

North Carolina Aquariums (applicant), Raleigh, North Carolina. If granted, the EFP would authorize the applicant, with certain conditions, to collect up to 60 red porgy and up to 500 lb (227 kg) of coral/live rock each year for 2 years in Federal waters off North Carolina for public display. The three North Carolina Aquariums are located at Roanoke Island, Pine Knoll Shores, and Kure Beach, North Carolina.

DATES: Comments must be received no later than 5 p.m., eastern standard time, on November 1, 2000.

ADDRESSES: Comments on the application must be mailed to Peter Eldridge, Southeast Regional Office, NMFS, 9721 Executive Center Drive N., St. Petersburg, FL 33702. Comments also may be sent via fax to 727-570-5583. Comments will not be accepted if submitted via e-mail or Internet. The application and related documents are available for review upon written request to the same address.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Peter Eldridge, 727-570-5305; fax 727-570-5583; e-mail: peter.eldridge@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The EFP is requested under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*), and regulations at 50 CFR 600.745(b) concerning exempted fishing.

According to the applicant, the North Carolina Aquariums (NCA), located at Roanoke Island, Pine Knoll Shores, and Kure Beach, are public, non-profit, self-supporting institutions established to promote an awareness, understanding, and appreciation of the diverse natural and cultural resources associated with North Carolina's ocean, estuaries, rivers, streams and other aquatic environments. The aquariums are major educational and conservation institutions with free admission to school children in groups and extensive field study and outreach programs. The specimens will be maintained in the NCA for public display.

The applicant intends to collect for public display up to 60 red porgy during a 2-year period and up to 500 lb (227 kg) of coral/live rock annually during a 2-year period.

The proposed collection for public display involves activities otherwise prohibited by regulations implementing the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Coral, Coral Reefs, and Live/Hard Bottom Habitats, and the FMP for the Snapper-Grouper Fisheries of the South Atlantic Region. The applicant requires authorization to harvest and possess

corals, live rock, and red porgy taken from Federal waters off North Carolina.

Based on a preliminary review, NMFS finds that this application warrants further consideration and intends to issue an EFP. A final decision on issuance of the EFP will depend on a NMFS review of public comments received on the application, conclusions of environmental analyses conducted pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act, and consultations with North Carolina, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, and the U.S. Coast Guard. The applicant requests a 24-month effective period for the EFP.

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

Dated: September 26, 2000.

Bruce C. Morehead,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Telecommunications and Information Administration

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Patent and Trademark Office

[Docket No. 000718211-0211-01]

RIN 0651-AB24

Study of Alternative Fee Structures

AGENCY: United States Patent and Trademark Office, Commerce.

SUMMARY: The United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO), in response to certain provisions of the "American Inventors Protection Act of 1999," is

proposing to study alternative patent fee structures to determine how best to encourage maximum participation of the U.S. inventor community in the patent system. In examining the evolution of the current fee structure, the USPTO has identified several fee structure issues which it considers important. These issues in several cases involve fee structures unconstrained by current statutory requirements, in keeping with the perceived intent of the Act. The agency will prepare a report to Congress identifying critical fee structure issues and will continue to evaluate these alternatives to determine the effects of implementation. The USPTO asks for comments on the issues raised and questions posed in this document.

DATES: To be ensured of consideration, written comments must be received on or before October 31, 2000. No public hearing will be held.

ADDRESSES: Comments should be sent by electronic mail message via the Internet addressed to barry.riordan@uspto.gov. Comments may also be submitted by mail addressed to: Office of Corporate Planning, Crystal Park One, Suite 807, Washington, D.C. 20231, or by facsimile to (703) 305-8138, marked to the attention of Barrett J. Riordan. If comments are submitted by mail, the Office would prefer that the comments be submitted on a DOS formatted 3½ inch disk accompanied by a paper copy.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Barrett J. Riordan by telephone at (703) 305-8475, by e-mail at barry.riordan@uspto.gov, by facsimile at (703) 305-8138, or by mail marked to his attention and addressed to Office of Corporate Planning, Crystal Park 1, Suite 807, Washington, D.C. 20231.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The American Inventors Protection Act of 1999, Pub. L. 106-113, 113 Stat. 1501 (1999), Section 4204 (enacted November 29, 1999), instructs the Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office to "conduct a study of alternative fee structures that could be adopted * * * to encourage maximum participation by the inventor community in the United States." Such study is to be submitted to Congress no later than one year after enactment.

To assist in the preparation of this study, the USPTO requests comments on the range of topics which could potentially be considered therein. The USPTO is interested in comments that the public has regarding these and other related fee issues that the respondent believes to be appropriate. The USPTO encourages interested persons to