

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The agenda will include presentations on Geographic Information System Approach for Identifying Emerging Technology Regions, U.S. Manufacturing Competitiveness in the Global Economy and Collaborations in ATP Projects. A discussion scheduled to begin at 1 p.m. and to end at 3 p.m. on May 9, 2006, on ATP budget issues will be closed. Agenda may change to accommodate Committee business. The Assistant Secretary for Administration, with the concurrence of the General Counsel, formally determined on April 21, 2006, that portions of the meeting of the Advanced Technology Program Advisory Committee which involve discussion of proposed funding of the Advanced Technology Program may be closed in accordance with 5 U.S.C. 552b(c)(9)(B), because that portion will divulge matters the premature disclosure of which would be likely to significantly frustrate implementation of proposed agency actions.

Dated: April 21, 2006.

William Jeffrey,
Director.

[FR Doc. 06-3971 Filed 4-24-06; 9:26 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 041906D]

Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act Provisions; Application for Exempted Fishing Permits (EFPs)

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

ACTION: Notification of a request for EFPs to conduct experimental fishing; request for comments.

SUMMARY: This request for the continuation of an EFP involves the non-destructive collection of size frequency and population data on legal and sublegal lobsters as part of an ongoing research project to monitor the offshore lobster fishery in Lobster Management Area 3.

DATES: Comments on this lobster EFP notification for offshore lobster monitoring and data collection must be received on or before May 11, 2006.

ADDRESSES: Written comments should be sent to Patricia A. Kurkul, Regional Administrator, NMFS, Northeast Regional Office, 1 Blackburn Drive,

Gloucester, MA 01930-2298. Mark the outside of the envelope "Comments - Lobster EFP Proposal". Comments also may be sent via facsimile (fax) to 978-281-9117. Comments on the Lobster EFP Proposal may be submitted by e-mail. The mailbox address for providing e-mail comments is Lobster0206@noaa.gov. Include in the subject line of the e-mail comment the following document identifier: "Comments - Lobster EFP Proposal".

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Bob Ross, Fishery Management Specialist, (978) 281-9234, fax (978)-281-9117.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The regulations that govern exempted fishing, at 50 CFR 600.745(b) and 697.22 allow the Regional Administrator to authorize for limited testing, public display, data collection, exploration, health and safety, environmental clean-up, and/or hazardous removal purposes, and the targeting or incidental harvest of managed species that would otherwise be prohibited. An EFP to authorize such activity may be issued, provided there is adequate opportunity for the public to comment on the EFP application, the conservation goals and objectives of Federal management of the American lobster resource are not compromised, and issuance of the EFP is beneficial to the management of the species.

Continuation of this EFP, until April 30, 2007, would not involve the authorization of any additional trap gear in the area. A maximum of seven participating commercial fishing vessels will continue the non-destructive collection of detailed abundance and size frequency data on the composition of lobsters in four general offshore study areas in a collaborative effort with the Atlantic Offshore Lobstermen's Association (AOLA). Continuation of this EFP would authorize each participating commercial fishing vessel to continue to utilize one modified juvenile lobster collector trap to collect population data. The lobster trap modifications are to the escape vents, and trap entrance head. Therefore, this modified trap would impact its environment no differently than the regular lobster trap it replaces and will add no additional traps to the area. After data is collected on lobsters in the trap, all sub-legal lobsters will be immediately returned to the sea. The EFP waives the American lobster escape vent requirement specified at 50 CFR 697.21(c) for a maximum of one trap per vessel for a maximum of seven vessels in the program.

The Director, State, Federal and Constituent Programs Office, Northeast Region, NMFS (Office Director) has made a preliminary determination that the subject EFP application contains all the required information and warrants further consideration. The Office Director has also made a preliminary determination that continuation of the activities authorized under the EFPs would be consistent with the goals and objectives of Federal management of the American lobster resource. However, further review and consultation may be necessary before a final determination is made to issue EFPs. NMFS announces that the Office Director proposes to renew EFPs that would allow a maximum of seven vessels to conduct fishing operations involving the use of one juvenile lobster collector trap per vessel that are otherwise restricted by the regulations governing the American lobster fisheries of the Northeastern United States. Therefore, this document invites comments on the renewal of EFPs to allow a maximum of seven commercial fishing vessels to utilize a maximum of seven modified lobster traps and to collect statistical data using modified lobster trap gear.

The American lobster fishery is the most valuable fishery in the northeastern United States. In 2004, approximately 75 million pounds (34,169 metric tons (mt)) of American lobster were landed with an ex-vessel value of approximately 315 million dollars. American lobster experience very high fishing mortality rates throughout their range, from Canada to Cape Hatteras. Operating under the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's interstate management process, American lobster are managed in state waters under Amendment 3 to the American Lobster Interstate Fishery Management Plan (Amendment 3). In Federal waters of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), lobster is managed under Federal regulations at 50 CFR part 697. Amendment 3, and compatible Federal regulations established a framework for area management, which includes industry participation in the development of a management program which suits the needs of each lobster management area while meeting targets established in the Interstate Fisheries Management Program. The industry, through area management teams, with the support of state agencies, have played a vital role in advancing the area management program.

To facilitate the development of effective management tools, extensive monitoring and detailed abundance and size frequency data on the composition

of lobsters throughout the range of the resource are necessary. The need for additional monitoring and detailed abundance and size frequency data on the offshore fishery, as proposed by this EFP, is critical due to the lack of consistent statistical coverage of the offshore lobster fishery. This proposed EFP will continue a project involved in extensive monitoring and detailed population information of American lobster in four offshore study areas using modified lobster trap gear that would otherwise be prohibited.

Proposed EFP

The proposed EFP is a continuation of a project begun in 2003, and is submitted by the AOLA and seven commercial lobster fishing vessels that are also members of the AOLA. The EFP proposes to collect statistical and scientific information on all lobsters retained in one juvenile lobster collector trap, as part of a project designed to monitor the offshore American lobster fishery to collect data that will assist the development of management practices appropriate to the fishery.

Each of seven commercial fishing vessels involved in this monitoring and data collection program would collect detailed abundance and size frequency data on the composition of all lobsters collected from one modified juvenile lobster trap in a string of approximately 40 lobster traps, including data on sub-legal, and egg bearing females in addition to legal lobsters. This EFP would not involve the authorization of any additional lobster trap gear in the area. Vessels would collect data from each of four general study areas: The Mid-Atlantic - Chesapeake 50 Fathom Edge; the Southern - Hudson Canyon Area; the Middle - Veatch Canyon Area; and the Northern - Georges Bank and Gulf of Maine Area. The participating vessels may retain on deck sub-legal lobsters, and egg bearing female lobsters, in addition to legal lobsters, for the purpose of collecting the required abundance and size frequency data specified by this project. Data collected would include size, sex, shell disease index, and the total number of legal, sub-legals, berried females, and v-notched females. All sub-legals, berried females, and v-notched female lobsters would be returned to the sea as quickly as possible after data collection. Pursuant to 50 CFR 600.745 (b)(3)(v), the Regional Administrator may attach terms and conditions to the EFP consistent with the purpose of the exempted fishing.

This EFP requests the inclusion of a maximum of one modified lobster trap per vessel, designated as a juvenile

lobster collector trap, in the string of approximately 40 traps. This modified lobster trap would have a smaller entrance head, no escape vents and would be made of a smaller mesh than the traditional offshore trap to catch and retain a high percentage of juvenile lobsters in the 30–65 mm carapace length range. The smaller entrance head would exclude large lobsters from this trap and decrease the probability of cannibalism within the trap. The modifications to the trap are to the escape vents, and trap entrance head, not to the trap's size or configuration, therefore this modified trap would impact its environment no differently than the regular lobster trap it replaces. Renewal of this EFP will add no additional traps to the areas. Due to modifications to the escape vent, the EFP proposed to waive the American lobster escape vent requirement specified at 50 CFR 697.21(c) for a maximum of one trap per vessel for a maximum of seven vessels in the program. With the exception of the one modified juvenile lobster collector trap, all traps fished by a maximum of seven participating vessels would comply with all applicable lobster regulations specified at 50 CFR part 697.

All monitoring and data collection would be conducted by seven federally permitted commercial fishing vessels, during the course of regular commercial fishing operations. There would not be observers or researchers onboard the participating vessels.

This project, including the lobster handling protocols, was initially developed in consultation with NMFS and University of New Hampshire scientists. To the greatest extent practicable, these handling protocols are designed to avoid unnecessary adverse environmental impact on lobsters involved in this project, while achieving the data collection objectives of this project.

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

Dated: April 21, 2006.

James P. Burgess,
Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.
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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[Docket No. 060313063-6104-02; I.D. 042006C]

Financial Assistance to Administer NOAA's Faculty and Student Intern Research Program and Notice of Availability of Funds and Solicitation for Proposals for These Funds; Extension of Application Deadline

AGENCY: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of Availability of Student Intern Research Program funding.

SUMMARY: NOAA publishes this notice to extend the solicitation period for proposals for NOAA's Faculty and Student Intern Research Program. Proposals are solicited from non-profit organizations who would design and provide administrative services, such as provide training, educational, and research opportunities to faculty, as well as graduate and undergraduate students pursuing degrees related to NOAA's mission. This solicitation was originally announced in the Federal Register on March 30, 2006. The solicitation period for this program was extended to provide the public more time to submit proposals.

DATES: Proposals must be received no later than 5 p.m., eastern daylight time, May 9, 2006.

ADDRESSES: It is strongly encouraged that applications submitted in response to this announcement are submitted through the *Grants.gov* Web site. Electronic access to the Full Funding Opportunity Announcement for this program is available via the Grants.gov Web site: <http://www.grants.gov>. Applicants must comply with all requirements contained in the Full Funding Opportunity Announcement. Paper applications (a signed original and two copies) may also be submitted to the following address: NOAA Civil Rights Office/OFA51, 1305 East West Highway, Room 12222, Silver Spring, MD 20910. No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Victoria G. Dancy, NOAA Civil Rights Office/OFA51, 1305 East West Highway, Room 12222, Silver Spring, MD 20910, or by phone at (301) 713-0500, ext. 136.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On March 30, 2006, NOAA published a Notice of Availability of Funds and Solicitation for Proposals for these Funds for the NOAA Faculty and Student Intern