

(3) Abide by established rules of the road;

(4) Use proper care; or

(5) Use due care and diligence to mitigate the damage or loss.

*Outer Continental Shelf* means all submerged lands lying seaward and outside of the area of lands beneath navigable waters as defined in 43 U.S.C. section 1301, and of which the subsoil and seabed appertain to the United States and are subject to its jurisdiction and control. Generally, but not in all cases, this includes all submerged lands lying seaward of the territorial sea (3 miles from a State's coastline, or 9 miles from the coast of Texas or Florida).

*Person* means an individual, partnership, corporation, association, public or private organization, government, or other entity.

*Resulting Economic Loss* means the gross income, as estimated by the Chief, FSD, that a claimant will lose because of not being able to fish, or having to reduce fishing effort, during the period before the damaged or lost fishing gear concerned is repaired or replaced and available for use. This period must be reasonable. This period begins on the date of the casualty and stops on the date the damage could reasonably have been remedied by repair or replacement.

*Right-of-way* means any right-of-way granted under section 5(e) of the OCS Lands Act or under 43 CFR 3340.0-5.

*Secretary* means the Secretary of Commerce or his designee.

[47 FR 49600, Nov. 1, 1982, as amended at 61 FR 6322, Feb. 20, 1996]

### § 296.3 Fishermen's contingency fund.

(a) *General.* There is established in the Treasury of the United States the Fishermen's Contingency Fund. The Fund is available without fiscal year limitation as a revolving fund to carry out the purposes of title IV of the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act Amendments of 1978, as amended.

(b) *Payments into the fund.* Each Holder of an exploration permit, lease, easement, or rights-of-way for the construction of a pipeline, or a prelease exploration drilling permit issued or maintained under the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act, in effect on or after June 30, 1982, shall pay assess-

ments to the Fund. All pipeline right-of-way and easements are to be included for assessment except those constructed and operated lines within the confines of a single lease or group of contiguous leases under unitized operation or single operator. Payments will not be required for geological or geophysical permits, other than prelease exploratory drilling permits issued under section 11 of the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act (43 U.S.C. 1340).

(1) *Assessments to maintain the fund.* When the total amount in the Fund is less than the Chief, FSD, determines is needed to pay Fund claims and expenses, the Chief, FSD, will notify the Secretary of the Interior that additional assessments are needed.

(2) *Billing and collections.* The Secretary of the Interior will calculate the amounts to be paid by each Holder and shall notify each Holder of the dollar amount and the time and place for all payments. Each assessment shall be paid to the Secretary of the Interior no later than 45 days after the Secretary of the Interior sends notice of the assessment.

(3) *Annual assessment limits.* No Holder shall be required to pay in excess of \$5,000 for any lease, permit, easement or right-of-way in any calendar year.

(c) *Moneys recovered through subrogation.* Any moneys recovered by the Secretary through the subrogation of a claimant's rights shall be deposited into the Fund.

(d) *Investments of the fund.* Excess sums in the Fund will be invested in obligations of, or guaranteed by, the United States. Revenue from such investments shall be deposited in the Fund.

(e) *Litigation.* The Fund may sue and be sued in its own name.

### § 296.4 Claims eligible for compensation.

(a) *Claimants.* Damage or loss eligible for Fund compensation must be suffered by a commercial fisherman.

(b) *Damage or loss of fishing gear.* Damage or loss is eligible for Fund compensation if it was caused by materials, equipment, tools, containers, or other items associated with OCS oil and gas exploration, development, or production activities. Damage or loss

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may be eligible for compensation even though it did not occur in OCS waters if the item causing the damage or loss was associated with oil and gas exploration, development, or production activities in OCS waters.

(c) *Exceptions.* Damage or loss is not eligible for Fund compensation:

(1) If the damage or loss was caused by the negligence or fault of the claimant;

(2) If the damage or loss occurred prior to September 18, 1978;

(3) To the extent that damage or loss exceeds the replacement value of the fishing gear involved;

(4) For any portion of the damage or loss which can be compensated by insurance;

(5) If the claim is not filed within 90 calendar days of the date the claimant or the claimant's agent first became aware of the damage or loss (or such longer period as the Secretary may allow under unusual and extenuating circumstances); or

(6) If the damage or loss was caused by an obstruction unrelated to OCS oil and gas exploration, development, or production activities.

[47 FR 49600, Nov. 1, 1982, as amended at 50 FR 13796, Apr. 8, 1985; 61 FR 6322, Feb. 20, 1996]

### § 296.5 Instructions for filing claims.

(a) *Fifteen-day report required to gain presumption of causation*—(1) *General.* Damages or losses are presumed to be qualified for compensation if certain requirements are satisfied. One requirement is that a report must be made to NMFS within fifteen (15) days after the date on which the vessel first returns to a port after discovering the damage or loss. Filing of a fifteen-day report must be followed up by filing a detailed claim.

(2) *When and how to file a fifteen-day report.* To qualify for the presumption of causation, a fifteen-day report must be made to NMFS within fifteen days after the date on which the vessel first returns to a port after discovering the damage or loss. Satisfaction of the fifteen-day requirement is determined by the postmark, if the report is mailed; by the date of a call, if the report is telephoned or radiotelephoned; or, by the date of appearance, if the report is

made in person. The fifteen-day report must be made to the Chief, Financial Services Division, National Marine Fisheries Service, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910; telephone: (301) 713-2396.

(3) *Contents of fifteen-day report.* Each fifteen-day report must include the following information:

(i) The claimant's name and address;

(ii) The name of the commercial fishing vessel involved;

(iii) The location of the obstruction which caused the damage or loss;

(iv) A description of the nature of the damage or loss;

(v) The date such damage or loss was discovered;

(vi) If the fifteen-day report is made after the vessel returns to port, the date on which the vessel first returned to port after discovering the damage.

(b) *Form of claim.* Claims must be in writing. Claims may be submitted on NOAA form 88-164. This form may be obtained from any NMFS regional office or from the Chief, FSD. Although claimants are not required to use this claim form, it will probably be to their benefit to do so.

(c) *Who must file and when and where to file claims.* All claimants (including those who filed 15-day reports to gain the presumption of causation) must submit a claim application to the Chief, Financial Services Division, within 90 calendar days of the date the claimant or the claimant's agent first became aware of the damage or loss. The Chief, FSD, may allow a longer period for filing claims if, in his discretion, unusual and extenuating circumstances justify a longer period. The term "filed" means delivered in person, or mailed (as determined by the date of the postmark) to the Chief, Financial Services Division, National Marine Fisheries Service, 1825 Connecticut Avenue, NW., Washington, DC 20235. The Chief, FSD, suggests that mailed claims be sent by registered or certified mail, return receipt requested, so the claimant will have a record that the claim was received by the Chief, FSD.

(d) *Aggregating claims.* If more than one commercial fisherman suffers loss or damage from the same incident (for example, when several members of the