

National Marine Fisheries Report Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan Activities

Clearance of Data Collection Elements Contained in the HMS FMP Final Rule

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) announced clearance of the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) request for the data collection elements contained in the HMS FMP final rule. The announcement was published in Federal Register on February 10, 2005 (70FR7022) and contains a 60 day wait period before becoming effective on April 11, 2005. After April 11, logbooks, permits, and observer requirements, as well as several other mandatory management measures will be required as specified under the HMS FMP final rule.

Status of HMS Permit Issuance

NOAA Fisheries Service has mailed out over 1,000 HMS Permit applications to a comprehensive list of vessel owners who have been identified as participants in U.S. West Coast HMS commercial and recreational charter fisheries. Completed applications are being processed and HMS permits will be mailed out shortly. Application requests have been received, and packets mailed out, for several new entrants as well as current HMS vessel owners who were not on the original mail out list. HMS Permit applications can be obtained by calling 562 980-4034 or by downloading from the NOAA Fisheries Southwest Region website at: <http://swr.nmfs.noaa.gov>. We welcome hearing from HMS vessel owners that may have been overlooked in this initial notification process.

Status of HMS Observer Sampling Plan and Expected Coverage Levels

Per Council recommendation, and by way of a NOAA Fisheries grant, a final report entitled "Recommendations for U.S. West Coast Highly Migratory Species Observer Programs with Options for Levels of Significance" has been submitted to NOAA Fisheries. The report is currently undergoing in-house review at the Region and Science Center level and will be delivered to the HMS Management Team at the next scheduled meeting.

Funding for observing HMS gear types in FY 05 has been secured as part of the Region's Observer Program Budget. The FY 05 observer placements will be coordinated in close cooperation with industry as part of a "pilot" program designed to gather needed data for under-observed sectors. Final decisions on HMS observer coverage by gear type will be deliberated and decided in close cooperation with the Council and co-managers with the states.

Several voluntary albacore troll observer trips have been completed thanks to assistance by the albacore troll fishermen and industry representatives.

HMS FMP Voluntary Informational Port Meetings

NOAA Fisheries Service, in consultation with state fishery representatives and several HMS Advisory Subpanel members, will be scheduling a series of Voluntary Informational Meetings at strategic HMS West Coast ports during the months of April and May. The meeting dates and

times will be published in the Federal Register and through local media and industry information outlets. The meetings will be held at key ports in California, Oregon, and Washington to provide participants an opportunity to receive answers to questions regarding implementation of the HMS FMP. In addition, NOAA Fisheries will hold a series of mandatory skipper workshops at selected sites for vessel owners and captains required to possess a Marine Mammal Certification under the MMPA.

A tentative list of port sites for the meetings include: Westport, Washington.; Newport, Coos Bay, and Astoria, Oregon; Eureka, Monterey, Morro Bay, Santa Barbara, Long Beach, and San Diego, California. The expanded number of California port sites is required to cover the mandatory Skipper Education Workshops for HNS Drift Gillnet Marine Mammal Certifications.

HMS FMP Small Entity Compliance Guide

As required under Section 212 of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act of 1996, NOAA Fisheries has prepared a Small Entity Compliance Guide that provides guidance on the rules and regulations contained in the HMS FMP final rule. The Compliance Guide will be mailed out to HMS vessel owners and operators with the HMS permit. Copies of the Compliance Guide will be available at the April Council meetings. Copies can also be requested directly from NOAA Fisheries or by downloading from the NOAA Fisheries Southwest Region website (<http://swr.nmfs.noaa.gov>).

Receipt of Exempted Fishing Permit Applications

NOAA Fisheries Service has received two Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) applications for limited pelagic longline fishing out of Southern California ports. National guidelines for EFPs, as well as guidance in the HMS FMP, recommend that EFP applications be reviewed by the Council. NOAA Fisheries intends to submit the EFP applications to the Council for discussion and recommendations (e.g., at the next scheduled meeting date of the Advisory Subpanel). A decision on whether to proceed with processing the EFP applications will follow the Council review and recommendation.

HMS SAFE Report

An HMS Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation Report (SAFE) is scheduled to be presented by the HMS Management Team to the Council at the June and September meetings. The HMS Management Team will coordinate the development of the HMS SAFE report with delivery of final report expected to meet the September target.

The SAFE report will provide information to the Council and NOAA Fisheries for determining, among other things, significant trends or changes in the resource, marine ecosystems, and fishery over time, and assessing the relative success of existing state and Federal fishery management programs. Information on bycatch and safety for each fishery will also be summarized along with relevant information on the social and economic condition of the recreational and commercial fishing industry.

NOAA Fisheries Recreational Fisheries Strategic Plan FY 2005-FY 2010

With input from recreational fishing constituents, NOAA Fisheries has developed a plan defining a common vision for recreational fisheries and a strategy to achieve that vision. The Plan was presented at the Fred Hall Fishing Tackle, Boat & Travel Show in Long Beach, California last week. The Plan sets out short and long range goals for Management, Science, and Outreach components. A Regional Recreational Plan Implementation Team will be formed to help guide the final National Strategy and Implementation elements. The Council will be a vital partner in developing the National Implementation elements and will be kept abreast of meeting dates and other pertinent notices.

Attachment: NOAA Recreational Fisheries Strategic Plan, FY 2005-FY 2010

