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**Authority:** 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*

Dated: July 27, 2001.

**William T. Hogarth,**

*Acting Assistant Administrator, National Marine Fisheries Service.*

[FR Doc. 01–19354 Filed 7–30–01; 2:45 pm]

**BILLING CODE 3510–22–S**

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

#### 50 CFR Part 622

[I.D. 072301B]

#### Fisheries of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic; Shrimp Fishery of the Gulf of Mexico; Public Hearings

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

**ACTION:** Notice of public hearings; request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) will convene public hearings to receive comments on its proposed Draft Amendment 10 to the Fishery

Management Plan for the Shrimp Fishery of the Gulf of Mexico, U.S. Waters (Draft Amendment 10).

**DATES:** The public hearings will be held in August, 2001. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for specific dates and times of the public hearings. Written comments on Draft Amendment 10 will be accepted until September 7, 2001.

**ADDRESSES:** Written comments should be sent to and copies of Draft Amendment 10 are available from the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, 3018 U.S. Highway 301, North, Suite 1000, Tampa, FL 33619; telephone 813–228–2815. Public hearings will be held in Texas and Florida. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for specific hearing locations.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Dr. Richard Leard, Senior Fishery Biologist, Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council; telephone: 813–228–2815.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The public hearings will be convened to take public comment on Draft Amendment 10. The amendment contains alternative measures for reducing bycatch in the Gulf of Mexico shrimp fishery off the west coast of Florida, south and east of Cape San Blas, FL (85°30' W long.). The Council is considering alternative measures including area and/or seasonal shrimp fishery closures as well as requiring bycatch reduction devices (BRDs) in shrimp trawls used in the subject area.

#### Time and Location for Public Hearings

Public hearings for Draft Amendment 10 will be held at the following locations and dates from 7 p.m. – 10 p.m.

1. Tuesday, August 14, 2001, Laguna Madre Learning Center, Port Isabel High School, Highway 100, Port Isabel, TX 78578, telephone: 956–943–0052;

2. Wednesday, August 15, 2001, Palacios Recreation Center, 2401 Perryman, Palacios, TX 77465, telephone: 361–972–2387;

3. Monday, August 20, 2001, Holiday Inn Beachside, 3841 North Roosevelt Boulevard, Key West, FL 33040, telephone: 305–294–2571;

4. Tuesday, August 21, 2001, Edison Comm. College, Room H101, Ft. Myers, FL (use Shoreline Blvd entrance Park in 1st lot on right [Lot 8]. For Map directions see: <http://www.edison.edu/aboutecc/lee-campus.htm>;

5. Thursday, August 23, 2001, Tampa Airport Hilton, 2225 Lois Avenue, Tampa, FL 33607, telephone: 813–877–6688; and

6. Tuesday, August 28, 2001, Franklin County Courthouse, 33 Market Street,

Apalachicola, FL 32320, telephone: 850-653-8861.

The Council will also hear public testimony before taking final action on the amendment on September 12, 2001, at its meeting in New Orleans, LA. A notification of the date, time, and location of that meeting will be published in the **Federal Register**. The Council will accept written comments received by September 7, 2001.

#### Special Accommodations

These meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Anne Alford at the Council (see **ADDRESSES**) by July 31, 2001.

Dated: July 27, 2001.

**Dean Swanson,**

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

[FR Doc. 01-19359 Filed 8-1-01; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3510-22-S**

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

#### 50 CFR Part 660

[ID 071301D]

#### Fisheries Off West Coast States and in the Western Pacific; Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery; Application for an Exempted Fishing Permit

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

**ACTION:** Notice of receipt of an application for an exempted fishing permit (EFP); request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS announces receipt of an application for an EFP from the Pacific Marine Conservation Council (PMCC), State of California Department of Fish and Game (CDF&G), and Kenyon Hensel. The primary purpose of the EFP is to collect quantitative information to assess the selectivity of open access vertical hook-and-line and rod-and-reel gear used in the open access fishery off California. If awarded, the EFP would allow a small number of vessels to land groundfish species in excess of cumulative trip limits and to sell a portion of the yellowtail rockfish for profit, providing the vessel carries a State sponsored observer. This EFP proposal is intended to promote the

objectives of the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) by providing data on gear selectivity and supporting a cooperative partnership to collect data to enhance management of the groundfish fishery.

**DATES:** Comments must be received by September 4, 2001.

**ADDRESSES:** ADDRESSES: Copies of the EFP application are available from Becky Renko, Northwest Region, NMFS, 7600 Sand Point Way N.E., Bldg. 1, Seattle, WA 98115-0070.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Becky Renko, 206-526-6140.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** This action is authorized by the FMP and implementing regulations at 50 CFR 600.745 and 50 CFR 660.350.

On June 13, 2001, NMFS received a joint EFP application from PMCC, CDF&G, and Kenyon Hensel, a commercial fisher. The primary purpose of the exempted fishing activity is to provide quantitative information that can be used to assess the selectivity of open access vertical hook-and-line and rod-and-reel gear used in the open access fishery off California. In addition, fishing under the EFP is expected to provide valuable information on at-sea catch monitoring aboard small groundfish vessels.

Fishing for yellowtail rockfish, an abundant and commercially important groundfish species, is constrained by efforts to rebuild canary rockfish, an overfished species. This is because the two species are typically caught together. Open access fishers who target yellowtail rockfish believe that the fishery can be prosecuted with a much lower rockfish bycatch rate than is currently assumed.

Under the current open access trip limits for canary rockfish, fishers are allowed to land up to 50 lb (23 kg) per month of canary rockfish and up to 100 lb (45 kg) per month of yellowtail rockfish. Because the applicants believe that the current limits are too restraining to conduct an assessment of gear selectivity, they are requesting that participating vessels be allowed to land up to 1,000 lb (454 kg) yellowtail rockfish per month. Up to 500 lb (227 kg) of the yellowtail rockfish landed per month could be sold for profit by the vessel. Any monthly yellowtail landings greater than 500 lb (227 kg) would be forfeited to the state of California. In addition, vessels would be required to retain all harvested rockfish species. Landings in excess of the applicable trip limits would be forfeited to the State of California.

If issued, this EFP would allow designated vessels to retain rockfish in excess of cumulative trip limits and would allow them to sell a portion of the yellowtail rockfish for profit. In addition to the 50-lb (23-kg) per month cumulative limit for canary rockfish, a canary sub-limit of 30 lb (14 kg) per trip would apply. The EFP would also provide for a state-run observer program in which observers collect: species composition and length/weight data, and information on fishing effort, gear configurations and fishing schedules. Without an EFP, groundfish regulations at 50 CFR 660.306 (f) restrict vessels from landing groundfish species or species groups in excess of trip limits.

Data collected during this project is expected to have a broader significance to the management of the groundfish fishery by providing: (1) Quantitative information necessary to evaluate the selectivity of vertical hook-and-line and rod-and-reel gear used by open access fishers; (2) catch composition data; (3) length and weight data from harvested catch that is otherwise not available, (4) information on the full retention of rockfish catch; and (5) valuable information on at-sea catch monitoring aboard small groundfish vessels.

If the EFP is issued, approximately 1-5 vessels are expected to fish under the EFP using vertical hook-and-line and rod-and-reel gear, from August to October 2001 and again from June to October 2002. The proposed fishing would initially occur in nearshore waters, 19-55 fathoms, off Crescent City, CA, but may be expanded into other areas depending on the number of participating vessels and the final sampling plan. With the exception of rockfish, landings of all other groundfish will be within the applicable trip limit limits for those species.

In accordance with regulations, NMFS has determined that the proposal warrants further consideration and has consulted with the Council. The Council considered the EFP application during its June 11-5, 2001, meeting in Burlingame, CA and supported approval of the application. A copy of the application is available for review from NMFS (see **ADDRESSES**). Based on the results of this EFP, this action may lead to future rulemaking.

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

Dated: July 26, 2001.

**Dean Swanson,**

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

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