

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: April 30, 2012.

Gwellnar Banks,

Management Analyst, Office of the Chief Information Officer.

[FR Doc. 2012-10722 Filed 5-3-12; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Proposed Information Collection; Comment Request; Southeast Region Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) and Related Requirements

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

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 July 3, 2012.

ADDRESSES: Direct all written comments to Jennifer Jessup, Departmental Paperwork Clearance Officer, Department of Commerce, Room 6616, 14th and Constitution Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20230 (or via the Internet at Jjessup@doc.gov).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Requests for additional information or copies of the information collection instrument and instructions should be directed to Anik Clemens, (727) 551-5611 or Anik.Clemens@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Abstract

The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) authorizes the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) to prepare and amend fishery management plans for any fishery in

waters under its jurisdiction. National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) manages the reef fish fishery in the waters of the Gulf of Mexico under the Reef Fish Fishery Management Plan (FMP). The vessel monitoring system (VMS) regulations for the Gulf reef fish fishery may be found at 50 CFR 622.9.

The Reef Fish Fishery Management Plan contains several area-specific regulations where fishing is restricted or prohibited in order to protect habitat or spawning aggregations, or to reduce fishing pressure in areas that are heavily fished. Unlike size, bag, and trip limits, where the catch can be monitored onshore when a vessel returns to port, area restrictions require at-sea enforcement. However, at-sea enforcement of offshore area restrictions is difficult due to the distance from shore and the limited number of patrol vessels, resulting in a need to improve enforceability of area fishing restrictions through remote sensing methods. In addition, all fishing gears are subject to some area fishing restrictions. Because of the sizes of these areas and the distances from shore, the effectiveness of enforcement through over flights and at-sea interception is limited. An electronic VMS allows a more effective means to monitor vessels for intrusions into restricted areas.

The VMS provides effort data and significantly aids in enforcement of areas closed to fishing. All position reports are treated in accordance with NMFS existing guidelines for confidential data. As a condition of authorized fishing for or possession of Reef Fish in or from the Gulf of Mexico Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), a vessel owner or operator subject to the requirements for a VMS in this section must allow NMFS, the United States Coast Guard (USCG), and their authorized officers and designees, access to the vessel's position data obtained from the VMS.

The currently approved reporting requirements are being renewed without change. The burden estimates, however, have changed due to adjustments. There are more vessels with VMS onboard and a larger number of transfers in which the new permit holder obtains a new vessel; therefore, start-up costs (purchase and installation of VMS units) will increase.

II. Method of Collection

Respondents have a choice of either electronic or paper forms. Methods of submittal include email of electronic forms, and mail and facsimile transmission of paper forms.

III. Data

OMB Control Number: 0648-0544.

Form Number: None.

Type of Review: Regular submission (extension of a currently approved information collection).

Affected Public: Business or other for-profit organizations.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 905.

Estimated Time per Response: Installation of VMS, 4 hours; installation and activation checklist, 15 minutes; power-down exemption requests, 5 minutes; transmission of position reports, 1 second; and annual maintenance, 2 hours.

Estimated Total Annual Burden Hours: 2,380.

Estimated Total Annual Cost to Public: \$911,567 in start-up transfer costs, operations and maintenance costs.

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: April 30, 2012.

Gwellnar Banks,

Management Analyst, Office of the Chief Information Officer.

[FR Doc. 2012-10738 Filed 5-3-12; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XC014

Marine Mammals; File No. 15777

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

ACTION: Notice; receipt of application.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that NMFS Northeast Fisheries Science Center, Woods Hole, MA (Responsible Party: Michael Simpkins), has applied in due form for a permit to take marine mammals during scientific research in coastal waters and adjacent waters off the northeast U.S.

DATES: Written, telefaxed, or email comments must be received on or before June 4, 2012.

ADDRESSES: The application and related documents are available for review by selecting "Records Open for Public Comment" from the *Features* box on the Applications and Permits for Protected Species (APPS) home page, <https://apps.nmfs.noaa.gov>, and then selecting File No. 15777 from the list of available applications.

These documents are also available upon written request or by appointment in the following offices:

Permits and Conservation Division, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13705, Silver Spring, MD 20910; phone (301) 427-8401; fax (301) 713-0376;

Northeast Region, NMFS, 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930; phone (978) 281-9328; fax (978) 281-9394; and

Southeast Region, NMFS, 263 13th Avenue South, Saint Petersburg, FL 33701; phone (727) 824-5312; fax (727) 824-5309.

Written comments on this application should be submitted to the Chief, Permits and Conservation Division, at the address listed above. Comments may also be submitted by facsimile to (301) 713-0376, or by email to NMFS.Pr1Comments@noaa.gov. Please include the File No. in the subject line of the email comment.

Those individuals requesting a public hearing should submit a written request to the Chief, Permits and Conservation Division at the address listed above. The request should set forth the specific reasons why a hearing on this application would be appropriate.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Tammy Adams or Amy Sloan, (301) 427-8401.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The subject permit is requested under the authority of the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, as amended (MMPA; 16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*), and the regulations governing the taking and importing of marine mammals (50 CFR part 216).

The applicant requests a five-year permit to take harbor seals (*Phoca vitulina concolor*), gray seals (*Halichoerus grypus*), harp seals (*Pagophilus groenlandicus*), and hooded

seals (*Cystophora cristata*) during conduct of research to estimate distribution and abundance, determine stock structure and habitat requirements, study foraging ecology, assess health and determine the effects of natural and anthropogenic factors on these seal species. Types of take include harassment during shipboard, skiff, and aircraft transect and photo-identification surveys, and scat collection; and capture with tissue sampling and instrument or tag attachment. The applicant proposes to capture up to 175 harbor seals and 225 gray seals annually for measurement of body condition, collection of tissue samples (e.g., blood, blubber biopsy, skin, hair, swab samples, vibrissae), and attachment of telemetry devices. Up to 200 harp seals, 50 hooded seals, and an additional 18,000 harbor seals and 20,000 gray seals could be harassed annually incidental to surveys, scat collections and capture operations. The applicant requests unintentional mortality of up to 3 animals of each species annually. Permission is also sought to import and export pinniped specimen material (including soft and hard tissue, blood, extracted DNA, and whole dead animals or parts thereof) to/from any country. The study area includes waters within or proximal to the U.S. EEZ from North Carolina northward to Maine, and Canadian waters in the Gulf of Maine.

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), an initial determination has been made that the activity proposed is categorically excluded from the requirement to prepare an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement.

Dated: May 1, 2012.

Tammy C. Adams,

Acting Chief, Permits and Conservation Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XB114

Notice of Availability of Draft Documents for Public Comment Related to a Fishery Conservation Plan and Research Permits for the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and

Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice; reopening of comment period.

SUMMARY: NMFS is reopening the comment period for a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) and Fishery Conservation Plan (Plan) related to scientific research and fisheries management measures in waters of the Puget Sound/Georgia Basin, Washington.

DATES: Written comments on the draft EA and proposed Plan and associated applications must be received on or before May 11, 2012.

ADDRESSES: Address all written comments to: Dan Tonnes, National Marine Fisheries Service, 7600 Sand Point Way NE., Building Number 1, Seattle, WA 98115-6349, facsimile (206) 526-6426. Comments may be submitted by email to the following address: WDFWEA.nwr@noaa.gov. In the subject line of the email, include the Document identifier: WDFWEA. Comments and materials received will be available for public inspection, by appointment, during normal business hours at the office listed in the **ADDRESSES** section of this notice.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dan Tonnes, National Marine Fisheries Service, 7600 Sand Point Way NE., Building Number 1, Seattle, WA 98115-6349, facsimile (206) 526-6426, phone (206) 526-4643, email: Dan.Tonnes@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

NMFS published a document in the **Federal Register** on March 30, 2012, concerning the availability of a draft documents for public comment related to a Fishery Conservation Plan and Research Permits for the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife. The comment period for this action expired on April 23, 2012. The comment period is being reopened to provide additional opportunity for public comment.

Reopening of Comment Period

The comment period is reopened through May 11, 2012.

Document Availability

The documents are available electronically on the World Wide Web at <http://www.nwr.noaa.gov>.