

Project Narrative

The purpose of this survey is to provide fishery-independent data on lobster and Jonah crab growth and abundance within Massachusetts State waters of statistical areas 514 and 538. MA DMF funds this lobster abundance survey through its commercial and recreational lobster license fees. This survey has occurred annually since 2006.

Each trawl consists of six traps, with three vented and three ventless traps alternated along the string. The escape vents in vented traps are standardized throughout all survey areas to one rectangular vent in the parlor, size 1¹⁵/₁₆" x 5³/₄" (Lobster Conservation Management Area 1 regulation sized vent). All gear would be Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan compliant and meet Federal protected-species related regulations. Survey traps would be tagged as "MA DMF Research Traps". At least one MA DMF scientist would be on board for the sampling trips. MA DMF personnel would not be on board when traps are baited and deployed. Exemptions would not substantively change vessel operations. Catch is expected to be low compared with the biomass and, aside from samples retained for research purposes, returned to sea alive. All catch during sampling trips would be retained temporarily to collect biological data. MA DMF staff may collect lobster and/or Jonah crab, including undersized, oversized, v-notched, and egg-bearing lobsters. Collected samples would be used for research projects on growth and maturity. No catch from the experimental traps would be landed for sale.

If approved, the applicant may request minor modifications and extensions to the EFP throughout the year. EFP modifications and extensions may be granted without further notice if they are deemed essential to facilitate completion of the proposed research and have minimal impacts that do not change the scope or impact of the initially approved EFP request. Any fishing activity conducted outside the scope of the exempted fishing activity would be prohibited.

(Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*)

Dated: April 8, 2026.

David R. Blankinship,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

[RTID 0648-XF690]

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC); Public Meeting

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of public meeting.

SUMMARY: The Mid-Atlantic and South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils will hold a public meeting of a Joint Blueline Tilefish Subcommittee.

DATES: The meeting will be held on Friday, May 1, 2026, from 9 a.m. until 12 p.m. For agenda details, see **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION.**

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held via webinar. Connection information, agenda items, and any additional information will be posted at <https://www.mafmc.org> prior to the meeting.

Council address: Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, 800 N State Street, Suite 201, Dover, DE 19901; telephone: (302) 674-2331; <https://www.mafmc.org>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Christopher M. Moore, Ph.D., Executive Director, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, telephone: (302) 526-5255.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Mid-Atlantic and South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils agreed to establish a Joint Blueline Tilefish Subcommittee to help determine the jurisdictional allocation of the blueline tilefish acceptable biological catch (ABC) north of Cape Hatteras, North Carolina. During this kick-off meeting the joint subcommittee will meet to consider the various data sources available to evaluate potential jurisdictional allocations and review previous methods used to determine other regional allocations. The discussions from this initial meeting will serve as a foundation for future discussions, informing the subcommittee's allocation recommendations at subsequent meetings.

Special Accommodations

These meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aid should be directed to Shelley Spedden, (302) 526-5251, at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: April 9, 2026.

Rey Israel Marquez,

Acting Deputy Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 2026-07106 Filed 4-10-26; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

[RTID 0648-XF420]

Notice of Intent To Prepare a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for Identification of Aquaculture Opportunity Areas in Alaska State Waters and Conduct Public Scoping Meetings

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of intent (NOI) to prepare a programmatic environmental impact statement; request for comments.

SUMMARY: In compliance with Section 7 of the Executive Order, "Promoting American Seafood Competitiveness and Economic Growth" (May 7, 2020), NMFS intends to prepare a programmatic environmental impact statement (PEIS) to evaluate alternatives for identifying Aquaculture Opportunity Areas (AOAs) in state waters within the Gulf of Alaska. The PEIS will be prepared in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), NOAA Administrative Order 216-6A, and NOAA's Companion Manual. NMFS is the lead agency for this PEIS and the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Alaska Department of Fish & Game, Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will act as cooperating agencies. The PEIS will evaluate the potential impacts of identifying one or more AOAs in state waters of the Gulf of Alaska and will discuss the potential impacts of siting aquaculture facilities in those locations. The proposed action is a planning initiative and does not propose any aquaculture facilities or authorize any permits. This notice initiates the public scoping process for the PEIS.

DATES: The 45-day public scoping period begins on April 13, 2026, and finishes on May 28, 2026. NMFS will