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Dated: October 3, 1989.

Eric I. Garfinkel,

Assistant Secretary for Import Administration.

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National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Announcement of Washington State Nearshore (Northern Puget Sound) as an Active Candidate for National Marine Sanctuary Designation; Intent To Prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Management Plan; Intent To Hold Public Scoping Meetings

AGENCY: Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management (OCRM), National Ocean Service (NOS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: By direction of Congress (Pub. L. No. 100-627 section 205), NOAA is naming the Washington State Nearshore (Northern Puget Sound) as an Active Candidate for designation as a National Marine Sanctuary and will proceed with the subsequent steps in the evaluation process to prepare a Congressional prospectus. The proposed study area includes, in general, the waters surrounding the islands of San Juan County; waters off Cherry Point and Lummi Bay in Whatcom County; waters surrounding Cypress Island in Skagit County; waters surrounding Cypress Island in Skagit County; waters surrounding Smith and Minor Islands and Partridge Banks in Island County; waters surrounding Protection Island in Jefferson County; up to the high water mark in Discovery Bay, Sequim Bay and Dungeness Bay and surrounding Dungeness Spit in Clallum County; and a western boundary along longitude 123°10' to the Canadian border. All treaty rights, where applicable, will be respected.

Selection of a site as an Active Candidate formally begins the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process; NOAA will prepare an environmental impact statement and management plan which will examine management, boundary and regulatory alternatives associated with Sanctuary designation. To initiate this process, NOAA will hold scoping meetings in Washington State to solicit information and comments on the range

and significance of issues related to Sanctuary designation and management. Individuals and representatives of interested organizations and government agencies, including Tribal governments, are invited and encouraged to attend.

Scoping meetings will be held on November 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17, 1989. The first meeting will be held on November 8, 1989, at 7:00 p.m., in the County Commissioners Meeting Room, Courthouse Annex, 350 Court Street, Friday Harbor, San Juan Island, Washington. The second meeting will be held on November 9, 1989, at 10 a.m. at the Orcas Fire Hall, Eastsound, Orcas Island, Washington. The third meeting will be held on November 10, 1989, at 7 p.m. at the Bellingham Public Library, 210 Central Avenue, Bellingham, Washington. The fourth meeting will be held on November 13, 1989, at 7 p.m., at the City Hall Community Center, 6th and Q, Anacortes, Washington. The fifth meeting will be held on November 14, 1989, at 7 p.m. at the Hearing Room, Courthouse Annex, 7th and Main, Coupeville, Washington. The sixth meeting will be held on November 15, 1989, at 7 p.m., at the John Wayne Marina, Old Blynn Highway, East of town off Highway 101, Sequim, Washington. The seventh meeting will be held on November 16, 1989, at 7 p.m., at the City Council Chambers, City Hall, 540 Water Street, Port Townsend, Washington. The eighth meeting will be held on November 17, 1989, at 7 p.m., in the NOAA Auditorium, Conference Room A, 7600 Sand Point Way, N.E., Seattle, Washington.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Joseph A. Uravitch, Chief, or Franklin Christhilf, Pacific Regional Manager, Marine and Estuarine Management Division, Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management, National Ocean Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, 1825 Connecticut Avenue, NW., Suite 714, Washington, DC 20235, (202/673-5126).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Selection Procedures

Title III of the Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act of 1972, 16 U.S.C. 1431 *et seq.*, (the "Act") authorizes the Secretary of Commerce to designate discrete areas of the marine environment as National Marine Sanctuaries to protect their special conservation, recreational ecological, historical, research, educational, or esthetic qualities. The Act is administered by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) through the Office of Ocean

and Coastal Resource Management (OCRM), Marine and Estuarine Management Division (MEMD).

Public Law Number 100-627 (November 7, 1988) reauthorized, and amended, Title III of the Act. Section 205 of Public Law No. 100-627 directs the Secretary of Commerce to submit to Congress a prospectus pursuant to the requirements of section 304 (a)(1)(C), and (a)(5) of the Act (16 U.S.C. 1434 (a)(1)(c) and (a)(5)) with respect to the feasibility of designating Washington State Nearshore (Northern Puget Sound) as a National Marine Sanctuary not later than March 31, 1991. Selection of a site as an Active Candidate formally triggers the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) environmental impact analysis process.

In preparing the prospectus, MEMD will develop a draft environmental impact statement and draft management plan which will include any proposed regulations needed to implement the terms of the proposed designation. Subsequent steps include public hearings; preparation of a final environmental impact statement, final management plan, and final regulations; preparation of Designation Documentation and Findings; and designation by the Secretary of Commerce. Opportunities for comment exist throughout this process and will be announced in the Federal Register, the local media, and other appropriate channels.

In the development of the Sanctuary designation materials, NOAA will evaluate the suitability of Northern Puget Sound as a National Marine Sanctuary in accordance with the criteria established by section 303(a) of the Act, 16 U.S.C. 1433(a), namely whether:

(1) The area is of special national significance due to its resource or human-use values;

(2) Existing State and Federal authorities are inadequate to ensure coordinated and comprehensive conservation and management of the area, including resource protection, scientific research, and public education;

(3) Designation of the area as a National Marine Sanctuary will facilitate coordinated and comprehensive conservation and management of the area, including resource protection, scientific research, and public education; and

(4) The area is of a size and nature that will permit comprehensive and coordinated conservation and management.

Further, pursuant to section 303(b) of the Act, 16 U.S.C. 1433(b) NOAA shall consider:

(1) The area's natural resource and ecological qualities, including its contribution to biological productivity, maintenance of ecosystem structure, maintenance of ecologically or commercially important or threatened species or species assemblages, and the biogeographic representation of the site;

(2) The area's historical, cultural, archeological, or paleontological significance;

(3) The present and potential uses of the area that depend on maintenance of the area's resources, including commercial and recreational fishing, subsistence uses, other commercial and recreational activities, and research and education;

(4) The present and potential activities that may adversely affect the factors identified in considerations number 1-3 listed above;

(5) The existing State and Federal regulatory and management authorities applicable to the area and the adequacy of those authorities to fulfill the purposes and policies of the Act;

(6) The manageability of the area, including such factors as its size, its ability to be identified as a discrete ecological unit with definable

boundaries, its accessibility, and its ability for monitoring and enforcement activities;

(7) The public benefits to be derived from sanctuary status, with emphasis on the benefits of long-term protection of nationally significant resources, vital habitats, and resources that generate tourism;

(8) The negative impacts produced by management restrictions on income-generating activities such as living and non-living resource development; and

(9) The socioeconomic effects of Sanctuary designation. NOAA will also include an assessment of its fiscal capability to manage the area as a National Marine Sanctuary.

In preparing the environmental impact statement and management plan (EIS/MP) to examine the management and regulatory alternatives associated with Sanctuary designation, NOAA will solicit comments from interested persons, groups and organizations, the appropriate Congressional committees, heads of interested Federal agencies, the responsible officials of the State, local and Tribal governments and the appropriate officials of the affected National Fisheries Management Council.

Comments will be done during scoping meetings to be held in the State of Washington prior to preparation of the EIS/MP, during public hearings to

receive comments on the draft EIS/MP, and throughout the EIS/MP preparation period.

History

The Washington State Nearshore (Northern Puget Sound) site was first recognized for its high natural resource potential and human-use values by placement on the National Marine Sanctuaries Program Site Evaluation List (SEL) on August 4, 1983 (48 FR 35575). In 1988, when Congress reauthorized and amended the Act, it specified in section 205 of Public Law No. 100-627 that NOAA submit, not later than March 31, 1991, a prospectus to the Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries of the House of Representatives and to the Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation in the Senate with respect to the proposal to designate Northern Puget Sound as a National Marine Sanctuary.

Natural Resources

Oceanographic Characteristics

The Northern Puget Sound study area can be categorized as a two layered estuarine type circulation system. This system consists of a predominant upper layer of fresh water, reflecting major discharges from the Fraser and Skagit Rivers, as well as contributions from lesser rivers and streams in Puget Sound. The second bottom component is a denser more saline layer of water that flows landward from the Pacific Ocean through the Strait of Juan Du Fuca.

Other physical properties are then superimposed on this estuarine-type system and contribute to the complexity of the oceanographic characteristics of the area. The daily ebb and flow of the tides, and their associated tidal currents, add another dimension to the circulation pattern. Spring tide heights ranging from 10 to 13 feet and tidal currents of 1½ to 2½ knots are common in this area.

The combination of fresh and seawater causes turbulent mixing by the tidal currents found in the area. As a result, the net water found within the Sound is variable and is constantly seeking equilibrium from the fresh water input and ocean water supplies that change seasonally. Water in Puget Sound is most diluted in February, after the landward sources have received the maximum precipitation, and is most saline around late October when contributing river flow is at its lowest point.

While the oceanography of Northern Puget Sound will be dealt with as a defined unit, research shows that because of the complexity of the

topographic and bathymetric features of this area, this water body can be divided into distinct water units depending on its location and the intended use within the system.

Geologic Features

Northern Puget Sound has been geologically defined by a combination of plate tectonic stresses and glacial processes that have occurred in the area over time. These geologic activities have created a series of deep U-shaped, interconnected channels such as the Haro and Rosario Channels that surround the San Juan Islands, and the Juan De Fuca and Georgia Straits which are typical of glacially scoured channels. The bathymetry of the deep water passages, that average 150 meters in depth within the study area, is characterized by shoals and banks.

Glacial activity is also responsible for the predominantly rounded shape of the San Juans and surrounding smaller islands and for the numerous rock deposits found along the shoreline of the Sound.

The shoreline of the study area also shows evidence of historical glacial activities with its combination of rocky shores, gravel, cobble and sand types as well as mudflats and mixed mud bottom areas.

Flora and Fauna

The study area lies within the transitional biogeographical zones of the Oregonian and Skatian sub-provinces with waters extremely rich in plant and animal life. As a result, Northern Puget Sound supports a wide selection of marine life that directly contributes to the complex foodweb and supports the economically and culturally important fisheries industries as well as the varied mammal and bird populations found within the area.

Several species of birds migrate through or reside permanently within the proposed study area. It is recognized as one of the most important wintering areas of the Pacific Flyway with over 100 species of birds identified. Marine bird species are also abundant within the area, with as many shorebirds repeatedly sited. Foremost among the bird population is the bald eagle. The area supports the largest concentration of bald eagles in the contiguous United States with several documented nesting sites and a wintering population of over 200 eagles. Other predominant bird species include the Rhinoceros Auklets, Ring-billed gulls, Caspian Terns, and American Black Oystercatchers.

Several hundred species of invertebrates and algae are abundant in

the waters of Northern Puget Sound. This resource is a direct contributor to the productive fish and shellfish

industry in the study area. Dominant predatory fish species include, but are not limited to, salmon, trout, anchovy, pollack, herring and halibut. Abundant resident species common to the area include the cabezon, lingcod and rockfish. The study area also sustains several species of crabs, clams and oysters, and a productive shellfish industry exists.

Marine mammals including seals, sea lions, porpoises, river otters and five types of whales, two of which are on the Federal endangered species list inhabit Northern Puget Sound at various times of the year.

As evidenced by the diversity of animals found in Northern Puget Sound, several species depend on this area as an important feeding and breeding site critical to their continued existence. Examples of these species include the harbor seal, river otter, false killer whale, herring, trout, and five species of salmon. In addition, Protection, Smith and Colville islands have been identified as three of the largest breeding locations for marine birds on the Pacific coast in North America.

Human use

The waters of Northern Puget Sound have traditionally supported multiple use activities. Currently, because of the size and number of population centers located on land surrounding the Sound, the study area is subjected to direct and secondary effects of these land based activities.

The natural beauty of Northern Puget Sound and surrounding waters is visited by thousands of tourists annually to enjoy the natural resources of the area. The proximity of this proposed sanctuary to Seattle, the fastest growing metropolitan city in Washington, has increased the demand for recreational facilities in Northern Puget Sound and as a result, boating, sport fishing, shellfish harvesting, whale watching tours, national historic parks, the Whale Museum, and the Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve all serve as recreational activities available to tourists in the area.

Commercial and subsistence fisheries also play a critical role in the economy and culture of Northern Puget Sound. Many Indian Tribes utilize the waters of the study area as part of their traditional fishing grounds. These tribes maintain and operate separate fishing industries, including aquaculture facilities, that are cooperatively managed with the State of Washington. Both Tribal and non-Tribal user groups depend on the clean waters

of the Sound to continue commercial fishing activities and to support increasing aquaculture operations.

The diversity of species found in Northern Puget Sound has provided a natural laboratory for the scientific research conducted by the University of Washington's Friday Harbor Lab since 1904. Critical base line data and surveys have been compiled over the years and the Lab is internationally recognized for its research facilities and contributions to marine science.

Numerous archeological sites have been identified in Northern Puget Sound that are of historical value; evidence of past settlement including tools, harpoons, and shell middens have been found along coastal boundaries. Twenty-three historic shipwrecks have been identified in the waters of the study area. Work continues in the field to examine historical relics of past cultures.

Oil and gas exploration is prohibited within the proposed sanctuary under the provisions of the State Shoreline Act. However, the area is heavily utilized by oil tankers that enter the Sound from the Strait of Juan De Fuca to transfer oil products at the four refineries located landward of the study area.

The U.S. Navy maintains a military air base on Whidbey Island, landward of the study area and, as a result, continuous overflights occur within the range of the proposed sanctuary area.

Existing Protection of Marine Resources

Since this proposed marine sanctuary is located entirely within State controlled waters, Federal, State, Tribal and local agencies all have concurrent program responsibilities to manage and protect selected marine resources and to provide education and recreation opportunities within Northern Puget Sound. Only agencies with major marine protection responsibilities will be identified in this notice.

The San Juan County National Wildlife Refuge encompasses 83 refuge islands within the San Juan archipelago. It serves as a breeding ground and nesting colony for several species of seabirds, including puffins and winged gulls.

San Juan Island, Dungeness Spit and Protection Island National Wildlife Refuges are all managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. These areas provide breeding and nesting colonies for several species of birds and mammals that inhabit the waters within the study area.

The waters surrounding San Juan County were designated a Biological Preserve by the State of Washington in 1923. This designation requires

individuals to obtain collecting permits from the Director of the University of Washington's Friday Harbor Lab to remove biological materials, other than for personal use, from the waters of San Juan County and Cypress Island.

Both commercial and recreational fisheries are cooperatively managed by the Pacific Fisheries Management Council, the Treaty Tribes of Western Washington, the Pacific Salmon Commission, the Washington Department of Wildlife, the Department of Natural Resources, the National Marine Fisheries Service, and the Washington Department of Fisheries. Aquaculture within the study area is managed by the State of Washington Departments of Ecology, Fisheries, and Agriculture, as well as the Treaty Tribes of Western Washington. Water quality in Northern Puget Sound is monitored and managed by the Puget Sound Water Quality Authority, the U.S.

Environmental Protection Agency and the Washington State Department of Ecology. The U.S. Coast Guard regulates vessel traffic, including boating safety, within the Sound. Scheduled maintenance of harbors, ports and channels, including dredge and fill disposal, is under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Seattle District.

The Department of Commerce, NOAA, National Marine Fisheries Service, is responsible for the protection of whales, dolphins and other pinnipeds, while the U.S. Fish and Wildlife regulations provide protection for all other marine mammals within the study area.

The Designation Process

The draft management plan to be prepared for the proposed Sanctuary will specify the goals and objectives of Sanctuary designation and describe programs for resource protection, research, education, and interpretation. The various administrative and regulatory alternatives for sanctuary management will be analyzed in the draft environmental impact statement.

Opportunities for public participation in NOAA's development of a draft environmental impact statement and management plan will be provided through scoping meetings, solicitation of comments on the draft environmental impact statement/management plan and proposed regulations, and public hearings.

The November scoping meetings will identify issues regarding the designation of the Washington State Nearshore (Northern Puget Sound) National Marine Sanctuary and generate suggestions for

addressing them. The following are examples of discussion topics:

- (1) Boundary alternatives;
- (2) Management alternatives;
- (3) Resource protection;
- (4) Research opportunities; and
- (5) Interpretive opportunities.

Dated: October 3, 1989.

John J. Carey,

Deputy Assistant Administrator for Ocean Services and Coastal Zone Management.

[FR Doc. 89-23720 Filed 10-6-89; 8:45 am]

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Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service, NOAA, Commerce.

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council will hold a public meeting of the Louisiana/Mississippi Habitat Protection Advisory Panel on October 26, 1989, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. The meeting will be held at the Sheraton Baton Rouge Hotel, 4728 Constitution Avenue, Baton Rouge, LA. The panel will discuss the Cameron Creole Watershed Project and its operation, the Cal-Sabine River Basin Study, Louisiana's coastal restoration efforts, Louisiana's oil spill emergency response regulations, the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources marsh management study, problems with oil field wastes and produced waters, effects of produced waters on wetlands, and problems with Gulfport Harbor, Mississippi, dredging.

For more information contact Wayne F. Swingle, Executive Director, Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, 5401 West Kennedy Boulevard, Suite 881, Tampa, FL; telephone: (813) 228-2815.

Dated: October 3, 1989.

David S. Crestin,

Deputy Director, Office of Fisheries Conservation and Management, National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 89-23759 Filed 10-6-89; 8:45 am]

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National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service, NOAA, Commerce.

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council will hold a public meeting on October 25-26, 1989, at the Radisson Hotel Hampton, 700 Settlers Landing Road, Hampton, VA; telephone:

(804) 727-9700. The Council will begin the meeting on October 25 at 8 a.m., and will adjourn during the afternoon of October 26.

The Council will meet to adopt Amendment #8 to the Surf Clam and Ocean Quahog Fishery Management Plan (FMP), the Bluefish FMP, and the optimum yield definition for the Surf Clam and Ocean Quahog and the Squid/Mackerel/Butterfish FMPs. It will also discuss other fishery management matters. The public meeting may be lengthened or shortened depending upon progress on the agenda. The Council may hold a closed session (not open to the public) to discuss personnel and/or national security matters.

For more information contact John C. Bryson, Executive Director, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Room 2115, Federal Building, 300 South New Street, Dover, DE 19901; telephone: (302) 674-2331.

Dated: October 3, 1989.

David S. Crestin,

Deputy Director, Office of Fisheries Conservation and Management, National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 89-23760 Filed 10-6-89; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-M

Pacific Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service, NOAA, Commerce.

Members of the Pacific Fishery Management Council's Salmon Advisory Subpanel (SAS), representing recreational and charter fishing interests north of Cape Falcon, OR, will hold a public meeting on October 23, 1989, at 9:30 a.m., at the Metro Center, Room 145, 2000 S.W. First Avenue, Portland, OR. The SAS will develop fishery management plan amendment alternatives for the geographic distribution of the recreational harvest allocation north of Cape Falcon. The amendment alternatives developed by the group will be reviewed by the Pacific Council in November 1989 and January 1990, and could be incorporated in the next annual amendment cycle, resulting in the implementation of a preferred alternative in 1991.

Comments pertaining to the geographic distribution of the recreational ocean salmon harvest allocation north of Cape Falcon will be accepted at appropriate times. If necessary, a second public meeting will be scheduled for November 6, 1989, at the Pacific Council's office (address below), to complete drafting of preliminary allocations.

For more information contact Lawrence D. Six, Executive Director, Pacific Fishery Management Council, 2000 S.W. First Avenue, Portland, OR 97201; telephone: (503) 326-6352.

Dated: October 3, 1989.

David S. Crestin,

Deputy Director, Office of Fisheries Conservation and Management, National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 89-23761 Filed 10-6-89; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-M

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council; Rescheduling of Public Meeting

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service, NOAA, Commerce.

The joint public meeting of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's Law Enforcement Committee and Advisory Panel, on September 20-21, 1989, in Savannah, GA, previously published at 54 FR 37968, was postponed due to the possibility of severe weather conditions resulting from Hurricane Hugo.

The meeting has been rescheduled for November 6-7, 1989, at the same location at the Club House Inn, 6800 Abercorn Street, Savannah, GA. The meeting will begin at 1 p.m., on November 6 and will adjourn at 5 p.m., on November 7.

The Committee/Advisory Panel will discuss Cooperative Law Enforcement Agreements between state agencies and the National Marine Fisheries Service. It will also discuss a permit requirement for spiny lobster, review and make recommendations for modifications of proposed regulations to implement Amendment #5 to the Coastal Migratory Pelagics (mackerels) Fishery Management Plan (FMP), and to implement Amendment #1 to the FMP for Atlantic Swordfish. A detailed agenda will be available to the public upon request.

For more information contact Carrie R. F. Knight, Public Information Officer, South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, One Southpark Circle, Suite 306, Charleston, SC 29407, telephone: (803) 571-4366.

Dated: October 3, 1989.

David S. Crestin,

Deputy Director, Office of Fisheries Conservation and Management, National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 89-23762 Filed 10-6-89; 8:45 am]

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