

Issued in Washington, D.C., on February 14, 1997.

Richard B. Felder,

Associate Administrator for Pipeline Safety.

[FR Doc. 97-4275 Filed 2-20-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-06-P

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

49 CFR Part 541

[Docket No. 96-122; Notice 01]

RIN 2127-AG33

Preliminary Theft Data; Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Standard

AGENCY: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), Department of Transportation.

ACTION: Publication of preliminary theft data; request for comments.

SUMMARY: This document requests comments on data about passenger motor vehicle thefts that occurred in calendar year (CY) 1995, including theft rates for existing passenger motor vehicle lines manufactured in model year (MY) 1995. The theft data preliminarily indicate that the vehicle theft rate for CY/MY 1995 vehicles (3.61 thefts per thousand vehicles) decreased by 13.4 percent from the theft rate for CY/MY 1994 vehicles (4.17 thefts per thousand vehicles).

Publication of these data fulfills NHTSA's statutory obligation to periodically obtain accurate and timely theft data, and publish the information for review and comment.

DATES: Comments must be submitted on or before April 22, 1997.

ADDRESSES: All comments should refer to the docket number and notice number cited in the heading of this document and be submitted, preferably with ten copies to: Docket Section, Room 5109, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 400 Seventh Street, SW., Washington, DC 20590. Docket hours are from 9:30 am to 4:00 pm, Monday through Friday.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ms. Rosalind Proctor, Office of Planning and Consumer Programs, NHTSA, 400 Seventh Street, SW, Washington, DC 20590. Ms. Proctor's telephone number is (202) 366-0846. Her fax number is (202) 493-2739.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NHTSA administers a program for reducing motor vehicle theft. The central feature of this program is the Federal Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Standard, 49 CFR Part 541. The standard specifies performance requirements for inscribing or affixing vehicle identification numbers (VINs) onto certain major original equipment and replacement parts of high-theft lines of passenger motor vehicles.

The agency is required by 49 U.S.C. 33104(b)(4) to periodically obtain, from the most reliable source, accurate and timely theft data, and publish the data for review and comment. To fulfill the § 33104(b)(4) mandate, this document reports the preliminary theft data for CY 1995, the most recent calendar year for which data are available.

In calculating the 1995 theft rates, NHTSA followed the same procedures it used in calculating the MY 1994 theft rates. (For 1994 theft data calculations, see 61 FR 50069, September 24, 1996). As in all previous reports, NHTSA's data were based on information provided to NHTSA by the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The NCIC is a governmental system that receives vehicle theft information from nearly 23,000 criminal justice agencies and other law enforcement authorities throughout the United States. The NCIC data also include reported thefts of self-insured and uninsured vehicles, not all of which are reported to other data sources.

The 1995 theft rate for each vehicle line was calculated by dividing the number of reported thefts of MY 1995 vehicles of that line stolen during calendar year 1995, by the total number of vehicles in that line manufactured for MY 1995, as reported to the Environmental Protection Agency.

The preliminary 1995 theft data show a decrease in the vehicle theft rate when compared to the theft rate experienced in CY/MY 1994. The preliminary theft rate for MY 1995 passenger vehicles stolen in calendar year 1995 decreased to 3.61 thefts per thousand vehicles produced, a decrease of 13.4 percent from the rate of 4.17 thefts per thousand vehicles experienced by MY 1994 vehicles in CY 1994. For MY 1995 vehicles, out of a total of 207 vehicle lines, 86 lines had a theft rate higher than 3.5826 per thousand vehicles, the established median theft rate for MYs 1990/1991. (See 59 FR 12400, March 16,

1994). Of the 86 vehicle lines with a theft rate higher than 3.5826, 71 are passenger car lines, 12 are multipurpose passenger vehicle lines, and 3 are light-duty truck lines.

In Table I, NHTSA has tentatively ranked each of the MY 1995 vehicle lines in descending order of theft rate. Public comment is sought on the accuracy of the data, including the data for the production volumes of individual vehicle lines.

Comments must not exceed 15 pages in length (49 CFR Part 553.21). Attachments may be appended to these submissions without regard to the 15 page limit. This limitation is intended to encourage commenters to detail their primary arguments in a concise fashion.

If a commenter wishes to submit certain information under a claim of confidentiality, three copies of the complete submission, including purportedly confidential business information, should be submitted to the Chief Counsel, NHTSA, at the street address given above, and seven copies from which the purportedly confidential information has been deleted should be submitted to the Docket Section. A request for confidentiality should be accompanied by a cover letter setting forth the information specified in the agency's confidential business regulation. 49 CFR Part 512.

All comments received before the close of business on the comment closing date indicated above for this document will be considered, and will be available for examination in the docket at the above address both before and after that date. To the extent possible, comments filed after the closing date will also be considered. Comments on this document will be available for inspection in the docket. NHTSA will continue to file relevant information as it becomes available for inspection in the docket after the closing date, and it is recommended that interested persons continue to examine the docket for new material.

Those persons desiring to be notified upon receipt of their comments in the rules docket should enclose a self-addressed, stamped postcard in the envelope with their comments. Upon receiving the comments, the docket supervisor will return the postcard by mail.

Authority: 49 U.S.C. 33101, 33102 and 33104; delegation of authority at 49 CFR 1.50.

THEFT RATES OF MODEL YEAR 1995 PASSENGER MOTOR VEHICLES STOLEN IN CALENDAR YEAR 1995

	Manufacturer	Make/model (line)	Thefts 1995	Production (MFG'R'S) 1995	1995 (per 1,000 vehicles produced) theft rate
1	TOYOTA	SUPRA	31	1,542	20.1038
2	MINISUBISHI	DIAMANTE	249	12,947	19.2323
3	CHRYSLER CORP.	LEBARON COUPE/CONVERTIBLE	537	35,844	14.9816
4	MINISUBISHI	MONTERO	459	31,643	14.5056
5	CHRYSLER CORP.	DODGE SPIRIT	341	24,557	13.8861
6	TOYOTA	LEXUS GS	100	7,700	12.9870
7	CHRYSLER CORP.	PLYMOUTH ACCLAIM	308	23,761	12.9624
8	HONDA/ACURA	LEGEND	296	22,847	12.9557
9	PORSCHE	911	96	7,487	12.8222
10	HYUNDAI	SCOUPE	101	8,673	11.6453
11	MINISUBISHI	MIRAGE	692	60,209	11.4933
12	MINISUBISHI	EXPO	79	7,347	10.7527
13	BMW	M3	98	9,279	10.5615
14	MINISUBISHI	GALANT/SIGMA	676	80,384	8.4096
15	FORD MOTOR CO.	MUSTANG	1,388	165,831	8.3700
16	NISSAN	300ZX	28	3,624	7.7263
17	FORD MOTOR CO.	F150 PICKUP TRUCK	843	109,770	7.6797
18	NISSAN	ALTIMA	1,245	163,237	7.6269
19	FIAT	F355	4	529	7.5614
20	TOYOTA	LEXUS SC	120	15,915	7.5401
21	NISSAN	INFINITI Q45	64	8,579	7.4601
22	MINISUBISHI	ECLIPSE	435	61,045	7.1259
23	HONDA	PRELUDE	93	13,763	6.7572
24	HONDA/ACURA	2.5TL	3	444	6.7568
25	NISSAN	PATHFINDER	666	104,565	6.3692
26	NISSAN	240SX	157	25,114	6.2515
27	GENERAL MOTORS	OLDSMOBILE CUTLASS CIERA	769	123,593	6.2220
28	GENERAL MOTORS	CHEVROLET CORVETTE	124	19,949	6.2159
29	HYUNDAI	ELANTRA	298	50,215	5.9345
30	HONDA/ACURA	INTEGRA	411	72,753	5.6493
31	TOYOTA	4-RUNNER	565	101,650	5.5583
32	CHRYSLER CORP.	JEEP GRAND CHEROKEE	1,464	263,571	5.5545
33	PORSCHE	968	3	559	5.3667
34	MERCEDES BENZ	140(S-CLASS)	140	26,141	5.3556
35	TOYOTA	TERCEL	494	93,018	5.3108
36	GENERAL MOTORS	BUICK CENTURY	581	110,291	5.2679
37	MINISUBISHI	3000GT	82	15,597	5.2574
38	BMW	3	284	54,625	5.1991
39	MAZDA	626/MX-6	573	110,320	5.1940
40	CHRYSLER CORP.	TOWN & COUNTRY MPV	64	12,365	5.1759
41	GENERAL MOTORS	GEO TRACKER	266	51,400	5.1751
42	HONDA/ACURA	NSX	4	781	5.1216
43	NISSAN	MAXIMA	779	154,596	5.0389
44	TOYOTA	COROLLA/COROLLA SPORT	1,042	211,049	4.9372
45	HYUNDAI	SONATA	161	32,807	4.9075
46	CHRYSLER CORP.	DODGE STEALTH	22	4,497	4.8922
47	TOYOTA	PICKUP TRUCK	218	44,724	4.8743
48	CHRYSLER CORP.	PLYMOUTH NEON	843	173,510	4.8585
49	CHRYSLER CORP.	NEW YORKER/LHS	241	49,779	4.8414
50	CHRYSLER CORP.	JEEP WRANGLER	500	104,244	4.7964
51	CHRYSLER CORP.	EAGLE TALON	164	34,297	4.7818
52	CHRYSLER CORP.	PLYMOUTH VOYAGER/GRAND	782	163,590	4.7802
53	TOYOTA	CAMRY	1,489	314,047	4.7413
54	GENERAL MOTORS	CHEVROLET CORSICA	669	142,074	4.7088
55	MAZDA	MPV WAGON	77	16,379	4.7011
56	GENERAL MOTORS	CHEVROLET BERETTA	333	71,753	4.6409
57	CHRYSLER CORP.	DODGE NEON	943	203,881	4.6252
58	GENERAL MOTORS	PONTIAC TRANS SPORT	198	42,984	4.6064
59	SUZUKI	SIDEKICK	144	31,741	4.5367
60	FORD MOTOR CO.	LINCOLN TOWN CAR	488	107,707	4.5308
61	BMW	5	164	36,329	4.5143
62	CHRYSLER CORP.	DODGE CARAVAN/GRAND	976	217,893	4.4793
63	HYUNDAI	ACCENT	225	51,061	4.4065
64	CHRYSLER CORP.	EAGLE VISION	110	25,140	4.3755
65	FORD MOTOR CO.	ASPIRE	272	62,775	4.3329
66	HONDA	ACCORD	1,411	327,746	4.3052
67	MERCEDES BENZ	129(SL-CLASS)	36	8,380	4.2959
68	MAZDA	323/PROTEGE	352	82,433	4.2701

THEFT RATES OF MODEL YEAR 1995 PASSENGER MOTOR VEHICLES STOLEN IN CALENDAR YEAR 1995—
Continued

	Manufacturer	Make/model (line)	Thefts 1995	Production (MFGR'S) 1995	1995 (per 1,000 vehicles produced) theft rate
69	HONDA	PASSPORT	155	36,620	4.2327
70	GENERAL MOTORS	BUICK SKYLARK	220	52,743	4.1712
71	BMW	8	5	1,230	4.0650
72	CHRYSLER CORP.	INTREPID	611	151,118	4.0432
73	GENERAL MOTORS	CHEVROLET CAMARO	495	122,959	4.0257
74	GENERAL MOTORS	PONTIAC GRAND AM	1,055	262,739	4.0154
75	MAZDA	929	17	4,248	4.0019
76	GENERAL MOTORS	GEO PRIZM	408	103,820	3.9299
77	FORD MOTOR CO.	PROBE	229	58,275	3.9296
78	FORD MOTOR CO.	MERCURY TRACER	249	63,707	3.9085
79	NISSAN	INFINITI J30	77	20,117	3.8276
80	HONDA	CIVIC	1,242	325,199	3.8192
81	GENERAL MOTORS	OLDSMOBILE ACHIEVA	192	51,388	3.7363
82	FORD MOTOR CO.	LINCOLN MARK VIII	75	20,107	3.7300
83	MITSUBISHI	PICKUP TRUCK	37	9,991	3.7033
84	FORD MOTOR CO.	MERCURY SABLE	380	102,624	3.7028
85	CHRYSLER CORP.	DODGE AVENGER	121	33,055	3.6606
86	GENERAL MOTORS	PONTIAC FIREBIRD	187	51,279	3.6467
87	TOYOTA	LEXUS LS	80	22,659	3.5306
88	TOYOTA	CELICA	88	25,391	3.4658
89	ISUZU	PICKUP TRUCK	57	16,493	3.4560
90	FORD MOTOR CO.	MERCURY MYSTIQUE	229	66,690	3.4338
91	FORD MOTOR CO.	THUNDERBIRD	389	114,919	3.3850
92	NISSAN	INFINITI G20	59	17,457	3.3797
93	GENERAL MOTORS	CHEVROLET LUMINA APV	198	58,819	3.3663
94	KIA MOTORS	SEPHIA	68	20,250	3.3580
95	TOYOTA	PASEO	14	4,211	3.3246
96	NISSAN	SENTRA	425	128,110	3.3175
97	TOYOTA	LEXUS ES	128	38,608	3.3154
98	GENERAL MOTORS	GEO METRO	252	76,079	3.3123
99	JAGUAR	XJ6	40	12,195	3.2800
100	CHRYSLER CORP.	SEBRING	67	20,613	3.2504
101	FORD MOTOR CO.	ESCORT	1,186	364,969	3.2496
102	MAZDA	MX-3	28	8,627	3.2456
103	TOYOTA	MR2	1	309	3.2362
104	FORD MOTOR CO.	TAURUS	1,238	396,050	3.1259
105	FORD MOTOR CO.	CONTOUR	546	179,245	3.0461
106	CHRYSLER CORP.	JEEP CHEROKEE	376	123,859	3.0357
107	MAZDA	MILLENNIA	134	45,891	2.9200
108	FORD MOTOR CO.	MERCURY COUGAR	170	60,279	2.8202
109	VOLKSWAGEN	GOLF III/GTI	60	21,285	2.8189
110	NISSAN	PICKUP TRUCK	479	173,383	2.7627
111	FORD MOTOR CO.	LINCOLN CONTINENTAL	88	32,816	2.6816
112	CHRYSLER CORP.	DODGE STRATUS	126	48,060	2.6217
113	VOLKSWAGEN	JETTA III	208	79,470	2.6173
114	GENERAL MOTORS	CHEVROLET CAVALIER	398	152,457	2.6106
115	CHRYSLER CORP.	DODGE DAKOTA PICKUP	307	117,873	2.6045
116	CHRYSLER CORP.	EAGLE SUMMIT	30	12,632	2.5791
117	GENERAL MOTORS	PONTIAC GRAND PRIX	341	132,266	2.5781
118	ISUZU	RODEO	231	89,961	2.5678
119	CHRYSLER CORP.	CIRRUS	158	61,913	2.5520
120	GENERAL MOTORS	GMC SAFARI	132	52,479	2.5153
121	GENERAL MOTORS	CHEVROLET CAPRICE	134	55,459	2.4162
122	MAZDA	MX-5 MIATA	47	19,822	2.3711
123	SUBARU	IMPREZA	69	29,916	2.3065
124	GENERAL MOTORS	OLDSMOBILE SILHOUETTE	40	17,347	2.3059
125	GENERAL MOTORS	OLDSMOBILE CUTLASS SUPREME	238	104,586	2.2756
126	SUZUKI	SAMURAI	1	440	2.2727
127	GENERAL MOTORS	CADILLAC DEVILLE/SIXTY SPECIAL	238	105,621	2.2533
128	GENERAL MOTORS	CHEVROLET S-10 PICKUP	530	245,938	2.1550
129	CHRYSLER CORP.	DODGE VIPER	3	1,431	2.0964
130	TOYOTA	TACOMA PICKUP TRUCK	162	79,946	2.0264
131	KIA MOTORS	SPORTAGE	21	10,473	2.0052
132	MAZDA	RX-7	1	501	1.9960
133	GENERAL MOTORS	CHEVROLET ASTRO	308	157,562	1.9548
134	GENERAL MOTORS	PONTIAC BONNEVILLE	179	92,140	1.9427
135	JAGUAR	XJ12	1	520	1.9231

THEFT RATES OF MODEL YEAR 1995 PASSENGER MOTOR VEHICLES STOLEN IN CALENDAR YEAR 1995—
Continued

	Manufacturer	Make/model (line)	Thefts 1995	Production (MFG'R'S) 1995	1995 (per 1,000 vehicles produced) theft rate
136	GENERAL MOTORS	OLDSMOBILE CUTLASS CRUISER	17	8,865	1.9177
137	VOLKSWAGEN	PASSAT	30	15,712	1.9094
138	GENERAL MOTORS	CADILLAC ELDORADO	46	24,488	1.8785
139	TOYOTA	T100 PICKUP TRUCK	66	35,352	1.8669
140	GENERAL MOTORS	SATURN SC	111	59,912	1.8527
141	VOLVO	850	108	58,537	1.8450
142	MERCEDES BENZ	124 (E-CLASS)	58	31,583	1.8364
143	GENERAL MOTORS	CHEVROLET BLAZER S-10	405	221,093	1.8318
144	GENERAL MOTORS	PONTIAC SUNFIRE	97	53,129	1.8257
145	GENERAL MOTORS	GMC SONOMA TRUCK	108	59,435	1.8171
146	FORD MOTOR CO.	EXPLORER	468	260,844	1.7942
147	GENERAL MOTORS	SATURN SL	362	208,457	1.7366
148	GENERAL MOTORS	BUICK REGAL	155	90,290	1.7167
149	NISSAN	QUEST	111	65,072	1.7058
150	FORD MOTOR CO.	MERCURY GRAND MARQUIS	161	94,519	1.7034
151	TOYOTA	AVALON	100	60,370	1.6565
152	FORD MOTOR CO.	CROWN VICTORIA	106	64,247	1.6499
153	FORD MOTOR CO.	AEROSTAR	181	109,873	1.6474
154	FORD MOTOR CO.	WINDSTAR	523	321,744	1.6255
155	MERCEDES BENZ	202 (C-CLASS)	55	34,068	1.6144
156	GENERAL MOTORS	GMC JIMMY S-15	112	71,652	1.5631
157	TOYOTA	PREVIA	31	20,905	1.4829
158	JAGUAR	XJS	8	5,441	1.4703
159	GENERAL MOTORS	CHEVROLET LUMINA	477	337,623	1.4128
160	FORD MOTOR CO.	RANGER PICKUP	310	220,493	1.4059
161	SAAB	900	34	24,332	1.3973
162	SUBARU	LEGACY	106	78,271	1.3543
163	JAGUAR	XJR	1	750	1.3333
164	SUZUKI	SWIFT	7	5,330	1.3133
165	ISUZU	TROOPER	31	24,647	1.2578
166	MAZDA	B SERIES PICKUP	37	29,848	1.2396
167	SAAB	9000	9	7,338	1.2265
168	VOLVO	940	15	12,238	1.2257
169	BMW	7	22	17,960	1.2249
170	GENERAL MOTORS	CADILLAC SEVILLE	42	35,789	1.1735
171	GENERAL MOTORS	OLDSMOBILE AURORA	52	45,677	1.1384
172	GENERAL MOTORS	BUICK RIVIERA	45	39,626	1.1356
173	GENERAL MOTORS	CADILLAC FLEETWOOD	16	14,839	1.0782
174	AUDI	CABRIOLET	1	950	1.0526
175	FORD MOTOR CO.	MERCURY VILLAGER (MPV)	81	87,745	0.9231
176	GENERAL MOTORS	SATURN SW	16	17,900	0.8939
177	CHRYSLER CORP.	CONCORDE	46	51,524	0.8928
178	GENERAL MOTORS	BUICK LESABRE	144	163,726	0.8795
179	GENERAL MOTORS	OLDSMOBILE 88 ROYALE	59	70,346	0.8387
180	SUBARU	SVX	1	1,228	0.8143
181	VOLVO	960	11	14,228	0.7731
182	AUDI	90	3	4,475	0.6704
183	GENERAL MOTORS	BUICK PARK AVENUE	36	60,667	0.5934
184	AUDI	A6	5	8,492	0.5888
185	GENERAL MOTORS	OLDSMOBILE 98/TOURING	13	24,161	0.5381
186	GENERAL MOTORS	BUICK ROADMASTER	15	28,375	0.5286
187	HONDA	ODYSSEY	15	32,065	0.4678
188	SUZUKI	ESTEEM	2	4,466	0.4478
189	GENERAL MOTORS	GMC G15/25/35 VANDURA	4	31,897	0.1254
190	GENERAL MOTORS	CHEVROLET G10/20/30 VAN/SPORTVAN	12	102,383	0.1172
191	AUDI	S6	0	2,377	0.0000
192	FIAT	ALFA ROMEO 164	0	361	0.0000
193	FIAT	FERRARI 348	0	181	0.0000
194	FIAT	FERRARI 456	0	155	0.0000
195	FIAT	FERRARI 512	0	76	0.0000
196	FIAT	FERRARI F50	0	56	0.0000
197	GENERAL MOTORS	BUICK COACHBUILDER	0	98	0.0000
198	GENERAL MOTORS	GMC G15/25/35 RALLY	0	1,650	0.0000
199	LAMBORGHINI	DIABLO	0	285	0.0000
200	LOTUS	ESPIRIT	0	241	0.0000
201	PORSCHE	928	0	77	0.0000
202	ROLLS-ROYCE	BROOKLANDS	0	25	0.0000

THEFT RATES OF MODEL YEAR 1995 PASSENGER MOTOR VEHICLES STOLEN IN CALENDAR YEAR 1995—
Continued

	Manufacturer	Make/model (line)	Thefts 1995	Production (MFGR'S) 1995	1995 (per 1,000 vehicles produced) theft rate
203	ROLLS-ROYCE	CORNICHE/CONTINENTAL	0	105	0.0000
204	ROLLS-ROYCE	SIL SPIRIT/SPUR/MULS	0	132	0.0000
205	ROLLS-ROYCE	TURBO R	0	19	0.0000
206	VOLKSWAGEN	EUROVAN	0	1,814	0.0000
207	VOLVO	LIMOUSINE	0	6	0.0000

Issued on: February 18, 1997.

L. Robert Shelton,

*Associate Administrator for Safety
Performance Standards.*

[FR Doc. 97-4356 Filed 2-20-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-59-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 648

[I.D. 021097C]

New England Fishery Management Council; Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council; Public hearings

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

ACTION: Public hearings; request for
comments.

SUMMARY: The New England Fishery
Management Council and the Mid-
Atlantic Fishery Management Council
(Councils) will hold public hearings to
receive comments on Amendment 9 to
the Northeast Multispecies Fishery
Management Plan (FMP). The Councils
have determined a need for better
management of the monkfish resource to
stem the long-term decline in stock
biomass, average size, and the
proportion of mature fish. Management
measures to reduce the catch of small
monkfish will help resolve the problem,
but additional reductions in landings
and mortality are needed to stop
overfishing. The Councils propose to
reduce fishing effort in no more than 7
years through reductions in total
allowable landings (TAL). The TAL
reductions would be achieved through a
combination of days-at-sea (DAS) limits,
quotas, trip limits, limited access, size
limits, and minimum mesh limits.

DATES: Written comments on
Amendment 9 will be accepted through
March 14, 1997. Testimony may be

presented at the public hearings, which
are scheduled to be held from February
24 to March 10, 1997. See
SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION for specific
dates and times.

ADDRESSES: Direct written comments or
requests for copies of the public hearing
document, draft Amendment 9
document, or the draft Supplemental
Environmental Impact Statement to Paul
J. Howard, Executive Director, New
England Fishery Management Council, 5
Broadway, Saugus, MA 01906;
telephone 617/231-0422, or David
Keifer, Executive Director, Mid-Atlantic
Fishery Management, 300 South New
Street, Suite 2115, Dover, DE 19901;
telephone 302/674-2331.

The hearings will be held in Maine,
New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode
Island, New York, New Jersey,
Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina.
See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for
locations of the hearings and special
accommodations.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Paul
J. Howard, 617-231-0422.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Recent U.S. landings of monkfish
have increased dramatically in response
to an increase in the market value of the
species in combination with the decline
in abundance of traditional groundfish
species. Most monkfish are taken as
bycatch in the Northwest Atlantic
groundfish and scallop fisheries,
although directed effort is increasing.
Directed effort is occurring in both
deepwater (100-150 fathoms) by otter
trawls and in shoal waters by gillnets
and scallop dredges. Interest in fishing
for monkfish has been fueled by the
valuable liver market and increasing
market acceptance of small monkfish
tails. This trend is expected to continue,
especially as fishermen seek alternatives
to the traditional scallop and groundfish
fisheries, which are now strictly
regulated.

Management Measures by Area

Amendment 9 to the FMP would
bring monkfish under Federal
management authority throughout the
Northeast region (Virginia to Maine).
The Councils are proposing two
management areas for monkfish, a
northern fishery management area
(NFMA) and a southern fishery
management area (SFMA). The reason
for the separation is partly based on the
biological characteristics of the resource
and partly based on the differences in
fisheries in the Gulf of Maine versus
areas to the south.

TAL targets have been established for
the two fishery management areas and
are consistent with the monkfish
overfishing definition and the
rebuilding strategy adopted by the
Councils. Different management
measures would apply to vessels fishing
in these two management areas.

Limited Access Program

A limited access program for vessels
that target and land large volumes of
monkfish would be based on historic
participation from February 28, 1991, to
February 27, 1995 (the monkfish control
date). Vessels must comply with the
control date guidelines to be eligible for
qualification. These limited access
vessels could target monkfish under a
seasonal quota or under a limited
number of DAS, depending on the
management measures in the final
amendment.

Monkfish Selectivity

Limited access vessels would be
required to use at least 10-inch (25.4-
cm) square or 12-inch (30.5-cm)
diamond mesh to target monkfish. This
requirement is necessary to reduce the
groundfish bycatch below the 5 percent
threshold for a certified fishery as
specified by Amendment 7 to the
Multispecies FMP.

Amendment 9, which takes into
account the effect of large mesh on
bycatch, may open the monkfish limited
access fishery in some areas. Other areas