

**JUSTIFICATION FOR CHANGE
ALASKA LICENSE LIMITATION PROGRAM
FOR GROUNDFISH, CRAB, AND SCALLOPS
OMB CONTROL NO. 0648-0334**

INTRODUCTION

National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Alaska Region manages the fisheries in the exclusive economic zone off the coast of Alaska under the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for: 1) Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA FMP), 2) Groundfish of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area (BSAI FMP), 3) Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands King and Tanner Crabs (Crab FMP), and 4) the Scallop Fishery off Alaska (Scallop FMP). Under the Scallop FMP, management of all aspects of the scallop fishery, except limited access, is delegated to the State of Alaska. The North Pacific Fishery Management Council prepared, and NMFS approved, the FMPs under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, 16 U.S.C. 1801 et seq. as amended by Public Law 109-479. These FMPs are implemented by regulations at 50 CFR part 679.

NMFS proposes regulations to implement Amendment 92 to the BSAI FMP and Amendment 82 to the GOA FMP. This action would result in: 1) removal of trawl gear endorsements on licenses issued under the license limitation program (LLP) in specific management areas, if those licenses have not been used on vessels that meet minimum recent landing requirements using trawl gear; 2) provision of exemptions to this requirement for licenses that are used in trawl fisheries subject to quota-based management; and 3) issuance of new Aleutian Islands (AI) area endorsements for trawl catcher vessels that have been active in State of Alaska waters in the Aleutian Islands in recent years, but who do not hold an LLP license with an AI area endorsement. These new AI area endorsements would be assigned to LLP licenses assigned to non-American-Fisheries Act trawl catcher vessels because those vessels have been active in the fisheries near Adak. These new AI area endorsements would provide additional opportunities to harvest and process Pacific cod in the AI. The direct effect in terms of information collection would be the addition of a checkbox indicating the type of endorsement, if any, on an LLP transfer application.

If the proposed rule were approved and implemented, NMFS would mail a notification to each trawl LLP license holders about the status of each regulatory area endorsement for that LLP license and/or whether a new AI area endorsement would be assigned to an LLP license. NMFS would provide information concerning the proposed effects of any changes to the LLP license holder and provide a single 30-day evidentiary period from the date that notification is sent for an LLP holder to submit any supporting information, or evidence, to verify that the information contained in the official record is inconsistent with his or her records.

If a person does not dispute the notification of changes in their LLP license endorsements, or upon the resolution of any inconsistent claims, a revised LLP license with the appropriate endorsements would be reissued to the LLP license holder. In cases where all endorsements on a LLP license with only a trawl endorsement are extinguished, NMFS would not reissue the LLP license because it is no longer valid for use with trawl gear in any management area.

The current collection-of-information requires the applicant to specify the LLP license number for the transfer. This action would now require the applicant also to check the applicable AI area endorsement, if any, on a groundfish/crab LLP transfer application (Block B). *This change does not modify the burden or cost of the PRA collection* but rather provides an additional option from which to choose on the existing application.