

The closest Metro access is from the Crystal City station.

If you wish to attend the meeting and/or make presentations on the proposed rule, please contact and submit a copy of your presentation by March 6, 2003, to: General Services Administration, Acquisition Policy Division (MVP), 1800 F Street, NW., Room 4033, Attn: Linda Nelson, Washington, DC 20405, Telephone: (202) 501-1900.

Submit electronic presentation materials via e-mail to: meeting.2002-G505@gsa.gov.

Please submit only presentations to this e-mail address and cite Public Meeting 2002-G505 in all correspondence related to this public meeting. The submitted presentations will be the only record of the public meeting. If you intend to have your presentation considered as a public comment on the proposed rule, the presentation must be submitted separately as a public comment as instructed in the proposed rule. (See 68 FR 3220, January 23, 2003.)

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: The Regulatory Secretariat, Room 4035, GS Building, Washington, DC, 20405, (202) 501-4225, for information pertaining to status or publication schedules. The TTY Federal Relay Number for further information is 1-800-877-8973. For clarification of content, contact Ms. Linda Nelson, Procurement Analyst, at (202) 501-1900. Please cite GSAR case 2002-G505.

Special Accommodations

The public meeting is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Request for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Mrs. Linda Nelson (202-501-1900) at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.

Dated: February 13, 2003.

Laura G. Smith,

Director, Acquisition Policy Division.

[FR Doc. 03-4053 Filed 2-20-03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6820-61-P

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

50 CFR Part 17

RIN 1018-A145

Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Threatened Status and Special Regulation for the Mountain Plover

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Proposed rule; reopening of comment period.

SUMMARY: On December 5, 2002, we, the Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), published a notice of new information and reopened the comment period to propose listing the mountain plover as a threatened species (67 FR 72396), under authority of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (Act). We hereby give notice that the comment period is reopened until March 21, 2003.

DATES: The comment period on the proposed listing rule is reopened until March 21, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Written comments and materials should be sent to the Assistant Field Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 764 Horizon Drive, Building B, Grand Junction, Colorado 81506-3946. You may send electronic mail (e-mail) comments to fw6_mountainplover@fws.gov. You also may obtain a copy of the 1999 proposed rule to list the mountain plover (64 FR 7587) and other pertinent documents from this office, or access them at our Web site at <http://www.r6.fws.gov/mtnplover/>. We will make comments and materials we receive available for public inspection, by appointment, during normal business hours at the above address.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Robert Leachman at the above address; telephone: 970-243-2778; facsimile: 970-245-6933; or e-mail: robert_leachman@fws.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

On February 16, 1999, we published a proposed rule to list the mountain plover as a threatened species (64 FR 7587). Higher priority listing actions precluded listing work on the mountain plover during Fiscal Years 2000 and 2001. On October 16, 2001, Earthjustice (representing the Biodiversity Legal Foundation, Biodiversity Associates, and Center for Native Ecosystems) submitted a 60-day notice of intent to sue to the Secretary of the Department of the Interior and the Fish and Wildlife Service Regional Director for failure to meet listing deadlines for the mountain plover, as required by section 4(b)(6)(A) of the Act. We responded by publishing a notice of new information and reopening the comment period on the listing proposal on December 5, 2002 (67 FR 72396). The comment period closed on February 3, 2003.

Section 4(b)(5)(E) of the Act requires that public hearings regarding proposals for listing be held promptly when

requested by the public within 45 days of the proposal's publication in the **Federal Register**. We received public hearing requests and requests to extend the comment period during the allotted time period from California Congressman Bob Filner, the Oklahoma Farm Bureau, the Kansas Farm Bureau, and Holland and Hart LLP, representing the Petroleum Association of Wyoming. Following discussions with each of these parties, each agreed that informational meetings rather than formal hearings would be acceptable. Therefore, we scheduled, advertised, and conducted informational meetings in El Centro, California, and Elkhart, Kansas. We are also reopening the comment period in response to these requests. Comments already submitted in response to the December 5, 2002, rulemaking document need not be resubmitted and will be fully considered in our decisionmaking on this proposed rule.

Author

The author of this notice is Robert Leachman (*see FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT*).

Authority

The authority for this action is the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).

Dated: February 11, 2003.

Steve Williams,

Director, Fish and Wildlife Service.

[FR Doc. 03-4152 Filed 2-20-03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310-55-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 600

[I.D. 020403B]

Magnuson-Stevens Act Provisions; General Provisions for Domestic Fisheries; Application for Exempted Fishing Permits (EFPs)

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

ACTION: Notification of two proposals for EFPs to conduct experimental fishing; request for comments.

SUMMARY: The Administrator, Northeast Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator) has made a preliminary determination that the EFP applications from the University of Rhode Island (URI)

contain all the required information and warrant further consideration. The Regional Administrator has also made a preliminary determination that the activities authorized under the EFPs would be consistent with the goals and objectives of the Northeast (NE) Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan (FMP), and does not detrimentally affect the well being of any stock of fish likely to be taken during the experiment. Therefore, NMFS announces that the Regional Administrator proposes to issue two EFPs that would allow vessels to conduct fishing operations that are otherwise restricted by the regulations governing the fisheries of the NE United States. The first EFP, hereafter referred to as the summer flounder EFP, would allow for an exemption from the NE summer flounder gear restrictions specified at 50 CFR 648.104. The second EFP, hereafter referred to as the scup EFP, would allow for an exemption from the NE scup closure restrictions specified at 50 CFR 648.121.

For the summer flounder EFP, the exempted fishing activity would support research to test large mesh experimental codends to determine their ability to reduce regulatory discards and bycatch of other species when fishing for commercial summer flounder. The testing will occur off the coast of Rhode Island. For the scup EFP, the exempted fishing activity would support research to test large mesh experimental codends for their ability to reduce sublegal scup discards when fishing for commercial scup. The testing will occur off the coast of Southern New England and the inshore waters of Rhode Island. 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 on these documents must be received on or before March 10, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Written comments should be sent to Patricia A. Kurkul, Regional Administrator, NMFS, Northeast Regional Office, 1 Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930. Mark the outside

of the envelope either "Comments on University of Rhode Island Summer Flounder Codend Mesh Size EFP Proposal," or "Comments on University of Rhode Island Scup Codend Mesh Size EFP Proposal."

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jason Blackburn, Fishery Management Specialist, (978) 281-9326, fax (978) 281-9135, e-mail: jason.blackburn@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The applications for two EFPs were submitted by URI for research being funded by awards under the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's Research Set-Aside (RSA) program administered by the NMFS Northeast Region.

Summer Flounder EFP Proposal

The applicant is requesting an exemption for four commercial vessels from the NE summer flounder gear restrictions specified at 50 CFR 648.104 for 24 days of at-sea gear testing. The objective of the research is to test large mesh experimental codends to determine their ability to reduce regulatory discards and bycatch of other species. The experimental design will test the selectivity of four experimental codend mesh sizes and shapes, 6.5 and 7.0 inch diamond mesh, and 7.0 and 8.0 inch square mesh, compared to the selectivity of a control net with a 3-inch small mesh codend. The sea trials would be conducted off the coast of Rhode Island during the months of April through September 2003.

It is estimated that the total catch of summer flounder will be 24,000 lb (10886 kg), with an estimated bycatch of 5,000 lb (2268 kg) of scup, 2,000 lb (907 kg) of longfin squid, and 1,000 lb (454 kg) of black sea bass. These fish will be landed in Rhode Island. It is further estimated that 2,000 lb (907 kg) of summer flounder, 5,000 lb (2268 kg) of scup, and 1,000 lb (454 kg) of black sea bass will be discarded during the research operations. Two URI fisheries researchers would be aboard each vessel during all experimental sea trials. All the areas surveyed during this experiment will be open to fishing, and only fish from legal open seasons will

be retained from the Exclusive Economic Zone.

This experimental work is important because it could lead to the development of gear that could improve the size selection of the nets for summer flounder, reduce regulatory discards, and reduce bycatch of other fish species.

Scup EFP Proposal

The applicant is requesting an exemption for one commercial vessel from the NE scup closure restrictions specified at 50 CFR 648.121 for 6 days of at-sea gear testing. The objective of the research is to compare large mesh experimental codends, to a legal sized codend, to determine their ability to reduce sublegal scup discards. The experimental design will test two experimental codend mesh sizes, 6.0 inch and 6.5 inch square mesh. The sea trials would be conducted off the coast of Rhode Island during the months of April through July 2003.

It is estimated that the total catch of scup will be 20,000 lb (9,072 kg), with an estimated bycatch of 1,000 lb (454 kg) of squid, 1,000 lb (454 kg) of summer flounder, and 1,200 lb (544 kg) of black sea bass. These fish will be landed in Rhode Island. It is further estimated that 2,000 lb (907 kg) of scup, and minimal amounts of other species, will be discarded during the research operations. Two URI fisheries researchers would be aboard each vessel during all experimental sea trials. With the exception of scup, only fish from legal open seasons will be retained from the Exclusive Economic Zone.

This experimental work is important because it could lead to the development of gear that could reduce sublegal scup discards, and thereby reduce scup mortality.

Based on the results of the EFPs, these actions could result in future rulemaking.

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

Dated: February 13, 2003.

Richard W. Surdi,
Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.
[FR Doc. 03-4138 Filed 2-20-03; 8:45 am]

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