

Conservation Plan

NCDMF's conservation plan describes measures to minimize, monitor, and mitigate the incidental take of ESA-listed sea turtles and sturgeon. The conservation plan includes gill net fisheries operating in estuarine waters and deploying anchored gill nets as regulated through fisheries rules adopted by the North Carolina Marine Fisheries Commission and proclamations issued by the NCDMF director. Regulations include mandatory net attendance, yardage limits, mesh size restrictions, a minimum distance between fishing operations, gear marking requirements, soak-time restrictions, net shot limits, net height tie-down requirements, closed areas, and monitoring and reporting requirements. The conservation plan includes an adaptive management and monitoring program, fisheries reduction, outreach, and timely response to "hotspots" where sturgeon and/or sea turtle interactions are unusually high.

Additionally, NCDMF will commit funds of up to \$2,000 per year to purchase PIT tags, which equates to approximately 100 tags per year. This number exceeds the average number of live Atlantic Sturgeon observed during ITP years 2013 through 2021 and should ensure that sturgeon in condition fit for tagging are PIT tagged unless poor maritime conditions make tagging infeasible. As part of the Observer Program sampling protocol, fin clips are taken from live and dead sturgeon. These samples are stored until they can be submitted for genetic analysis and included in the sturgeon genetics repository currently housed at the Atlantic Coast Sturgeon Tissue Research Repository (ACSTRR) at the Leetown Science Center. The NCDMF will commit up to \$3,000 per year to fund genetic analysis; at approximately \$100 per sample, this funding provides for the analysis of approximately 30 fin clips per year. The NCDMF will consult with NMFS to ensure samples collected during the current ITP and future samples collected under the requested ITP are appropriately selected based on criteria such as sturgeon length, location, and season. Should fewer than 30 fin clips be collected for a given year, any funds not expended from this allocation could be used for analysis of historical samples provided by NCDMF.

Research is also a valuable tool to address data gaps and inform research needs. The assistance and cooperation of commercial fishery stakeholders in the research can greatly benefit these projects. The NCDMF will continue to support and assist research efforts and

facilitate the establishment of relationships with the commercial fishing industry. The NCDMF will also help, to the extent possible, respond to cold-stun events that occur in NC with some regularity. During future events, NCDMF will help provide transportation of staff, supplies, and turtles using Observer Program staff, vehicles, and vessels. NCDMF will communicate with the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission about this commitment to ensure they reach out for assistance when needed.

NCDMF's monitoring program is largely funded through state appropriations and is supplemented through other sources such as the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

NCDMF considered and rejected three other alternatives: (1) No-Action; (2) Full Gear Closure; and (3) Additional Gear Regulations.

National Environmental Policy Act

Issuing an ESA section 10(a)(1)(B) permit constitutes a Federal action requiring NMFS to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA; 42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*) as implemented by 40 CFR parts 1500–1508 and NOAA Administrative Order 216–6, Environmental Review Procedures for Implementing the National Policy Act (1999). NMFS intends to prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) to consider a range of reasonable alternatives and fully evaluate the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts likely to result from issuing a permit. Once a draft of the EA is complete it will be made available for public review and comment. The final NEPA and permit determinations will not be made until after the end of that comment period.

Next Steps

This notice is provided pursuant to section 10(c) of the ESA. NMFS will evaluate the application, associated documents, and comments received during the comment period to determine whether the application meets the requirements of section 10(a) of the ESA. If NMFS determines that the requirements are met, a permit will be issued for incidental take of ESA-listed sea turtles and sturgeon. NMFS will publish a record of its final action in the **Federal Register**.

Dated: December 16, 2022.

Angela Somma,

Chief, Endangered Species Conservation Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 2022–27799 Filed 12–21–22; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–22–P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**Patent and Trademark Office**

[Docket No.: PTO–P–2021–0037]

Fifth Extension of the Modified COVID–19 Prioritized Examination Pilot Program for Patent Applications

AGENCY: United States Patent and Trademark Office, Department of Commerce.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: To continue to support the acceleration of innovations in the fight against COVID–19 during the public health emergency, the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO or Office) is extending the modified COVID–19 Prioritized Examination Pilot Program, which provides prioritized examination of certain patent applications. Requests that are compliant with the pilot program's requirements and are filed on or before February 15, 2023, will be accepted. The USPTO will evaluate whether to further extend the program during this extension period.

DATES: The COVID–19 Prioritized Examination Pilot Program is extended as of December 22, 2022, to run until February 15, 2023.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Raul Tamayo, Senior Legal Advisor, Office of Patent Legal Administration (571–272–77285, raul.tamayo@uspto.gov).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: In 2020, the USPTO published a notice on the implementation of the COVID–19 Prioritized Examination Pilot Program. See COVID–19 Prioritized Examination Pilot Program, 85 FR 28932 (May 14, 2020) (COVID–19 Track One Notice). The pilot program was implemented to support the acceleration of innovations in the fight against COVID–19. The COVID–19 Track One Notice indicated that an applicant may request prioritized examination without payment of the prioritized examination fee and associated processing fee if: (1) the patent application's claim(s) covered a product or process related to COVID–19, (2) the product or process was subject to an applicable Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval for COVID–19 use, and (3) the applicant

met other requirements noted in the COVID-19 Track One Notice.

Since the COVID-19 Track One Notice, the USPTO has modified the pilot program by removing the limit on the number of patent applications that could receive prioritized examination and extending the pilot program four times through notices published in the **Federal Register**. The most recent notice (87 FR 38714, June 29, 2022) extended the program until December 31, 2022.

As of December 6, 2022, 353 patents had issued from applications granted prioritized status under the pilot program. The average total pendency, from filing date or later submission of a request for continued examination to issue date, for those applications was 348 days. The shortest pendency from filing date to issue date for those applications was 75 days.

The USPTO is further extending the pilot program by setting the expiration date as February 15, 2023. The Office will continue to monitor the state of the current public health emergency and evaluate whether to further extend the program. If the USPTO determines that an additional extension of the pilot program is appropriate, the Agency will publish a subsequent notice to the public.

Unless the pilot program is further extended by a subsequent notice, following the expiration of this extension, the pilot program will be terminated in favor of the Office dedicating its resources to its other prioritized examination programs. Patent applicants interested in expediting the prosecution of their patent application may instead seek to use the Prioritized Examination (Track One) Program. Patent applications accorded prioritized examination under the pilot program will not lose that status merely because the application is still pending after the date the pilot program is terminated but will instead retain prioritized examination status until that status is terminated for one or more reasons, as described in the COVID-19 Track One Notice.

The Track One Program permits an applicant to have a patent application advanced out of turn (accorded special status) for examination under 37 CFR 1.102(e) if the applicant timely files a request for prioritized (Track One) examination accompanied by the appropriate fees and meets the other conditions of 37 CFR 1.102(e). See § 708.02(b)(2) of the Manual of Patent Examining Procedure (9th ed., rev. 10.2019, June 2020). The current USPTO fee schedule is available at www.uspto.gov/Fees.

The Track One Program does not have the restrictions of the COVID-19 Prioritized Examination Pilot Program regarding the types of inventions for which special status may be sought, as the Track One Program does not require a connection to any particular technology. Moreover, under the Track One Program, an applicant can avoid delays associated with the determination of whether a patent application presents a claim that covers a product or process related to COVID-19 and whether the product or process is subject to an applicable FDA approval for COVID-19 use.

Katherine K. Vidal,

Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property and Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office.

[FR Doc. 2022-27795 Filed 12-21-22; 8:45 am]

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U.S. INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT FINANCE CORPORATION

[DFC-008]

Submission for OMB Review; Comments Request

AGENCY: U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC).

ACTION: Notice of information collection; request for comment.

SUMMARY: Under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act, agencies are required to publish a Notice in the **Federal Register** notifying the public that the agency is modifying an existing information collection for OMB review and approval and requests public review and comment on the submission. The agencies received no comments in response to the sixty (60) day notice. The purpose of this notice is to allow an additional thirty (30) days for public comments to be submitted. Comments are being solicited on the need for the information; the accuracy of the burden estimate; the quality, practical utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and ways to minimize reporting the burden, including automated collected techniques and uses of other forms of technology.

DATES: Comments must be received by January 23, 2023.

ADDRESSES: Comments and requests for copies of the subject information collection may be sent by any of the following methods:

- *Mail:* Deborah Papadopoulos, Agency Submitting Officer, U.S. International Development Finance Corporation, 1100 New York Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20527.

- *Email:* fedreg@dfc.gov.

Instructions: All submissions received must include the agency name and agency form number or OMB form number for this information collection. Electronic submissions must include the agency form number in the subject line to ensure proper routing. Please note that all written comments received in response to this notice will be considered public records.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Agency Submitting Officer: Deborah Papadopoulos, (202) 357-3979.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The agency received no comments in response to the sixty (60) day notice published in **Federal Register** volume 87 page 59065 on September 29, 2022. Upon publication of this notice, DFC will submit to OMB a request for approval of the following information collection.

SUMMARY FORM UNDER REVIEW

Title of Collection: Development Outcomes Survey.

Type of Review: Revision of a currently approved information collection.

Agency Form Number: DFC-008.

OMB Form Number: 3015-0015.

Frequency: Once per DFC project per year.

Affected Public: Business or other for-profit; not-for-profit institutions; individuals.

Total Estimated Number of Annual Number of Respondents: 650.

Estimated Time per Respondent: 2 hours.

Total Estimated Number of Annual Burden Hours: 1,300 hours.

Abstract: The Development Outcomes Survey (DOS) is the principal document used by DFC to review development performance and monitor projects supported by DFC. It is a comprehensive survey that is also used to determine the project's compliance with environmental, labor, and economic policies, as consistent with DFC's authorizing legislation.

Dated December 16, 2022.

Nichole Skoyles,

Administrative Counsel, Office of the General Counsel.

[FR Doc. 2022-27744 Filed 12-21-22; 8:45 am]

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