

hearing on this particular request would be appropriate.

Comments may also be submitted by facsimile at (301)427-2521, provided the facsimile is confirmed by hard copy submitted by mail and postmarked no later than the closing date of the comment period.

Comments may also be submitted by e-mail. The mailbox address for providing e-mail comments is *NMFS.Pr1Comments@noaa.gov*. Include in the subject line of the e-mail comment the following document identifier: File No. 13543.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Patrick Opay or Amy Hapeman, (301)713-2289.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The subject permit is requested under the authority of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA; 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*) and the regulations governing the taking, importing, and exporting of endangered and threatened species (50 CFR 222-226).

The proposed research would further the understanding of the growth, distribution, and life history of sea turtles. The applicant requests a five-year permit to annually handle, measure, weigh, passive integrated transponder tag, flipper tag, and photograph up to 45 loggerhead, 6 green, 15 Kemp's ridley, 6 leatherback, and 2 hawksbill sea turtles. These animals would have already been captured by authorized coastal trawl surveys taking place in waters off of North Carolina to Florida.

Dated: July 31, 2008.

**P. Michael Payne,**

*Chief, Permits, Conservation and Education Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XI61

#### Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Crab Rationalization Cost Recovery Program

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

**ACTION:** Notification of fee percentage.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS publishes a notification of a one and five one-

hundredths (1.05) percent fee for cost recovery under the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Crab Rationalization Program (Program). This action is intended to provide holders of crab allocations with the fee percentage for the 2008/2009 crab fishing year so they can calculate the required payment for cost recovery fees that must be submitted by July 31, 2009.

**DATES:** The Crab Rationalization Program Registered Crab Receiver permit holder is responsible for submitting the fee liability payment to NMFS on or before July 31, 2009.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Gretchen Harrington or Glenn Merrill, 907-586-7228.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

##### Background

NMFS Alaska Region administers the Crab Rationalization Program in the North Pacific. Fishing under the Program began in August 15, 2005. Regulations implementing the Program are set forth at 50 CFR part 680.

The Program is a limited access system authorized by section 313(j) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act). The Program includes a cost recovery provision to collect fees to recover the actual costs directly related to the management and enforcement of the Program. NMFS developed the cost recovery provision to conform with statutory requirements and to partially compensate the agency for the unique added costs of management and enforcement of the Program. Section 313(j) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act provided supplementary authority to section 304(d)(2)(A) and additional detail for cost recovery provisions specific to the Program. The cost recovery provision allows collection of 133 percent of the actual management, data collecting, and enforcement costs up to three percent of the ex-vessel value of crab harvested under the Program. Additionally, section 313(j) requires the harvesting and processing sectors to each pay half the cost recovery fees. Catcher/processor quota share holders are required to pay the full fee percentage.

A crab allocation holder generally incurs a cost recovery fee liability for every pound of crab landed. The crab allocations include Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ), Crew IFQ, Individual Processing Quota, Community Development Quota, and the Adak community allocation. The Registered Crab Receiver (RCR) permit holder must collect the fee liability from the crab allocation holder who is landing crab.

Additionally, the RCR permit holder must collect his or her own fee liability for all crab delivered to the RCR. The RCR permit holder is responsible for submitting this payment to NMFS on or before the due date of July 31, following the crab fishing year in which payment for the crab is made.

The dollar amount of the fee due is determined by multiplying the fee percentage (not to exceed three percent) by the ex-vessel value of crab debited from the allocation. Specific details on the Program's cost recovery provision may be found in the implementing regulations set forth at 50 CFR 680.44.

##### Fee Percentage

Each year, NMFS calculates and publishes in the **Federal Register** the fee percentage according to the factors and methodology described in Federal regulations at § 680.44(c)(2). The formula for determining the fee percentage is the "direct program costs" divided by "value of the fishery," where "direct program costs" are the direct program costs for the Crab Rationalization Program for the previous fiscal year, and "value of the fishery" is the ex-vessel value of the catch subject to the crab cost recovery fee liability for the current year. Using this fee percentage formula, the estimated percentage of costs to value for the 2007/2008 crab fishing year was 1.05 percent. Therefore, the fee percentage will be 1.05 percent for the 2008/2009 crab fishing year.

In all previous crab fishing years, the estimated percentage of costs to value have exceeded three percent. However, the Magnuson-Stevens Act, at section 304(d)(2)(B), prohibits NMFS from collecting fees greater than three percent of the ex-vessel value of the crab harvests under the Program. The fee percentage for the 2008/2009 crab fishing year is less than three percent due to a variety of factors including the increasing value of the fishery due to increased total allowable catch limits for various crab species such as Bristol Bay red king crab (*Paralithodes camtschaticus*) and Bering Sea Snow crab (*Chionoecetes opilio*), increased exvessel price per pound of crab relative to previous years, and decreased management costs relative to previous years primarily due to decreased staff and contract costs.

**Authority:** 16 U.S.C. 1862 *et seq.*

Dated: August 1, 2008.

**Alan D. Risenhoover,**

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

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