

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE****National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration****Submission for OMB Review; Comment Request**

The Department of Commerce will submit to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for clearance the following proposal for collection of information under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act (44 U.S.C. Chapter 35).

*Agency:* National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

*Title:* Alaska Prohibited Species Donation Program.

*OMB Control Number:* 0648–0316.

*Form Number(s):* None.

*Type of Request:* Regular (extension of a currently approved information collection).

*Number of Respondents:* 1.

*Average Hours per Response:* 50 hours for a three-year permit, annualized to 17.

*Burden Hours:* 17.

*Needs and Uses:* The prohibited species donation (PSD) program for salmon and halibut has effectively reduced regulatory discard of salmon and halibut by allowing fish that would otherwise be discarded to be donated to needy individuals through tax-exempt organizations. Vessels and processing plants participating in the PSD program voluntarily retain and process salmon and halibut bycatch. An authorized, tax-exempt distributor, chosen by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), is responsible for monitoring retention and processing of fish donated by vessels and processors. The authorized distributor also coordinates processing, storage, transportation, and distribution of salmon and halibut. The PSD program requires an information collection so that NMFS can monitor the authorized distributors' ability to effectively supervise program participants and ensure that donated fish are properly processed, stored, and distributed.

*Affected Public:* Not-for-profit institution.

*Frequency:* Every three years.

*Respondent's Obligation:* Mandatory.

This information collection request may be viewed at [reginfo.gov](http://reginfo.gov). Follow the instructions to view Department of Commerce collections currently under review by OMB.

Written comments and recommendations for the proposed information collection should be sent within 30 days of publication of this notice to [OIRA\\_Submission@omb.eop.gov](mailto:OIRA_Submission@omb.eop.gov) or fax to (202) 395–5806.

Dated: November 7, 2017.

**Sarah Brabson,**

*NOAA PRA Clearance Officer.*

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**BILLING CODE 3510–22–P**

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE****National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

**RIN 0648–XF829**

**Magnuson-Stevens Act Provisions; General Provisions for Domestic Fisheries; Application for Exempted Fishing Permits**

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

**ACTION:** Notice; request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** The Assistant Regional Administrator for Sustainable Fisheries, Greater Atlantic Region, NMFS, has made a preliminary determination that an Exempted Fishing Permit application contains all of the required information and warrants further consideration. This Exempted Fishing Permit would exempt a commercial fishing vessel from Atlantic sea scallop regulations in support of research conducted by the Coonamessett Farm Foundation. 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 Exempted Fishing Permits.

**DATES:** Comments must be received on or before November 28, 2017.

**ADDRESSES:** You may submit written comments by any of the following methods:

- *Email:* [nmfs.gar.efp@noaa.gov](mailto:nmfs.gar.efp@noaa.gov).

Include in the subject line “DA17–100 CFF BREP LA Flounder Sweep Study EFP.”

- *Mail:* John K. Bullard, Regional Administrator, NMFS, Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office, 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930. Mark the outside of the envelope “Comments on DA17–100 CFF BREP LA Flounder Sweep Study EFP.”

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Shannah Jaburek, Fisheries Management Specialist, 978–282–8456.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

Coonamessett Farm Foundation (CFF) submitted an application for an EFP on September 18, 2017, for a 2017 Bycatch Reduction Engineering Program project titled “A Modified Flounder Sweep for

Flatfish Bycatch Reduction in the Limited Access (LA) Scallop Fishery.” The project would test a modified flounder cookie sweep on the outer bale bars of the scallop dredge and film fish-dredge interactions to monitor the effectiveness of the gear modification in reducing flatfish bycatch.

To conduct this experiment, vessels would require exemptions from the following regulations: Atlantic sea scallop crew size restrictions at 50 CFR 648.51(c); dredge gear obstruction restrictions at § 648.51(b)(4)(ii); Atlantic sea scallop observer program requirements at § 648.11(g); and closed area exemptions for Closed Area I at § 648.60(c), Closed Area II at § 648.60(d), Closed Area II Extension at § 648.60(e), and Nantucket Lightship at § 648.60(f). It would also exempt participating vessels from possession limits and minimum fish size requirements specified in 50 CFR part 648, subsections B and D through O, for biological sampling purposes only.

Vessels would conduct scallop dredging between November 2017–June 2018, on 2 trips each lasting approximately 7 days-at-sea (DAS) each for a project total of 14 DAS. An average of 10 tows per day would be conducted for a maximum duration of 50 minutes at a tow speed range of 4.8–5.1 knots (2.5–2.6 m/s). Trips would take place in scallop open areas of Southern New England and Georges Bank along with scallop access areas Nantucket Lightship and Closed Areas I and II.

The vessel would conduct all tows with two 15-foot (4.57-m) New Bedford Style dredges, one acting as a control dredge and one acting as an experimental dredge. The vessel would tow both dredges simultaneously to reduce spatial and temporal variability. Researchers would attach the two 9-foot (2.74-m) cookie sweeps to each of the outer bale bars using chain and shackles on the experimental dredge. The cookie sweeps would alternate between the two dredges each tow to reduce “side” effects. The cookie sweeps would be constructed of round rubber disks with lead cookies approximately 3–4 inches (7.6–10.2 cm) in diameter evenly spaced to encourage bottom contact. The attachment chains would be evenly spaced and varied in length to account for dredge position while being towed to ensure contact with the ocean bottom. Exemption from the dredge gear obstruction regulation would allow researchers to use the cookie sweep for the experimental tows.

Researchers would weigh all scallop catch in industry bushel baskets caught in both dredges and measure a one-basket sub-sample from each side in 5-

millimeter increments. The researchers would also obtain total weight of bycatch species and individual measurements to the nearest centimeter. If the volume of the catch is large, subsampling protocols would be necessary. All bycatch would be

returned to the sea as soon as practicable following data collection. Exemption from possession limit and minimum sizes would support catch sampling activities, and ensure the vessel is not in conflict with possession regulations while collecting catch data.

Researchers would discard all catch above a possession limit or below a minimum size as soon as practicable following data collection. The table below lists the anticipated catch for the project. No catch would be landed for sale.

Species	Weight (lb)	Weight (kg)
Scallop .....	20,000	9,072
Northeast Skate Complex (Barndoor Skate not included) .....	50,000	22,680
Barndoor Skate .....	250	113
Summer Flounder .....	90	41
Winter Flounder .....	250	113
Yellowtail Flounder .....	750	340
Windowpane Flounder .....	750	340
Monkfish .....	1,750	794

Researchers need additional exemptions to deploy dredge gear in closed areas in order to help locate large enough aggregations of flatfish to test the experimental gear. Participating vessels need crew size waivers to accommodate science personnel and possession waivers would enable them to conduct data collection activities. We would waive the observer program notification requirements because the research activity is not representative of standard fishing activity.

If approved, the applicant may request minor modifications and extensions to the EFP throughout the year. EFP modifications and extensions may be granted without further notice if they are deemed essential to facilitate completion of the proposed research and have minimal impacts that do not change the scope or impact of the initially approved EFP request. Any fishing activity conducted outside the scope of the exempted fishing activity would be prohibited.

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

Dated: November 7, 2017.

**Emily H. Menashes,**

*Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.*

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**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

**RIN 0648-XF816**

**Fisheries of the South Atlantic; Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review (SEDAR); Public Meeting**

**AGENCY:** National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and

Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

**ACTION:** Notice of SEDAR 55 Assessment Scoping webinar II.

**SUMMARY:** The SEDAR 55 assessment of the South Atlantic stock of Vermilion Snapper will consist of a series of webinars. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION.**

**DATES:** A SEDAR 55 Assessment Scoping webinar II will be held on Tuesday, November 28, 2017, from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m.

**ADDRESSES:**

*Meeting address:* The meetings will be held via webinar. The webinars are open to members of the public. Those interested in participating should contact Julia Byrd at SEDAR (see **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**) to request an invitation providing webinar access information. Please request webinar invitations at least 24 hours in advance of each webinar.

*SEDAR address:* South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, 4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201, N. Charleston, SC 29405; [www.sedarweb.org](http://www.sedarweb.org).

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Julia Byrd, SEDAR Coordinator, 4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201, North Charleston, SC 29405; phone: (843) 571-4366; email: [julia.byrd@safmc.net](mailto:julia.byrd@safmc.net).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, and Caribbean Fishery Management Councils, in conjunction with NOAA Fisheries and the Atlantic and Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commissions, have implemented the Southeast Data, Assessment and Review (SEDAR) process, a multi-step method for determining the status of fish stocks in the Southeast Region. The product of the SEDAR webinar series will be a report which compiles and evaluates

potential datasets and recommends which datasets are appropriate for assessment analyses, and describes the fisheries, evaluates the status of the stock, estimates biological benchmarks, projects future population conditions, and recommends research and monitoring needs. Participants for SEDAR Workshops are appointed by the Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, and Caribbean Fishery Management Councils and NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office, Highly Migratory Species Management Division, and Southeast Fisheries Science Center. Participants include: Data collectors and database managers; stock assessment scientists, biologists, and researchers; constituency representatives including fishermen, environmentalists, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs); international experts; and staff of Councils, Commissions, and state and federal agencies.

The items of discussion in the Assessment Scoping webinar II are as follows:

Participants will review data and discuss data issues, as necessary, and initial model issues.

Although non-emergency issues not contained in this agenda may come before this group for discussion, those issues may not be the subject of formal action during this meeting. Action will be restricted to those issues specifically identified 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 intent to take final action to address the emergency.

**Special Accommodations**

This meeting is accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for auxiliary aids should be directed to the SAFMC