

are currently about 1,204 such permit holders and they all meet the Small Business Administration definition of small business entities.

The status quo (taking no action) means that the permit moratorium would expire, the fishery would revert to open access, and the number of permits issued to fishermen would likely increase. Conversely, the proposed action to extend the existing moratorium means that nothing would change and the permit moratorium, would continue. Under the status quo alternative, then there would be a number of economic effect changes related to the fishery's reversion to open access. For example, given that there were 2,200 permits issued to fishermen at the start of the moratorium in 1992 and that there are now only about 1,204 permits, it is likely that additional vessel owners would obtain permits. While some of them would probably obtain a permit with the intention only of establishing harvesting rights in the reef fish fishery and would not actively participate in the fishery, other new entrants would ostensibly be active. Some of the active new entrants might land a minimum quantity of reef fish with the expectation that having a permit in combination with at least some level of landings history would enhance their claim to future fishery access rights.

Another reason to expect additional entrants into the fishery under open access conditions is that the moratorium has created an economic situation in which about 120 permit transfers occur each year. A market has developed for reef fish permits, and recent single permit prices have been in the range of \$8,000 to \$10,000. This market probably exceeds the expected net present value of profits (net revenues) derived from the small catches made by marginal participants. The market value is also indicative of the value that some entrants have put on participation in the fishery. With the moratorium lifted, new entry would be possible by paying only the administrative permit fee, currently \$50 for a new permit or \$20 for a reef fish endorsement to an existing permit for another species. If some fishermen are willing to buy a permit for several thousand dollars, others must be ready to pay the \$20 or \$50 for an endorsement or for a new permit.

Further, at the present time, the fisherman giving up a permit by transfer must exit the fishery, and current exit behavior is probably influenced by the value of a permit. Logbook data indicate that some participants do not land a large amount of reef fish on an annual basis and these are the participants who are most likely to sell their existing permit to a new entrant under the continuing condition of a moratorium on new permits. The reasoning is that the expected net present value of profits (net revenues) derived from small catches would be exceeded by the current market value of the reef fish permit. This exit behavior probably accounts for the bulk of the annual transfer of about 120 permits.

In summary, maintaining the status quo and thereby allowing the current permit moratorium to expire could result in an increase in the number of permits; an increase in the catch of those reef fish species

not currently subject to a commercial catch quota; an unknown, but likely small, decrease in exvessel prices; and a loss of the estimated \$8,000 to \$10,000 market value of a permit. The result would be a negative economic impact on all current permit holders, including those who might otherwise be expected to sell their permits and exit the fishery under the current system.

At the same time, there would also be positive impacts for at least some new entrants because they could obtain a permit for \$20 to \$50 instead of paying \$8,000 to \$10,000 for an existing permit. Some new entrants probably would be able to participate in the fishery at a significant and profitable level. In addition to these rather straightforward impacts on current participants and new entrants, the increase in the number of permitted fishermen could create derby fisheries for species subject to commercial quotas with the attendant loss in economic benefits typically associated with such fisheries.

By allowing the fishery to revert to open access, the Council would once again have to undertake the preliminary steps necessary to establish a comprehensive controlled access system. It is likely that these steps would have negative economic impacts on at least some participants who may have to reestablish a fishing history or take other steps to remain in the new system.

The overall conclusion is that if the status quo was chosen and the permit moratorium allowed to expire on December 31, 2000, there would be negative impacts on existing participants in the Gulf of Mexico reef fish fishery. While there would likely be some positive economic impacts for a portion of the new entrants, the negative impacts would be expected to exceed the positive impacts. Taking action to extend the moratorium means that the expected negative economic outcome of the status quo (letting the permit moratorium expire) will not occur. In other words, the proposed action of extending the moratorium for an additional 5 years will forestall economic changes and impacts associated with the status quo scenario. The effect of taking action in this case is to maintain the present permits system; hence, there should be no economic impacts. It follows, therefore, that there will not be a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small business entities.

As a result, a regulatory flexibility analysis was not prepared.

List of Subjects in 50 CFR Part 622

Fisheries, Fishing, Puerto Rico, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements, Virgin Islands.

Dated: March 13, 2000.

Andrew A. Rosenberg,
Deputy Assistant Administrator for Fisheries,
National Marine Fisheries Service.

For the reasons set out in the preamble, 50 CFR part 622 is proposed to be amended as follows:

PART 622—FISHERIES OF THE CARIBBEAN, GULF, AND SOUTH ATLANTIC

1. The authority citation for part 622 continues to read as follows:

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

2. In § 622.4, paragraph (m) introductory text is revised to read as follows:

§ 622.4 Permits and fees.

* * * * *

(m) *Moratorium on commercial vessel permits for Gulf reef fish.* The provisions of this paragraph (m) are applicable through December 31, 2005.

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[FR Doc. 00-6714 Filed 3-16-00; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 648

[Docket No. 000223051-0051-01; I.D. 020300A]

Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Deep-sea Red Crab Fishery; Correction

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

ACTION: Advance notice of proposed rulemaking; notice of a control date for the purposes of controlling entry in the deep-sea red crab fishery; correction.

SUMMARY: On March 1, 2000, NMFS published an announcement that it is considering, and is seeking public comment on, proposed rulemaking to control future access to the deep-sea red crab (*Chaceon quinquegens*) resource if a management regime is developed and implemented under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act that limits the number of participants in the fishery. The announcement indicated that written comments may be sent to the New England Fishery Management Council at the address provided in the announcement and may also be submitted by facsimile (fax). However, an incorrect fax number was provided. This document corrects the error.

DATES: Written comments must be received on or before 5:00 p.m., local time, March 31, 2000.

ADDRESSES: Written comments should be sent to Paul J. Howard, Executive Director, New England Fishery

Management Council, 50 Water Street, Mill 2, Newburyport, MA 01950. Mark the outside of the envelope, "Comments on Deep-sea Red Crab Control Date." Comments may also be sent via fax to (978) 465-3116.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Regina L. Spallone, Fishery Policy Analyst, 978-281-9221, email: regina.l.spallone@noaa.gov

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The notice of a control date for the purposes of controlling entry in the deep-sea red

crab fishery was published in the **Federal Register** on March 1, 2000 (65 FR 11029), and invited public comment. The fax number identified in the announcement was incorrect and this action corrects the error.

Correction

Accordingly, the publication on March 1, 2000, of the advance notice of proposed rule for the deep-sea red crab fishery (I.D. 020300A), which was the subject of FR Doc. 00-4910, is corrected as follows:

On page 11029, column 3, ninth line in the **ADDRESSES** section is corrected to read as follows:

"facsimile (fax) to (978) 465-3116."

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

Dated: March 9, 2000.

Penelope D. Dalton,

*Assistant Administrator for Fisheries,
National Marine Fisheries Services.*

[FR Doc. 00-6715 Filed 3-16-00; 8:45 am]

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