

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration****Proposed Information Collection; Comment Request; Cost-Earnings Surveys of American Samoa Longline Fishery**

AGENCY: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Department of Commerce, as part of its continuing effort to reduce paperwork and respondent burden, invites the general public and other Federal agencies to take this opportunity to comment on proposed and/or continuing information collections, as required by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995.

DATES: Written comments must be submitted on or before November 9, 2015.

ADDRESSES: Direct all written comments to Jennifer Jessup, Departmental Paperwork Clearance Officer, Department of Commerce, Room 6616, 14th and Constitution Avenue NW., Washington, DC 20230 (or via the Internet at Jjessup@doc.gov).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Requests for additional information or copies of the information collection instrument and instructions should be directed to Minling Pan, National Marine Fisheries Service, (808) 725-5349 or Minling.Pan@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**I. Abstract**

This request is for a new information collection.

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) proposes to collect information about annual base fishing expenses in the American Samoa longline fishery with which to conduct economic analyses that will improve fishery management in those fisheries; satisfy NMFS' legal mandates under Executive Order 12866, the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*), the Regulatory Flexibility Act, the Endangered Species Act, and the National Environmental Policy Act; and quantify achievement of the performances measures in the NMFS Strategic Operating Plans. Respondents will include longline fishers in American Samoa and their participation in the economic data collection will be voluntary.

II. Method of Collection

The economic surveys will be conducted via in-person interviews with fishing vessel owners and operators.

III. Data

OMB Control Number: 0648-xxxx.

Form Number(s): None.

Type of Review: Regular (request for a new information collection).

Affected Public: Business or other for-profit organizations.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 22.

Estimated Time per Response: 30 minutes.

Estimated Total Annual Burden Hours: 11.

Estimated Total Annual Cost to Public: \$0 in recordkeeping/reporting costs.

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: September 4, 2015.

Sarah Brabson,

NOAA PRA Clearance Officer.

[FR Doc. 2015-22832 Filed 9-9-15; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3520-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

RIN 0648-XE166

Magnuson-Stevens Act Provisions; General Provisions for Domestic Fisheries; Application for Exempted Fishing Permits

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

ACTION: Notice; request for comments.

SUMMARY: The Assistant Regional Administrator for Sustainable Fisheries, Greater Atlantic Region, NMFS, has made a preliminary determination that an Exempted Fishing Permit application contains all of the required information and warrants further consideration. This Exempted Fishing Permit would allow four commercial fishing vessels to fish outside of the limited access sea scallop regulations in support of study investigating the effect different dredge tow cable scope ratios have on dredge pitch and catch rates using the Turtle Deflector Dredge and Low Profile Dredge designs.

Regulations under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act require publication of this notification to provide interested parties the opportunity to comment on applications for proposed Exempted Fishing Permits.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before September 25, 2015.

ADDRESSES: You may submit written comments by any of the following methods:

- *Email:* nmfs.gar.efp@noaa.gov. Include in the subject line "DA15-065 CFF Dredge Design Study EFP."
- *Mail:* John K. Bullard, Regional Administrator, NMFS, Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office, 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930. Mark the outside of the envelope "DA15-065 CFF Dredge Design Study EFP."

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Shannah Jaburek, Fisheries Management Specialist, 978-282-8456.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NOAA has preliminarily awarded the Coonamesset Farm Foundation (CFF) a grant through the 2015 Saltonstall Kennedy grant program, in support of a project titled "Improving an Ecosystem Friendly Scallop Dredge." To conduct this research, CFF submitted a complete application for an EFP on August 6, 2015. The project would look at the effect different scope ratios have on dredge pitch and catch rates using the Turtle Deflector Dredge (TDD) and Low Profile Dredge (LPD) designs. The project would also utilize an underwater camera attached to the dredge frames to capture fish dredge interactions.

CFF is requesting exemptions that would allow four commercial fishing vessels be exempt from the Atlantic sea scallop days-at-sea (DAS) allocations at 50 CFR 648.53(b); crew size restrictions at § 648.51(c); and rotational closed area exemptions for Closed Area I at § 648.58(a), Closed Area II at § 648.58(b),

and Nantucket Lightship at § 648.58(c). It would also exempt participating vessels from the Atlantic sea scallop observer program requirements at § 648.11(g) and from possession limits and minimum size requirements specified in 50 CFR part 648, subsections B and D through O, for sampling purposes only. Any fishing activity conducted outside the scope of the exempted fishing activity would be prohibited.

Four vessels would conduct scallop dredging in October 2015-April 2016, on four 7-day trips, for a total of 28 DAS. Each trip would complete approximately 50 tows per trip for an overall total of 200 tows for the project. Trips would take place in the open areas of southern New England and Georges Bank as well as in Georges Bank scallop access areas that are closed. Trips would be centralized around areas with high yellowtail and winter flounder bycatch and in areas that contain a wide range of scallop sizes to examine changes in size selectivity due to dredge design and wire scope.

All tows would be conducted in tandem using one TDD and one LPD for a duration of 60 minutes with a tow speed range of 4–5.5 knots. Both dredges would be 15 feet (4.57 meters) in width using 4-inch (10.16 cm) rings, and would be rigged with a 7-row apron, and twine top hanging ratio of 2:1. Both dredges would be equipped with a regulation turtle chain mat for any tows west of 71° W. longitude. The LPD dredge in comparison to the TDD dredge has a reduced frame angle from 45° to 22.5°, an extended shoe from 15 inches (38.10 cm) to 22 inches (55.88 cm), and a reduced frame height from 15 inches (38.10) to 9.5 inches (24.13 cm). Each tow pair would be conducted in a straight line varying between long (4:1) and short (3:1) scope ratios in an AB-BA alternating pattern. Scope is the ratio of deployed towing cable to ocean depth.

To film finfish interactions, both dredge frames would have an underwater camera attached to the outer frame bars facing the depressor plate. Each interaction would be recorded using Observer XT computer software and would fall into three categories: Horizontal escape where the fish swims perpendicular to the dredge; vertical escape where the fish swims over the frame; and overcome/capture where the fish passes under the cutting bar or through the openings between the depressor plate and cutting bar. Filming will help test the hypothesis that the LPD frame aids in flatfish escapement and reduces interaction time with the

dredge potentially, reducing incidental mortality rates.

For all tows, the sea scallop catch would be counted into baskets and weighed. One basket from each dredge would be randomly selected and the scallops would be measured in 5-mm increments to determine size selectivity. Finfish catch would be sorted by species then counted, weighed, and measured in 1-mm increments. Depending on the volume of scallops and finfish captured, the catch would be subsampled as necessary. No catch would be retained for longer than needed to conduct sampling and no catch would be landed for sale.

PROJECT CATCH ESTIMATES

Species	lbs	mt
Scallops	110,231	50.00
Yellowtail	2,000	0.91
Winter Flounder	500	0.23
Windowpane Flounder ..	3,500	1.59
Monkfish	4,500	2.04
Summer Flounder	150	0.007
Barndoor Skate	500	0.23
NE Skate Complex	75,000	34.02
Atlantic Cod	50	0.02
Haddock	75	0.03
Silver/Offshore Hake	125	0.05
Unclassified hakes	100	0.06

CFF needs these exemptions to allow them to conduct experimental dredge towing without being charged DAS, as well as deploy gear in access areas that are currently closed to scallop fishing. Participating vessels need crew size waivers to accommodate science personnel and possession waivers will enable them to conduct finfish sampling activities.

If approved, the applicant may request minor modifications and extensions to the EFP throughout the year. EFP modifications and extensions may be granted without further notice if they are deemed essential to facilitate completion of the proposed research and have minimal impacts that do not change the scope or impact of the initially approved EFP request. Any fishing activity conducted outside the scope of the exempted fishing activity would be prohibited.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: September 4, 2015.

Jennifer M. Wallace,

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

[FR Doc. 2015–22834 Filed 9–9–15; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Proposed Information Collection; Comment Request; Reporting Requirements for Commercial Fisheries Authorization Under Section 118 of the Marine Mammal Protection Act

AGENCY: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Department of Commerce, as part of its continuing effort to reduce paperwork and respondent burden, invites the general public and other Federal agencies to take this opportunity to comment on proposed and/or continuing information collections, as required by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995.

DATES: Written comments must be submitted on or before November 9, 2015.

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Requests for additional information or copies of the information collection instrument and instructions should be directed to Lisa White, (301) 427–8402 or Lisa.White@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Abstract

This request is for an extension of a currently approved information collection.

Reporting injury to and/or mortalities of marine mammals is mandated under Section 118 of the Marine Mammal Protection Act. This information is required to determine the impacts of commercial fishing on marine mammal populations. This information is also used to categorize commercial fisheries into Categories I, II, or III. Participants in the first two categories must be authorized to take marine mammals, while those in Category III are exempt from that requirement. All categories must report injuries or mortalities on a National Marine Fisheries Service form.

II. Method of Collection

Respondents have a choice of either electronic or paper forms. Methods of submittal include online forms, email of electronic or scanned forms, and mail