

to broad-based applicants with experience in coral reef conservation to conduct activities to protect and conserve coral reef ecosystems. The information submitted by applicants is used to determine if a proposed project is consistent with the NOAA coral reef conservation priorities and the priorities of authorities with jurisdiction over the area where the project will be carried out. As part of the application, NOAA requires a Data and Information Sharing Plan in addition to the standard required application materials.

Affected Public: Business or other for-profit organizations; not-for-profit institutions; state, local, or tribal government.

Frequency: Annually.

Respondent's Obligation: Required to obtain or retain benefits.

This information collection request may be viewed at reginfo.gov. Follow the instructions to view Department of Commerce collections currently under review by OMB.

Written comments and recommendations for the proposed information collection should be sent within 30 days of publication of this notice to *OIRA_Submission@omb.eop.gov* or fax to (202) 395-5806.

Dated: February 17, 2015.

Sarah Brabson,
NOAA PRA Clearance Officer.

[FR Doc. 2015-03535 Filed 2-20-15; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-JE-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Proposed Information Collection; Comment Request; Aleutian Islands Pollock 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 April 24, 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 Patsy A. Bearden, (907) 586-7008 or patsy.bearden@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Abstract

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

Amendment 82 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Groundfish Fishery of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area (FMP) established a framework for the management of the Aleutian Islands subarea (AI) directed pollock fishery. The Aleutian Islands pollock fishery was allocated to the Aleut Corporation, Adak, Alaska, for the purpose of economic development in Adak, Alaska. The Aleut Corporation is identified in Public Law 108-199 as a business incorporated pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (43 U.S.C. 1601 *et seq.*). Regulations implementing the FMP appear at 50 CFR part 679.

Participants are identified and approved through a letter from the Aleut Corporation which is approved by National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). This letter includes a list of approved participants. A copy of the letter must be on each participating vessel.

II. Method of Collection

Mail and retention of document on participating vessels.

III. Data

OMB Control Number: 0648-0513.

Form Number: None.

Type of Review: Extension of a currently approved information collection.

Affected Public: Business or other for-profit organizations.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 1.

Estimated Time per Response: Annual AI Pollock Fishery Participant Letter, 16 hours; process, 4 hours.

Estimated Total Annual Burden Hours: 36.

Estimated Total Annual Cost to Public: \$3 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: February 18, 2015.

Sarah Brabson,
NOAA PIA Clearance Officer.

[FR Doc. 2015-03543 Filed 2-20-15; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XD775

Magnuson-Stevens Act Provisions; General Provisions for Domestic Fisheries; Application for Fishing Year 2014 Sector Exemption

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

ACTION: Notice; request for comments.

SUMMARY: Several groundfish sectors have requested regulatory exemptions from two recently implemented Gulf of Maine cod interim management measures. The Regional Administrator, Greater Atlantic Region, NMFS, has determined that the request warrants further consideration. We are seeking public comment on these exemption requests.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before March 2, 2015.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments by the following methods:

- *Email:* william.whitmore@noaa.gov. Include in the subject line "Comments on Gulf of Maine Cod Sector Exemption Request."

- *Mail:* John K. Bullard, Regional Administrator, NMFS, NE Regional Office, 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930. Mark the outside of the envelope "Comments on Gulf of Maine Cod Sector Exemption Request."

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: William Whitmore, Fisheries Policy

Analyst, 978-281-9182,
william.whitmore@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On November 13, 2014, NMFS published a temporary rule to enhance protections for Gulf of Maine (GOM) cod (79 FR 67362) in response to an updated GOM cod stock assessment that indicated the health of the stock is worsening. The GOM cod interim rule implemented a GOM cod trip limit of 200 lb (90.7 kg) for sector and common pool groundfish vessels fishing within the GOM broad stock area (BSA) and restricted commercial limited access groundfish vessels that fish in the GOM BSA to fishing only in that BSA for the duration of the declared trip. Additional information on the GOM cod interim rule can be found online at www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/stories/2014/GOM_cod_interim_management_measures.html.

On February 9, 2015, we received an exemption request from several sectors. These sectors worked together to assemble 30 mt of GOM cod annual catch entitlement (ACE), which was traded to Northeast Fishery Sector IV, a lease-only sector with no active fishing effort. That sector has proposed to withhold and render unusable that GOM cod ACE, including preventing its use for potential carryover to the next fishing year, if sectors are granted regulatory exemptions from the GOM cod trip limit and GOM BSA restriction.

The 200-lb (90.7-kg) trip limit was intended to reduce the incentive to target GOM cod in areas that would remain open under the interim action to ensure that open-area catch would not result in excessive GOM cod fishing mortality. The 2014 GOM Cod Interim Rule environmental assessment (EA) estimated that implementing the 200-lb (90.7-kg) trip limit would likely reduce GOM cod mortality by 20 mt. The sectors' request would reduce the GOM cod catch limit by 30 mt. Economic modeling and simulations included in the EA suggest that there is a substantial amount of uncertainty regarding the 20-mt estimated mortality reduction. It should also be noted that most of the public comments submitted in response to the GOM cod interim rule opposed the implementation of a trip limit because trip limits can result in high discards of GOM cod and are counter to the sector system, which limits the fishery based on an annual quota. The requesting sectors propose that a definite 30-mt reduction in the catch limit resulting from the sector exemption would provide a greater biological benefit to GOM cod than the probable reduction in mortality from the

200-lb (90.7-kg) trip limit. Removing the trip limit, as requested by the sectors, would provide a clear limit on overall catch of GOM cod and should minimize regulatory discarding.

The requested exemption would also remove the restriction preventing vessels from fishing both inside and outside of the GOM BSA on the same trip. The sectors requesting the exemption have argued that the single BSA restriction has severely impacted fishing operations of vessels that traditionally fish on Georges Bank and in the GOM on the same trip. Although recognizing that the single BSA restriction impedes flexibility to fish in multiple stock areas on a trip, we previously determined that the short-term benefits of this measure were necessary to achieve the interim rule's objective of reducing mortality and ensuring the effectiveness of other measures in the interim rule. Specifically, the single GOM BSA restriction was intended to facilitate more effective shore-side enforcement of the 200-lb (90.7 kg) trip limit. It was also intended to help reduce the opportunity for vessels to misreport their catch to ensure that GOM cod catch would be properly accounted for between stock areas.

Reducing the overall catch limit by 30 mt and removing the trip limit more effectively achieves the interim rule's objective of reducing potential cod mortality and, along with additional reporting measures, outweighs the short-term benefit of retaining the single BSA restriction. If the trip limit is no longer in effect, there is less of a need for the GOM BSA restriction to facilitate dockside enforcement.

In consideration of the sectors' request to be exempt from the BSA restriction, we are proposing to replace this requirement with daily catch reporting requirements should we approve the sectors' request. We would still require that sector vessels that declare their intent to fish inside and outside of the GOM BSA on the same trip submit daily vessel monitoring system (VMS) catch reports. Vessels would also be required to submit a VMS catch report prior to moving fishing operations from one BSA to another. This additional reporting requirement would help ensure that catch is properly accounted for. The removal of any incentive to misreport trip catches in relation to the trip limit along with additional reporting requirements to help ensure proper apportioning of catch between BSAs replaces or mitigates the loss of the short-term benefits expected from the single BSA restriction.

When NMFS implemented the interim rule in November 2014, it did not take any action to reduce the GOM cod ACL or ACE allocated to sectors. During public discussion at the September Council meeting at which the Council requested the agency to develop emergency measures for GOM cod, it was clear that any unilateral action to reduce the ACE available to sectors in the middle of the fishing year could have substantial economic impacts to much of the industry. However, in terms of effecting mortality reductions, a change to the ACE available for harvest by the sectors is generally the most effective and direct means to reduce total potential catch. Instead, NMFS imposed a trip limit to reduce the incentive to target GOM cod within the ACE available, recognizing that if the industry continued to encounter GOM cod, mortality would continue largely through regulatory discarding, potentially up to the full allocated ACE level. Although the analysis supporting the interim measures suggested the trip limit could reduce mortality by approximately 20 mt, there was considerable uncertainty around this estimate, primarily due to uncertainty with the amount of discarding that would occur.

In this request for a sector exemption, the sectors are proposing to implement what NMFS did not: A reduction to the ACE available to those sectors for the remainder of the fishing year. Because the fishing industry will continue to fish through the end of the fishing year, and will continue to encounter GOM cod, the sectors' proposed exemption would establish a firm upper limit on total cod mortality and is more likely to be lower than would otherwise be achieved through the interim measures. In addition to an actual reduction in the total potential cod catch, the sectors' proposed exemption would improve the catch yield and reduce the uncertainty of that cod catch.

This exemption would apply only for the remainder of the 2014 fishing year. It is our intent to continue reviewing sector exemption requests included in annual sector operations plans through a proposed and final rulemaking process. However, future mid-year exemption requests, or modifications to existing exemptions, may be considered, and granted or denied, through a shortened notice and comment process similar to this action.

If we can conclude that the exemption request is at least conversation neutral, and if this request is granted, this exemption will apply to all sectors who request it, and sector operations plans and letters of authorizations will be

modified to include these regulatory exemptions. Minor sector exemption modifications may be granted without further notice if they are deemed essential to facilitate these exemptions and have minimal impacts that do not change the scope or impact of the initially approved sector exemption request.

A supplemental information report analyzing the environmental impacts of this exemption request has been developed and is available online for review at <http://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/regs/>.

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

Dated: February 13, 2015.

Emily H. Menashes,

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

[FR Doc. 2015-03539 Filed 2-18-15; 4:15 pm]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XD781

Western Pacific Fishery Management Council; Public Meetings

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

ACTION: Notice of public meetings and hearings.

SUMMARY: The Western Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) will hold meetings of its 118th Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), SSC sub-working group and its 162nd Council meeting to take actions on fishery management issues in the Western Pacific Region. The Council will also convene meetings of the Pelagic and International Standing Committee and Executive and Budget Standing Committee.

DATES: The SSC sub-working group will be held on Monday, March 9, between 1 p.m. and 4 p.m. The SSC meeting will be held between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. on March 10–12, 2015. The Council's Pelagic and International Standing Committee meeting will be held between 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. on March 14, 2015; Executive and Budget Standing Committee meeting will be held between 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. on March 14, 2015; and the 162nd Council meeting will be held between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. on March 16–18, 2015. In addition, the Council will host a Fishers Forum

on March 17, 2015, between 6 p.m. and 9 p.m. For specific times and agendas, see **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION**.

ADDRESSES: The SSC Sub-working group on March 9, 2015, 118th SSC on March 10–12, 2015, Pelagic and International Standing Committee and Executive and Budget Standing Committee on March 14, 2015 will be held at the Council office, 1164 Bishop Street, Suite 1400, Honolulu, HI 96813, telephone: (808) 522-8220;

The 162nd Council meeting on March 16–18, 2015 will be held at the Laniakea YWCA-Fuller Hall, 1040 Richards Street, Honolulu, HI 96813, telephone: (808) 538-7061; and

The Fishers Forum on March 17, 2015 will be held at the Harbor View Center, Pier 38, 1129 North Nimitz Highway, Honolulu, HI 96817, telephone: (808) 983-1200.

Background documents will be available from, and written comments should be sent to, Mr. Edwin Ebisui, Chair, Western Pacific Fishery Management Council, 1164 Bishop Street, Suite 1400, Honolulu, HI 96813, telephone: (808) 522-8220 or fax: (808) 522-8226.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Kitty M. Simonds, Executive Director; telephone: (808) 522-8220.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: In addition to the agenda items listed here, the SSC and Council will hear recommendations from Council advisory groups. Public comment periods will be provided throughout the agendas. The order in which agenda items are addressed may change. The meetings will run as late as necessary to complete scheduled business.

Schedule and Agenda for the SSC Sub-Working Group

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Approval of the Agenda
3. Main Hawaiian Island Deep 7 Bottomfish
 - A. Review of the Center for Independent Experts (CIE) review reports
 - B. Current status of stock assessments and Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) specification
 - C. ABC specification for fishing year 2015–16
 5. Public Comments
 6. Discussion and Recommendations

Schedule and Agenda for 118th SSC Meeting

8:30 a.m., Tuesday, March 10, 2015

1. Introductions
2. Approval of Draft Agenda and Assignment of Rapporteurs
3. Status of the 117th SSC Meeting Recommendations

4. Report from the Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center (PIFSC)

Director

5. Insular Fisheries

A. Coral reef ecosystem stock assessments

1. Hawaii kumu

2. Hawaii parrotfish

B. Report on the Main Hawaiian

Island (MHI) Deep 7 Bottomfish public scoping meeting

C. Report on PIFSC meeting with the Hawaii bottomfish fishermen

D. 2nd Bottomfish Research

Coordination Workshop

E. Report on the Center for Independent Experts (CIE) review of the 2014 MHI Deep 7 Bottomfish Stock Assessment

F. NMFS actions on the MHI

Bottomfish Annual Catch Limits (ACLs)

G. Public Comment

H. SSC Discussion and

Recommendations

6. Program Planning

A. National Standards (NS)

Guidelines Proposed Rule

B. NOAA Fisheries Draft Climate

Science Strategy

C. Report on the National SSC

Workshop V

D. Public Comment

E. SSC Discussion and

Recommendations

8:30 a.m., Wednesday, March 11, 2015

7. Pelagic Fisheries

A. Hawaii Yellowfin and Bigeye

Commercial Minimum Size Limit

1. Public Meetings

2. Socio-economic studies

3. Yield per Recruit Analyses

B. American Samoa Large Vessel

Prohibited Area (LVPA) changes (Action Item)

C. Territorial Bigeye Specification (Action Item)

D. American Samoa longline U.S.

Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)

albacore catch limit (Action Item)

E. Social Capital, Ethnic Diversity,

and Economic Outcome in Hawaii's

Longline Fishery

E. International Fisheries

1. WCPFC 11th Regular Session

F. Public Comment

G. SSC Discussion and

Recommendations

8. Protected Species

A. Endangered Species Act (ESA)

Section 7 Consultations for Coral

Species

B. Effectiveness of Management

Measures Implemented under the False

Killer Whale Take Reduction Plan

C. Draft 2014 Marine Mammal Stock Assessment Reports

D. False Killer Whale Stock Boundary Revision