

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration****Submission for OMB Review; Comment Request**

The Department of Commerce will submit to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for clearance the following proposal for collection of information under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act (44 U.S.C. Chapter 35).

Agency: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

Title: Alaska Prohibited Species Donation Program.

OMB Control Number: 0648–0316.

Form Number(s): None.

Type of Request: Regular (extension of a currently approved information collection).

Number of Respondents: 1.

Average Hours per Response: 50 hours for a three-year permit, annualized to 17.

Burden Hours: 17.

Needs and Uses: The prohibited species donation (PSD) program for salmon and halibut has effectively reduced regulatory discard of salmon and halibut by allowing fish that would otherwise be discarded to be donated to needy individuals through tax-exempt organizations. Vessels and processing plants participating in the PSD program voluntarily retain and process salmon and halibut bycatch. An authorized, tax-exempt distributor, chosen by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), is responsible for monitoring retention and processing of fish donated by vessels and processors. The authorized distributor also coordinates processing, storage, transportation, and distribution of salmon and halibut. The PSD program requires an information collection so that NMFS can monitor the authorized distributors' ability to effectively supervise program participants and ensure that donated fish are properly processed, stored, and distributed.

Affected Public: Not-for-profit institution.

Frequency: Every three years.

Respondent's Obligation: Mandatory.

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: November 7, 2017.

Sarah Brabson,

NOAA PRA Clearance Officer.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

RIN 0648–XF829

Magnuson-Stevens Act Provisions; General Provisions for Domestic Fisheries; Application for Exempted Fishing Permits

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

ACTION: Notice; request for comments.

SUMMARY: The Assistant Regional Administrator for Sustainable Fisheries, Greater Atlantic Region, NMFS, has made a preliminary determination that an Exempted Fishing Permit application contains all of the required information and warrants further consideration. This Exempted Fishing Permit would exempt a commercial fishing vessel from Atlantic sea scallop regulations in support of research conducted by the Coonamessett Farm Foundation. Regulations under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act require publication of this notification to provide interested parties the opportunity to comment on applications for proposed Exempted Fishing Permits.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before November 28, 2017.

ADDRESSES: You may submit written comments by any of the following methods:

- *Email:* nmfs.gar.efp@noaa.gov.

Include in the subject line “DA17–100 CFF BREP LA Flounder Sweep Study EFP.”

- *Mail:* John K. Bullard, Regional Administrator, NMFS, Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office, 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930. Mark the outside of the envelope “Comments on DA17–100 CFF BREP LA Flounder Sweep Study EFP.”

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Shannah Jaburek, Fisheries Management Specialist, 978–282–8456.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Coonamessett Farm Foundation (CFF) submitted an application for an EFP on September 18, 2017, for a 2017 Bycatch Reduction Engineering Program project titled “A Modified Flounder Sweep for

Flatfish Bycatch Reduction in the Limited Access (LA) Scallop Fishery.” The project would test a modified flounder cookie sweep on the outer bale bars of the scallop dredge and film fish-dredge interactions to monitor the effectiveness of the gear modification in reducing flatfish bycatch.

To conduct this experiment, vessels would require exemptions from the following regulations: Atlantic sea scallop crew size restrictions at 50 CFR 648.51(c); dredge gear obstruction restrictions at § 648.51(b)(4)(ii); Atlantic sea scallop observer program requirements at § 648.11(g); and closed area exemptions for Closed Area I at § 648.60(c), Closed Area II at § 648.60(d), Closed Area II Extension at § 648.60(e), and Nantucket Lightship at § 648.60(f). It would also exempt participating vessels from possession limits and minimum fish size requirements specified in 50 CFR part 648, subsections B and D through O, for biological sampling purposes only.

Vessels would conduct scallop dredging between November 2017–June 2018, on 2 trips each lasting approximately 7 days-at-sea (DAS) each for a project total of 14 DAS. An average of 10 tows per day would be conducted for a maximum duration of 50 minutes at a tow speed range of 4.8–5.1 knots (2.5–2.6 m/s). Trips would take place in scallop open areas of Southern New England and Georges Bank along with scallop access areas Nantucket Lightship and Closed Areas I and II.

The vessel would conduct all tows with two 15-foot (4.57-m) New Bedford Style dredges, one acting as a control dredge and one acting as an experimental dredge. The vessel would tow both dredges simultaneously to reduce spatial and temporal variability. Researchers would attach the two 9-foot (2.74-m) cookie sweeps to each of the outer bale bars using chain and shackles on the experimental dredge. The cookie sweeps would alternate between the two dredges each tow to reduce “side” effects. The cookie sweeps would be constructed of round rubber disks with lead cookies approximately 3–4 inches (7.6–10.2 cm) in diameter evenly spaced to encourage bottom contact. The attachment chains would be evenly spaced and varied in length to account for dredge position while being towed to ensure contact with the ocean bottom. Exemption from the dredge gear obstruction regulation would allow researchers to use the cookie sweep for the experimental tows.

Researchers would weigh all scallop catch in industry bushel baskets caught in both dredges and measure a one-basket sub-sample from each side in 5-