

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Steven Atran, Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (GMFMC), 2203 North Lois Avenue, Suite 1100, Tampa FL 33607. telephone: (813) 348-1630. John Carmichael, SEDAR Coordinator, 1 Southpark Circle, Suite 306, Charleston, SC 29414. (843) 571-4366.

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. SEDAR includes three workshops: (1) Data Workshop, (2) Stock Assessment Workshop and (3) Review Workshop. The product of the Data Workshop and the Stock Assessment Workshop is a stock assessment report which describes the fisheries, evaluates the status of the stock, estimates biological benchmarks, projects future population conditions, and recommends research and monitoring needs. The Assessment Report is independently peer reviewed at the Review Workshop. The product of the Review Workshop is a Consensus Summary which reports Panel opinions regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the stock assessment and input data. Participants for SEDAR Workshops are appointed by the regional Fishery Management Councils, NOAA Fisheries' Southeast Regional Office (SERO), and the NOAA Fisheries' Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC), and include data collectors and database managers; stock assessment scientists, biologists, and researchers; constituency representatives including fishermen, environmentalists, and NGO's; International experts; and staff of Councils, Commissions, and state and federal agencies.

The stock assessments assigned to SEDAR 9 were not completed during the August Assessment Workshop. Therefore, an additional workshop will be held in December 2005 to finalize the stock assessment reports and complete the Assessment Workshop tasks. As a result of delay in completing the stock assessments, the Review Workshop will be moved from December 2005 to March 2006. The original announcement of the SEDAR Workshops for the Gulf of Mexico vermillion snapper, greater amberjack, and gray triggerfish published at 70 FR 25018, May 12, 2005.

SEDAR 9 Workshop Schedule:

December 19–20, 2005. SEDAR 9 Assessment Workshop II

December 19, 2005, 10 a.m.–8 p.m. and December 20, 2005, 8 a.m.–5 p.m.

Participants will review proposed assessment models and recommend the most appropriate methods and configurations for determining stock status and estimating population parameters. Participants will review assessment reports, compare and contrast various assessment approaches, and determine whether the assessments are adequate for submission to the review panel.

March 27–31, 2006. SEDAR 9 Review Workshop

March 27, 2006, 1 p.m.–8 p.m., March 28–30, 2006, 8 a.m.–8 p.m. and March 31, 2006, 8 a.m.–1 p.m.

The Review Workshop is an independent peer review of the assessment developed during the Data and Assessment Workshops. Workshop Panelists will review the assessment and document their comments and recommendations in a Consensus Summary. Panelists will summarize the assessment results in an Advisory Report.

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 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 the Council office (see **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**) at least 5 business days prior to each workshop.

Dated: November 23, 2005

Tracey L. Thompson,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.
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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

[I.D. 110905B]

Magnuson-Stevens Act Provisions; Atlantic Highly Migratory Species; Exempted Fishing, Scientific Research, Display, and Chartering Permits

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

ACTION: Notice of intent to issue exempted fishing, scientific research, display, and chartering permits; request for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces the intent to issue Exempted Fishing Permits (EFPs), Scientific Research Permits (SRPs), Display Permits, and Chartering Permits for the collection of Atlantic highly migratory species (HMS). The permits would authorize collections of a limited number of tunas, swordfish, billfishes, and sharks from Federal waters in the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico for the purposes of scientific data collection and public display. Generally, these permits would be valid from the date of issuance through December 31, 2006. NMFS also announces the intent to consider issuing permits upon receiving applications from U.S. fishermen whose vessels fish for Atlantic HMS while operating under chartering arrangements within the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of other nations to collect data consistent with the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) recommendations and to ensure consistency with that country's regulations without violating U.S. regulations.

DATES: Written comments on these collection, research, and fishing activities will be considered by NMFS when issuing EFPs, SRPs, Display, and/or Chartering Permits if received on or before December 29, 2005.

ADDRESSES: Comments may be submitted by any of the following methods:

- Email: ID110905B@noaa.gov. Include in the subject line the following identifier: I.D. 110905B.
- Mail: Margo Schulze-Haugen, Chief, Highly Migratory Species Management Division (F/SF1), NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910.
- Fax: (301)713-1917.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Heather Stirratt, by phone: (301)713-2347; or fax: (301)713-1917.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: EFPs, SRPs, Display, and Chartering Permits are requested and issued under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*) and/or the Atlantic Tunas Convention Act (16 U.S.C. 971 *et seq.*). Regulations at 50 CFR 600.745 and 50 CFR 635.32 govern scientific research activity, exempted fishing, chartering arrangements, and exempted educational activity with respect to Atlantic HMS.

Issuance of EFPs, SRPs, Display, and Chartering Permits may be necessary for the collection of scientific data and for public display because the possession of certain shark species is prohibited, possession of billfishes on board commercial fishing vessels is prohibited, and/or because the commercial fisheries for bluefin tuna, swordfish, and large coastal sharks may be closed for extended periods, during which time the collection of live animals and/or biological samples would be otherwise prohibited. Collection of bluefin tuna may be authorized for scientific research, age and growth, genetic, and spawning studies. NMFS regulations at 50 CFR 635.32 regarding the implantation or attachment of archival tags in Atlantic HMS require prior authorization and a report on implantation activities.

NMFS seeks public comment on its intent to issue EFPs for the purpose of collecting biological samples under at-sea fisheries observer programs. NMFS intends to issue EFPs to any NMFS employee or NMFS-approved contractor/observer to bring onboard and possess (for scientific research purposes, biological sampling, measurement, etc.) any Atlantic swordfish, Atlantic shark, or Atlantic billfish provided the fish is a tag recapture fish, dead prior to being brought onboard, or specifically authorized for sampling by the Director of NMFS' Office of Sustainable Fisheries at the request of the Southeast Fisheries

Science Center or the Northeast Fisheries Science Center. On average, several hundred swordfish and sharks are collected by at-sea observers under such EFPs in any given year.

NMFS is also seeking public comment on its intent to issue Display Permits for the collection of restricted species of sharks for the purpose of public display. In the Final Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Tunas, Swordfish, and Sharks (1999 HMS FMP), NMFS established a 60 metric ton wet weight quota for the public display and research of sharks. NMFS preliminarily determined that, based on average weight of sharks landed, approximately 3,000 sharks could be taken with this current quota. The actual number of sharks taken depends on the species and size of the sharks collected. NMFS believes that harvesting this amount for public display will have a minimal impact on the stock and that the number of sharks harvested for display and research will remain under the annual 60 metric ton quota. In 2005, seven Display Permits were issued, authorizing the collection of 258 large coastal, 133 small coastal, and 92 prohibited sharks for display purposes. The total number reported as actually taken will not be known until early 2006. However, of the 373 large coastal, 60 small coastal, and 72 prohibited sharks authorized for collection via the issuance of nine Display Permits in 2004, only 10 large coastal sharks, no small coastal sharks, and nine prohibited species were reported taken from Federal waters. In 2004, 23.68 percent of the shark display and research quota was used for public display collections.

Generally, authorized collections or exemptions involve activities otherwise prohibited by regulations implementing the 1999 HMS FMP and Amendment 1 to the Atlantic Billfish FMP. The EFPs, if issued, may authorize recipients to fish for and possess tunas, billfish, swordfish, and sharks outside the

applicable Federal commercial seasons, size limits and/or retention limits; to fish for and possess prohibited species; or to fish for and possess HMS collected for research purposes in closed areas. NMFS may consider exempted fishing applications for bycatch reduction research in closed regions of the Atlantic Ocean, Gulf of Mexico, and Caribbean Sea to test gear modifications and fishing techniques aimed to avoid incidental capture of non-target species. Such applications would likely require further National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analyses and possibly public comment.

Comments are also requested on the issuance of Chartering Permits to vessels fishing for HMS while operating under chartering arrangements within the EEZ of other nations. Chartering Permits allow a U.S. fishing vessel to fish in a manner consistent with another country's regulations without violating U.S. regulations, and ensure that such vessels report to the proper authorities, consistent with ICCAT recommendations. To date, NMFS has only issued one Chartering Permit for a pelagic longline vessel.

Table 1 summarizes the number of exempted permits and authorized collections in 2004 and 2005, as well as the number of specimens collected in 2004. The number of specimens collected in 2005 will be available when all of the 2005 annual reports are submitted to NMFS. In 2004, the number of authorized specimens for collection was greater than the number specimens actually collected under each permit. A total of 43 exempted permits were issued by NMFS in 2004 for the collection of HMS, whereas the number of permits issued in 2005 declined to 35 permits. In both 2004 and 2005, the greatest number of exempted permits issued were Tuna EFPs. Shark SRPs had the greatest number of specimens authorized for collection in 2004, whereas tuna EFPs authorized the greatest number of specimens in 2005.

Table 1. Summary of HMS Exempted Permits Issued in 2004 and 2005

	2004			2005	
	Number of Permits Issued	Number of Authorized Specimens	Number of Specimens Taken	Number of Permits Issued	Number of Authorized Specimens
EFP					
HMS	5	480	22	4	0
Shark	8	870	835	5	760
Tuna	12	385	102	7	859
Billfish*	1	100	0	2	625
SRP					
HMS	1	100	0	4	100
Shark	3	1,170	196	3	850
Display					
HMS	1	18	0	1	41
Shark	8	592	19	6	377
Total	39	3,715	1,174	32	3,612
LOA**					
Shark	4	2,445	1,114	4	1,974

* These permits authorize the collection of blue marlin, white marlin, sailfish, and swordfish, as well as larvae of each species.

**Collections made under an LOAs are not authorized; rather this estimated harvest for research is acknowledged by NMFS. All sources of mortality are accounted for and used to assess stock status.

Final decisions on the issuance of any EFPs, SRPs, Display, and Chartering Permits will depend on the submission of all required information about the proposed activities, NMFS' review of public comments received on this notice, consistency with conclusions in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) contained in the Final HMS FMP (64 FR 13575; March 19, 1999), Environmental Assessments (EAs) or EISs, and any consultations with appropriate Regional Fishery Management Councils, states, or Federal agencies. NMFS does not anticipate any environmental impacts from the issuance of these EFPs other than impacts already assessed in the 1999 HMS FMP.

All requests for EFPs, SRPs, Display, and Chartering Permits of a type or nature not addressed in this **Federal Register** notice will have a separate notice filed and separate public comment period.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 971 *et seq.* and 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: November 22, 2005.

Alan D. Risenhoover,
Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.
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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[Docket No. [051121306-5306-01]]

Announcement of Funding Opportunity for the Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program

AGENCY: Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management (OCRM), the National Ocean Service (NOS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Announcement of funding opportunity for financial assistance for project grants.

SUMMARY: NOS/OCRM is soliciting coastal and estuarine land conservation acquisition projects from eligible coastal states. The Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP) was established "for the purpose of

protecting important coastal and estuarine areas that have significant conservation, recreation, ecological, historical, or aesthetic values, or that are threatened by conversion from their natural or recreational state to other uses." This announcement solicits proposals for land acquisition projects, up to 3 years in duration, with the purpose of protecting important coastal and estuarine areas. Project proposals should reflect priorities identified in an approved state CELC plan or, if a state plan has not been completed, by the state's approved coastal management program. This solicitation will result in a prioritized list of projects that will be submitted to Congress in March 2006 for consideration in the FY 2007 appropriations process. Proposals should be prepared assuming a cost of no more than \$3,000,000 per project and three projects per eligible applicant. **DATES:** Proposals must be received by the NOS/OCRM no later than 5 p.m. e.s.t., December 30, 2005.

ADDRESSES: It is strongly preferred that you submit your application through Grants.gov at the Internet site: <http://www.grants.gov>. You may access, download, and submit an electronic grant application through Grants.gov.