Council address: South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, One Southpark Circle, Suite 306; Charleston, SC 29407-4699.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Robert Mahood, Executive Director; telephone: (843) 571-4366; fax: (843) 769-4520; email: robert.mahood@noaa.gov

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The purpose of this meeting is for Council staff to meet with the limited access permit holders in the golden crab fishery to gather information in preparation for Amendment 1 to the Golden Crab Fishery Management Plan.

Although other issues not contained in this agenda may come before this group for discussion, in accordance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, those issues may not the subject of formal action during this meeting. Action will be restricted to those issues specifically listed in this notice.

Special Accommodations

This meeting is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to the Council office (see **ADDRESSES**) by September 20, 1999.

Dated: September 8, 1999.

Bruce C. Morehead,

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

[FR Doc. 99–23799 Filed 9–10–99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–22–F

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 082599B]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone off Alaska; Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska Management Area; Exempted Fishing Permit

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

ACTION: Issuance of an exempted fishing permit (EFP).

SUMMARY: NMFS announces the issuance of exempted fishing permit (EFP) 99–04 to the Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation, Inc. (AFDF). The EFP authorizes AFDF to conduct an experiment in the Gulf of Alaska (GOA) to test artificial bait fabricated from Alaska pollock offal. This EFP is necessary to obtain information that could prove valuable for Alaska fisheries. It is intended to further the goals of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

ADDRESSES: Copies of the EFP and the Environmental Assessment (EA) prepared for the EFP are available from Lori Gravel, Sustainable Fisheries Division, Alaska Region, NMFS, P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Nina Mollett, 907–586–7462.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska authorizes the issuance of EFPs for fishing for groundfish in a manner that would otherwise be prohibited under existing regulations. The procedures for issuing EFPs are set out at 50 CFR 679.6 and 600.745.

NMFS received an EFP application from AFDF on April 19, 1999, to conduct field trials in the GOA to test artificial longline bait fabricated from Alaska seafood offal. An announcement of receipt of the EFP application was published in the **Federal Register** on June 8, 1999 (64 FR 30488). The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) approved the application at its June 9–14, 1999, meeting in Kodiak.

AFDF is receiving funding for this project from the Alaska Science Technology Foundation and is conducting its research collaboratively with MARCO Marine; the Center for Applied Regional Studies (based in Cambridge, Massachusetts); and the Wildlife Conservation Society, which is run by the Bronx Zoo in New York City.

AFDF plans to conduct the experiment in the GOA, near Seward, Kodiak, or Sitka, and will charter longline vessels under 60 feet for the purpose. The experiment will consist of two trials: One in late July, consisting of 8 days of fishing, and one in September, consisting of 12 days of fishing. The objective of the experiment is to compare the effectiveness between artificial and natural bait under commercial fishing conditions.

The first trial is intended to determine whether the artificial bait is effective and to make any changes needed in the bait itself or in the procedures followed. The second trial is intended to obtain meaningful and, if possible, statistically significant results on the effectiveness of the bait. The bait will be tested for its attractiveness to Pacific cod, to other species taken as incidental catch in the Pacific cod fishery, and to Pacific halibut.

AFDF sees both environmental and socioeconomic benefits accruing from its experiment, which, if successful, will lead to the substitution of artificial bait for much of the natural bait that is currently used. Potential environmental benefits include:

1. Recycling waste that is currently being dumped into the ocean into a productive use;
2. Reducing fishing pressure on bait species that are also used for human consumption, such as squid and herring;
3. Enhancing fishermen's ability to target species and size of fish desired, thus lowering bycatch and discard rates. Norwegian studies have indicated that bait type may be the most important gear factor affecting species and size selectivity.

Potential socioeconomic benefits include:

1. Creation of Alaskan jobs in producing the artificial bait, and money brought into Alaska through sale of artificial bait, as opposed to natural bait currently bought out of state.
2. Cost savings from bait that is less subject to loss, can continue to attract fish for longer periods underwater, and is more consistent in quality. Frozen bait, bought sight unseen, is sometimes rotten, and natural bait is often lost when it is cut into wrong size pieces;
3. Cheaper bait—AFDF anticipates that its artificial bait will be less expensive by 15 to 20 percent;
4. Higher catch rates if artificial bait proves to be indeed more successful in attracting fish than natural bait; and
5. Improved safety in that uniform sized bait will be less likely to cause problems in automatic bait machines.

AFDF plans to make two to four sets per day, depending on the weather. It will use four strings of longlines per set, each consisting of four skates and 200 hooks. Natural bait (herring) and artificial bait will be fished on each longline, alternating every ten hooks. Hook timers will be used to determine whether fish are attacking the bait and not being hooked and to compare catch over time and the success of hooking rates among bait types. Temperature-depth-time recorders will be used to determine fishing time on the bottom. Underwater video observations will be taken twice daily, for two hours at a time, to observe fish behavior with artificial and natural bait and to interpret the data recorded by the hook timers.

Data collected prior to each set and before recovering gear will include vessel location, time, date, set number, set direction, beginning and ending set time, bottom depth, wind speed, swell height, chop height, presence of birds, and so forth. While hauling in the gear, data collected will include the bait type,

hook number in the sequence, presence of hook timer, bait status when nothing is caught (bait intact, partially gone, lost, hook lost, snood entanglement), species caught, and hook location.

AFDF is required by the terms of the permit to report within 24 hours the beginning and ending times of each fishing trip taken under the EFP. It is also required to provide a report to NMFS by February 2000, including all catch data and its analysis and findings, and to coordinate with the Council on presenting the results of its experiment at a Council meeting.

For the purposes of this experiment, AFDF will be allowed to catch 20,800 lb (9.45 mt) of Pacific cod and 1,100 lb (0.5 mt) of rockfish. The participants are expected to catch relatively small amounts of other species while fishing. NMFS is not including these other species as a limiting factor in the EFP.

The EFP states that, if AFDF approaches its limit on Pacific cod or rockfish, the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), must be notified immediately and will make a decision on whether to stop fishing under the EFP or to modify the terms of the permit, pursuant to 50 CFR 679.6(f).

The applicant estimated a catch of up to 12,000 lb (5.44 mt) of Pacific halibut. However, the vessel is receiving no allowance of prohibited species bycatch and the halibut must be counted against the chartered vessel's individual fishing quota (IFQ) for halibut.

Groundfish mortality associated with this experiment will not be deducted from total allowable catch (TAC) specified for the 1999 groundfish fisheries. This additional groundfish mortality will not cause a conservation problem for groundfish species because estimated total removals under the EFP are very small compared with the overall TACs for these species and would not contribute in a meaningful way to approaching overfishing levels already considered in the EA for the 1999 groundfish specifications.

Failure of the permit holder to comply with the terms and conditions of the EFP may be grounds for revocation, suspension, or modification of the EFP under 15 CFR part 904 with respect to any or all persons and vessels conducting activities under the EFP. Failure to comply with applicable laws also may result in sanctions imposed under those laws.

Classification

The Regional Administrator has determined that fishing activities conducted under this action will not affect endangered and threatened species or critical habitat in any manner not considered in prior consultations on the groundfish fisheries. Participating vessels must take seabird avoidance measures; in the unlikely event that a short-tailed albatross is taken, it would be counted against the four short-tailed albatrosses allowed under the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Biological Opinion on the effects of the hook-and-line groundfish fisheries in the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Area, March 19, 1999.

This notice is exempt from review under E.O. 12866. It also is exempt under the Regulatory Flexibility Act (RFA) because prior notice and opportunity for public comment are not required. Therefore, the analytical requirements of the RFA are inapplicable.

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

Dated: September 7, 1997.

Gary C. Matlock,

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

[FR Doc. 99–23797 Filed 9–10–99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–22–F

COMMITTEE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF TEXTILE AGREEMENTS

Removing Companies From List of Companies From Which Customs Shall Deny Entry to Textiles and Textile Products

September 8, 1999.

AGENCY: Committee for the Implementation of Textile Agreements (CITA).

ACTION: Issuing a directive to the Commissioner of Customs directing Customs not to apply the directive regarding denial of entry to shipments from certain companies.

EFFECTIVE DATE: September 13, 1999.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Martin Walsh, International Trade Specialist, Office of Textiles and Apparel, U.S. Department of Commerce, (202) 482–3400.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Authority: Section 204 of the Agricultural Act of 1956, as amended (7 U.S.C. 1854); Executive Order 12475 of May 9, 1984, as amended.

In a notice and letter to the Commissioner of Customs, dated July 27, 1999, and published in the **Federal Register** on July 30, 1999 (64 FR 41395), the Chairman of CITA directed the U.S. Customs Service to deny entry to textiles and textile products allegedly manufactured by certain listed companies; Customs had informed CITA that these companies were found to have been illegally transshipping, closed, or unable to produce records to verify production.

Based on information received since that time, CITA has determined that Macau Ltd., Fabrica de Artigos de Vestuario; and Tong Heng, Fabrica de Vestuario, two of the listed companies, should not be subject to that directive. Effective on September 13, 1999, Customs should not apply the directive to shipments of textiles and textile products allegedly manufactured by these two companies. CITA expects that Customs will conduct on-site verifications of these companies' textile and textile product production.

D. Michael Hutchinson,

Acting Chairman, Committee for the Implementation of Textile Agreements.

Committee for the Implementation of Textile Agreements

September 8, 1999.

Commissioner of Customs

Department of Treasury, Washington, DC 20229

Dear Commissioner: In the letter to the Commissioner of Customs, dated July 27, 1999 (64 FR 41395), the Chairman of CITA directed the U.S. Customs Service to deny entry to textiles and textile products allegedly manufactured by certain listed companies; Customs had informed CITA that these companies were found to have been illegally transshipping, closed, or unable to produce records to verify production.

Based on information received since that time, CITA has determined that Macau Ltd., Fabrica de Artigos de Vestuario; and Tong Heng, Fabrica de Vestuario, two of the listed companies, should not be subject to that directive. Effective on September 13, 1999, Customs is directed to not apply the directive to shipments of textiles and textile products allegedly manufactured by these two companies. CITA expects that Customs will conduct on-site verifications of these companies' textile and textile product production.

CITA has determined that these actions fall within the foreign affairs exception of the rulemaking provisions of 5 U.S.C. 553(a)(1).

Sincerely,

D. Michael Hutchinson,

Acting Chairman, Committee for the Implementation of Textile Agreements

[FR Doc. 99–23893 Filed 9–9–99; 2:28pm]

BILLING CODE 3510–DR–F