

Act (16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*) and/or the Atlantic Tunas Convention Act (16 U.S.C. 971 *et seq.*). Regulations at 50 CFR 600.745 and 50 CFR 635.32 govern scientific research activity, exempted fishing, and exempted educational activity with respect to Atlantic HMS.

Several operators of permitted Atlantic pelagic longline vessels have requested exemptions from certain regulations applicable to the harvest and landing of Highly Migratory Species (HMS) in order to conduct bycatch reduction research in the following regions of the Atlantic Ocean: North of Cape Hatteras, South of Cape Hatteras, and Gulf of Mexico (GOM). Specifically, the permitted pelagic longline vessels propose to test gear modifications and/or various fishing techniques to avoid incidentally-caught white marlin, blue marlin, bluefin tuna, and sea turtles, while allowing for the targeted catches of allowed species.

Research experiments will be carried out, to the extent practicable, within open fishing areas. However, due to statistical protocols to demonstrate the effectiveness of gear modifications it may be necessary to conduct comparison experiments inside of existing closed areas. Restricted access within existing closed areas has been proposed by the applicants as terms and conditions of the proposed research in order to minimize or eliminate the potential for gear and/or fishing grounds conflicts. Within the GOM region, two pelagic longline vessels propose to conduct 100 compensated bycatch reduction fishing sets (approximately 750 hooks/set) during a limited time period (May through October). Within the North of Cape Hatteras region, two pelagic longline vessels propose to conduct 50 compensated bycatch reduction fishing sets (approximately 680 hooks/set) during a limited time period (May, June, and July). Within the South of Cape Hatteras region, two pelagic longline vessels propose to conduct 50 compensated bycatch reduction fishing sets (approximately 556 hooks/set) during a limited time period (October through December).

This research may benefit all interested parties by providing fishery managers with additional gear modifications and/or fishing techniques that reduce or avoid incidental capture/bycatch mortality of highly migratory species (HMS) in the research areas as proposed above.

The regulations that would prohibit the proposed activities include requirements for size limits (50 CFR 635.20) and gear operation and deployment (50 CFR 635.21).

NMFS invites comments from interested parties on potential concerns should these EFPs be issued.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 971 *et seq.* and 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: August 13, 2004.

Alan D. Risenhoover,
Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.
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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 081604B]

Endangered Species; File No. 1494

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

ACTION: Receipt of application.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that St. George's School, P.O. Box 1910, Newport, RI, 02840, has applied in due form for a permit to take green (*Chelonia mydas*), loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*), hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricata*), and Kemp's ridley (*Lepidochelys kempii*) sea turtles for purposes of scientific research.

DATES: Written, telefaxed, or e-mail comments must be received on or before September 20, 2004.

ADDRESSES: The application and related documents are available for review upon written request or by appointment in the following office(s):

Permits, Conservation and Education Division, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13705, Silver Spring, MD 20910; phone (301)713-2289; fax (301)713-0376; and Southeast Region, NMFS, 9721 Executive Center Drive North, St. Petersburg, FL 33702-2432; phone (727)570-5301; fax (727)570-5320.

Written comments or requests for a public hearing on this application should be mailed to the Chief, Permits, Conservation and Education Division, F/PR1, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13705, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Those individuals requesting a hearing should set forth the specific reasons why a hearing on this particular request would be appropriate.

Comments may also be submitted by facsimile at (301)713-0376, provided the facsimile is confirmed by hard copy submitted by mail and postmarked no

later than the closing date of the comment period.

Comments may also be submitted by e-mail. The mailbox address for providing email comments is *NMFS.Pr1Comments@noaa.gov*. Include in the subject line of the e-mail comment the following document identifier: File No. 1494.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Patrick Opay or Jennifer Skidmore, (301)713-2289.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The subject permit is requested under the authority of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA; 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*) and the regulations governing the taking, importing, and exporting of endangered and threatened species (50 CFR 222-226).

The applicant proposes to capture, weigh, measure, flipper tag, tissue sample and release 50 loggerhead, 5 green, 5 hawksbill, 5 Kemp's ridley sea turtles. Animals would be captured by dip net or by hand from the waters of the western Atlantic Ocean. The applicant also proposes to import tissue samples from each of these species taken legally during separate research being conducted in the waters of the Bahamas. The purpose of the research conducted under Permit No. 1494 would be to obtain life history and growth rate data on these species. Information from this study would be used to help determine migratory behavior and habitat utilization of sea turtles. The results of this study would provide a better understanding of the migratory demographics for constructing models that can then be used to better formulate species management plans.

Dated: August 16, 2004.

Stephen L. Leathery,
Chief, Permits, Conservation and Education Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 04-19167 Filed 8-19-04; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[Docket No. 040812237-4237-01]

NOAA Five-Year Research Plan Draft and NOAA Twenty-Year Research Vision Draft

AGENCY: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce.

ACTION: Notice and Request for Public Comment.