

National Car Rental System, Inc.
PHH Vehicle Management Services
Ryder System, Inc. (Both rental and
leasing operations)
U-Haul International, Inc. (Subsidiary of
AMERCO)
USL Capital Fleet Services
Wheels Inc.

Issued on: April 4, 2000.

Stephen R. Kratzke,

*Acting Associate Administrator for Safety
Performance Standards.*

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BILLING CODE 4910-59-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Parts 600 and 648

[I.D. 032400C]

Magnuson-Stevens Act Provisions; General Provisions for Domestic Fisheries; Applications for Exempted Fishing Permits (EFPs) to Conduct Experimental Fishing

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

ACTION: Notification of EFP proposals to
conduct experimental fishing; request
for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces that the
Administrator, Northeast Region, NMFS
(Regional Administrator), has made a
preliminary determination to issue EFPs
to conduct experimental fishing to two
vessels participating in separate
fisheries that would permit these vessels
to conduct operations otherwise
restricted by regulations governing the
fisheries of the Northeastern United
States. The EFPs would exempt vessels
from regulations regarding: Days-at-sea
(DAS) while fishing for, retaining, and
landing Atlantic sea scallops; fishing in
the scallop closed areas; and limiting
the vessel's scallop and bycatch harvest.
Regulations under the Magnuson-
Stevens Fishery Conservation and
Management Act require publication of
this notification to provide interested
parties the opportunity to comment on
the proposed EFP to conduct
experimental fishing. A decision to
approve or disapprove the EFPs will be
made following the comment period.

DATES: Comments on this notification
must be received on or before 5:00 p.m.,
local time, on April 24, 2000.

ADDRESSES: Comments should be sent to
Patricia A. Kurkul, Regional

Administrator, NMFS, Northeast
Regional Office, 1 Blackburn Drive,
Gloucester, MA 01930. Mark on the
outside of the envelope "Comments on
Proposed Scallop EFP Proposals."

Comments also may be sent via
facsimile (fax) to (978) 281-9135.
Comments will not be accepted if
submitted via e-mail or Internet.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

David Gouveia, Fishery Policy Analyst,
978-281-9280.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The
Virginia Institute of Marine Science
(VIMS) proposes a scallop resource
depletion study in selected locations
within the Hudson Canyon and Virginia
Beach Closure Areas chosen in
consultation with the Northeast
Fisheries Science Center's scallop
survey stations. In addition, this study
proposes to collect information on
bycatch, habitat effects, and bio-fouling
of sea scallops. Depending on the
funding available, this study may also
attempt to use an autonomous
underwater vehicle to verify tow tracks
and habitat modifications.

On a tow-by-tow basis, scientific staff
and designated crew members will
enumerate bycatch and estimate
quantities of non-bycatch debris
(mollusk shells) and will report on their
general physical condition. The overall
objective of the study is to assess the
increased availability of commercial sea
scallop biomass resulting from the area
closures that commenced 2 years ago. A
similar study in Georges Bank Closed
Area II was not performed until 4 years
after the closure. It is thought that more
knowledge could be gained from a post-
dredge survey conducted closer to the
cessation of mobile gear activity.

The survey would be conducted
during the period June through July
2000 and would employ the use of two
15-ft (4.57-m) commercial sea scallop
dredges at 400 pre-designated stations.
Sampling densities of approximately
one station per 7.5 nm² in the Hudson
Canyon South Closure Area, and one
station per 5.0 nm² in the Virginia
Beach Closure Area are proposed.
Sampling density will be increased to
one station per 5.0 nm² on or near the
edges of closed area boundaries. Set tow
times of 10 minutes at a speed of 4.5
knots will be used to calibrate area gear
coverage (width of gear x length of
dredge path). The dredge gear will
comply with all mesh size and gear
configuration provisions of Amendment
4 to the Atlantic Sea Scallop Fishery
Management Plan (FMP). Therefore, no
special twine-top configurations or rock
chains will be used.

No other species besides Atlantic sea
scallops will be retained or landed,
except for unusual specimens of interest
to scientists and only at the discretion
of the chief scientist in charge of at-sea
cruise operations. All fishing activities
conducted by the participating vessel
must only be research activities. All
commercial operations would be
prohibited. The participating vessel
would be exempt from regulations on
scallop harvest and bycatch (50 CFR
648.52 and 648.53) but would be
allowed to retain and land no more than
9,100 lb (4,127.76 kg) (650 lb/day
(294.84 kg/day)) of Atlantic sea scallops.
It would also be exempt from the
Atlantic Sea Scallop DAS program when
fishing under the EFP (50 CFR 648.10).
Based on this landing limit, participants
would be required to commit a
maximum of 14 days to the study.

The vessel's crew will be instructed
that low value sea scallops may not be
discarded in favor of retaining high
value sea scallops (high grading). VIMS'
chief scientist is charged with
monitoring all stages of the proposed
cruise operations in support of the study
objectives, and will ensure maximum
integrity of data collection and
organization of deck operations. The
second proposal, submitted by
Coonamessett Farm, proposes to test
new gear designs to reduce yellowtail
flounder and skate bycatch rates. The
experimental dredge will have two
modifications. The first modification
adds a 10-inch (25.40-cm) mesh panel
between the depressor plate and the
dredge bale that will follow the angle of
the depressor plate. The second
modification adds the equivalent of an
old-style locomotive cow catcher under
the bale frame that would direct skates
and flatfish above the bale, along the
mesh panel, and over the dredge frame.
The applicant requests one 7-day trip to
the Georges Bank and South Channel
sea scallop stock areas. The
participating vessel would be allowed to
retain up to 850 lb (385.56 kg) of scallop
meats per day, not to exceed 5,950 lb
(2,698.9 kg) of scallop meats for the
entire trip. An EFP issued to the vessel
participating in the Coonamessett Farm
proposal would exempt the vessel from
the DAS restrictions (50 CFR 648.53)
and limit the vessel's scallop and
bycatch harvest (50 CFR 648.52 and
648.53). Although the dredge gear used
by Coonamessett Farm is modified, the
changes to the dredge are within the
current dredge specifications found in
the Atlantic Sea Scallop FMP.
Therefore, no exemption of the dredge
gear is necessary.

Coonamessett Farm and VIMS would
each conduct experimental fishing

activities with a single commercial vessel with a Federal limited access Atlantic sea scallop permit. The vessels will be allowed to land and sell sea scallops caught during the conduct of the experiment, up to a maximum, which is determined based on the average scallop catch per DAS for the most recent 12-month period available for the Atlantic sea scallop stock areas.

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

Dated: April 3, 2000.

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

50 CFR Parts 600 and 648

[I.D. 032300D]

Magnuson-Stevens Act Provisions; General Provisions for Domestic Fisheries; Application for Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) to Conduct Experimental Fishing

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

ACTION: Notification of EFP proposal to conduct experimental fishing; request for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces that the Administrator, Northeast Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has made a

preliminary determination to issue an EFP to that would allow a single vessel to conduct operations otherwise restricted by regulations governing the fisheries of the Northeastern United States. Mount Desert Oceanarium of Southwest Harbor, Maine, submitted a complete application for an EFP, which warrants further consideration. The experimental fishery would involve fishing for, retention of, and landing of small numbers of regulated multispecies and various unmanaged species for the purpose of public education. Regulations issued under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act require publication of this notification to provide interested parties the opportunity to comment on the proposed EFP to conduct experimental fishing.

DATES: Comments on this notification must be received at the appropriate address or fax number (See **ADDRESSES**) on or before 5:00 p.m., local time, on April 24, 2000.

ADDRESSES: Written comments should be sent to Patricia Kurkul, Regional Administrator, NMFS, Northeast Regional Office, 1 Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930. Mark on the outside of the envelope "Comments on Proposed EFP Proposal." Comments also may be sent via facsimile (fax) to (978) 281-9135. Comments will not be accepted if submitted via e-mail or Internet.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Tom Warren, Fishery Management Specialist, 978-281-9347.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Mount Desert Oceanarium, of Southwest

Harbor, Maine, submitted an application for an EFP on February 15, 2000, to collect various species of animals for public education. A single chartered vessel will use a modified 50-ft (15.2-m) shrimp trawl to collect marine animals on 3 days during the time period from May 1, 2000, to May 20, 2000. The animals will be brought to shore, maintained in tanks for public display, and most will be returned to the sea in October 2000. Collection will be from the Small Mesh Northern Shrimp Fishery Exemption Area, off Maine. If the target species cannot be located in this area, collection will be farther east or southeast from the Gulf of Maine/ Georges Bank Regulated Mesh Area. The target species will include dabs, blackback and yellowtail flounder, plaice, halibut, monkfish, eel pouts, sculpins, sea ravens, cod, wolffish, spiny dogfish, little skate, barndoor skate, and unidentified species of the Phyla Arthropoda and Echinodermata. The vessel will collect a maximum of six individuals per species, juvenile and adult, with the exception of halibut, which will be limited to a total of one individual, with a minimum total length of 36 inches (91.4 cm).

EFPs are required to exempt the vessel from the possession prohibition, mesh size, minimum fish size, and days-at-sea restrictions of the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan.

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

Dated: March 31, 2000.

Bruce C. Morehead,

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

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