)[4]. Unless market conditions change substantially in year 2014, it would be expected that commercial bluefish fishermen would likely have bluefish landings close to the 2011 landings.

The proposed overall commercial quota under the supplemental EA for 2014 is higher than the landings for the base year, and the commercial quotas for all states with the exception of New York is higher than the 2011 landings. In 2014, negative economic impacts are anticipated as a result of this action due to the commercial quota decrease in bluefish in New York. An Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis (IRFA) was prepared to further evaluate the economic impacts of the various alternatives presented in this document on small business entities and is presented in this section.

Description of the Reasons Why Action by Agency is Being Considered

The purpose for this action is to implement revised catch limits for bluefish for FY 2014, in order to respond to the revised ABC determination from the Council's SSC. This action is needed because of the availability of new scientific information and resulting recommendations to decrease ABC for bluefish. For more information refer to Sections 2.0 and 3.0 of this supplemental EA.

The Objectives and Legal Basis for the Proposed Action

As stated above, the purpose for this action is to implement a revised ABC and catch limits for bluefish for FY 2014. The legal basis for the action is the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

Estimate of the Number of Small Entities

The potential number of small entities (i.e., those which fit the definition of a small business) that may be affected by the proposed rule is presented below.

Reporting Requirements

There are no changes to the existing reporting requirements previously approved under this FMP for vessel permits, dealer reporting, or vessel logbooks. This action does not contain a collection-of-information requirement for purposes of the PRA.

Conflict with Other Federal Rules

This action does not duplicate, overlap, or conflict with other Federal rules.

[4] In the original EA, the proposed commercial quotas for 2013 and 2014 were compared against the 2011 landings for analysis purposes. Since 2011 was the last full year from which data were available when the analysis was conducted (partial year data could miss seasonal fisheries), it was chosen as the base year for the original analysis. In 2011, commercial landings were 5.082 M lb or 46% below the adjusted commercial quota implemented that year (9.375 M lb). Landings data for 2012 indicates that coastwide bluefish landings were slightly lower than in 2011. As such, there is no indication that market conditions have substantially change in recent years. It is not expected than market conditions would change in 2014 either.

Analysis of Economic Impacts

The Small Business Administration (SBA) defines a small business in the commercial harvesting sector, as a firm with receipts (gross revenues) of up to $5.0 and $19.0 million for shellfish and for finfish businesses, respectively. A small business in the recreational fishery is a firm with receipts of up to $7.0 million. The proposed measures regarding the 2014 revised bluefish quotas could affect any vessel holding an active Federal permit for bluefish as well as vessels that fish for bluefish in state waters.

An active participant in the commercial sector was defined as being any vessel that reported having landed one or more pounds of bluefish the dealer data during calendar year 2011. This data covers activity by unique vessels. Of the active vessels reported in 2011, 742 known vessels landed bluefish from Maine through North Carolina. The dealer data does not cover vessel activity in the South Atlantic. The dealer data indicate that 59 vessels landed bluefish in North Carolina in 2011. However, the North Carolina landings data for bluefish may be incomplete is this data system. South Atlantic Trip Ticket Report data indicate that 768 vessels landed bluefish in North Carolina in 2011 (Stephanie McInerny, NC Division of Marine Fisheries, pers. comm., 2012). Some of these vessels may be included among the 59 vessels identified as landing bluefish in the dealer data. As such, double counting is possible. In addition, up to 791 vessels may have landed bluefish in Florida's east coast in 2011 (Steve Brown, Fla Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, pers. comm., 2012). Bluefish landings in Georgia were zero in 2011 and next to nil in South Carolina; as such, it was assumed that no vessel activity for those two states took place in 2011. In addition, it was estimated that in recent years approximately 2,000 party/charter vessels may have been active and/or caught bluefish. Using the SBA definition of small business ($5 million cutoff for shellfish firms, the $19 million cutoff for finfish firms, and the $7.0 million cutoff for recreational firms), all of the permitted vessels fall within the definition of small business.

Economic Impacts on Small Entities Resulting from Proposed Action

Section 4.0 contains a full description of the commercial quotas and recreational harvest limits under consideration for 2014. The No Action Alternative (first alternative) would allow the bluefish management measures analyzed and implemented under the previously approved specifications package (MAFMC 2012a) to remain in place and under the Preferred Alternative (second alternative), the resulting RHL and commercial quotas would be revised as specified above. The bluefish landings limits are consistent with the ABC recommendations of the SSC and therefore based on the best scientific information available and are intended to prevent overfishing.

The impacts of the No Action Alternative (termed Preferred-Preferred Alternative under the previously approved specifications package) are described in detail in section 8.10 of the original 2013-2014 bluefish specifications EA. These results are summarized below. In addition,

potential impacts of the Preferred Alternative under this supplement EA are also presented below.

First Alternative - No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative is expected to result in a total of 13 commercial vessels projected to incur revenue losses of 5% or more. More specifically, 10 vessels were projected to incur in revenue losses of 5-9%, 2 vessels of 10-19%, and 1 vessel of 20-29%. In addition, 143 vessels were projected to incur in revenue losses of less than 5% and 586 vessels were projected to have no change in revenue relative to 2011.

Under this alternative, according to dealer data, a total of 9 of the 742 commercial vessels reporting landings of bluefish in New York were projected to incur revenue losses of 5% or more. Furthermore, 147 vessels were projected to incur revenue losses of less than 5% and 586 vessels would incur no revenue change relative to 2011. A closer look to the overall vessel activity of the 9 vessels projected to incur revenue losses of 5% or more indicate that over 50% of the impacted vessels had gross sales of $10,000 or less, thus likely indicating that the dependence on fishing for some of these vessels is very small.

Amendment 1 implemented a transfer provision as a tool to mitigate the adverse economic impacts of prematurely closing a fishery when surplus quota exists. If quota allocations were to be transferred from a state or states that do not land their entire bluefish quota allocation for 2014, then the number of affected entities described in this threshold analysis could potentially decrease, thus decreasing economic burden.

It is not anticipated that this management measure will have any negative effects on recreational fishermen or affect the demand for party/charter boat trips. This alternative is not expected to affect angler satisfaction nor expected to result in landings in excess of the recreational harvest limit.

In summary, the No Action Alternative is expected to result in overall economic impacts that range from neutral to slightly positive economic impact when compared to the Preferred Alternative in 2014. However, the bluefish landings limits under this alternative are inconsistent with the ABC recommendations of the SSC and therefore not based on the best scientific information available and are intended to prevent overfishing. Because a revised biomass estimate resulted in modification of the SSC's ABC recommendation for 2014, the existing harvest limits, if fully realized, are not as appropriate for maintaining sustainable harvest as are the limits under the preferred alternative.

Second Alternative - Preferred Alternative

This alternative would result in a decrease in the commercial quota (16.20%) and RHL (3.0%) when compared to the No Action Alternative analyzed above.

When the proposed overall commercial quota under this alternative is distributed to the states, all states except New York and Massachusetts show a 2014 quota level which is higher than their

2011 landings (base year). Under this alternative, the states of New York and Massachusetts show a 35.6% and 15.8% 2014 quota level which is lower than their 2011 landings, respectively. In 2014, negative economic impacts are anticipated as a result of this action due to the commercial quota decrease in bluefish in New York and Massachusetts.

When the of the original 2013-2014 bluefish specifications EA was developed, a suite of management alternatives were evaluated. These contained a wide range of commercial quotas and RHLs. The most restrictive 2014 commercial quota analyzed in the 2013-2014 bluefish specifications EA specified a commercial quota of 4.462 M lb. Under that most restrictive alternative, all states except Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, and North Carolina were constrained by the 2014 quota when compared to landings in 2011. Under that most restrictive alternative, the states of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, and North Carolina showed a 48%, 26%, 60% 7%, and 11% 2014 quota level which was lower than their 2011 landings, respectively. The economic impacts of that most restrictive alternative were presented in section 8.10 of the original 2013-2014 bluefish specifications EA and summarized below. It is expected that the economic impacts of the preferred alternative in this supplemental EA would be smaller than those described under the most restrictive alternative for 2014 in the original 2013-2014 bluefish specifications EA and summarized below.

Under the most restrictive 2014 alternative analyzed in the 2013-2014 bluefish specifications EA, it was estimated that 69 of the 742 commercial vessels reporting landings of bluefish in 2011 were projected to incur revenue losses of 5% or more. Furthermore, 594 vessels were projected to incur revenue losses of less than 5% and 79 vessels would incur no revenue change relative to 2011. A closer look to the overall vessel activity of the 69 vessels projected to incur revenue losses of 5% or more indicate that over 50% of the impacted vessels had gross sales of $10,000 or less, thus likely indicating that the dependence on fishing for some of these vessels is very small.

It is not anticipated that this management measure will have any negative effects on recreational fishermen or affect the demand for party/charter boat trips. This alternative is not expected to affect angler satisfaction nor expected to result in landings in excess of the recreational harvest limit.

Amendment 1 implemented a transfer provision as a tool to mitigate the adverse economic impacts of prematurely closing a fishery when surplus quota exists. If quota allocations were to be transferred from a state or states that do not land their entire bluefish quota allocation for 2014, then the number of affected entities described in this threshold analysis could potentially decrease, thus decreasing economic burden.

In summary, the Preferred Alternative is expected to result in overall economic impacts that range from neutral to slightly negative economic impact when compared to the No Action Alternative in 2014. The bluefish landings limits under this alternative are consistent with the ABC recommendations of the SSC and therefore based on the best scientific information available and are intended to prevent overfishing.

8.0 LIST OF PREPARERS AND PERSONS/AGENCIES CONTACTED

In preparing this specifications document, the Council consulted with NMFS GARFO, the states of Maine through Florida (through their membership on either the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council and/or the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

9.0 LITERATURE CITED

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