

Agenda

Tuesday, May 22, 2018 through
Thursday, May 24, 2018

CCC Session: The agenda for the CCC's plenary session will include the following issues.

- (1) Budget Update
- (2) National Bycatch Reduction Policy
- (3) Electronic Monitoring Policy

Directive

- (4) Data Modernization
- (5) Development of Electronic

Monitoring in the North Pacific

- (6) Legislative Update
- (7) Recusal Policy
- (8) Ecosystem Based Fishery

Management Regional Implementation Plans

- (9) Exempted Fishing Permits
- (10) Best Scientific Information

Available

- (11) NMFS Policy Directive
- (12) Allocation Reviews
- (13) Research Priorities
- (14) Aquaculture
- (15) International Affairs/Seafood

Inspection

- (16) Regulatory Reform
- (17) Recreational Fisheries Overview
- (18) Citizen Science
- (19) NEFMC Program Review
- (20) NOAA Fisheries website

Transition

(21) CCC Workgroup Reports (communications group, habitat committee, scientific coordination subcommittee)

- (22) CCC Terms of Reference
- (23) Other Business

The CCG agenda will include the following issues:

- (1) Communication and technology tools and procedures
- (2) Promoting the regional Council system
- (3) Communicating effectively using social media
- (4) Public comment/input outside of Council meetings/public hearings
- (5) Working effectively with the news media
- (6) Regional and national communications coordination between councils and NOAA
- (7) Council and advisory body meeting communication protocols
- (8) Education programs and training of Council/staff
- (9) Publications and outreach
- (10) Wrap up: Path forward

The Agenda is subject to change, and the latest version will be posted at <http://www.npfmc.org/>.

Public Comment

Public comment letters will be accepted and should be submitted either electronically to Diana Evans, Council

staff: diana.evans@noaa.gov or through the mail: North Pacific Fishery Management Council, 605 W. 4th Ave., Suite 306, Anchorage, AK 99501-2252.

Special Accommodations

These meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Shannon Gleason at (907) 271-2809 at least 7 working days prior to the meeting date.

Dated: April 27, 2018.

Tracey L. Thompson,

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

[FR Doc. 2018-09342 Filed 5-2-18; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-P

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: Assessment of the Social and Economic Impact of Hurricanes and Other Climate Related Natural Disasters on Commercial and Recreational Fishing Industries in the Eastern, Gulf Coast and Caribbean Territories of the United States.

OMB Control Number: 0648-xxxx.

Form Number(s): None.

Type of Request: Regular (request for a new information collection).

Number of Respondents: 18,747.

Average Hours Per Response: 15-20 minutes.

Burden Hours: 9,373.

Needs and Uses: This request is for a new information collection.

The NOAA Fisheries Office of Science and Technology's Economics and Social Analysis Division seeks to conduct assessments of the social and economic impacts from hurricanes and other climate related natural disasters on commercial and recreational fishing industries in the eastern, gulf coast and Caribbean territories of the United States. It seeks to collect data on the immediate and long-term disruption and impediments to recovery of normal business practices to the commercial and recreational fishing industries. Data

would be collected from commercial and recreational for hire fishermen, fish dealers, bait and tackle stores, marinas and other businesses dependent on the fishing industry for livelihood. The data will improve research and analysis of potential fishery management actions by understanding the immediate effects and/or long-term compounding effects of natural disasters on communities most dependent on commercial and recreational fishing. This data collection is consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act and essential for implementing National Standard 8, which calls for the sustained participation of fishing communities.

Affected Public: Individuals or households; business or other for profit organizations.

Frequency: On occasion.

Respondent's Obligation: Voluntary.

This information collection request may be viewed at 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 or fax to (202) 395-5806.

Dated: April 30, 2018.

Sarah Brabson,

NOAA PRA Clearance Officer.

[FR Doc. 2018-09375 Filed 5-2-18; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-P

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

RIN 0648-XG053

Notice of Intent To Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement

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

ACTION: Notice of intent.

SUMMARY: Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), this notice announces that NMFS intends to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to inform its decision of whether to determine that a resource management plan (RMP) jointly developed by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and the Puget Sound Tribes (Tribes), collectively the co-managers, meets requirements under Limit 6 of the

ESA 4(d) rule for the ESA-listed Puget Sound Chinook salmon Evolutionarily Significant Unit (ESU), which is listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The purpose of the RMP is to manage commercial, recreational, ceremonial, and subsistence salmon fisheries potentially affecting the Puget Sound Chinook ESU within the marine and freshwater areas of Puget Sound, from the entrance of the Strait of Juan de Fuca inward, including fisheries under the jurisdiction of the Pacific Salmon Commission's Fraser River Panel. In order for NMFS to make a positive determination under Limit 6 on the RMP, NMFS must conclude that the RMP's management framework is consistent with the criteria under Limit 6. Limit 6 applies to RMPs developed jointly by the States of Washington, Oregon and/or Idaho and the Tribes within the continuing jurisdiction of *United States v. Washington* or *United States v. Oregon*. NMFS provides this notice to advise other agencies and the public of our plan to analyze effects related to approval and implementation of the RMP and to obtain suggestions and information that may be useful to the scope of issues and alternatives to include in the EIS.

DATES: Written or electronic scoping comments must be received at the appropriate address or email mailbox (see **ADDRESSES**) on or before June 4, 2018.

ADDRESSES: Written comments should be sent to Barry A. Thom, Regional Administrator, West Coast Region, NMFS, 1201 NE Lloyd Boulevard, Suite 1100, Portland, OR 97232. Comments may also be sent by email to ps2018rmp.wcr@noaa.gov.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Emi Kondo, NMFS West Coast Region, telephone: 503-736-4739, email: emi.kondo@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The Puget Sound Chinook Salmon ESU was listed as threatened under the ESA in 1999 (64 FR 14308, March 24, 1999). The definition of the ESU has been revised twice to include specific artificial propagation programs (70 FR 37160, June 28, 2005; 79 FR 20802, April 14, 2014). The current description of the ESU includes naturally spawned Chinook salmon originating from rivers flowing into Puget Sound from the Elwha River (inclusive) eastward, including rivers in Hood Canal, South Sound, North Sound, and the Strait of Georgia; also included are Chinook salmon from 26 artificial propagation programs (79 FR 20802, April 14, 2014).

Puget Sound Chinook salmon have a complex life history, migrating from their natal streams throughout Puget Sound to the Pacific Ocean, where they generally spend one to three years before returning to their natal streams, primarily as three- and four-year-old adults. In their ocean migration, they travel north along the west coast into Canadian, and at times as far north as Alaskan, waters. In doing so, they are caught in a broad range of fisheries, which are managed by an array of agencies, bodies, and governments including NMFS, the States of Washington, Oregon, and Alaska, more than 20 Native American tribal jurisdictions, the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council, the Pacific Fisheries Management Council, and the Pacific Salmon Commission.

Section 4(d) of the ESA (16 U.S.C. 1531(d)) requires the Secretary of Commerce (Secretary) to adopt such regulations that are deemed necessary and advisable for the conservation of species listed as threatened. Such protective regulations may include any or all of the prohibitions that apply automatically to protect endangered species under ESA section 9(a)(1). Those section 9(a)(1) prohibitions, in part, make it illegal for any person subject to the jurisdiction of the United States to take (including harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect; or to attempt any of these) the relevant listed species. In 2000, NMFS published a rule, under section 4(d), that specified take prohibitions for several ESA-listed salmon ESUs, including Puget Sound Chinook salmon (65 FR 42422, July 10, 2000). NMFS did not find it necessary and advisable to apply the take prohibitions described in section 9(a)(1)(B) and 9(a)(1)(C) to specified categories of activities that contribute to conserving listed salmonids or are governed by a program that adequately limits impacts on listed salmonids; therefore, the 4(d) rule included 13 limits on the application of the ESA section 9(a)(1) take prohibitions. Limit 6 of the 4(d) rule applies to activities in compliance with joint tribal/state plans (e.g., RMPs) developed within the continuing jurisdiction of *United States v. Washington* or *United States v. Oregon*. The co-managers developed an RMP that NMFS determined was consistent with Limit 6 and was implemented from 2011 to 2014. Since the expiration of that RMP after 2014 fisheries, the fishery has since been managed on a year-to-year basis. The co-managers are currently developing an updated RMP, the Comprehensive

Management Plan for Puget Sound Chinook: Harvest Management Component, to guide conservation and harvest of Puget Sound Chinook salmon in Washington for 10 years.

Once the co-managers have submitted the RMP for NMFS' approval, NMFS must make a determination under Limit 6 of the 4(d) rule whether the co-managers' RMP meets the criteria of the 4(d) rule and whether it does or does not appreciably reduce the likelihood of survival and recovery of Puget Sound Chinook Salmon ESU (50 CFR 223.203(b)(6)(i)). This determination is a Federal action that requires review under NEPA.

Environmental Impact Statement

NEPA (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*) requires that Federal agencies conduct an environmental analysis of their proposed actions to determine if the actions may significantly affect the human environment. NMFS has determined that an EIS should be prepared under NEPA for the purpose of informing our determination under Limit 6 of the 4(d) rule. We will prepare an EIS in accordance with NEPA requirements, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*); NEPA implementing regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508); and other Federal laws, regulations, and policies.

The Proposed Action for analysis in the Final Environmental Impact Statement is NMFS's approval of a Puget Sound Chinook Harvest Resource Management Plan which NMFS determines would adequately address the criteria established for Limit 6 of the ESA 4(d) rule for the ESA-listed Puget Sound Chinook Salmon ESU. NMFS' purpose for the proposed action is to respond to the co-manager's request for an exemption from the take prohibitions of section 9 of the ESA for commercial, recreational, and tribal salmon harvest programs included in an RMP for approval under Limit 6 of the ESA 4(d) rule for the ESA-listed Puget Sound Chinook Salmon Evolutionarily Significant Unit (ESU). NMFS' need for the proposed action is two-fold: To ensure the sustainability and recovery of Puget Sound Chinook salmon; and to facilitate, as appropriate, tribal treaty and non-tribal fishing opportunities as described under the RMP, consistent with tribal treaty rights and court rulings in *United States v. Washington*.

Development of Initial Alternatives

NMFS has preliminarily identified the following three alternatives for the public to consider.

Mixed Escapement and Exploitation Rate Alternative (Proposed Action):

Make a 4(d) determination on an RMP that utilizes a mixture of management-unit-specific escapement thresholds and exploitation rate ceilings.

Fixed Management Unit Escapement Goal Alternative: Make a 4(d) determination on an RMP that sets fixed escapement goals for Puget Sound Chinook management units.

No-action Alternative (No-fishing Alternative): Under this alternative, NMFS would not make a determination on the RMP; therefore, there would be no authorized take of Puget Sound Chinook salmon in Puget Sound salmon fisheries through the 4(d) rule. Although this alternative would not meet the purpose and need of the proposed action, a No-action Alternative is required in our NEPA analysis.

Request for Comments

NMFS requests data, comments, pertinent information, or suggestions from the public, other concerned governmental agencies, the scientific community, tribes, the business community, or any other interested party regarding the proposed action discussed in this notice. We will consider all comments we receive that are relevant to the proposed action and relevant to complying with the requirements of NEPA. We particularly seek specific comments concerning:

(1) The direct, indirect, and cumulative effects that implementation of any reasonable alternative could have on endangered and threatened species, and other non-ESA-listed species and their habitats;

(2) Other reasonable alternatives (in addition to the initial alternatives presented in this notice), and their associated effects. NMFS is particularly interested in alternatives that include ecosystem considerations, including the conservation and harvest of Puget Sound Chinook salmon, recovery of the ESA-listed Southern Resident killer whales, and needs of other wildlife;

(3) Measures that would minimize and mitigate potentially adverse effects of the proposed action; and

(4) Other plans or projects that might be relevant to this project.

The EIS will analyze the effects that the various alternatives would have on salmon and fish species in Puget Sound, as well as the other aspects of the human environment. These aspects may include other fish, habitat, marine nutrient transport, seabirds, marine mammals, marine invertebrates, ESA-listed species, vegetation, socioeconomics, environmental justice, cultural resources, and the cumulative impacts of the alternatives.

Authority: 42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*; 40 CFR 1500–1508; and Companion Manual for NOAA Administrative Order 216–6A, 82 FR 4306.

Dated: April 26, 2018.

Angela Somma,

Chief, Endangered Species Division, National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 2018–09337 Filed 5–2–18; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–22–P

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: West Coast Region Gear Identification Requirements.

OMB Control Number: 0648–0352.

Form Number(s): None.

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

Number of Respondents: 811.

Average Hours Per Response: 15 minutes.

Burden Hours: 648.

Needs and Uses: This request is for extension of a currently approved information collection.

The success of fisheries management programs depends significantly on regulatory compliance. The requirements that fishing gear be marked are essential to facilitate enforcement. The ability to link fishing gear to the vessel owner or operator is crucial to enforcement of regulations issued under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. The marking of fishing gear is also valuable in actions concerning damage, loss, and civil proceedings. The regulations specify that fishing gear must be marked with the vessel's official number, Federal permit or tag number, or some other specified form of identification. The regulations further specify how the gear is to be marked (*e.g.*, location and color). Law enforcement personnel rely on gear marking information to assure compliance with fisheries management regulations. Gear that is not properly identified is confiscated. Gear violations are more readily prosecuted when the

gear is marked, and this allows for more cost-effective enforcement. Gear marking helps ensure that a vessel harvests fish only from its own traps/pots/other gear are not illegally placed. Cooperating fishermen also use the gear marking numbers to report suspicious or non-compliant activities that they observe, and to report placement or occurrence of gear in unauthorized areas. The identifying number on fishing gear is used by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), the United States Coast Guard (USCG), and other marine agencies in issuing regulations, prosecutions, and other enforcement actions necessary to support sustainable fisheries behaviors as intended in regulations. Regulation-compliant fishermen ultimately benefit from these requirements, as unauthorized and illegal fishing is deterred and more burdensome regulations are avoided.

Affected Public: Business or other for-profit organizations.

Frequency: Every five years.

Respondent's Obligation: Mandatory.

This information collection request may be viewed at 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 or fax to (202) 395–5806.

Dated: April 30, 2018.

Sarah Brabson,

NOAA PRA Clearance Officer.

[FR Doc. 2018–09372 Filed 5–2–18; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–22–P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648–XG209

New England Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

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

ACTION: Notice; public meeting.

SUMMARY: The New England Fishery Management Council (Council) is scheduling a public meeting of its Skate Advisory Panel to consider actions affecting New England fisheries in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ). Recommendations from this group will