

instrument and instructions should be directed to: Eric D. Prince, (305) 361-4248, eric.prince@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Abstract

According to the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), Atlantic white marlin has been severely overfished for several decades and the stock continues to decline. These unfortunate circumstances have prompted several conservation groups to petition NOAA Fisheries to list white marlin under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). One of the main objectives of the Atlantic Billfish Research Plan (http://www.sefsc.noaa.gov/PDFdocs/ABRP_01_30_04.pdf) is to develop better information for management and rebuilding of the stocks. This project is designed to investigate characteristics of the offshore recreational white marlin fishery, including identification of specific fishing techniques and potential variables that might be included in post-release survival experiments. Specific in-depth knowledge of fishing techniques is essential to evaluate recreational fishing impacts and to develop relevant research and management approaches to reduce mortality for this sector of the fishery.

Information will be obtained through a survey and complemented and confirmed by on-board observers in the Ocean City, Maryland area, which is known as the "White Marlin Capital of the World." The project will serve as a pilot program to develop and hone survey techniques and gain general acceptance for the survey through meetings, face-to-face dialogue and word of mouth. It is important to develop rapport with the boat captains and mates to obtain information on the methods and specific techniques used to catch white marlin, which might be closely guarded information. This work attempts to form a current and knowledgeable information source on which to base appropriate research and conservation measures relative to the U.S. recreational fishery for Atlantic white marlin.

II. Method of Collection

Paper applications, electronic reports, and telephone calls are required from participants, and methods of submittal include Internet and facsimile transmission of paper forms.

III. Data

OMB Number: None.

Form Number: None.

Type of Review: Regular submission.

Affected Public: Not-for-profit institutions and business or other for-profit organizations.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 500.

Estimated Time Per Response: 10 minutes.

Estimated Total Annual Burden Hours: 85.

Estimated Total Annual Cost to Public: \$0.

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: March 10, 2005.

Gwellnar Banks,

Management Analyst, Office of the Chief Information Officer.

[FR Doc. 05-5243 Filed 3-16-05; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Proposed Information Collection; Comment Request; Application for Commercial Fisheries Authorization Under Section 118 of the Marine Mammal Protection Act

AGENCY: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), DOC.

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 May 16, 2005.

ADDRESSES: Direct all written comments to Diana Hynek, Departmental Paperwork Clearance Officer, Department of Commerce, Room 6625, 14th and Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20230 (or via the Internet at dHynek@doc.gov).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Requests for additional information or copies of the information collection instrument and instructions should be directed to Patricia Lawson, (301) 713-2322 or Patricia.Lawson@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Abstract

The Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) requires any commercial fisher operating in Category I and II fisheries to register for a certificate of authorization that will allow the fisher to take marine mammals incidental to commercial fishing operations. Category I and II fisheries are those identified by NOAA as having either frequent or occasional takings of marine mammals.

Some States have integrated the NMFS registration process into the existing State fishery registration process and fishers in those fisheries do not need to file a separate Federal registration. If applicable, vessel owners will be notified of this simplified registration process when they apply for their State or Federal permit or license.

II. Method of Collection

Most fishers have their information imported directly into the MMAP from their State. Otherwise they can fill out the forms on NMFS' Web page or mail in application for exemption made available to them in the NMFS regions.

III. Data

OMB Number: 0648-0293.

Form Number: None.

Type of Review: Regular submission.

Affected Public: Business or other for-profit organizations, and individuals or households.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 12,000.

Estimated Time Per Response: 15 minutes.

Estimated Total Annual Burden Hours: 3,000 hours.

Estimated Total Annual Cost to Public: \$304,550.

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: March 10, 2005.

Gwellnar Banks,

Management Analyst, Office of the Chief Information Officer.

[FR Doc. 05-5244 Filed 3-16-05; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 031005C]

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, Northeast Region, NMFS (Assistant Regional Administrator) has made a preliminary determination that the subject Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) application contains all of the required information and warrants further consideration. The Assistant Regional Administrator has also made a preliminary determination that the activities authorized under the EFP would be consistent with the goals and objectives of the Northeast (NE) Multispecies Fishery Management Plan (FMP). However, further review and consultation may be necessary before a final determination is made to issue the EFP. Therefore, NMFS announces that the Assistant Regional Administrator proposes to issue an EFP that would allow vessels to conduct fishing operations that are otherwise restricted by the regulations governing the fisheries of the Northeastern United States. The EFP would allow for

exemptions from the NE multispecies year-round closure area restrictions and the NE multispecies Gulf of Maine (GOM) and Georges Bank (GB) hook gear restrictions. The applicant proposes to conduct a haddock tagging study to assess the movement of haddock between the GOM and GB stocks, western and eastern GB substocks, and across closure area boundaries. The EFP would allow these exemptions for up to 20 commercial vessels for a combined total of 30 trips. All experimental work would be monitored by Cape Cod Commercial Hook Fishermen's Association (CCCHFA) personnel. 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 EFPs.

DATES: Written comments must be received on or before March 31, 2005.

ADDRESSES: Written comments on this notice may be submitted by e-mail to: DA736@noaa.gov. Include in the subject line the following document identifier: "Comments on CCCHFA EFP Proposal for Haddock Tagging Study (DA-736)."

Written comments may also be mailed to: Patricia A. Kurkul, Regional Administrator, NMFS, Northeast Regional Office, 1 Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930. Mark the outside of the envelope "Comments on CCCHFA EFP Proposal for Haddock Tagging Study (DA-736)."

Comments may also be sent via fax to: (978) 281-9135.

Copies of the Environmental Assessment (EA) are available from the NE Regional Office at the mailing address specified above.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Peter Cooper, Fishery Management Specialist, phone: 978-281-9122, fax: 978-281-9135.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: An application for an EFP was submitted by CCCHFA, in collaboration with the Gulf of Maine Research Institute and the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC), on November 22, 2004. Modifications to the initial EFP application were received on February 25, 2005. The EFP would exempt 20 federally permitted commercial fishing vessels from the following requirements in the FMP: NE multispecies closed area restrictions specified at §§ 648.81(a), (b), (d), and (e) for the purpose of providing access to haddock stocks within GB Closed Area (CA) I, GB CA II, Cashes Ledge Closure Area (Cashes), and the Western Gulf of Maine Closure Area (WGOM); and the NE multispecies GOM hook gear restrictions specified at

§ 648.80(a)(3)(v) and GB hook gear restrictions specified at § 648.80(a)(4)(v), in order to allow fishing for the purposes of tagging viable fish without hook gear restrictions.

Researchers request that the study would be conducted from March 2005 through February 2006. Fishing would take place aboard a maximum of 20 different fishing vessels totaling 30 trips fishing under NE multispecies Category A days-at-sea (DAS). Only the most vigorous haddock caught would be tagged and released to maximize their chance of survival. It is estimated that 250 haddock would be tagged and released each trip. All legal catch not tagged would be landed and sold, consistent with the current daily and trip possession landing limits. NEFSC personnel would accompany researchers on trips and sample the ovaries of landed haddock for fecundity research. The NEFSC fecundity research is not included in the EFP because it would be conducted only on landed catch. NEFSC fecundity research began February 2005, within CA I under a separate scientific research permit (SRP) that also allows haddock tagging in CA I. The EFP would not provide exemptions from the Eastern U.S./Canada Management Area, should this area or portion of this area be closed due to attainment of the U.S./Canada total allowable catches of GB cod, haddock, or yellowtail flounder. Undersized fish would be returned to the sea as quickly as possible. The participating vessels would be required to report all landings in their Vessel Trip Reports.

The goal of this study is to assess haddock movement between stock areas and across closure area boundaries. The proposed project would test existing assumptions about haddock movement rates between the GOM and GB, haddock movement rates between the eastern and western GB regulated areas, and haddock movement rates in and out of the closure areas. Researchers propose to use benthic longline gear consisting of hooks with fabricated baits (Norbait or Trident) that target haddock and reduce cod bycatch. An estimated total of 7,500 Hallmark T-bar tags would be deployed in the closure areas as follows: CA I (53.3 percent of tags); CA II (13.3 percent of tags); WGOM (26.7 percent of tags); and Cashes (6.7 percent of tags). Researchers under this tagging study, would be allowed to catch a maximum of 94,470 lb (42,851 kg) of haddock and 3,149 lb (1,429 kg) of cod within the closure areas. Catch limits would reflect tagging effort in closure areas within GB (62,980 lb (28,568 kg) haddock; 1,575 lb (715 kg) cod) and within the GOM (31,490 lb (14,284 kg)