

electronically to <https://meetings.npfmc.org/Meeting/Details/3114> or <https://meetings.npfmc.org/Meeting/Details/3115>.

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

Dated: December 11, 2025.

**Rey Israel Marquez,**

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

[FR Doc. 2025-22823 Filed 12-12-25; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3510-22-P**

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648-XF296]

### Magnuson-Stevens Act Provisions; General Provisions for Domestic Fisheries; Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act Provisions; Application for Exempted Fishing Permits

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

Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

#### ACTION: Notice; request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** The Assistant Regional Administrator for Sustainable Fisheries, Greater Atlantic Region, NMFS, has made a preliminary determination that an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) application contains all of the required information and warrants further consideration. The EFP would allow federally permitted fishing vessels to fish outside fishery regulations in support of exempted fishing activities proposed by the Maine Department of Marine Resources (ME DMR). Regulations under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act require publication of this notification to provide interested parties the opportunity to comment on applications for proposed EFPs.

**DATES:** Comments must be received on or before December 30, 2025.

**ADDRESSES:** You may submit written comments by email: [nmfs.gar.efp@noaa.gov](mailto:nmfs.gar.efp@noaa.gov)

[noaa.gov](http://noaa.gov). Include in the subject line “Maine lobster fishery-dependent offshore ventless and commercial trap research program”. All comments received are a part of the public record and may be posted for public viewing without change. All personal identifying information (e.g., name, address), confidential business information, or otherwise sensitive information submitted voluntarily by the sender will be publicly accessible. NMFS will accept anonymous comments (enter “anonymous” as the signature if you wish to remain anonymous).

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Elise Scholl, Fishery Management Specialist, [elise.scholl@noaa.gov](mailto:elise.scholl@noaa.gov), (978) 281-9189.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The applicant submitted a complete application for an EFP to conduct commercial fishing activities that the regulations would otherwise restrict. This EFP would exempt the participating vessels from the following Federal regulations:

TABLE 1—REQUESTED EXEMPTIONS

CFR citation	Regulation	Need for exemption
50 CFR 697.21(c) .....	Gear specification requirements.	To allow for closed escape vents and smaller trap mesh and entrance heads.
§ 697.19 (a–e) .....	Trap limit requirements .....	To allow for 3 additional traps per fishing vessel, for a total of up to 60 additional traps.
§ 697.19(j) .....	Trap tag requirements .....	To allow for the use of untagged traps (though each modified trap will have the participating fisherman’s identification attached).
§§ 697.20(a), 697.20(d), 697.20(g), and 697.20(h)(1) and (2).	Possession restrictions .....	To allow for onboard biological sampling of undersized, v-notched, and egg-bearing lobsters and undersized and egg-bearing Jonah crabs.

TABLE 2—PROJECT SUMMARY

Project title .....	Maine lobster fishery-dependent offshore ventless and commercial trap research program.
Project start .....	1/01/2026.
Project end .....	12/31/2026.
Project objectives .....	To conduct a survey, in partnership with the Commercial Fisheries Research Foundation (CFRF), to provide distribution, abundance, and biological data on juvenile lobsters and Jonah crabs from times and areas in Federal waters of the Gulf of Maine with low coverage from traditional surveys.
Project location .....	Gulf of Maine: Statistical Areas 511, 512, and 513.
Number of vessels .....	Up to 20.
Number of trips .....	Up to 36 per vessel; up to 720 total.
Trip duration (days) .....	Up to 3 days.
Total number of days .....	Up to 108 per vessel; up to 2,160 total.
Gear type(s) .....	Trap.
Number of tows or sets .....	1 per trip; up to 720 total.
Duration of tows or sets .....	7–10 days.

### Project Narrative

This project would contribute to the ongoing effort by the CFRF to collect data on juvenile lobster and Jonah crab abundance and distribution in areas and times of the year with low or no coverage by traditional surveys. This would be year two of an ongoing project

that received an EFP with the same exemptions in 2024.

The 2024 survey identified 10 harvesters to participate in the first year of the program and were included on the 2024 EFP. Of those, nine harvesters have been trained and have begun data collection from commercial and ventless

traps. There are currently 27 ventless traps deployed within Lobster Management Area 1, spanning statistical areas 511, 512 and 513. To date, there have been 224 sampling events from ventless traps. 145 trips have had sampling from either commercial or ventless gear. Within both commercial

and ventless traps, a total of 10,614 biological samples from lobsters and crabs have been recorded.

Year 2 of this project would expand the program to up to 20 federally-permitted Maine lobster vessels. Each vessel would fish with 3 modified, ventless traps designed to catch juvenile lobsters, totaling up to 60 modified traps. The ventless trap configuration is as follows: 40 inch length x 21 inch width x 14 inch height, single parlor, 1 inch square rubber-coated 12-gauge wire, standard shrimp mesh netting, cement runners, and 4 inch x 6 inch disabling door. The modified traps would adhere to the standard coastwide survey gear for lobster and Jonah crab set by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and would be fished with standard Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan-compliant trawls.

This study would take place during regular fishing activity of the participating vessels, but catch from the modified traps would remain separate from that of standard gear. Operators would collect data on size, sex, presence of eggs, and shell hardness for lobsters and Jonah crabs, and v-notch and shell disease for lobsters. Operators would return all specimens from modified gear to the ocean once sampling is complete.

The study is designed to inform management by addressing questions about changing reproduction and recruitment dynamics of lobster and to develop a foundation of knowledge for the data-deficient Jonah crab fishery. All data collected by the participants using the CFRF data collection app would be

sent to ME DMR for processing. ME DMR would then share final datasets with CFRF, to further share with the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program, the Northeast Fisheries Science Center, and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission.

If approved, the applicant may request minor modifications and extensions to the EFP throughout the year. EFP modifications and extensions may be granted without further notice if they are deemed essential to facilitate completion of the proposed research and have minimal impacts that do not change the scope or impact of the initially approved EFP request. Any fishing activity conducted outside the scope of the exempted fishing activity would be prohibited.

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

Dated: December 10, 2025.

**Kelly Denit,**

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

[FR Doc. 2025-22768 Filed 12-12-25; 8:45 am]

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648-XF361]

### Marine Mammals and Endangered Species

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

**ACTION:** Notice; issuance of permits and a permit amendment.

**SUMMARY:** Notice is hereby given that permits and a permit amendment have been issued under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) and the Endangered Species Act (ESA), as applicable.

**ADDRESSES:** The permits and related documents are available for review upon written request via email to [NMFS.Pr1Comments@noaa.gov](mailto:NMFS.Pr1Comments@noaa.gov).

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Jennifer Skidmore (File No. 28233), Sara Young (File Nos. 23858 and 28742), Erin Markin, Ph.D., (File No. 29122), and Shasta McClenahan, Ph.D., (File Nos. 29090 and 29152); at (301) 427-8401.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The requested permits and permit amendment have been issued under the MMPA of 1972, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*), the regulations governing the taking and importing of marine mammals (50 CFR part 216), the ESA of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*), and the regulations governing the taking, importing, and exporting of endangered and threatened species (50 CFR parts 222-226), as applicable. Notices were published in the **Federal Register** on the dates listed below that permit requests had been submitted. To locate the **Federal Register** notice that announced our receipt of the application and a complete description of the activities, go to <https://www.federalregister.gov> and search for the file number provided in table 1 below.

TABLE 1—ISSUED PERMITS AND PERMIT AMENDMENTS

File No.	Version No.	RTID	Applicant	Previous <b>Federal Register</b> notice	Issuance date
23858 ..	01 .....	0648-XA919	NMFS' Marine Mammal Laboratory, 7600 Sand Point Way NE, Seattle, WA 98115 (Responsible Party: John Bengtson, Ph.D.).	86 FR 13700, March 10, 2021.	November 19, 2025.
28223 ..	N/A .....	0648-XE619	Clearwater Marine Aquarium, 249 Windward Passage, Clearwater, FL 33767 (Responsible Party: Joe Handy).	90 FR 7661, January 22, 2025.	November 18, 2025.
28742 ..	N/A .....	0648-XE876	Institute of Marine Sciences, University of California at Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz, CA 95064 (Responsible Party: Roxanne Beltran, Ph.D.).	90 FR 38466, August 8, 2025	November 20, 2025.
29090 ..	N/A .....	0648-XF186	Mark Clementz, Ph.D., University of Wyoming, 1000 East University Avenue, Laramie, WY 82071.	90 FR 45022, September 18, 2025.	November 21, 2025.
29122 ..	N/A .....	0648-XF119	Pacific Whale Foundation, 300 Ma'alaea Road, Suite 211, Wailuku, HI 26793 (Responsible Party: Selket Kaufman).	90 FR 42232, August 29, 2025.	November 20, 2025.
29152 ..	N/A .....	0648-XF221	Adam Gilbertsen, University of Minnesota, 689 23rd Avenue SE, MRF Room 1-151, Minneapolis, MN 55455.	90 FR 46565, September 29, 2025.	November 26, 2025.

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

As required by the ESA, as applicable, issuance of these permits was based on a finding that such permits: (1) were applied for in good faith; (2) will not operate to the disadvantage of such endangered species; and (3) are consistent with the purposes and policies set forth in section 2 of the ESA.

Dated: December 10, 2025.

**Shannon Bettridge,**

*Chief, Marine Mammal and Sea Turtle Conservation Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.*

[FR Doc. 2025-22753 Filed 12-12-25; 8:45 am]

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