

## ***Advocacy Submits Comment on Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act; Regional Fishery Management Councils; Operations***

On October 30, 2009, the Office of Advocacy of the U.S. Small Business Administration (Advocacy) submitted a comment on the Department of Commerce, National Marine Fisheries Services' (NMFS) proposed rule on the *Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act; Regional Fishery Management Councils; Operations*. A copy of Advocacy's comments can be found at [www.sba.gov/advo/laws/comments](http://www.sba.gov/advo/laws/comments).

- The proposed rule addresses the administration and operations of the regional fishery management councils and makes changes to the regulations requiring Councils to provide procedures for proposed regulations, clarifying restrictions on lobbying, and clarifying timing in the Council nomination process. Advocacy commended NMFS for proposing a rule that will increase transparency of the process. Advocacy stated that while many of the initiatives will benefit small entities, there are some areas of the proposal that could be improved.
- The proposal requires the Councils to post their Statement of Organization, Practices and Procedures (SOPPs) on the Internet. Advocacy supported that aspect of the proposal and encouraged NMFS to continue to allow the public to request a copy by mail or in person to assure access to all.
- The proposal also requires each Council to establish clear internal procedures for proposed regulations and to make them available to the public to inform the public of how it operates. Advocacy encourages NMFS to provide more guidance on the substance of the procedures and to establish a minimum set of standards for information available on a Council's website.
- The proposed rule also specifies a revised means for announcing meetings of a Council, Scientific and Statistical Committees (SSCs), advisory panels, other committees, and the Council Coordination Committee. The revised regulations allow for notice of regular, emergency, and closed meetings by any means that will result in wide publicity in the major fishing ports of the region and those other ports with an interest in any of the fisheries likely to be addressed in the proceedings. Advocacy supported this aspect of the proposal.
- The proposal also requires members of SSCs to file financial disclosures. Advocacy encouraged NMFS to include grants, income, and other forms of compensation in the disclosure of financial interests from the groups that are listed.

For more information, visit Advocacy's webpage at [www.sba.gov/advo](http://www.sba.gov/advo) or contact Jennifer Smith at 202-205-6943.