

*Legal Authority:* Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act as reauthorized in 2007 (16 U.S.C. 1801 et. seq.)

This information collection request may be viewed at [www.reginfo.gov](http://www.reginfo.gov). Follow the instructions to view the Department of Commerce collections currently under review by OMB.

Written comments and recommendations for the proposed information collection should be submitted within 30 days of the publication of this notice on the following website [www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAMain](http://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAMain). Find this particular information collection by selecting "Currently under 30-day Review—Open for Public Comments" or by using the search function and entering either the title of the collection or the OMB Control Number 0648–0769.

**Sheleen Dumas,**

*Department PRA Clearance Officer, Office of the Chief Information Officer, Commerce Department.*

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**BILLING CODE 3510–22–P**

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

#### Agency Information Collection Activities; Submission to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for Review and Approval; Comment Request; South Pacific Tuna Act

**AGENCY:** National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

**ACTION:** Notice of information collection, request for comment.

**SUMMARY:** The Department of Commerce, in accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (PRA), invites the general public and other Federal agencies to comment on proposed, and continuing information collections, which helps us assess the impact of our information collection requirements and minimize the public's reporting burden. The purpose of this notice is to allow for 60 days of public comment preceding submission of the collection to OMB.

**DATES:** To ensure consideration, comments regarding this proposed information collection must be received on or before November 7, 2022.

**ADDRESSES:** Interested persons are invited to submit written comments to Adrienne Thomas, NOAA PRA Officer, at [NOAA.PRA@noaa.gov](mailto:NOAA.PRA@noaa.gov). Please reference OMB Control Number 0648–

0218 in the subject line of your comments. Do not submit Confidential Business Information or otherwise sensitive or protected information.

#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Requests for additional information or specific questions related to collection activities should be directed to Emily Reynolds, Fishery Policy Analyst, NOAA Fisheries, 1845 Wasp Blvd., Building 176, Honolulu, HI 96818; (808) 725–5039 or [emily.reynolds@noaa.gov](mailto:emily.reynolds@noaa.gov).

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

##### I. Abstract

This request is for extension, with no changes, to a currently approved information collection. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) collects vessel license, vessel registration, catch, and unloading information from operators of U.S. purse seine vessels fishing under the provisions of the Treaty on Fisheries between the Governments of Certain Pacific Island States and the Government of the United States of America (Treaty). The Treaty provides access for U.S. purse seine vessels to fish in the exclusive economic zones (EEZs) of Pacific Island Parties to the Treaty (PIPs). The PIPs include Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. This collection of information is required to meet U.S. obligations under the Treaty.

The South Pacific Tuna Act of 1988 (16 U.S.C. 973–973r) and U.S. implementing regulations (50 CFR part 300, subpart D) authorize the collection of information from U.S. purse seine vessels fishing in the EEZs of PIPs under the Treaty. Vessel operators must submit annual vessel license and registration (including registration of vessel monitoring system (VMS) units) applications and periodic written reports of catch and unloading of fish from licensed vessels. They are also required to ensure the continued operation of VMS units on board licensed vessels, which is expected to require periodic maintenance of the units. The information collected is submitted to the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) through the U.S. government, NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). The license and registration application information is used by the FFA to determine the operational capability and financial responsibility of a vessel operator interested in fishing under the Treaty. Information obtained from vessel catch

and unloading reports is used by the FFA to assess fishing effort and fishery resources in the region and to track the amount of fish caught within each PIP's EEZ. Maintenance of VMS units is needed to ensure the continuous operation of the VMS units, which, as part of the VMS administered by the FFA, are used as an enforcement tool. If the information is not collected, the U.S. government will not meet its obligations under the Treaty, and the lack of fishing information will result in poor management of the fishery resources.

##### II. Method of Collection

All information will be submitted in hard copy via mail or through electronic reporting.

##### III. Data

*OMB Control Number:* 0648–0218.

*Form Number(s):* None.

*Type of Review:* Regular submission (extension of a current information collection).

*Affected Public:* Business or other for-profit organizations.

*Estimated Number of Respondents:* 21.

*Estimated Time per Response:* License application, 1 hour; VMS registration application, 45 minutes; catch report, 1 hour; unloading logsheet, 30 minutes, expression of interest, 2 hours and renewal, 15 minutes.

*Estimated Total Annual Burden Hours:* 207.

*Estimated Total Annual Cost to Public:* \$76,706 in recordkeeping/reporting costs.

*Respondent's Obligation:* Mandatory.

*Legal Authority:* 16 U.S.C. 973–973r.

##### IV. Request for Comments

We are soliciting public comments to permit the Department/Bureau to: (a) Evaluate whether the proposed information collection is necessary for the proper functions of the Department, including whether the information will have practical utility; (b) Evaluate the accuracy of our estimate of the time and cost burden for this proposed collection, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used; (c) Evaluate ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) Minimize the reporting burden on those who are to respond, including the use of automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

Comments that you submit in response to this notice are a matter of public record. We will include or summarize each comment in our request to OMB to approve this ICR. Before including your address, phone number,

email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you may ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

**Sheleen Dumas,**

*Department PRA Clearance Officer, Office of the Chief Information Officer, Commerce Department.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648–XC246]

#### Fisheries of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic; Exempted Fishing Permits

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

**ACTION:** Notice of receipt of an application for exempted fishing permit; request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS announces the receipt of an application for an exempted fishing permit (EFP) from Dr. David Portnoy, Texas A&M University, Corpus Christi. If granted, the EFP would allow a limited harvest of speckled hind in South Atlantic Federal waters by select commercial fishermen. The samples collected would be used to assess the speckled hind population structure, genetic diversity, and life history in the South Atlantic.

**DATES:** Written comments must be received on or before September 21, 2022.

**ADDRESSES:** You may submit comments on the application, identified by “NOAA–NMFS–2022–0084” by any of the following methods:

- *Electronic Submission:* Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal. Go to <https://www.regulations.gov> and enter “NOAA–NMFS–2022–0084” in the Search box. Click on the “Comment” icon, complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments.
- *Mail:* Submit written comments to Frank Helies, Southeast Regional Office, NMFS, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701.

**Instructions:** Comments sent by any other method, to any other address or individual, or received after the end of the comment period, may not be considered by NMFS. 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).

Electronic copies of the EFP application may be obtained from the Southeast Regional Office website at <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/southeast/about-us/south-atlantic-speckled-hind-exempted-fishing-permit-application/>.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Frank Helies, 727–824–5305; email: [frank.helies@noaa.gov](mailto:frank.helies@noaa.gov).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The EFP is requested under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act; 16 U.S.C 1801 *et seq.*), and regulations at 50 CFR 600.745(b) concerning exempted fishing.

Currently, Federal regulations at 50 CFR 622.181 (b)(3) prohibit the harvest and possession of speckled hind in or from South Atlantic Federal waters. Speckled hind are sedentary, long-lived, deep-water groupers. There are no known data regarding the stock structure of speckled hind in South Atlantic waters and little is known about their biology; consequently, there are not enough data to accurately determine whether the species is undergoing overfishing or are overfished.

Dr. Portnoy was awarded a Marine Fisheries Initiative grant to assess the population structure, genetic diversity, and life history of speckled hind in the U.S. South Atlantic. Beginning in 2018, Dr. Portnoy acquired some of his project’s needed speckled hind samples from fishery independent surveys conducted by NMFS and the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources. However, as a result of low encounter rates with the species since 2018, and reduced fishery independent survey effort in 2020, additional samples were needed to obtain a sufficient number of project samples.

Dr. Portnoy previously requested, and was granted, an EFP from NMFS on March 22, 2021, to retain up to 40

speckled hind per calendar year (up to 80 total for the EFP) (86 FR 11503, February 25, 2021). That EFP expired on August 31, 2022. To date, only 11 of the 80 projected samples have been obtained in the South Atlantic, and only 2 from the previously issued EFP. However, the applicant has continued to add fishermen to the previous EFP to increase opportunities for speckled hind sample collection.

If granted, the EFP would be valid through August 31, 2024, and would allow a limited harvest of up to 40 speckled hind per calendar year (up to 80 total for the duration of the EFP) in the Federal waters of the South Atlantic. The EFP would exempt select commercial fishermen from Federal regulations prohibiting the harvest and possession of speckled hind in Federal waters of the South Atlantic at 50 CFR 622.181(b)(3). Because speckled hind would be harvested incidentally during routine commercial fishing trips, NMFS does not expect that any additional environmental impacts would occur through the issuance of the EFP.

Dr. Portnoy proposes to collect speckled hind from select commercial fishermen who occasionally encounter speckled hind in South Atlantic Federal waters during routine commercial fishing operations. Currently, six commercial fishermen have volunteered to participate in the EFP while using hook-and-line gear fishing in South Atlantic Federal waters in depths ranging from 70 ft (21 m) to 600 ft (183 m), and one fisherman has volunteered while using black sea bass pots in depths ranging from 60 ft (18 m) to 110 ft (34 m). Speckled hind would only be collected using either gear type during the course of regular fishing operations. The selected commercial fisherman would comply with all other Federal fishing regulations such as fishing seasons, area closures, and commercial trip limits. If the fishermen encounter a speckled hind, a fin clip would be taken from the harvested speckled hind and shipped to the Marine Genomics Laboratory at Texas A&M University, Corpus Christi, Texas. The sampled fin clip would be used for genetic studies. All sampled speckled hind carcasses would be shipped to the NMFS Southeast Fisheries Science Center for otolith extraction to determine age and growth parameters. The results of the EFP are expected to contribute to improved understanding of speckled hind population structure, genetic diversity, and life history in the U.S. South Atlantic. The EFP results could help support future scientific and management decisions for the speckled hind stock in the South Atlantic.