

artificial intelligence (AI), advanced and quantum computing, and autonomous systems.

Request for Information

Respondents are encouraged—but not required—to respond to any or all of the following questions, and may address related topics. Please identify the questions or topic areas each of your comments addresses. The following questions cover the major areas about which NIST seeks comment. These questions are directed towards domestic semiconductor manufacturers, associated supporting industries, educational institutions, and their stakeholders. Responses may include estimates. Please indicate where the response is an estimate.

Respondents may organize their submissions in response to this RFI in any manner, and all responses that comply with the requirements listed in the **DATES** and **ADDRESSES** sections of this notice will be considered.

Comments containing references, studies, research, and other empirical data that are not widely published should include electronic copies of the referenced materials. *Do not include in comments or otherwise submit proprietary or confidential information.* Comments that contain profanity, vulgarity, threats, or inappropriate language or content will not be considered.

Basic Information

Briefly describe your company or organization in terms of:

- a. What is the name of your company or organization?
- b. How is your company or organization involved with the semiconductor industry (e.g., industry association, university, company involved in semiconductor design, fabrication, package test and assembly, or other)?

Workforce Challenges and Needs

1. When hiring technical staff, for what types of positions do you encounter the most difficulty in finding qualified employees?

a. Have you been able to identify any causes for these recruitment difficulties (lack of appropriate educational programs, lack of collaboration between industry and educational institutions, competition within your industry, competition for talent from outside your industry, etc.)

2. Are there specific educational levels that are needed for your current workforce?

a. Are there some educational levels where it is harder to find qualified staff?

b. Have you been able to identify any causes for these difficulties in finding qualified staff (high competition for a specific talent pool, lack of experienced individuals, educational programs not directly aligned with your needs, etc.)

3. Are there certain factors relating to workforce needs that your company or organization prioritizes when locating a new facility, for example a strong base of existing talent, a robust local educational ecosystem, etc.?

4. How do you see the work force needs of your company or organization changing over the next 5 years, 10 years, 15 years?

a. Do you think that certain levels of education will be more important?

b. Are there fields of training that you think will be more important?

5. As the industry continues to evolve and develop and integrate new technologies (e.g., new computing paradigms, new material systems, broader use of AI) are there skillsets that you see as becoming more important?

a. Do you have an opinion on the types of training needed to develop these skillsets for the future?

b. From your experience are there types of partnerships with federal agencies and/or educational institutions that would be helpful to prepare this workforce for the future?

6. Are there certain obstacles that you see as the biggest impediment to meeting your workforce needs? For example, a lack of aligned educational programs (including internship and apprenticeship opportunities), a lack of collaboration with such educational programs, a lack of students in science and engineering, a lack of interest in your industry, a lack of facilities with appropriate equipment to train workers (e.g., community colleges without access to fabrication equipment/facilities), or other issues? Please describe.

Potential Workforce Solutions

7. Are there specific approaches your company or organization utilizes to address your workforce needs? For example, tailored partnerships and curricula with regional universities and community colleges, internship or apprenticeship programs, training or retraining of displaced workers, or other approaches?

8. Are there certain approaches or actions that would most effectively stimulate the supply of qualified workers for the semiconductor industry in the near term (e.g., targeted scholarships including internships/apprenticeships, loan repayment incentives, procurement of specialized

equipment for schools and universities, immigration and visa reform, etc.)?

9. What approaches do you think would most effectively stimulate the supply of qualified workers for the semiconductor industry over the long term (e.g., professional development opportunities for K–12 teachers and K–12 student programs such as camps, competitions and projects in the semiconductor space)?

10. Although apprenticeship has, in the past, been available mostly to those in the traditional trades, efforts are now underway to expand apprenticeship into new fields, including advanced manufacturing, IT, healthcare, energy supply and distribution, banking and finance and engineering (in partnership with four-year institutions). Have you considered engaging in apprenticeship training to prepare your workforce? Why or why not?

11. Are there examples of partnerships with local educational institutions (e.g., a work-study program) that you use to support your operations?

12. Are there types of support (grants, economic development incentives or other benefits) from federal, state and local government agencies that have helped enable your workforce? Of these types of support what makes them most effective?

Authority: 15 U.S.C. 278s.

Kevin A. Kimball,
Chief of Staff.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648–XG304

Fisheries of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic; Reef Fish Fishery of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands; Exempted Fishing Permit

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

ACTION: Notice of receipt of an application for an exempted fishing permit; request for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces the receipt of an application for an exempted fishing permit (EFP) from the NMFS Panama City, FL laboratory. If granted, the EFP would authorize NMFS or NMFS contracted commercial fishers aboard their commercial fishing vessels

to collect certain deep-water snapper species in waters of the U.S. exclusive economic zone (EEZ) in the Caribbean off Puerto Rico. The EFP would exempt this activity from complying with certain seasonal closures in the U.S. Caribbean EEZ. The purpose of the EFP is to gather information that could be used to define essential fish habitat (EFH) of deep-water snappers off the coast of Puerto Rico and to determine life history information for queen and blackfin snappers.

DATES: Comments must be received no later than August 15, 2018.

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

- **Email:** Sarah.Stephenson@noaa.gov. Include in the subject line of the email comment the following document identifier: "PR NOAA NMFS_EFP 2018".

- **Mail:** Sarah Stephenson, Southeast Regional Office, NMFS, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701.

The EFP application and related documents are available for review upon written request to any of the above addresses.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Sarah Stephenson, 727-824-5305; email: Sarah.Stephenson@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The EFP is requested under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*), and regulations at 50 CFR 600.745(b) concerning exempted fishing.

The applicant requests authorization to collect deep-water reef fish species in the U.S. Caribbean EEZ off the west, north, and south coasts of Puerto Rico. The applicant is seeking to gather information that could be used to define essential fish habitat for deep-water snapper species off the coast of Puerto Rico, and to obtain additional life history information about queen and blackfin snapper. Specimens would be collected by NMFS researchers and/or contractors and contracted commercial fishermen aboard three commercial fishing vessels. These activities may be conducted without NMFS staff aboard the contracted vessels. Each vessel's home port is located in Puerto Rico. This permit would exempt project participants from certain seasonal and area closure regulations at 50 CFR 622.435, as identified and described below. The EFP would be effective from the date of issuance through August 1, 2020.

Activities would consist of harvesting reef fish during a total of 450 fishing trips in the 2-year project period, of

which 225 would be within the U.S. Caribbean EEZ off Puerto Rico. The remaining trips would be conducted in Puerto Rico territorial waters. Sampling sites would be randomly selected from locations with a high probability of containing habitat that could be considered essential for deep-water snappers as determined by bathymetric maps recently produced by NOAA's Marine Spatial Ecology Division. The target depth range for this project is 100 to 500 m, with sampling sites selected in each 50 m depth range throughout the overall depth range.

Sampling would be conducted by hook-and-line drift fishing in deep-water habitats, with underwater cameras attached to the fishing line. On each fishing trip, three to seven sites would be fished per day based on distance between the sampling sites and weather, with an average of five sites per day at sea and an average of 15 days at sea per vessel. At each site, one vertical fishing line would be deployed from the commercial fishing vessel with a surface float and bottom weight for a 30 minute soak time. Twelve #9 hooks would be attached to the bottom 2 m of the line and manual snapper reels would be used to retrieve the line. A GoPro camera encased in a light-weight pressure-tested housing and a light would be attached to a small, neutrally buoyant fitting on the vertical line. This camera array would be attached to the fishing line at two separate points, approximately 3 m above the bottom weight.

Project activities would be conducted from September 1, 2018, through August 1, 2020. The majority of sampling would occur each year in September and October. Sampling would occur at approximately 75 sites at each of the following locations in the EEZ off Puerto Rico:

- **Western region:** From Isabela to Puerto Real, including Isla de Desecheo Marine Reserve, within 12 miles of any point of land in Puerto Rico, from depths of 100–500 m.
- **Northeast region:** From San Juan to Fajardo, extending out to Isla de Culebra, within 12 miles of any point of land in Puerto Rico, from depths of 100–500 m.
- **Southeast region:** From Patillas to Buena Vista, extending out to Isla de Vieques, within 12 miles of any point of land in Puerto Rico, from depths of 100–500 m.

The applicant will target queen and blackfin snappers, but anticipates encountering other species. All queen and blackfin snappers caught during the EFP would be retained, and the gonads and otoliths would be extracted for

subsequent analysis by NMFS, Puerto Rico's Department of Natural and Environmental Resources, and the University of South Carolina. Length measurements would be recorded for all targeted and incidental species except for species for which harvest is prohibited under Federal law (*i.e.*, goliath and Nassau groupers, and midnight, rainbow, and blue parrotfishes). These species would be returned immediately to the water with a minimum of harm. In order to minimize the negative biological effects of bringing these deep-water species to the surface, the commercial fishermen would have venting tools onboard their vessels to properly vent fish being released to facilitate their return to depth.

Based on catch and effort information from the commercial sector in Puerto Rico, the applicant anticipates harvesting up to 100 specimens of both queen and blackfin snappers in each of the three sampling regions, each year. Under the EFP, the applicant would be allowed to fish for and possess blackfin snapper during the October 1 through December 31 seasonal closure in place for vermilion, black, silk, or blackfin snappers (50 CFR 622.435(a)(1)(iii)). In addition, under the EFP, the applicant would be allowed to fish for and possess queen and blackfin snappers in or from the Bajo de Sico closed area, which is located in the project's western area off Puerto Rico, during the October 1 to March 31 closure period (50 CFR 622.435(a)(2)(iv)). Based on the sampling plan, the applicant anticipates making a maximum of 10 fishing trips over the 2 year period of the EFP to the Bajo de Sico closed area during the months of October through March.

Based on catch and effort information from the commercial sector in Puerto Rico, the applicant also anticipates catching up to 100 fish of the following species from each of the three sampling regions each year, as incidental catch: Black, silk, vermilion, and wenchman snappers (Snapper Unit 1); coney, graysby, red hind, and rock hind groupers (Grouper Unit 3); black, red, tiger, and yellowfin groupers (Grouper Unit 4), and misty and yellowedge groupers (Grouper Unit 5). It is possible that the applicant may also incidentally catch cardinal snapper, which is in Snapper Unit 2 with queen snapper, as they are targeting queen snapper and these species are frequently caught together.

Some of these incidental species (namely, red, black, tiger, yellowfin, yellowedge, and red hind groupers and vermilion, black, and silk snappers) are also subject to seasonal closures (50 CFR

622.435(a)(1)(i) & (ii) & (iii)). The applicant does not intend to retain any of these species caught during the respective seasonal closures. However, the EFP would allow the applicant to possess these species during those closure periods for sufficient time to collect and record length measurements, consistent with the goals of the EFP. If these species were caught outside of a closed season, the contracted commercial fishers would be able to retain them, consistent with applicable law. These species also may be encountered in the Bajo de Sico closed area (50 CFR 622.435(a)(2)(iv)), and the EFP would allow the applicant to possess the species during the seasonal area closure for sufficient time to collect and record length measurements. No species caught as incidental catch during the seasonal or area closures would be retained during the EFP.

NMFS finds this application warrants further consideration based on a preliminary review. Possible conditions the agency may impose on this permit, if it is granted, include but are not limited to, a prohibition on conducting sampling activities within marine protected areas, marine sanctuaries, or special management zones, without additional authorization, and requiring compliance with best practices in the event of interactions with any protected species. NMFS may also require annual reports summarizing the amount of reef fish species harvested during the seasonal and area closures, as well as during the period of effectiveness of any issued EFP. Additionally, NMFS would require any sea turtles taken incidentally during the course of the activities to be handled with due care to prevent injury to live specimens, observed for activity, and returned to the water.

A final decision on issuance of the EFP will depend on NMFS' review of public comments received on the application, consultations with the affected state(s), the Council, and the U.S. Coast Guard, and a determination that it is consistent with all applicable laws.

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

Dated: July 10, 2018.

Margo B. Schulze-Haugen,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XG299

Nominations to the Marine Mammal Scientific Review Groups

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

ACTION: Notice; request for nominations.

SUMMARY: As required by the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), the Secretary of Commerce established three independent regional scientific review groups (SRGs) to provide advice on a range of marine mammal science and management issues. NMFS conducted a membership review of the Alaska, Atlantic, and Pacific SRGs, and is soliciting nominations for new members to fill vacancies and gaps in expertise.

DATES: Nominations must be received by August 15, 2018.

ADDRESSES: Nominations can be emailed to Shannon.Bettridge@noaa.gov, or mailed to: Marine Mammal and Sea Turtle Conservation Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910-3226, Attn: SRGs.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Shannon Bettridge, Office of Protected Resources, 301-427-8402, Shannon.Bettridge@noaa.gov. Information about the SRGs, including the SRG Terms of Reference, is available at <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/marine-mammal-protection/scientific-review-groups>.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Section 117(d) of the MMPA (16 U.S.C. 1386(d)) directs the Secretary of Commerce to establish three independent regional SRGs to advise the Secretary (authority delegated to NMFS). The Alaska SRG advises on marine mammals that occur in waters off Alaska that are under the jurisdiction of the United States. The Pacific SRG advises on marine mammals that occur in waters off the U.S. West Coast, Hawaiian Islands, and the U.S. Territories in the Central and Western Pacific that are under the jurisdiction of the United States. The Atlantic SRG advises on marine mammals that occur in waters off the Atlantic coast, Gulf of Mexico, and U.S. Territories in the Caribbean that are under the jurisdiction of the United States.

SRGs members are highly qualified individuals with expertise in marine

mammal biology and ecology, population dynamics and modeling, commercial fishing technology and practices, and stocks taken under section 101(b) of the MMPA. The SRGs provide expert reviews of draft marine mammal stock assessment reports and other information related to the matters identified in section 117(d)(1) of the MMPA, including:

A. Population estimates and the population status and trends of marine mammal stocks;

B. Uncertainties and research needed regarding stock separation, abundance, or trends, and factors affecting the distribution, size, or productivity of the stock;

C. Uncertainties and research needed regarding the species, number, ages, gender, and reproductive status of marine mammals;

D. Research needed to identify modifications in fishing gear and practices likely to reduce the incidental mortality and serious injury of marine mammals in commercial fishing operations;

E. The actual, expected, or potential impacts of habitat destruction, including marine pollution and natural environmental change, on specific marine mammal species or stocks, and for strategic stocks, appropriate conservation or management measures to alleviate any such impacts; and

F. Any other issue which the Secretary or the groups consider appropriate.

SRG members collectively serve as independent advisors to NMFS and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and provide their expert review and recommendations through participation in the SRG. Members attend annual meetings and undertake activities as independent persons providing expertise in their subject areas. Members are not appointed as representatives of professional organizations or particular stakeholder groups, including government entities, and are not permitted to represent or advocate for those organizations, groups, or entities during SRG meetings, discussions, and deliberations.

SRG membership is voluntary; and, except for reimbursable travel and related expenses, service is without pay. The term of service for SRG members is three years, and members may serve up to three consecutive terms if reappointed.

NMFS annually reviews the expertise available on the SRG and identifies gaps in the expertise that is needed to provide advice pursuant to section 117(d) of the MMPA. In conducting the reviews, NMFS attempts to achieve, to