

developed RMP for Puget Sound chinook. The RMP encompasses fisheries within the range of the Puget Sound chinook salmon ESU, as well as the western Strait of Juan de Fuca, which is not within the ESU. Harvest objectives specified in the RMP account for fisheries-related mortality throughout the migratory range of Puget Sound chinook from Oregon and Washington to Southeast Alaska. The RMP also includes implementation, monitoring and evaluation procedures designed to ensure fisheries are consistent with these objectives.

As required by § 223.203 (b)(6) of the ESA 4(d) rule, the Secretary must determine pursuant to 50 CFR 223.209 and pursuant to the government to government processes therein whether the RMP for Puget Sound chinook would appreciably reduce the likelihood of survival and recovery of the Puget Sound chinook and other affected threatened ESUs. The Secretary must take comments on how the RMP addresses the criteria in § 223.203(b)(4) in making that determination.

Authority

Under section 4 of the ESA, the Secretary is required to adopt such regulations as he deems necessary and advisable for the conservation of the species listed as threatened. The ESA salmon and steelhead 4(d) rule (65 FR 42422, July 10, 2000) specifies categories of activities that contribute to the conservation of listed salmonids and sets out the criteria for such activities. The rule further provides that the prohibitions of paragraph (a) of the rule do not apply to actions undertaken in compliance with a RMP developed jointly by the State of Washington and the Tribes (joint plan) and determined by the Secretary to be in accordance with the salmon and steelhead 4(d) rule (65 FR 42422, July 10, 2000).

Dated: February 27, 2001.

Phil Williams,

Acting Chief, Endangered Species Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 021601B]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone off Alaska; Prohibited Species Donation Program

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

ACTION: Authorization and Renewal.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces the renewal of Northwest Food Strategies' (NFS) authorization to donate Pacific halibut to economically disadvantaged individuals under the Prohibited Species Donation (PSD) program. This action is necessary to comply with provisions of the PSD program implemented at 50 CFR part 679.

DATES: January 1, 2001, through December 31, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Copies of the PSD Permit may be obtained from the Sustainable Fisheries Division, NMFS, Alaska Region, P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802-21668, Attn: Lori Gravel. Copies of Amendments 50 to the groundfish FMPs and of the Environmental Assessment/Regulatory Impact Review (EA/RIR) prepared for the amendments may be obtained from the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, 605 West 4th Ave., Suite 306, Anchorage, AK 99510-2252.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Nina Mollett, 907-586-7462.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The domestic groundfish fisheries in the exclusive economic zone of the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area are managed by NMFS according to the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska and the Fishery Management Plan for the Groundfish Fishery of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Area (FMPs). The FMPs were prepared by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act). Regulations governing the Alaska groundfish fisheries appear at 50 CFR parts 600 and 679. Fishing for Pacific halibut in waters in and off Alaska is governed by the Convention between the United States and Canada for the Preservation of the Halibut Fishery of the North Pacific Ocean and Bering Sea and by

regulations adopted by the International Pacific Halibut Commission and approved by the Secretary of State of the United States pursuant to section 4 of the Northern Pacific Halibut Act (16 U.S.C. 773-773k).

Amendments 50/50 to the FMPs, which authorize the PSD program, were published in the **Federal Register** on June 12, 1998 (63 FR 32144). These amendments expanded the existing Salmon Donation Program by creating a program that includes Pacific halibut as well. The regulations authorize the voluntary distribution of Pacific halibut, taken incidentally in groundfish trawl fisheries off Alaska and landed at shoreside processing plants, to needy individuals by tax-exempt organizations, through an authorized distributor.

The Regional Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator) selected NFS, 600 Erickson Avenue, Suite 395, Bainbridge Island, WA 98110 to be an authorized distributor, as defined by 50 CFR 679.2, based on information submitted by NFS as required under § 679.26. The selection was announced in the **Federal Register** (63 FR 43380, August 13, 1998) and a permit was issued to NFS. A PSD permit issued to an authorized distributor may be renewed following application procedures at § 679.26(b).

The PSD program was scheduled to expire on December 31, 2000. This sunset provision was established to allow time for agency evaluation before Council action was taken to make it a permanent program. Following evaluation, NMFS permanently extended the PSD program on January 1, 2001 (65 FR 78119, December 14, 2000).

NFS had been authorized to distribute Pacific halibut under the PSD program from August 13, 1998, through December 31, 2000. During this period, NFS effectively coordinated the distribution of prohibited halibut bycatch for 3 years. NFS employed an independent seafood laboratory to ensure product quality and received support from cold storage facilities and common carriers servicing the areas where Pacific halibut donation would take place. The company worked with three shoreside processors located in Dutch Harbor, AK. Approximately 6 to 10 metric tons were landed and donated annually. NFS anticipates that this amount could increase.

NFS has submitted an application to renew its status as an authorized distributor. NMFS has reviewed NFS' application, and, on the basis of information submitted in the application, selects NFS as an authorized distributor. This document

announces NFS' selection and the renewal of NFS' permit through December 31, 2003.

The PSD permit may not be transferred and will be in effect for a 3-year period unless suspended or revoked. Suspension, modification, or revocation could occur under 15 CFR part 904, for noncompliance with terms and conditions specified in the permit or for a violation of this section or other regulations in 50 CFR part 679.

Classification

This action is taken under 50 CFR 679.26.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 773 *et seq.*, 1801 *et seq.*, and 3631 *et seq.*

Dated: February 27, 2001.

Bruce C. Morehead,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[Docket No. 990125030-1039-02]

RIN 0648-ZA56

National Oyster Disease Research Program and Gulf Oyster Industry Initiative: Request for Proposals

AGENCY: National Sea Grant College Program, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Department of Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of request for proposals.

SUMMARY: The purpose of this notice is to advise the public that the National Sea Grant College Program (Sea Grant) is entertaining grant proposals to participate in innovative research, outreach and demonstration in two separate competitions: one to continue the National Oyster Disease Research Program (ODRP) and one to continue the Gulf Oyster Industry Program (GOIP). Approximately \$1.85 million is available for the Oyster Disease Research Program and \$.9 million for the Gulf Oyster Program in FY-2001 and a similar amount is expected for FY-2002. Therefore, two year proposals are being accepted. The National Oyster Disease Research Program focuses on diseases that are impacting the oyster populations of the US and the Gulf Oyster Industry Program focuses on the oyster industry problems of the Gulf Coast with special emphasis on the human health considerations within that industry.

DATES: Preliminary proposals must be received at the individual state Sea Grant Programs by 5:00 p.m. (local time) on April 4, 2001 and at the National Sea Grant Office by 5:00 pm (EST) April 9, 2001. After evaluation at the National Sea Grant Office (NSGO), some proposers will be encouraged to prepare full proposals, and those comments will be made available by April 23, 2001. Full proposals must be received at individual Sea Grant Programs by 5:00 p.m. (local time), May 28, 2001 and copies to the National Sea Grant Office by 5:00 pm (EDT) May 31, 2001. Written peer reviews from state Sea Grant programs must be at the National Sea Grant Office by 5:00 pm (EDT) on July 11, 2001. It is anticipated that full proposal funding decisions will be made by July 20, 2001. State Program Directors should allow enough time in their process to pass the proposals and other materials to the National Sea Grant Office by the dates indicated above. Please see list of state program addresses and phone numbers below.

ADDRESSES: For those applicants living in Sea Grant States, the preliminary proposals and full proposals must go to state Sea Grant programs at the addresses obtainable at the web address below. If the applicant is not from a Sea Grant state they should submit directly to: National Sea Grant College Program, R/SG, Attn: Oyster Disease and Gulf Oyster Industry Competition, Room 11838, NOAA, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910, by the dates listed for submission to the National Sea Grant Office.

Electronic Addresses:

Sea Grant Directors—

<http://www.nsgo.seagrant.org/SGDirectors.html>;

Sea Grant Forms—

www.nsgo.seagrant.org/research/rfp/index.html#3

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

James P. McVey, Program Director for Aquaculture, or Mary Robinson, Secretary, National Sea Grant Office, 301-713-2451, facsimile 301-713-0799, e-mail-Jim.McVey@NOAA.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Program Authority

33 U.S.C. 1121 *et seq.*
Catalog of Federal Assistance Numbers: 11.417. Sea Grant Support.

II. Program Description

Background

National Oyster Disease Research Program: For more than two decades, oyster populations in the Chesapeake Bay and mid-Atlantic area have been

increasingly battered by Dermo and MSX, two parasitic diseases for which there is no known remedy. In the Northeast, a new and as yet unidentified pathogen, called Juvenile Oyster Disease (JOD), has been taking a toll in hatcheries. On the West Coast, the Pacific Oyster has been subjected to puzzling summer mortalities.

The continuing decline of oyster stocks has been a catalyst for federal support of the Oyster Disease Research Program, a far-reaching effort by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to support innovative research that will lead to improved techniques for combating oyster disease. The Program began in 1990 with oversight by the NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service and its Chesapeake Bay Office, and is now administered by the National Sea Grant College Program.

The Oyster Disease Research Program is supporting efforts to reduce the impacts of oyster disease on oyster populations through a competitive research program coupled with outreach and management efforts. The ODRP is committed to the restoration of healthy populations of oysters in the nation's coastal waters.

Gulf Oyster Industry Program: The Gulf Oyster Industry Program is a long term, research-based program aimed at assisting the oyster industry in states adjoining the Gulf of Mexico to achieve full economic recovery and sustainable oyster production. This program will foster the participation of highly qualified academic researchers with industry and management agency personnel in an organized, comprehensive search for practical solutions to the most pressing problems of the Gulf oyster industry, including those relating to *Vibrio vulnificus*, a human pathogen, and other human health risks associated with raw molluscan shellfish.

Funding Availability and Priorities

Approximately \$1.85 million in FY-2001 funding is available for the Oyster Disease competition and approximately \$900,000 is available for the Gulf Oyster Industry competition. A similar amount is expected but not assured for both competitions in FY-2002, therefore, two-year projects will be considered. Funding will be on an annual basis, with grant renewal depending upon satisfactory demonstration of progress and availability of funds. Any two-year grant awards that are funded annually must have scopes of work that can be easily separated into annual increments of meaningful work that represents solid accomplishments if prospective funding is not made available to the applicant