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2	Environmental Control (DNREC)
3	Division of Fish and Wildlife Public Hearing
4	Proposed Amendments to 7 DE Admin. Code 3505
5	Striped Bass Commercial Fishing Seasons; Quotas;
6	Tagging and Reporting Requirements
7	
8	Docket No. 2023-R-F-0021
9	
10	
11	Moderated by Theresa Smith
12	Tuesday, January 30, 2024
13	6:00 p.m.
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15	
16	Remote Proceeding
17	DNREC
18	89 Kings Highway
19	Dover, DE 19901
20	
21	
22	Reported by: Andrew Weader
23	JOB NO.: 6391184
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PROCEEDINGS

MS. SMITH: Good evening. Thank you

all for your patience. We will now begin the hearing

scheduled for tonight. The time is now 6 p.m. on

Tuesday, January 30, 2024.

For ADA compliance, tonight's formal proceeding offers closed captioning in a variation of languages. Before I begin my introductory remarks, I will now hand it over with Tanesha Perry with the Department's Office of the Secretary to go over the closed captioning feature, which is available in multiple languages on the Zoom platform. Tanesha.

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Teresa.

Hello. My name is Tanesha Perry. I'm the Administrative Specialist with the Office of Secretary. I'm here to assist the hearing officer tonight.

I'd like to make sure that everyone is aware that the Zoom platform we're using has the ability for closed captioning in multiple languages. To start closed captioning, if you're using a computer, at the bottom of your screen you should see a show captions button. If you do not see the show captions button, you may have to select the three dots

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that say more. Once you find your show captions button, you should click the carrot pointing up, which will bring up your translation options. You can select the -- your preferred language from there. If your preferred language isn't listed, you can select more and all languages will be listed.

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If you're on a smartphone, at the bottom of your screen, select the captions button indicated by CC. If your preferred language is not listed at the bottom, you may have to select the three dots that say more. You should then select meeting settings with the gear icon next to it. Once the settings page comes up, located at the very bottom, select translation language. From there, you'll be able to select the preferred language, then select done at the top right corner, and then done again. If the captions are not automatically popping up, you may need to select captions again and select show captions.

Now, I'll turn it back over to the hearing officer, Teresa Smith.

MS. SMITH: Thank you, Ms. Perry. My name is Teresa Smith, as she said, and Secretary Garvin has appointed me to serve as the

hearing officer for tonight's goal proceeding.

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We are here this evening to provide a virtual platform for the State of Delaware's Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control to conduct its virtual public hearing on the proposed revisions to 7 DE Admin. Code 3505, Striped Bass Commercial Fishing Season; Quotas; Tagging and Reporting Requirements Docket Number 2023-R-F-0021.

The purpose of the hearing is to build a record in regard to the hearing matter by providing a formal legal platform for the public to learn about the proposed regulatory revisions and to enable the public to offer live comment.

First and foremost, this hearing is being conducted virtually. No one is together in the same room. Everyone is participating independently at their own respective locations. While we are not physically gathered tonight, however, Zoom does generate a list of those who are virtually present for this proceeding. So the department will have a record of those who have joined electronically for this event.

There is a court reporter virtually present who will prepare a verbatim transcript of the

hearing pursuant to the statutory requirement for DNREC to have the same prepared. And as always, that transcript will be posted on the hearing web page dedicated to this matter as soon as it is received.

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In addition, I would encourage those who are attending the hearing to also visit the hearing web page dedicated to this matter for additional details concerning the proposed revisions to 7 DE Admin. Code 3505.

The hearing tonight presented along with other related documents, are posted on the department of the hearing web page dedicated to this matter. The hearing web page can be found online under the Administrative Law section of DNREC's website that will be listed towards the end of the hearing.

At the conclusion of my introductory remarks, I will be turning the hearing record over to department staff to provide their presentation for the record being generated in this matter. Following department's presentation, the public comment portion of the hearing will begin.

For those who pre-registered with DNREC to offer live comment this evening, they will be

recognized in the order that their pre-registration was received, and each commenter will be given three minutes to provide their verbal comment. If you are unable to finish your comment within the three minutes, you are encouraged to submit your full comments in writing to DNREC. All comments have equal weight, whether they are offered live this evening or in writing between now and when the record closes, which will be February 14, 2024. I will provide more details about the comment portion of the proceeding after the presentations conclude.

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Before we begin the presentation, please be advised of the following protocols that remain in place for all public DNREC hearings.

All comments received must be limited solely to the subject matter of tonight's hearing.

All comments pertinent to the subject matter of this virtual hearing will be incorporated into the record being generated.

In the light of Administrative Act procedure, and to ensure everyone who wishes to offer comment for the Secretary's consideration is accommodated, the department is required to, at a minimum, provide a comment period of 15 days after the

1 hearing.

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There's only one authentic record of the formal proceeding tonight and is the official court reporter's verbatim transcript.

The statutory purpose of tonight's hearing is to build the record with -- with regard to the department's proposed actions. A record consisting of a transcript of the hearing tonight, all written comments, all exhibits, and eventually the hearing officer's report will be reviewed by Secretary Garvey. The Secretary will ultimately issue an order following that review process containing his decision on this matter and their reasons therefore. Per DNREC's standard hearing protocols, there will be no Q&A or chat session permitted during the hearing.

It is important to note that no decision has already been made by the department nor will any decision be made tonight with regard to the proposed regulatory matter.

As previously stated, DNREC wishes to ensure that everyone is able to offer their comments for inclusion into the record being generated in this matter. As noticed in the legal ads and online, the Department stated that the public comment period will

be opened through February 14, 2024. Comments may be submitted through a comment form link on the hearing web page, via e-mail to dnrechearingcomments@delaware.gov, or via the U.S. Postal Service at the physical address for DNREC indicated on the hearing web page and/or the public notices previously issued in this matter. Written comments to DNREC may not be submitted using social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, or

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text messaging.

Please remember that all comment received either through USPS or via the electronic mechanism read just now, as long as it -- as it is received by the comment on or before February 14th, will bear the exact same weight and will be considered equally by the Secretary prior to making his final decision in this matter.

While comments are appreciated, each comment must be limited solely to the subject matter of tonight's hearing. Multiple comments saying the same thing do not outweigh one singular comment. Simply put, comments are not votes. A single well supported comment may carry more weight than 1000 form letters.

I also want to note that only comments submitted directly to DNREC and entered by myself into the hearing record in this matter will be posted on the hearing web page and be considered by the department as a part of the decision process. The department has not partnered with any outside organizations or websites to assist in the public submission of comments in this matter, so again, only submit your comments to DNREC directly.

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Lastly, the ultimate decision regarding this matter is made by DNREC Secretary Garvin. This formal proceeding tonight acts as a mechanism to enable the department to thoroughly back the hearing matter to the public and to let the public know the various ways to which the comment may be received and submitted for Secretary Garvin's consideration if so desired.

I will now hand it over to John Clark with the Division of Fish and Wildlife to provide the department's presentation.

MR. CLARK: Thank you, Hearing Officer Smith. I will can now proceed to -- let me get this.

Before I get to the

presentation, I'd just like to review the exhibits

Okay.

1 that we have submitted for this proposed regulatory action.

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Exhibit 1 is a copy of the final minutes from the September 19, 2023 Advisory Council Tidal Fin Fish Fisheries Meeting, which documents the discussion of this proposal and the Council's unanimous vote to recommend that the DNREC's Division of Fish and Wildlife proceed with this regulatory action.

Exhibit 2 is a copy of the Start Action 11 Notice.

Exhibit 3 is a copy of the Regulatory Flexibility Analysis Regulatory Impact Statement.

Exhibit 4 is a copy of the Register Notice.

Exhibit 5 is the proposed amendment as to the regulation as published in the January 2024 Delaware Register of Regulations.

Exhibit 6 is the legal notice and proof of publication of the notice as it appeared in the January 7th Delaware State News.

Exhibit 7 is proof of publication and the legal notice of the notice that was published on January 9th in the Wilmington News Journal.

Exhibit 8 is notice of this public
hearing as it appears on the DNREC's Public Hearings
website.

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Exhibit 9, Notice of this hearing on the State calendar.

Exhibit 10 is notice of this hearing as it appears on the DNREC Division of Fish and Wildlife Facebook page.

Exhibit 11, an e-mail sent to

Delaware's Commercial Gill Net permittees. Those gill

net permittees that we had their e-mail address for, I

should clarify, on January 23rd notifying them of this

hearing, and that same e-mail was resent on

January 29th.

Exhibit 12 is the notice of this public hearing as it appears on DNREC's Public Meeting Notices Bulletin Board in the Visitor Center.

And finally, Exhibit 13 is a copy of the hearing presentation, which I will now proceed to go through.

MS. SMITH: Before you proceed with the presentation, John, I'd like to mark those exhibits into the record. I have received all of the electronic versions of the proposed exhibits by the

department, and I hereby mark these exhibits as

Department's Exhibits 1 through 13.

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(Exhibit 1 through Exhibit 13 were marked for identification.)

You may proceed, John.

MR. CLARK: Thank you. First, I'll start by reviewing the current gill net season. The spring striped bass gill net season will open on February 15th and it runs through May 31st. The entire period is open for drift gill netting, but anchor gill netting is only open from March 1st through May 10th.

Anchor gill netting does account for the great majority of Delaware striped bass landings, approximately 90 percent of spring landings. Anchor netting is more efficient than drift netting, but can also be more destructive. Striped bass discard mortality studies conducted by the Division of Fish and Wildlife showed that from anchor nets, striped bass discard mortality was 41 percent versus only 8 percent for drifted gill nets. And anchor nets, because they are more efficient, they're out there fishing all day long. They kill other species. We have documented dead Endangered Species Act listed in

Atlantic Sturgeon and protected water birds among others.

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or proposing to change this. I shouldn't say changing. Proposing. Okay. The Advisory Council Tidal Fin Fish Fisheries discussed modifications to the spring anchor gill net season with DNREC Division of Fish and Wildlife at its April 18th and then its September 19, 2023 meetings. DNREC Fish and Wildlife stipulated at these meetings it would not support adding additional anchor net days, but it would support changing the anchor net season while maintaining the same number of days for as I mentioned before, because anchor netting can have unintended side effects that we are not looking to increase.

The Council passed a motion unanimously at the September meeting recommending that DNREC modify the spring anchor gill net season by adding two weeks in February and eliminating two weeks in April and May to better synchronize the spring anchor gill net season with the availability of striped bass since striped bass have been coming into Delaware Bay and River earlier in the year as the waters warm up, and the market for striped bass. Although the market for

striped bass early in the season typically was not that great, the last few years it has been good. So that was the impetus for this action.

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After this action was started, the proposal that is to get this proposed regulation moving, the Council did receive comments from several matters that were not in favor of this action. And the Council further discussed this recommendation at its January 17th meeting and recommended a minor modification to the start and end date of the proposed regulation.

So first, I'll show here the -- the strikethrough version of the proposed regulation as printed in the January 2024 Delaware Register of Regulations. And as mentioned, what this will do is change the opening of the anchor net season to February 15th instead of March 1st, and it will close the season on -- for anchor nets on April 27th instead of on May 10th.

After the discussion at the January meeting, the modification recommended by the Advisory Council Tidal Fin Fish Fisheries is to change the -- both those by five days. So with the change recommended at the meeting, the season for anchor nets

would open on February 20th and it would close on May 2nd. So either way, it's the same number of anchor netting days.

And that concludes my presentation.

And I will stop sharing my screen now.

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MS. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Clark.

We will now turn to the public comment portion of tonight's hearing. Those who pre-registered by noon today with DNREC to offer live comment for inclusion into the record will be called upon in the order the registration was received. The Department only received one registrant, Harvey Yankinson [ph].

At the time your name is called, you will be unmuted. If for any reason you are having technical issues, we will call your name twice and move on with the remainder of the hearing.

Before I begin, I want to stress the following parameters of the public comment portion of the hearing. Comments must be related to the subject matter of tonight's hearing. Each registrant will be given three minutes to offer comments for the record. The timer will begin when the commenter starts talking, and the system will automatically mute the

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commenter at the three minute mark. The commenter's video will remain off while speaking. There's no sharing or yielding of the commenters three minutes.

While the department appreciates all comments received, there will be no -- there will be a zero tolerance policy in effect for disruptive behavior, discouraging remarks, offensive language, or personal attacks.

This formal proceeding acts -- this formal -- this is a formal proceeding, and as such, should be given this respect by all attendance -- all in attendance this evening.

With that being said, may I have
Mr. Harvey Yankinson [ph] unmuted? Please state your
name for the record, and the organization you are
representing, and you may begin with your comments.

MS. PERRY: Mr. Yankinson, if you're in attendance, can you raise your hand?

MS. SMITH: Tanesha, is there a feature? I see there's a couple call-ins. What is the feature to raise your hand if you are a call-in?

MS. PERRY: Here, I'm going to unmute

the call-ins, and if Mr. Yankinson [ph] is available.

24 I've asked him to unmute.

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MS. SMITH: Okay. Did we receive any other contact information for Mr. Yankinson [ph] with his registration?

MS. PERRY: That's what I'm about to check for his phone number.

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6 MS. SMITH: Thank you. Thank you all 7 patiently for waiting.

MS. PERRY: It is a 610 number, so neither of the call-ins --

MS. SMITH: Okay. Thank you.

MS. PERRY: -- match that number.

MS. SMITH: Thank you, Ms. Perry, for confirming that.

As Mr. Yankinson is not in attendance tonight, we will move on with the remainder of the hearing.

That now concludes the comment portion of the hearing. I want to extend the written comments will be received again between now and February 14th and will be posted on the hearing web page so that everyone can see the hearing record as it is generated.

As we conclude tonight's hearing, I want to remind everyone of all the ways in which you

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1	can offer comments for inclusion into the formal
2	hearing record. It is on the screen, or should be on
3	the screen soon for you to record if you need to, but
4	is also available on the hearing web page dedicated to
5	this matter if you need to go there.
6	That now concludes the hearing for
7	tonight, and it is now 6:19. Thank you all for
8	joining.
9	(Whereupon, the meeting concluded at
10	6:19 p.m.)
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CERTIFICATE

2	I, ANDREW WEADER, the officer before whom
3	the foregoing proceedings were taken, do hereby
4	certify that any witness(es) in the foregoing
5	proceedings, prior to testifying, were duly sworn;
6	that the proceedings were recorded by me and
7	thereafter reduced to typewriting by a qualified
8	transcriptionist; that said digital audio recording of
9	said proceedings are a true and accurate record to the
10	best of my knowledge, skills, and ability; that I am
11	neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any
12	of the parties to the action in which this was taken;
13	and, further, that I am not a relative or employee of
14	any counsel or attorney employed by the parties
15	hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the
16	outcome of this action. Andrew Weader

17

ANDREW WEADER

18

Notary Public in and for the

19

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

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CERTIFICATE OF TRANSCRIBER

I, PATRICIA EDMONDS, do hereby certify that this transcript was prepared from the digital audio recording of the foregoing proceeding, that said transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings to the best of my knowledge, skills, and ability; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which this was taken; and, further, that I am not a relative or employee of any counsel or attorney employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

Patricia Edmond

PATRICIA EDMONDS

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