

9:30 a.m.–10 a.m.

—Fishery Management Plans Amendments, Actions and Priorities Update for 2026—María López-Mercer, NOAA Fisheries, Southeast Regional Office

10:15 a.m.–10:30 a.m.

—Coffee Break

10:30 a.m.–12 p.m.

—NOAA Fisheries Response to CFMC on E.O. 14276 Council Priority Actions

12 p.m.–1:30 p.m.

—Lunch Break

1:30 p.m.–2 p.m.

—Southeast Fishery Science Center Updates—Kevin McCarthy, Caribbean Fisheries Branch, NOAA Fisheries Southeast Fishery Science Center

2 p.m.–2:30 p.m.

—Scientific and Statistical Committee Report—Vance Vicente, Chair

—Southeast Data Assessment and Review (SEDAR) 91 Puerto Rico Spiny Lobster

—SEDAR 103 Terms of References

2:30 p.m.–3 p.m.

—Discussion of actions to include in an amendment to the Puerto Rico Fishery Management Plan for Spiny Lobster following Scientific and Statistical Committee Recommendations based on SEDAR 91.

3 p.m.–3:15 p.m.

—Coffee Break

3:15 p.m.–4:45 p.m.

—Evaluation of Managed Stocks in Need of Conservation and Management, Options Paper—Sarah Stephenson, NOAA Fisheries, SERO

4:45 p.m.–5 p.m.

—Public Comment Period (5-minute presentations)

5 p.m.

—Adjourn for the day

5:15 p.m.–5:45 p.m.

—Closed Session

August 12, 2026

9 a.m.–9:15 a.m.

—CFMC/NOAA Scholarships

9:15 a.m.–9:30 a.m.

—Caribbean Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) Funded Project Update—Martha Prada, CFMC IRA Coordinator

9:30 a.m.–10:30 a.m.

—Information on Permitting and Research on Fish Aggregation Devices (FADs)—Experience in Puerto Rico—Wessley Merteen, Beyond Our Shores

10:30 a.m.–10:45 a.m.

—Coffee Break

10:45 a.m.–11:30 a.m.

—Outreach and Education Advisory Panel (OEAP) Report—Jannette Ramos, Chair

—CFMC Social Networks Update—Cristina Olán

—CFMC Liaison Officers Reports

—St. Thomas/St. John, US Virgin Islands—Anjolie LaPlace

—Puerto Rico—Wilson Santiago

—St. Croix, USVI—Olivia Walton

11:30 a.m.–12 p.m.

—Overview of proposed action to review the Grouper Unit 4 seasonal closure in St. Thomas, USVI—María López-Mercer, NOAA Fisheries, SERO

12 p.m.–1:30 p.m.

—Lunch Break

1:30 p.m.–2:15 p.m.

—District Advisory Panel Reports (15 mins each)

—St. Thomas, USVI—Julian Magras, Chair

—St. Croix, USVI—Gerson Martínez, Chair

—Puerto Rico—Nelson Crespo, Chair

2:15 p.m.–3 p.m.

—Updated List of Fishery Management Plans Amendments, Actions and Priorities for 2026–2027—María López-Mercer, NOAA Fisheries, SERO

3 p.m.–3:15 p.m.

—Coffee Break

3:15 p.m.–4:15 p.m.

—Enforcement Reports

—Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources

—US Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources

—U.S. Coast Guard

—NOAA Fisheries Office of Law Enforcement

4:15 p.m.–4:30 p.m.

—CFMC Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy

4:30 p.m.–4:45 p.m.

—Advisory Bodies Membership

4:45 p.m.–5 p.m.

—Other Business

5 p.m.–5:15 p.m.

—Public Comment Period (5-minute presentations)

—Next Meeting

5:15 p.m.

—Adjourn

Note: (1): Other than starting time and dates of the meetings, the established times for addressing items on the agenda may be adjusted as necessary to accommodate the timely completion of discussion relevant to the agenda items. To further accommodate discussion and completion of all items on the agenda, the meeting may be extended from, or completed prior to the date established in this notice. Changes in the agenda will be posted to the CFMC website, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram as practicable.

Note: (2): Financial disclosure forms are available for inspection at this meeting, as per 50 CFR part 601.

The order of business may be adjusted as necessary to accommodate the completion of agenda items. The meeting will begin on August 11, 2026, at 9 a.m. AST, and will end on August 12, 2026, at 5:15 p.m. AST. Other than the start time on the first day of the meeting, interested parties should be aware that discussions may start earlier or later than indicated in the agenda, at the discretion of the Chair.

Special Accommodations

Simultaneous interpretation will be provided.

For simultaneous interpretation English-Spanish-English follow your Zoom screen instructions. You will be asked which language you prefer when you join the meeting.

For any additional information on this public virtual meeting, please contact Diana Martino, Caribbean Fishery Management Council, 270 Muñoz Rivera Avenue, Suite 401, San Juan, Puerto Rico, 00918–1903, telephone: (787) 226–8849.

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

Dated: July 23, 2026.

Rey Israel Marquez,

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

[FR Doc. 2026–15113 Filed 7–24–26; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648–XF863]

Magnuson-Stevens Act Provisions; General Provisions for Domestic Fisheries; Application for Exempted Fishing Permits

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and

Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice; request for comments.

SUMMARY: The Assistant Regional Administrator for Sustainable Fisheries, Greater Atlantic Region, NMFS, has made a preliminary determination that an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) application contains all of the required information and warrants further consideration. The EFP would allow federally permitted fishing vessels to fish outside fishery regulations in support of exempted fishing activities proposed by Coonamessett Farm Foundation (CFF). Regulations under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act

require publication of this notification to provide interested parties the opportunity to comment on applications for proposed EFPs.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before August 11, 2026.

ADDRESSES: You may submit written comments by email: nmfs.gar.efp@noaa.gov. Include in the subject line “Advancing the Use of Electronic Monitoring in the Scallop Fishery.” All comments received are a part of the public record and may be posted for public viewing without change. All personal identifying information (*e.g.*, name, address), confidential business information, or otherwise sensitive information submitted voluntarily by

the sender will be publicly accessible. NMFS will accept anonymous comments (enter “anonymous” as the signature if you wish to remain anonymous).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ashley Trudeau, Fishery Resource Management Specialist, ashley.trudeau@noaa.gov, (978) 281–9252.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The applicant, CFF, has submitted a complete application for an EFP to conduct commercial fishing activities that the regulations would otherwise restrict. This EFP would exempt participating vessels from the following Federal regulations:

TABLE 1—REQUESTED EXEMPTIONS

CFR citation	Regulation	Need for exemption
50 CFR 648.10(e)(5)(i) ..	Fishery participation notification, day-at-sea (DAS) begins upon crossing the vessel monitoring system (VMS) demarcation line..	CFF is testing an alternative DAS calculation as an incentive for participation in an electronic monitoring (EM) program, in which the calculation of DAS usage for a subject trip begins when the vessel’s dredge first enters the ocean on its first tow, and ends when the vessel’s dredge last leaves the ocean on the last tow of the trip before returning to port.
§ 648.59(a)(1)	Prohibition on entering or transiting a scallop rotational area..	CFF is requesting that the six participating vessels are permitted continuous transit through Scallop Rotational Areas during the project duration. Vessels would not be permitted to fish in these areas and would be required to stow gear.

TABLE 2—PROJECT SUMMARY

Project title	Advancing the Use of Electronic Monitoring (EM) in the U.S. Atlantic Sea Scallop Fishery (MA/NJ/NC).
Project start	July 15, 2026.
Project end	July 14, 2027.
Project objectives	(1) Determine start and stop times of fishing activity based on data from EM systems, including dredge winch activation and video stills. (2) Verify fishing activity with haul-level data through electronic logbooks and electronic Vessel Trip Reporting (eVTR) data. (3) Fishermen from each vessel record the lengths and weights of catch and priority bycatch species following Industry-Funded Scallop (IFS) observer protocol on one trip each year. (4) Evaluate the efficacy of regulatory exemptions to incentivize EM participation.
Project location	Georges Bank, Mid-Atlantic.
Number of vessels	6.
Number of trips	48 (24 each year for 2 years).
Trip duration (days)	9.
Total number of days	432 (216 per year for 2 years).
Gear type(s)	Dredge.
Number of tows or sets	100 per trip.
Duration of tows or sets	45 minutes.

Project Narrative

CFF requests an EFP for a project funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Electronic Monitoring and Reporting Grant Program that aims to evaluate the benefits and challenges of EM systems in the Atlantic sea scallop fishery as a tool to modernize data collection, improve management efficiencies, and augment the IFS observer program. Through a pilot program begun in 2024, EM systems have been installed on six

limited access commercial sea scallop fishing vessels. The project has successfully trialed EM for observing and documenting fishing effort and behaviors with over 500 DAS and over 5,000 hauls reviewed. However, it remains unclear whether EM systems can be utilized to provide incentives for fishing vessels to augment their installation and maintenance costs.

Each vessel is outfitted with two cameras positioned on fixed structures that have an unobstructed view of the

entire deck. Cameras are activated at the start of a trip by winch-mounted sensors that are either triggered by a spike in winch pressure (employed on 3 vessels) or by 10 full rotations of the winch (employed on 3 vessels). Each EM system also contains a Global Positioning System unit with a sampling interval of 10 seconds. During every trip, sensor and still-image video would be exported via Starlink from the system during the first five winch activations and during the last five winch

activations to confirm when fishing began and ended. CFF plans to export these data from vessels every 12 hours to a secure web server during the project period and determine within 5 days of each trip's completion the start/stop times based on paired winch sensor activations and video footage stills.

As an additional confirmation of fishing activity, participating vessels will be asked to record haul-level catch information on an electronic logbook (eLog). CFF will monitor vessel activity and ensure eLogs are submitted within 5 days after a vessel returns from a trip. CFF has an existing agreement in place with NOAA's Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office to access eVTR for these six vessels biannually. These records include all relevant variables, such as sail dates, number of tows, fishing area, gear type, catch, discards, and port. In addition to eLogs, CFF would use eVTR records to confirm fishing activity.

Through a Community Projects Award, CFF has developed a novel fish measuring and identification system with Acbotics Research, LLC, designed for use offshore on commercial fishing vessels. CFF would use this fishboard and a paired scale to enable participating fishermen to collect length and weight data for scallops and priority bycatch species following the IFS sampling protocol during one trip per year. For multiday trips, this protocol includes observation of at least 50 percent of hauls during a trip, measuring and weighing scallops from

one basket during the first haul of each watch, measuring and weighing priority bycatch species, and opportunistically monitoring for scallop diseases. A CFF scientist will join one fishing trip with a minimum duration of seven DAS on each vessel. On these trips, they would train the captain and at least one crew member on fishboard use, data collection, and system maintenance.

This EFP would authorize two regulatory exemptions as incentives for participation in this developing EM program. The first exemption would allow an alternative calculation method for DAS used per trip; rather than beginning and ending the trip's DAS upon crossing the demarcation line, the start of DAS accounting for a trip would be based on the time at which a vessel's dredge(s) first enter the ocean, and the end of DAS for a trip will be determined based on the time at which a vessel's dredge(s) last leave the ocean before returning to port. By removing transit time between port departure and first dredge deployment and between final dredge deployment and port arrival, DAS would be used only while on the fishing grounds, and not during transit time. In the previous two years of piloting the EM system, the six participating vessels took 36 trips where the trip length could be calculated by both DAS estimation methods. By the typical DAS calculation method (days between outgoing and return crossing of the VMS demarcation line), these trips used 259.75 DAS. If DAS had been

calculated using the alternative method (days between start of first haul and end of final haul), the trips would have used 217.3 DAS, a difference of 42.45 DAS. This equates to an average of 1.18 fewer DAS being used for each of the 36 trips. Under this EFP, CFF expects participating vessels to take 24 trips during each year of the 2-year project. If each trip uses approximately 1.18 fewer DAS under the alternative calculation method, this could result in a total difference of 28.32 DAS that participating vessels could apply to other scallop trips. For fishing year 2026, NMFS allocated 11,023 DAS to the commercial fleet. This EFP could potentially result in an approximately 0.26-percent increase to maximum fleetwide DAS use for the year.

The second exemption would allow participating vessels continuous transit through Scallop Rotational Areas, which are closed during the project duration. Vessels would not be permitted to fish in these Areas and would be required to stow their gear. Allowing transit of closed areas would additionally allow vessels to take more direct routes to fishing grounds, reducing fuel expenditures and potentially DAS used. These incentives would allow vessels to recoup EM system installation and maintenance costs and incentivize further participation in this developing EM program. The applicant expects that participating vessels would primarily transit the Nantucket Lightship-North and -South Access areas.

TABLE 3—ESTIMATED TOTAL WEIGHTS PER SPECIES, PER TRIP BASED ON AN AVERAGE OF 100 HAULS DURING OPEN BOTTOM FISHING

Common name	Scientific name	Estimated weight (lb)	Estimated weight (kg)
Atlantic sea scallop	<i>Placopecten magellanicus</i>	72,000	32,659
Yellowtail flounder	<i>Limanda ferruginea</i>	10	4.5
Winter flounder	<i>Pseudopleuronectes americanus</i>	50	23
Windowpane flounder	<i>Scophthalmus aquosus</i>	50	23
Summer flounder	<i>Paralichthys dentatus</i>	150	68
Fourspot flounder	<i>Paralichthys oblongus</i>	0	0
American plaice	<i>Hippoglossoides platessoides</i>	0	0
Grey sole	<i>Glyptocephalus cynoglossus</i>	0	0
Haddock	<i>Melanogrammus aeglefinus</i>	0	0
Atlantic cod	<i>Gadus morhua</i>	0	0
Monkfish	<i>Lophius americanus</i>	1,000	454
Spiny dogfish	<i>Squalus acanthias</i>	0	0
Barndoor skates	<i>Dipturus laevis</i>	100	45
Unclassified skate	<i>Leucoraja erinacea, Leucoraja ocellata</i>	8,500	3,856

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: July 23, 2026.

Shannon Bettridge,

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

[FR Doc. 2026–15122 Filed 7–24–26; 8:45 am]

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