

Oregon State Delegation 7 a.m.  
 Washington State Delegation 7 a.m.  
 Enforcement Consultants As  
 necessary  
 Salmon Advisory Subpanel As  
 necessary  
 Salmon Technical Team As necessary  
 Tribal Policy Group As necessary  
 Tribal and Washington Technical  
 Group As necessary  
 Although nonemergency issues not  
 contained in this agenda may come  
 before this Council for discussion, those  
 issues may not be the subject of formal  
 Council action during this meeting.  
 Council action will be restricted to those  
 issues specifically listed in this notice  
 and any issues arising after publication  
 of this notice that require emergency  
 action under Section 305(c) of the  
 Magnuson-Stevens Fishery  
 Conservation and Management Act,  
 provided the public has been notified of  
 the Council's intent to take final action  
 to address the emergency.

### Special Accommodations

These meetings are physically  
 accessible to people with disabilities.  
 Requests for sign language  
 interpretation or other auxiliary aids  
 should be directed to Ms. Carolyn Porter  
 at 503-820-2280 at least five days prior  
 to the meeting date.

Dated: March 15, 2005.

### Emily Menashes,

*Acting Director, Office of Sustainable  
 Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.*  
 [FR Doc. E5-1182 Filed 3-17-05; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-S

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 031505D]

### Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Application for an Exempted Fishing Permit

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

**ACTION:** Notice; receipt of exempted  
 fishing permit application.

**SUMMARY:** This notice announces receipt  
 of an application for an exempted  
 fishing permit (EFP) from John Gauvin  
 and John Gruver. If granted, this permit  
 would be used to continue the  
 development and testing of a salmon  
 excluder device in the Bering Sea  
 pollock trawl fishery. It is intended to  
 promote the objectives of the Fishery  
 Management Plan for Groundfish of the

Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands  
 Management Area (FMP) by developing  
 a method for reducing salmon bycatch  
 in the Bering Sea pollock trawl fishery.

**ADDRESSES:** Copies of the EFP  
 application are available by writing to  
 Sue Salvesson, Assistant Regional  
 Administrator for Sustainable Fisheries,  
 Alaska Region, NMFS, P.O. Box 21668,  
 Juneau, AK 99802, Attn: Lori Durall.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**  
 Melanie Brown, 907-586-7228 or  
*melanie.brown@noaa.gov*.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** NMFS  
 manages the domestic groundfish  
 fisheries in the Bering Sea and Aleutian  
 Islands Management Area (BSAI) under  
 the FMP. The North Pacific Fishery  
 Management Council (Council)  
 prepared the FMP under the Magnuson-  
 Stevens Fishery Conservation and  
 Management Act. Regulations governing  
 the groundfish fisheries of the BSAI  
 appear at 50 CFR parts 600 and 679. The  
 FMP and the implementing regulations  
 at §§ 679.6 and 600.745(b) authorize  
 issuance of EFPs to allow fishing that  
 would otherwise be prohibited.  
 Procedures for issuing EFPs are  
 contained in the implementing  
 regulations.

NMFS received an application for an  
 EFP from John Gauvin, Principal  
 Investigator and John Gruver of the  
 United Catcher Boats Association. The  
 purpose of the project is to improve the  
 performance of the salmon excluder  
 device developed under an EFP in 2004  
 and 2005, and to validate the  
 performance of this device for pollock  
 trawls. The goal is to develop a device  
 for pollock trawls that reduces salmon  
 bycatch without significantly lowering  
 catch rates of pollock.

The EFP would allow for two types of  
 testing of the salmon excluder device in  
 fall 2005 and spring 2006. In the first  
 experiment, a catcher vessel would be  
 used to test minor adjustments to the  
 current excluder device design to  
 improve performance. The second  
 experiment would be conducted using a  
 catcher/processor for the paired-tow  
 experiment to validate the performance  
 of the excluder device. Depending on  
 the results from the work in 2005 and  
 2006, the EFP may need to be modified  
 to allow for an additional year of testing.

Exemptions from regulations for  
 salmon bycatch limits, observer  
 requirements, salmon savings area  
 closure, the Catcher Vessel Operating  
 Area (CVOA), and total allowable catch  
 amounts (TACs) for groundfish would  
 be necessary to conduct the work. The  
 taking of salmon during the experiment  
 is crucial for determining the  
 effectiveness of the device. Salmon

taken during the experiment would not  
 be counted toward the chinook and  
 chum salmon bycatch limits under  
 §§ 679.21(e)(1)(vii) and (e)(1)(viii).  
 Potentially, the amount of salmon  
 bycatch by the pollock trawl industry  
 during the EFP period could approach  
 or exceed the salmon bycatch limits.  
 The additional salmon taken during the  
 experiment would create an additional  
 burden on the pollock trawl industry  
 and may lead to closures of the salmon  
 savings areas, if the EFP salmon were  
 counted toward the salmon bycatch  
 limits. Approximately 2,500 chum  
 salmon and 1,500 chinook salmon  
 would be required to support the  
 project.

The applicants also have requested an  
 exemption from closures of the Chinook  
 Salmon Savings Areas and the Chum  
 Salmon Savings Area  
 (§§ 679.21(e)(7)(vii) and (e)(7)(viii)). The  
 experiment must be conducted in areas  
 of salmon concentration to ensure a  
 sufficient sample size. The salmon  
 savings areas are areas of known  
 concentration of salmon and provide an  
 ideal location for conducting the  
 experiment and ensuring that the  
 vessels encounter concentrations of  
 salmon.

Groundfish taken under the EFP  
 would be exempt from the TACs  
 specified in the annual harvest  
 specifications (§ 679.20). A total of 2,500  
 metric tons (mt) of groundfish  
 (primarily pollock) would be taken  
 during the EFP work and would not be  
 included in the harvest applied against  
 the Bering Sea groundfish TACs,  
 including the pollock TAC of  
 approximately 1.5 million mt. The 2005  
 Bering Sea pollock acceptable biological  
 catch is 1.960 million mt, well above the  
 combined TAC and the additional  
 harvest anticipated from the project.  
 Because of the nature of groundfish  
 bycatch in the pollock fishery, the  
 harvest of other groundfish species  
 during the project is expected to be very  
 minor.

The experiment using the catcher/  
 processor would require exemption  
 from the CVOA restriction  
 (§ 679.22(a)(5)) because of the location  
 of the Chinook Salmon Savings Area in  
 the CVOA. Catcher/processors are  
 prohibited from operating in the CVOA  
 during the B season. It would be  
 necessary for the catcher/processor to  
 conduct tows in this area to ensure  
 encountering sufficient pollock and  
 salmon.

The EFP would include an exemption  
 from the observer requirements at  
 § 679.50. The applicants would use "sea  
 samplers" who are NMFS-trained  
 observers. They would not be deployed

as NMFS observers, however, at the time of the experiment. The "sea samplers" would conduct the data collection and perform other observer duties that would normally be required for vessels directed fishing for pollock.

The activities under the EFP are not expected to have a significant impact on the marine environment, but the potential effects on the marine environment will be further analyzed during review of the application.

In accordance with § 679.6, NMFS has determined that the proposal warrants further consideration and has initiated consultation with the Council by forwarding the application to the Council. The Council will consider the EFP application during its April 4–11, 2005, meeting which will be held at the Hilton Hotel in Anchorage, AK. The applicants have been invited to appear in support of the application, if the applicants desire. Interested persons may comment on the application at the Council meeting during public testimony. A notice announcing the upcoming meeting will be published in the **Federal Register**.

A copy of the application is available for review from NMFS (see **ADDRESSES**).

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

Dated: March 15, 2005.

**Alan D. Risenhoover,**

*Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.*  
[FR Doc. E5–1186 Filed 3–17–05; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3510–22–S**

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 031505F]

#### Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Application for an Exempted Fishing Permit

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

**ACTION:** Notice; receipt of amended application for an exempted fishing permit.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS has received an amended application for an exempted fishing permit (EFP) from William Thornton Smith of the North Pacific Longline Association (NPLA). If granted, this EFP would authorize the applicant to conduct an experiment to evaluate the integrated weight groundline as a potential seabird avoidance measure in the 2005 Pacific cod hook-and-line

fishery in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area (BSAI). The project is intended to promote the objectives of the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area (FMP) by reducing fishery interactions with the endangered short-tailed albatross (*Phoebastria albatrus*) and other seabird species.

**ADDRESSES:** Copies of the EFP application may be requested from Sue Salvesson, Assistant Regional Administrator for Sustainable Fisheries, Alaska Region, NMFS, Attn: Lori Durall by: mail to P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802; fax to 907–586–7557; or email to [Lori.Durall@noaa.gov](mailto:Lori.Durall@noaa.gov).

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Kim Rivera, 907–586–7424 or [Kim.Rivera@noaa.gov](mailto:Kim.Rivera@noaa.gov).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** NMFS manages the domestic groundfish fisheries in the BSAI under the FMP. The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) prepared the FMP under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act). Regulations governing the groundfish fisheries of the BSAI appear at 50 CFR parts 600 and 679. The FMP and the implementing regulations at §§ 679.6 and 600.745(b) authorize the issuance of EFPs to allow fishing that would otherwise be prohibited. Procedures for issuing EFPs are contained in the implementing regulations.

In June 2004, the Council approved the application for an EFP for this experiment which was submitted by the Washington Sea Grant Program (WSGP). The WSGP was unable to secure vessels for the work, and an EFP was not issued in 2004. In February 2005, NMFS received an amended application for this EFP from the NPLA. The purpose of this EFP is to authorize experimental fishing using integrated weight groundline to evaluate its effectiveness as a potential new seabird avoidance measure. The application calls for testing integrated weight groundlines against unweighted groundlines, with and without paired streamer lines. This proposed experiment builds on work that was completed in Alaska in 2002, and compliments efforts taking place in other fisheries. Information from this experiment could ultimately result in better and more effective seabird avoidance measures. The hook-and-line fishing industry appears especially interested in this experiment, because it may provide a better tool with which to avoid the incidental catch of the endangered short-tailed albatross and other seabird species. In addition, the

integrated weight groundline may improve fishing efficiency with better gear handling characteristics and increased target catch rates resulting from getting baited hooks down more quickly. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service issued a Biological Opinion (September 2003) that includes a conservation recommendation for NMFS to support research efforts to develop new and novel deterrent technologies such as integrated weight groundlines. This experiment would fulfill such a recommendation.

The goal of the experiment is to reduce the incidental catch of the endangered short-tailed albatross and other seabird species in ways that are consistent with Magnuson-Stevens Act National Standard 9 which requires conservation and management measures to minimize bycatch and bycatch mortality and that the effects on birds should be considered when selecting these measures. A preliminary WSGP investigation in 2002 evaluated four weightings of integrated weight groundline (25g/m, 50g/m, 75g/m and 100 g/m). The four weighting treatments were compared to a control of unweighted groundline in the sablefish fishery in the Aleutian Islands and the Pacific cod fishery in the Gulf of Alaska. Preliminary results strongly suggest that 50g/m line was the optimal weighting. It was the most practical gear in terms of operational performance in mechanical baiting (auto-bait) hook-and-line systems, and it sank quickly beyond the range of seabirds.

Based on these initial results, NPLA proposes to continue this work by comparing the catch rates of all species, the abundance and behavior of seabirds, and the sink rate of groundlines under three scenarios: 50g/m integrated weight groundline, and un-weighted groundlines with and without paired streamer lines. Regulations at § 679.24(e)(4)(ii)(c) require the use of paired streamer lines by vessels greater than 55 ft (16.8 m) length overall (LOA). Because vessels used in the experiment would be greater than 55 ft (16.8 m) LOA, an EFP is necessary to conduct the experimental control treatments that call for the experimental gear to be deployed in the absence of paired streamer lines. Work will take place on two freezer-longliner vessels using auto-bait systems in the Pacific cod fishery in the BSAI during 2005 and 2006, if unforeseen circumstances prohibit completion of the work in 2005.

Amendments to the application approved in June 2004, include: (1) starting the experimental fishing a month earlier (July 15, 2005 instead of August 15, 2005), (2) allocating