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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 230

[Docket No. 070302051-7051-01; I.D. 021607D]

Whaling Provisions; Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling Quotas

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

ACTION: Rule.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces the aboriginal subsistence whaling quota for bowhead whales, and other limitations deriving from regulations adopted at the 2002 Special Meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC). For 2007, the quota is 75 bowhead whales struck. This quota and other limitations will govern the harvest of bowhead whales by members of the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission (AEWC).

DATES: Effective March 12, 2007.

ADDRESSES: Office of International Affairs, National Marine Fisheries Service, 1315 East West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Cheri McCarty, (301) 713-9090.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Aboriginal subsistence whaling in the United States is governed by the Whaling Convention Act (16 U.S.C. 916 *et seq.*). Regulations that implement the Act, found at 50 CFR 230.6, require the Secretary of Commerce (Secretary) to publish, at least annually, aboriginal subsistence whaling quotas and any other limitations on aboriginal subsistence whaling deriving from regulations of the IWC.

At the 2002 Special Meeting of the IWC, the Commission set quotas for aboriginal subsistence use of bowhead whales from the Bering-Chukchi-Beaufort Seas stock. The bowhead quota was based on a joint request by the United States and the Russian Federation, accompanied by documentation concerning the needs of two Native groups: Alaska Eskimos and Chukotka Natives in the Russian Far East.

This action by the IWC thus authorized aboriginal subsistence whaling by the AEWC for bowhead

whales. This aboriginal subsistence harvest is conducted in accordance with a cooperative agreement between NOAA and the AEWC.

The IWC set a 5-year block quota of 280 bowhead whales landed. For each of the years 2003 through 2007, the number of bowhead whales struck may not exceed 67, except that any unused portion of a strike quota from any year, including 15 unused strikes from the 1998 through 2002 quota, may be carried forward. No more than 15 strikes may be added to the strike quota for any one year. At the end of the 2006 harvest, there were 15 unused strikes available for carry-forward, so the combined strike quota for 2007 is 82 (67 + 15).

This arrangement ensures that the total quota of bowhead whales landed and struck in 2007 will not exceed the quotas set by the IWC. Under an arrangement between the United States and the Russian Federation, the Russian natives may use no more than seven strikes, and the Alaska Eskimos may use no more than 75 strikes.

NOAA is assigning 75 strikes to the Alaska Eskimos. The AEWC will allocate these strikes among the 10 villages whose cultural and subsistence needs have been documented in past requests for bowhead quotas from the IWC, and will ensure that its hunters use no more than 75 strikes.

Other Limitations

The IWC regulations, as well as the NOAA regulation at 50 CFR 230.4(c), forbid the taking of calves or any whale accompanied by a calf.

NOAA regulations (at 50 CFR 230.4) contain a number of other prohibitions relating to aboriginal subsistence whaling, some of which are summarized here. Only licensed whaling captains or crew under the control of those captains may engage in whaling. They must follow the provisions of the relevant cooperative agreement between NOAA and a Native American whaling organization. The aboriginal hunters must have adequate crew, supplies, and equipment. They may not receive money for participating in the hunt. No person may sell or offer for sale whale products from whales taken in the hunt, except for authentic articles of Native handicrafts. Captains may not continue to whale after the relevant quota is taken, after the season has been closed, or if their licenses have been suspended. They may not engage in whaling in a wasteful manner.

Dated: March 6, 2007.

William T. Hogarth,

Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. E7-4443 Filed 3-9-07; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 648

[Docket No. 061109296-7009-02; I.D. 030607B]

Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Atlantic Bluefish Fishery; Quota Transfer

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

ACTION: Temporary rule; inseason quota transfer.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces that the Commonwealth of Virginia is transferring 150,000 lb (68,039 kg) of commercial bluefish quota to the State of New York from its 2007 quota. By this action, NMFS adjusts the quotas and announces the revised commercial quota for each state involved.

DATES: Effective March 7, 2007 through December 31, 2007, unless NMFS publishes a superseding document in the **Federal Register**.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Douglas Potts, Fishery Management Specialist, (978) 281-9341, FAX (978) 281-9135.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Regulations governing the Atlantic bluefish fishery are found at 50 CFR part 648. The regulations require annual specification of a commercial quota that is apportioned among the coastal states from Florida through Maine. The process to set the annual commercial quota and the percent allocated to each state is described in § 648.160.

Two or more states, under mutual agreement and with the concurrence of the Administrator, Northeast Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), can transfer or combine bluefish commercial quota under § 648.160(f). The Regional Administrator is required to consider the criteria set forth in § 648.160(f)(1) in the evaluation of requests for quota transfers or combinations.

Virginia has agreed to transfer 150,000 lb (68,039 kg) of its 2007 commercial quota to New York. The Regional Administrator has determined that the

criteria set forth in § 648.160(f)(1) have been met. The revised bluefish quotas for calendar year 2007 are: New York, 1,034,278 lb (469,141 kg); and Virginia, 868,660 lb (394,018 kg).

Classification

This action is taken under 50 CFR part 648 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

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

Dated: March 6, 2007.

Alan D. Risenhoover,

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

[FR Doc. 07-1148 Filed 3-7-07; 2:38 pm]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 660

[Docket No. 061113298-7046-02; I.D. 110106A]

RIN 0648-AU91

Fisheries Off West Coast States; Highly Migratory Species Fisheries

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

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: NMFS publishes this final rule to revise the method for renewing and replacing permits issued under the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for U.S. West Coast Fisheries for Highly Migratory Species (HMS). Permits are required for all commercial vessels and all recreational charter vessels participating in HMS fisheries managed under the FMP. The final rule modifies the renewal process by substituting the last day of the month corresponding to the last digit of the vessel's identification number with the last day of the vessel owner's birth month as the expiration date. The rule also requires that vessel owners requiring a duplicate permit to submit a completed application form to NMFS. These regulations are needed to improve the efficiency and timeliness of the permit system. The proposed rule is adopted without change.

DATES: Effective April 11, 2007.

ADDRESSES: Requests to renew an HMS permit or to apply for a replacement permit may be submitted by any of the following methods:

- Fax: 562-980-4047, Attn. Permits Coordinator.

- Telephone: 562-980-4030.
- Mail to: Permits Coordinator, Sustainable Fisheries Division (SFD) Southwest Region, NMFS, 501 West Ocean Boulevard, Suite 4200, Long Beach, CA 90802.

- E-mail:

HMSpermitrenewal.swr@noaa.gov

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Mark Helvey, NMFS, Southwest Region, SFD, (562) 980-4040.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: These regulations modify the process NMFS uses to renew and replace permits in the U. S. West Coast HMS fisheries managed under the HMS FMP. The FMP was prepared by the Pacific Fishery Management Council and was implemented through regulations at 50 CFR part 660 under authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act), 16 U.S.C. 1801 et seq.

Background

NMFS requires a permit for all commercial vessels and all recreational charter vessels that fish for HMS in the U.S. exclusive economic zone (EEZ) off the States of California, Oregon, and Washington, or land or transship HMS shoreward of the outer boundary of the U.S. EEZ off the States of California, Oregon, and Washington. The purpose of the HMS permit is to identify vessels in the HMS fisheries so that NMFS knows those participants who need to be contacted when management information is required and who to notify when potential management actions affecting the fisheries are being considered.

The requirement for a permit was established by final rule implementing the approved portions of the FMP for HMS published on April 7, 2004 (69 FR 18444). These permits were initially issued in 2005 after publishing a **Federal Register** notice on February 10, 2005 (70 FR 7022), that announced approval by the Office of Management and Budget of the collection-of-information components of the permit system.

Permit Renewal

Permits are issued to the managing owner of a specific vessel for a 2-year term. The initial issuance of HMS permits began in 2005 and these permits expire in 2007. NMFS initially implemented a permit term renewal process intentionally staggered so that there will be less likelihood of an excessive number of renewals at any one time of the year. NMFS used the last day of the month designated by the last

digit of the vessel identification number as determining the renewal date for expiring permits (e.g., if the vessel identification number ends in 3, the renewal date is March 31, 2 years later). Use of this criterion extends the renewal process over a 10-month term: January through October.

Because of the administrative burden of processing the high number of permits in effect, this final rule modifies the criterion by using the last day of the managing vessel owner's birth month as the expiration date. The managing vessel owner's date of birth is required in the Pacific HMS Vessel Permit Application and is already contained in the Pacific HMS Vessel Permit database. NMFS believes that staggering the renewal process over 12 months rather than 10 months will improve the efficiency of the permit renewal process. The first renewal date under this new system will be the last day of the vessel owner's birthday month in the second calendar year after the permit is issued. NMFS anticipates that the system implemented by this final rule should result in delivery of permits to vessel operators in a more efficient manner. This final rule does not require any new information to be provided by the applicant. A Southwest Region Pacific HMS Vessel Permit Application form may still be obtained from the SFD (see **ADDRESSES**) or downloaded from the Southwest Region home page (<http://swr.nmfs.noaa.gov/permits.htm>) to apply for a permit under this section. A completed application is one that contains all the required information and signatures. NMFS intends to contact vessel owners with a renewal notice by mail 3 months in advance of their permit expiration date. This procedure should provide additional time for fishermen to renew their HMS permits before the start of the fishing season. NMFS will also allow HMS fishermen to renew their permits even earlier by contacting NMFS directly (see **ADDRESSES**).

Replacement Permits

Replacement permits are issued by NMFS to vessel owners to replace lost or mutilated permits. Vessel owners with a lost or mutilated permit primarily notify NMFS by telephone when requesting a replacement permit. NMFS has never established a formal process to provide replacement permits, but the number of requests for replacements over the past year make it clear that such a process is required. Under this regulation, vessel owners requiring a replacement permit must submit a new completed application