

that depredation by orcas on post-release, deck-sorted halibut was at times high, especially in the arrowtooth flounder target fishery. The option of holding halibut in sea water tanks would allow the vessel to wait or change location and release halibut when or where they are less likely to be depredated. Another potential benefit of holding deck-sorted halibut in tanks would be to maintain or improve the halibut's viability by placing them in oxygenated water if sampling by the observer fell behind the pace of sorting.

This proposed action would exempt participating catcher/processors from selected 50 CFR part 679 prohibitions, and monitoring and observer requirements. Should the Regional Administrator issue a permit based on this EFP application, the conditions of the permit will be designed to minimize halibut mortality and any potential for biasing estimates of groundfish and halibut mortality. Vessels participating in EFP fishing may be exempt from, at minimum, the following regulations:

1. the prohibition against interfering with or biasing the sampling procedure employed by an observer including physical, mechanical, or other sorting or discarding of catch before sampling, at § 679.7(g)(2);

2. the requirements to weigh all catch by an Amendment 80 vessel on a NMFS-approved scale at § 679.93(c)(1) and by all vessels at § 679.28(b); and

3. the requirement to return all prohibited species, or parts thereof, to the sea immediately, with a minimum of injury, regardless of its condition at § 679.21(b)(2)(ii).

In 2017, the AKSC would be required to submit to NMFS a report of the EFP results after EFP experimental fishing has ended in 2016. The report would include a comparison of halibut mortality from halibut sampled during the EFP and an estimate of halibut mortality under standard IPHC halibut mortality rates for those target fisheries. Additionally, the report should compare the estimated amount of halibut sampled by observers in the factory with the census of halibut collected in the factory by vessel crew to evaluate the precision and associated variance of sampled-based extrapolations and to inform a decision of the best way to account for factory halibut in a regulated program. Finally, the report should evaluate the effectiveness of using sea water holding tanks on deck to improve the viability and minimize depredation by orcas on deck-sorted halibut.

Under the EFP, participants would be limited to their groundfish allocations under the 2016 harvest specifications.

The amount of halibut mortality applied to the EFP activities would be subject to review and approval by NMFS.

This EFP would be valid upon issuance in 2016 until either the end of 2016 or when the annual halibut mortality apportionment is reached in areas of the BSAI open to directed fishing by the various sectors. EFP-authorized fishing activities would not be expected to change the nature or duration of the groundfish fishery, gear used, or the amount or species of fish caught by the participants.

The fieldwork that would be conducted under this EFP is not expected to have a significant impact on the human environment as detailed in the categorical exclusion prepared for this action (see **ADDRESSES**).

In accordance with § 679.6, NMFS has determined that the application warrants further consideration and has forwarded the application to the Council to initiate consultation. The Council is scheduled to consider the EFP application during its February 2016 meeting, which will be held at the Benson Hotel in Portland, OR. The EFP application will also be provided to the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee for review at the February Council meeting. The applicant has been invited to appear in support of the application.

#### Public Comments

Interested persons may comment on the application at the February 2016 Council meeting during public testimony or until February 9, 2016. Information regarding the meeting is available at the Council's Web site at <http://www.npfmc.org>. Copies of the application and categorical exclusion are available for review from NMFS (see **ADDRESSES**). Comments also may be submitted directly to NMFS (see **ADDRESSES**) by the end of the comment period (see **DATES**).

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

Dated: January 20, 2016.

**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-XD961

#### Pacific Island Fisheries; Special Coral Reef Ecosystem Fishing Permit for Offshore Aquaculture

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

**ACTION:** Notice of availability of draft environmental assessment; request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS proposes to issue a Special Coral Reef Ecosystem Fishing Permit that would authorize Kampachi Farms, LLC, to stock, culture, and harvest fish that are part of the coral reef ecosystem management unit in a submerged net pen moored in Federal waters about 5.5 nm (10.2 km) off the west coast of the Island of Hawaii. This notice informs the public that NMFS prepared a draft environmental assessment (EA) of the potential impacts of the proposed activity.

**DATES:** NMFS must receive comments on the draft EA by February 16, 2016.

**ADDRESSES:** You may submit comments on the draft EA, identified by NOAA-NMFS-2015-0137, by either of the following methods:

- **Electronic Submission:** Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal. Go to [www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=NOAA-NMFS-2015-0137](http://www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=NOAA-NMFS-2015-0137), click the "Comment Now!" icon, complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments.

- **Mail:** Send written comments to Michael D. Tosatto, Regional Administrator, NMFS Pacific Islands Region (PIR), 1845 Wasp Blvd., Bldg. 176, Honolulu, HI 96818.

**Instructions:** NMFS may not consider comments sent by any other method, to any other address or individual, or received after the end of the comment period. All comments received are a part of the public record and will generally be posted for public viewing on [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov) without change. All personal identifying information (e.g., name, address, etc.), confidential business information, or otherwise sensitive information submitted voluntarily by the sender will be publicly accessible. NMFS will accept anonymous comments (enter "N/A" in the required fields if you wish to remain anonymous).

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Melanie Brown, Sustainable Fisheries, NMFS PIR, 808-725-5171.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** NMFS proposes to issue a Special Coral Reef Ecosystem Fishing Permit to Kampachi Farms, LLC (applicant), consistent with Federal regulations for Hawaii coral reef ecosystem fisheries management at Title 50, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 665.224, and the Fishery Ecosystem Plan for the Hawaiian Archipelago (FEP). NMFS would authorize the applicant to stock, culture, and harvest kampachi, a native coral reef ecosystem management unit fish (*Seriola rivoliana*, Almaco jack, marketed as Kona Kampachi®). NMFS would authorize the activity for 2 years.

The applicant would use a floating, submerged, cylindrical net pen with an area of 1,083 m<sup>3</sup> (38,246 ft<sup>3</sup>) net pen, suspended from a 30-m (98-ft) diameter float ring. The applicant would tether the net pen, made of brass and synthetic meshes, to a 60-ft (18-m) feed vessel. The net pen, float ring, and feed vessel are collectively called the Velella Delta Array. The applicant would secure the array to a single-point mooring in Federal waters approximately 6,000 ft (1,830 m) deep, 5.5 nm (10.2 km) west of Keauhou Bay, Hawaii. The exact position of the Velella Delta Array would depend on wind and currents and would approach no closer than 3 nm (5.6 km) from shore.

The proposed activity requires a special permit because the FEP and Federal regulations do not identify the Velella Delta Array as an approved gear type to fish for coral reef ecosystem management unit species. If NMFS authorizes the activity, the applicant would use the Velella Delta Array to grow and harvest 30,000 kampachi from fingerlings in two 15,000-fish cohorts. The applicant would stock the net pen with first-generation offspring from wild fish.

NMFS anticipates that the low density of cultured fish, the procedures proposed to minimize feed waste, and the flushing by ocean currents, would minimally affect water quality. The net materials resist both biofouling and leaching. The net pen design includes a single mesh entry panel on the top that Kampachi Farms staff would use only after raising the pen to the surface. The project design and operating procedures would prevent fish escapes.

The applicant would equip the array's float ring and feed vessel with GPS navigation units to provide constant location information on the array, simplifying retrieval operations if the array were to break free from the

mooring. In the unlikely case of the array separating from the mooring, the applicant would notify the U.S. Coast Guard and immediately recover any lost gear. In addition to requiring the applicant to monitor the array, NMFS would require the applicant to avoid interactions with protected species (*i.e.*, marine mammals, seabirds, sea turtles, and reef corals), prevent fish escapes, dispose of dead fish on land, maintain harvest and transshipment reports, and, if needed, accommodate a scientific observer.

NMFS expects that the array would aggregate pelagic fish, and fishermen would be able to continue fishing near the array. The small size of the array would not adversely affect fish catches in the ocean west of the Island of Hawaii.

The applicant must also obtain a permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to use the mooring, and NMFS prepared the draft EA in collaboration with the USACE. When finalized, NMFS will use the EA to determine whether or not the activity would be a major Federal action with the potential for significant environmental impacts. If NMFS determines that the proposed activity would have significant impacts, we would need to prepare an environmental impact statement. The EA will also inform our decision whether or not to issue the permit. Additionally, the EA will inform the USACE preparation of their own environmental evaluations in accordance with USACE procedures for the mooring permit.

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

Dated: January 20, 2016.

**Emily H. Menashes,**

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

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## DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

### Office of the Secretary

#### Defense Health Board; Notice of Federal Advisory Committee Meeting

**AGENCY:** Department of Defense (DoD).

**ACTION:** Notice of Federal Advisory Committee meeting.

**SUMMARY:** The Department of Defense is publishing this notice to announce that the following Federal Advisory Committee meeting of the Defense Health Board will take place.

**DATES:**

*Wednesday, February 10, 2016*

8:45 a.m.–11:30 a.m. (Open Session)  
11:30 a.m.–12:45 p.m. (Administrative Working Meeting)  
12:45 p.m.–4:15 p.m. (Open Session)

**ADDRESSES:** Inn by the Sea Hotel, Wind and Sea Room, 7830 Fay Avenue, La Jolla, California 92037 (Pre-meeting registration required; see guidance in **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION**, "Public's Accessibility to the Meeting").

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** The Executive Director of the Defense Health Board is Ms. Christine Bader, 7700 Arlington Boulevard, Suite 5101, Falls Church, Virginia 22042, (703) 681-6653, Fax: (703) 681-9539, [christine.e.bader.civ@mail.mil](mailto:christine.e.bader.civ@mail.mil). For meeting information, please contact Ms. Kendal Brown, 7700 Arlington Boulevard, Suite 5101, Falls Church, Virginia 22042, [kendal.l.brown2.ctr@mail.mil](mailto:kendal.l.brown2.ctr@mail.mil), (703) 681-6670, Fax: (703) 681-9539.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** This meeting is being held under the provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act of 1972 (5 U.S.C., Appendix, as amended), the Government in the Sunshine Act of 1976 (5 U.S.C. 552b, as amended), and 41 CFR 102-3.150, and in accordance with section 10(a)(2) of the Federal Advisory Committee Act.

Additional information, including the agenda and electronic registration, is available at the DHB Web site, <http://www.health.mil/About-MHS/Other-MHS-Organizations/Defense-VHealth-Board/Meetings>.

**Purpose of the Meeting:** The purpose of the meeting is to provide progress updates on specific taskings before the DHB. In addition, the DHB will receive information briefings on current issues or lessons learned related to military medicine, health policy, health research, disease/injury prevention, health promotion, and healthcare delivery.

**Agenda:** Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 552b, as amended, and 41 CFR 102-3.140 through 102-3.165 and subject to availability of space, the DHB meeting is open to the public from 8:45 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:45 p.m. to 4:15 p.m. on February 10, 2016. The DHB anticipates receiving a progress update from the Healthcare Delivery Subcommittee on the pediatric clinical preventive services review and an update from the Public Health Subcommittee on their review of improving Defense Health Program medical research processes. In addition, information briefings will be presented on, Naval Health Research Center and