

Region. Action is requested by June 24, 1997. The proposed measures would allow vessels with a VMS to be within 50 nautical miles of the fishing grounds before the season opens and would require those vessels to only be 50 nautical miles away from the grounds when the fishery closes. Without these provisions, vessels must be at least 200 nautical miles away at those times. A VMS allows NOAA to electronically identify the location of a vessel. Because of the accuracy of the systems and the ability they give NOAA to enforce regulations, location restrictions can be relaxed.

NOAA is requesting emergency review of these requirements to allow them to be implemented in time for the beginning of the next fishing year, which starts on July 1. Delayed implementation would deny the benefits of the provisions until the end of the year. Since most vessels involved already have VMSs onboard because of participation in another fishery, implementation of the provisions can be almost immediate.

As emergency approvals under the PRA are for a very limited duration, this notice also requests public comments on a follow-up submission that will be made to OMB under standard review procedures.

Vessels fishing with a VMS will not be required to submit any information apart from activating their VMS, which can then be queried by NOAA.

II. Method of Collection

The vessel monitoring systems will electronically transmit location information to NOAA when queried.

III. Data

OMB Number: 0648-0307.

Form Number: None.

Type of Review: Emergency Submission.

Affected Public: Businesses (commercial fishermen).

Estimated Number of Respondents: 15.

Estimated Time Per Response: .033 seconds per response for vessels with a VMS already installed. For vessels needing to install a VMS, there would be a one-time 4 hour burden for installation of the equipment by NOAA, and an annual maintenance time of 2 hours per vessel.

Estimated Total Annual Burden Hours: 17.

Estimated Total Annual Cost to Public: \$0 (NOAA installs the equipment to be used).

IV. Request for Comments

Comments are invited on: (a) Whether the proposed collection of information

is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information shall have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden (including hours and cost) of the proposed collection of information; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on respondents, including through the use of automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

Comments submitted in response to this notice will be summarized and/or included in the request for OMB approval of this information collection; they also will become a matter of public record.

Dated: June 17, 1997.

Wilson D. Haigler, Jr.,

Chief, Management Control Division, Office of Management and Organization.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 061797A]

Environmental Impact Statement for the Proposed Marine Environmental Health Research Laboratory at Fort Johnson, Charleston, SC

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

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement; request for comments.

SUMMARY: NOAA, with the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) as a cooperating agency, announces its intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to address construction of the proposed Marine Environmental Health Research Laboratory (MEHRL) at Fort Johnson, Charleston, SC and to conduct a public scoping meeting in conjunction with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR).

DATES: Written comments on the intent to prepare an EIS will be accepted on or before July 25, 1997. Comments postmarked after that date will be considered to the extent practicable. A scoping meeting is scheduled as follows:

July 23, 1997, 7 p.m., South Carolina Department of Natural Resources,

Marine Resources Division Auditorium, 217 Fort Johnson Road, Charleston, SC.

ADDRESSES: Written comments on suggested alternatives and/or potential impacts, or requests to speak at the public scoping meeting should be submitted to Donna Howard, U.S. Department of Commerce/NOAA, National Marine Fisheries Service, 219 Fort Johnson Rd., Charleston, SC 29412-9110 (803-762-8604).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

NOAA will prepare an EIS pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), 42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*, in accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality regulations for implementing NEPA (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508) and NOAA Administrative Order 216-6, and conduct a public scoping meeting in conjunction with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR). The EIS will address construction of the proposed Marine Environmental Health Research Laboratory (MEHRL) at Fort Johnson, Charleston, SC. NOAA is preparing this EIS to focus on the potential for significant environmental impacts and to consider reasonable alternatives.

The MEHRL will establish state-of-the-art marine research capabilities for NOAA Fisheries, NIST, SCDNR, the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC), and the University of Charleston (UC) at the Fort Johnson Marine Resources Center (FJMRC) at Charleston, SC. Research at MEHRL, will emphasize the multi-disciplinary and multi-institutional linkages focused on understanding the processes promoting coastal ecosystem health and the linking of these processes to fisheries and human health. The facility will promote a campus-like environment for researchers from participating institutions and their collaborators.

MEHRL will be a premier high-technology marine research center with programs that apply new scientific techniques to fisheries and marine resource management. Scientists will use new tools to assess the ecological health of the marine environment and the potential hazards of pollution on marine ecosystems. Scientists will also provide the information that can be used to address environmental problems and the means to evaluate the restoration of natural habitats. Research at MEHRL will emphasize multi-disciplinary approaches that link ecosystems with the health of both marine organisms and humans. The rapidly advancing field of marine

biotechnology holds great promise for improving the quality of the scientific information needed to manage living marine resources. MEHRL researchers will develop indicators to monitor the health of marine life. They will also explore impacts of environmental factors on reproduction, survival, and diseases of marine organisms. Research at MEHRL will greatly expand the information base required to manage fisheries. This new facility will emphasize the application of modern technology to manage coastal resources wisely and to rebuild sustainable fisheries and healthy coasts. This vision for MEHRL will be an important asset to address environmental issues and will play an integral role in accomplishing NOAA Fisheries strategic goals.

Research at MEHRL will include both environmental chemistry and environmental biology. These research areas will provide capabilities that can be utilized for multi-disciplinary research. The core research capabilities necessary to provide the proper support for multi-disciplinary environmental research include: A Nuclear Magnetic Resonance facility, cryogenic facilities, analytical clean laboratories, P2 biohazard laboratories, environmental controlled challenge laboratories, bioassay culture laboratories, incubator laboratories, culture laboratories, clean wet laboratories, etc. The nucleus of the facility will be state-of-the-art laboratories for environmental challenge research utilizing a range of seawater and temperature controls. The capacity to adequately handle hazardous materials with proper disposal and prevention of cross-contamination is a high priority. Equally important are the high-technology analytical laboratories with the capability to maintain the integrity and validity of the samples and to analyze samples safely with proper environmental protection for researchers working with hazardous materials.

MEHRL will be a unique contribution to the marine sciences in that it will provide not only a center of scientific and state-of-the-art equipment serving the Nation, as well as the East and Gulf Coasts, but represents a true breakthrough in institutional cooperation (federal, state, and academic) aimed at removing traditional jurisdictional barriers and improving overall research and development effectiveness.

A Web page has been established to inform the local community of the background information surrounding the MEHRL and to provide up-to-date information on the planning, design, and the building phases of the project.

The Web page may be reached at the following address: <http://www.cofc.edu/grice/mehrl>

Project Description

The State of South Carolina has provided a lease of land up to 14 acres for the MEHRL (Phase I) and support facilities (Phase II). The MEHRL will be built on approximately eight acres within the Fort Johnson campus of the SCDNR in Charleston, SC. The NMFS Charleston Laboratory and satellite NIST facility is currently located on this campus in leased facilities. The UC and the MU.S.C. also have existing facilities on this campus.

The proposed MEHRL complex will be approximately 69,000 gross square ft and will accommodate approximately 90 scientists/staff. The goal for MEHRL is to be a multi-use facility with complimentary institutional partnership functions and activities. Thus, MEHRL will be staffed with researchers from the partner institutions. MEHRL should attract visiting scientists, students, post-doctoral researchers, and require minimal new staff positions. MEHRL will provide approximately 34,000 net square ft for environmental biology and chemistry research.

Phase II of the project consists of dormitory, dining facility, and visiting scientist housing. The dormitory will be approximately 8,250 square ft and the dining facility will be approximately 1,750 square ft. The dormitory will be adjacent to the dining hall since the residents will be the primary users of the facilities. The dormitory will be a quad of five to eight person living suites of 1,050 square ft. The dining facility will include a dining hall for informal dining for 10 to 15 people. There will be a residential style kitchen for the residents to prepare their own meals. The visiting scientist housing will be a high quality living arrangement to be used by researchers and their families for an extended period of time. The housing will be five 1,250 square ft townhouses. The unit will be self-contained and independent of other facilities. The townhouses will be located away from the dormitory, but will have a direct relation to each other in a campus atmosphere. Phase II is contingent upon funding and may not be developed immediately.

NOAA and SCDNR invite interested agencies, organizations, and the general public to submit written comments or suggestions concerning the scope of the issues to be addressed, alternatives to be analyzed, and the environmental impacts to be addressed in the EIS. The public also is invited to attend a scoping meeting in which oral comments and

suggestions will be received (see DATES). Oral and written comments will be considered equally in preparation of the EIS. Those not desiring to submit comments or suggestions at this time, but who would like to receive a copy of the Draft EIS should write to Donna Howard (see ADDRESSES). When the Draft EIS is complete, its availability will be announced in the **Federal Register** and in the local news media, a public hearing will be held, and comments will be solicited.

Public Scoping Meeting

The public scoping meeting will be chaired by a NOAA representative but will not be conducted as an evidentiary hearing; speakers will not be cross-examined, although the chair and other NOAA and SCDNR representatives present may ask clarifying questions. To ensure that everyone has an adequate opportunity to speak, 5 minutes will be allotted for each speaker. Depending on the number of persons requesting to speak, the chair may allow more time for elected officials, or speakers representing multiple parties, or organizations. Persons wishing to speak on behalf of organizations should identify the organization. Persons wishing to speak may either notify Donna Howard in writing (see ADDRESSES) or register at the meeting. As time permits, individuals who have spoken subject to the 5-minute rule will be afforded additional speaking time. Written comments also will be accepted at the meeting.

Special Accommodations

The meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Donna Howard (see ADDRESSES) at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.

Dated: June 17, 1997.

Bruce Morehead,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 060497C]

Pacific Fishery Management Council; Public Meetings

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