

TABLE 1—STANDARD EX-VESSEL PRICES BY SPECIES FOR THE 2020 ROCKFISH PROGRAM SEASON IN KODIAK, ALASKA—Continued

Species	Period ending	Standard ex-vessel price per pound
Thornyhead rockfish	September 30	0.25
	October 31	0.24
	November 30	0.25
	May 31	0.31
	June 30	0.20
	July 31	0.22
	August 31	0.22
	September 30	0.22
	October 31	0.08
	November 30	0.22

*The pelagic shelf rockfish species group has been changed to "dusky rockfish."

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 773 *et seq.*; 1801 *et seq.*; 3631 *et seq.*; Pub. L. 108–447; Pub. L. 111–281.

Dated: February 1, 2021.

Jennifer M. Wallace,
Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648–XA758]

Magnuson-Stevens Act Provisions; Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Northeast Multispecies Fishery; Approved Monitoring Service Providers

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

ACTION: Notification of approved monitoring service providers.

SUMMARY: NMFS has approved six companies to provide Northeast multispecies sector at-sea and/or electronic monitoring services in fishing years 2021 and 2022. Regulations implementing the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan require at-sea and electronic monitoring companies to apply to, and be approved by, NMFS in order to be eligible to provide monitoring services to sectors. This action will allow sectors to contract for at-sea and electronic

monitoring services with any of the approved service providers for fishing years 2021 and 2022.

ADDRESSES: The list of NMFS-approved sector monitoring service providers is available at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/resource/data/observer-providers-northeast-and-mid-atlantic-programs>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Claire Fitz-Gerald, Fishery Policy Analyst, (978) 281–9255, email Claire.Fitz-Gerald@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan includes a requirement for industry-funded monitoring of catch by sector vessels. Sectors must contract with independent third-party service providers to provide at-sea and/or electronic monitoring services to their vessels. In order to provide at-sea or electronic monitoring services to sectors, monitoring companies must apply to, and be approved by, NMFS. Once approved, service providers must meet specified performance requirements outlined in 50 CFR 648.87(b)(4), including required coverage levels, in order to maintain eligibility.

At-Sea and Electronic Monitoring Service Provider Approval Process

Applications approved this year will cover both fishing year 2021 and fishing year 2022 (May 1, 2021 through April 30, 2023). There will be an opportunity in the fall of 2021 for additional monitoring companies to apply for approval to provide at-sea and electronic monitoring services in fishing year 2022.

The regulations at § 648.87(b)(4) describe the criteria for approval of at-sea and electronic monitoring service providers. We approve service providers based on: (1) Completeness and sufficiency of applications; and (2) determination of the applicant's ability to meet the performance requirements of a sector monitoring service provider. We must notify service providers, in writing, if NMFS withdraws approval for any reason.

Approved Monitoring Service Providers

NMFS approved six companies to provide monitoring services to the Northeast multispecies sectors in fishing years 2021 and 2022. Four of the six companies are approved to provide both

at-sea and electronic monitoring services: A.I.S., Inc.; East West Technical Services, LLC; Fathom Research, LLC; and Saltwater, Inc. NMFS approved the other two companies to provide electronic monitoring services: Flywire Cameras and Teem Fish.

We approved these six companies to provide at-sea and/or electronic monitoring services in fishing years 2021 and 2022 because they have met the application requirements and documented their ability to comply with service provider standards. In addition, A.I.S., Inc., East West Technical Services, LLC, and Fathom Research, LLC are currently approved to provide at-sea monitoring services to sectors in fishing years 2019 and 2020 and have a history of meeting or exceeding the requirements of the at-sea monitoring program in the region. We will closely monitor the performance of approved providers, and we will withdraw approval during the current approval term, or disapprove a provider in future fishing years, if we determine performance standards are not being met.

We received applications from two additional companies, but need further information before their application is sufficiently complete for us to make an approval determination. Typically, we engage in an iterative process with provider companies to assist them in assembling and submitting a complete application for our consideration. Because this is our first time approving electronic monitoring companies to provide monitoring services, we are continuing to work with these companies to help them through this process. In the meantime, we are continuing with the approval process for the providers that have submitted complete applications and demonstrated their ability to meet program requirements. Moving forward with notification of our approval of the completed applications while continuing to work with the two remaining applicants is necessary to allow sectors sufficient time to negotiate monitoring contracts for the upcoming fishing year. If we subsequently decide to approve these companies, we will publish an additional notice in the **Federal Register** announcing our decision.

TABLE 1—APPROVED PROVIDERS FOR FISHING YEARS 2021 AND 2022

Provider	Services *	Address	Phone	Fax	Website
A.I.S., Inc ..	ASM/EM	540 Hawthorn St., Dartmouth, MA 02747.	508–990–9054	508–990–9055	https://aisobservers.com/

TABLE 1—APPROVED PROVIDERS FOR FISHING YEARS 2021 AND 2022—Continued

Provider	Services *	Address	Phone	Fax	Website
East West Technical Services, LLC.	ASM/EM	91 Point Judith Rd., Unit 347, Narragansett, RI 02882.	860-910-4957	860-223-6005	https://www.ewts.com/
Fathom Resources, LLC.	ASM/EM	855 Aquidneck Ave., Unit 9, Middletown, RI 02842.	508-990-0997	508-991-7372	https://fathomresources.com/
Flywire Cameras.	EM	PO BOX 55048, Lexington, KY 40511.	888-315-7796	502-861-6568	https://www.flywirecameras.com/
Saltwater, Inc.	ASM/EM	733 N St., Anchorage, AK 99501.	907-276-3241	907-258-5999	https://www.saltwaterinc.com/
Teem Fish	EM	90-425 Carrall St., Vancouver, BC V6B 6E3 Canada.	778-884-2598	https://teem.fish/

* ASM/EM = At-sea and electronic monitoring; EM = Electronic monitoring only.

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

Dated: January 29, 2021.

Jennifer M. Wallace,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Patent and Trademark Office

[Docket No.: PTO-P-2020-0062]

Expanded Collaborative Search Pilot Program Extension

AGENCY: United States Patent and Trademark Office, Department of Commerce.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) has extended the Expanded Collaborative Search Pilot (CSP) program, originally running from November 2017 through October 2020, an additional two years. The Expanded CSP program, conducted with the Japan Patent Office (JPO) and the Korean Intellectual Property Office (KIPO), builds on the success of the initial CSP program, taking advantage of improvements in patent quality and examination pendency. With the Expanded CSP, applicants may request that multiple partnering intellectual property (IP) offices exchange search results for their counterpart applications prior to formulating and issuing their office actions. Each designated partner IP office independently conducts a prior art search for its corresponding counterpart application. The search results are then exchanged between the designated partner IP office(s), including the USPTO, before any IP office issues an office action. With this exchange of search results, the

examiners in all designated partner IP offices will have a more comprehensive set of prior art references to consider when making initial patentability determinations. The Expanded CSP allows the USPTO to study the impact on examination processes of exchanges of search results between the USPTO and multiple partner IP offices prior to formulating and issuing office actions.

DATES: Under the Expanded CSP, the USPTO and partner IP offices will each continue to accept requests to participate beyond November 1, 2020, until October 31, 2022. Each IP office will not grant more than 400 requests per year per partner office. The offices may extend the pilot program (with or without modification) if they deem it appropriate. Each office reserves the right to withdraw from the program at any time.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Inquiries regarding the handling of any specific application participating in the pilot may be directed to Nelson Yang, Senior Advisor, International Patent Business Solutions, Office of International Patent Cooperation, by phone at 571-272-0826. Any inquiries regarding this pilot program can be emailed to csp@uspto.gov. Inquiries concerning this notice may be directed to Anthony Smith, Attorney-Advisor, International Patent Legal Administration, by phone at 571-272-3298.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Background

The USPTO is continually looking for ways to improve the quality of issued patents and to promote worksharing with other IP offices throughout the world. Worksharing benefits applicants by promoting compact prosecution, reducing pendency, and supporting patent quality by reducing the

likelihood of inconsistencies in patentability determinations (not predicated upon differences in national patent laws) between IP offices. The USPTO has launched numerous worksharing pilot programs, including both the Initial and Expanded versions of CSP with the JPO and the KIPO. In the Initial CSP, the participating offices implemented administrative procedures to facilitate worksharing between the USPTO and a single designated partner IP office in the form of sharing search results of related counterpart applications. Feedback from the completed Initial CSP and the current Expanded CSP showed sufficiently positive benefits to justify extending the CSP an additional two years to continue to permit worksharing between the USPTO and more than one designated partner IP office for the corresponding U.S. application.

The USPTO will continue to cooperate in the Expanded CSP to determine whether exchanging the results from searches independently performed by multiple IP offices, which occur substantially simultaneously, also increases the efficiency and quality of patent examination. The Expanded CSP is designed so that this exchange of search results would occur prior to the IP offices making initial patentability determinations. The current partner IP offices for the Expanded CSP remain the JPO and the KIPO. The USPTO will announce future partner IP offices when they are designated.

Currently, applicants in the USPTO having U.S. applications with claims of foreign priority may have search results and prior art cited to them by the foreign IP office during pendency of their U.S. applications. Often, applicants submit the prior art after examination on the merits is already underway in their U.S. application. Upon evaluation of the search results