

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Marine Mammals: General Incidental Take Permits, Small Take Exemptions, and Certificates of Inclusion

ACTION: Proposed collection; comment request.

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, Public Law 104-13 (44 U.S.C. 3506(c)(2)(A)).

DATES: Written comments must be submitted on or before December 8, 1997.

ADDRESSES: Direct all written comments to Linda Engelmeier, Departmental Forms Clearance Officer, Department of Commerce, Room 5327, 14th and Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington DC 20230.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Requests for additional information or copies of the information collection instrument(s) and instructions should be directed to Wanda L. Cain, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910 (301-713-2055).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Abstract

This information is used to issue Certificates of Inclusion under the General Permit issued to the American Tunaboat Association (ATA) and to process requests for dolphin mortality limits from those vessels intending to fish for tuna in the eastern tropical Pacific Ocean (ETP) with purse seine nets. This is the only General Permit authorized under the Marine Mammal Protection Act, and it governs the taking of marine mammals in the course of commercial purse seine fishing for yellowfin tuna in the eastern tropical Pacific Ocean. Individual vessels must obtain certificates of inclusion under this permit.

II. Method of Collection

Currently, no take of marine mammals is authorized under the General Permit issued to the ATA under the Marine Mammal Protection Act since the established quota is zero. However, NMFS requires vessels fishing for tuna

in the eastern tropical Pacific Ocean to maintain valid Vessel and Operator Certificates of Inclusion to maintain adequate observer coverage.

Each year, NMFS notifies current certificated vessels and operators of their obligation to renew their certificates if they intend to fish in the eastern tropical Pacific Ocean. Vessel Certificates of Inclusion are valid for one year, non-transferable, and cost \$200. Operator Certificates of Inclusion are valid for one year, non-transferable, and no fee is required. However, to qualify for an Operator Certificate of Inclusion, the operator must have a current or previous calendar year Certificate of Inclusion or attend a new operator's workshop session.

III. Data

OMB Number: 0648-0083.

Form Number: None.

Type of Review: Regular Submission.

Affected Public: Individuals & Businesses.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 27.

Estimated Time Per Response: 0.25 hr.

Estimated Total Annual Burden Hours: 6.75 hrs.

Estimated Total Annual Cost to Public: \$0.00 (no capital expenditures are required of respondents).

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: October 1, 1997.

Linda Engelmeier,

Departmental Forms Clearance Officer, Office of Management and Organization.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 093097G]

Draft Strategic Plan for Fisheries Research

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

ACTION: Notice of availability; request for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces the availability of and seeks public comment on the draft Strategic Plan for Fisheries Research.

Section 404 of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) requires the Secretary of Commerce to develop, triannually, a strategic plan for fisheries research for the subsequent years. Any written comments on the draft plan will be considered by NMFS in the development of the final Strategic Plan for Fisheries Research.

DATES: Comments on the plan will be accepted on or before November 6, 1997.

ADDRESSES: Requests for copies of the draft plan and comments on the draft plan should be directed to John T. Everett, Chief, Research, Analysis, and Coordination Division, Office of Science and Technology, NMFS, NOAA, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910. PHONE: (301) 713-2363. FAX: (301) 713-1875.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: John Everett or Carolyn Brown at 301-713-2363.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Section 404 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act requires the Secretary of Commerce to publish in the **Federal Register** a strategic plan for fisheries research for the five years immediately following the plan's publication. The Magnuson-Stevens Act requires that the plan address four major areas of research: (1) Research to support fishery conservation and management; (2) conservation engineering research; (3) research on the fisheries; and (4) information management research. The Magnuson-Stevens Act specifies that the plan shall contain a limited number of priority objectives for each of these research areas; indicate goals and timetables; provide a role for commercial fishermen in such research; provide for collection and dissemination of complete and accurate information concerning fishing