The Seventh Circuit concluded that Hickman had a medical condition that was medically equivalent to the impairment set forth in Listing 101.03. The Seventh Circuit reversed the judgment of the district court and remanded the case with instructions to enter judgment in Hickman's favor.

Statement as to How Hickman Differs From SSA's Interpretation of the Regulations

The Seventh Circuit based its findings on 20 CFR 416.926(b), which states, ''[w]e will always base our decision about whether your impairment(s) is medically equal to a listed impairment on medical evidence only.'' However, we intended the phrase ''medical evidence only'' in this context only to exclude consideration of the vocational factors of age, education, and work experience. Other than such vocational factors, however, in accordance with 20 CFR 416.926(a), SSA considers all relevant evidence in the case record when it makes a finding on medical equivalence.[4]

The Seventh Circuit decision differs from SSA's national rule by requiring it to consider only a narrow definition of medical evidence, that is, evidence from medical sources, in determining medical equivalence and not permitting the use of other relevant evidence. The agency, on the other hand, interprets ''medical evidence'' broadly so as to include not just objective test results or other findings reported by medical sources, but other information about a claimant's medical conditions and their effects, including the claimant's own description of his or her impairments. Thus, the court's decision that medical equivalence is decided based solely on evidence from medical sources interprets the ''medical evidence only'' language of the regulation more narrowly than we intend.

Explanation of How SSA Will Apply The Hickman Decision Within the Circuit

This Ruling applies only to cases in which the claimant resides in Illinois, Indiana or Wisconsin at the time of the determination or decision at any level of administrative review; i.e., initial, reconsideration, ALJ hearing or Appeals Council review.

In determining medical equivalence, we will use only information obtained from health care professionals. We will not use any evidence from a source other than a health care professional in determining medical equivalence.

We intend to clarify the language at issue in this case at 20 CFR 404.1526 and 416.926 through the issuance of a regulatory change, and we may rescind this Ruling once we have clarified the regulations.

[FR 00–10934 Filed 5–3–00; 8:45am]

Billing Code 4191–02–F

the same substantive rules.'' 62 FR 6408, February 11, 1997, at 6413.

[4] In accordance with 20 CFR 416.926(a), SSA considers all relevant evidence in the case record when it makes a finding on medical equivalence. Although the companion regulation for title II, 20 CFR 404.1526(a), does not contain this language, SSA applies the same equivalency policy under both titles.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

[Public Notice 3304]

Amendment to Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs Request for Proposals: Small Grants Competition; Grassroots Citizen Participation in Democracy

SUMMARY: The Office of Citizen Exchanges, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State announces the addition of Brazil to the Latin American geographic region for which proposals will be accepted.

The Small Grants Competition was announced on April 20, 2000 in the **Federal Register** (Volume 65, pg. 21061). The deadline for proposals is June 2, 2000.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: Interested organizations should contact Laverne Johnson, 202/619–5337; E-Mail *ljohnson@usia.gov.*

Dated: April 26, 2000.

Evelyn S. Lieberman,

Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, U.S. Department of State.

[FR Doc. 00–11023 Filed 5–2–00; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4710–11–P

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

[Public Notice 3306]

Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs; Certifications Pursuant to Section 609 of Public Law 101–162

April 27, 2000.

SUMMARY: On April 25, 2000, the Department of State certified, pursuant to Section 609 of Public Law 101–162 (''Section 609''), that 16 nations have adopted programs to reduce the incidental capture of sea turtles in their shrimp fisheries comparable to the program in effect in the United States. The Department also certified that the fishing environments in 25 other countries do not pose a threat of the incidental taking of sea turtles protected under Section 609. Shrimp imports from any nation not certified were prohibited effective May 1, 2000 pursuant to Section 609.

EFFECTIVE DATE: May 3, 2000.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: David Hogan, Office of Marine Conservation, Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, Department of State, Washington, DC 20520–7818; telephone: (202) 647–2335.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Section 609 of Public Law 101–162 prohibits imports of certain categories of shrimp unless the President certifies to the Congress not later than May 1 of each year either: (1) that the harvesting nation has adopted a program governing the incidental capture of sea turtles in its commercial shrimp fishery comparable to the program in effect in the United States and has an incidental take rate comparable to that of the United States; or (2) that the fishing environment in the harvesting nation does not pose a threat of the incidental taking of sea turtles. The President has delegated the authority to make this certification to the Department of State. Revised State Department guidelines for making the required certifications were published in the **Federal Register** on July 2, 1999 (Vol. 64, No. 130, Public Notice 3086).

On April 25, 2000, the Department certified 16 nations on the basis that their sea turtle protection program is comparable to that of the United States: Belize, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Indonesia, Mexico, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Panama, Suriname, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, and Venezuela. Honduras, certified on these grounds in 1998, did not retain their certification. Honduras failed to demonstrate that its regulations requiring the use of sea turtle excluder devices (TEDs) were being adequately enforced. The Department expects that Honduras will take steps necessary to regain certification in 2000.

The Department also certified 25 shrimp harvesting nations as having fishing environments that do not pose a danger to sea turtles. Sixteen nations have shrimping grounds only in cold waters where the risk of taking sea turtles is negligible. They are: Argentina, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Russia, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and Uruguay. Nine nations only harvest shrimp using small boats

with crews of less than five that use manual rather than mechanical means to retrieve nets, or catch shrimp in using other methods that do not threaten sea turtles. Use of such small-scale technology does not adversely affect sea turtles. The nine nations are: the Bahamas, China, the Dominican Republic, Fiji, Haiti, Jamaica, Oman, Peru and Sri Lanka.

Any shipment of shrimp harvested in Honduras with a date of export prior to May 1, 2000 will be allowed entry into the United States regardless of date of importation into the United States. That is, shipments of shrimp harvested in this country in transit prior to the effective date of the ban are not barred from entry.

The Department of State communicated the certifications under section 609 to the Office of Trade Operations of the United States Customs Service in a letter transmitted on April 27, 2000.

Dated: April 27, 2000.

R. Tucker Scully,

Deputy Assistant Secretary for Oceans, Fisheries and Space, U.S. Department of State.

[FR Doc. 00–11025 Filed 5–2–00; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4710–14–P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Coast Guard

[CGD17–00–002]

Annual Certification of Prince William Sound Regional Citizen's Advisory Council

AGENCY: Coast Guard, DOT.

ACTION: Notice of recertification.

SUMMARY: Under the Oil Terminal and Tanker Environmental Oversight Act of 1990, the Coast Guard may certify on an annual basis, an alternative voluntary advisory group in lieu of a regional citizens' advisory council for Prince William Sound, Alaska. This certification allows the advisory group to monitor the activities of terminal facilities and crude oil tankers under the Prince William Sound Program established by the statute. The purpose of this notice is to inform the public that the Coast Guard has recertified the alternative voluntary advisory group for Prince William Sound, Alaska.

DATES: This certification is effective from January 31, 2000 to January 31, 2001.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For general information regarding the PWS RCAC or viewing material submitted to the docket, contact LCDR Larry Musarra, Seventeenth Coast Guard District, Marine Safety Division, (907) 463–2211.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: As part of the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 Congress passed the Oil Pollution Terminal and Oil Tanker Environmental Oversight and Monitoring Act of 1990, (the Act), Section 5002, to foster the long-term partnership among industry, government, and local communities in overseeing compliance with the environmental concerns in the operation of terminal facilities and crude-oil tankers. Subsection 5002(o) permits an alternative voluntary advisory group to represent the communities and interests in the vicinity of the terminal facilities in Prince William Sound (PWS), in lieu of a council of the type specified in subsection 5002(d), if certain conditions are met.

The Act requires that the group enter into a contract to ensure annual funding, and that it receive annual certification by the President to the effect that it fosters the general goals and purposes of the Act, and is broadly representative of the communities and interests in the vicinity of the terminal facilities and Prince William Sound. Accordingly, in 1991, the President granted certification to the Prince William Sound Regional Citizen's Advisory Council (PWS RCAC). The authority to certify alternative advisory groups was subsequently delegated to the Commandant of the Coast Guard and redelegated to the Commander, Seventeenth Coast Guard District.

On January 6, 2000, the Coast Guard announced in the **Federal Register** the availability of the application for recertification that it received from the PWS RCAC and requested comments (65 FR 800). Twenty-seven comments were received.

Discussion of Comments

Of the 27 comments received, 24 were supportive of recertification and generally noted the positive efforts, good communication, and broad representation of PWS communities as PWS RCAC carries out its responsibilities as intended by the Act. Three commenters recommended the Coast Guard conditionally certify the PWS RCAC due to what they perceived were substantial non-conformities with the Council's By Laws and the intent of OPA–90. The following summarizes the Coast Guard's analysis of the issues raised during the review process.

Two commented that the PWS RCAC is confrontational or adversarial, engaging in ''polarizing/politicization'' behavior, noting that such relations were not consistent with fostering cooperation, as per the Act. However, the majority of the commenters did not share that view. While the Act promotes developing trust, cooperation, and consensus between the industry, government and local citizens, it also establishes that local citizens (through the PWS RCAC) should provide advice and recommendations regarding environmental concerns of crude oil terminal and tanker operations in PWS. Based on 24 positive comments received, the action taken by PWS RCAC is consistent with their advisory role in representing the interests of local citizens on environmental concerns.

One commenter criticized the resolution passed by PWS RCAC regarding the proposed BP acquisition of ARCO. The resolution urged that certain factors be taken into consideration, and that certain commitments be sought from BP if the acquisition was approved. The commenter suggested this was a tactic based on ''unsubstantiated and subjective judgments'' of various issues. Upon review, the Coast Guard concludes that the resolution offered advice to regulators to help ensure that environmental safety would be preserved during the proposed BP acquisition of ARCO, an action within the scope of the purposes of the Act.

Three commenters complained that the PWS RCAC's activities regarding the PWS tanker contingency plan were not consistent with their role under the Act, showing lack of clarity in their role and moving from the role of advisor to adversary. The complaints in this area center around changes suggested by the PWS RCAC to the 1998 tanker contingency plans and advice provided to the government regarding an appeal of the Conditions of Approval of the plans. The Coast Guard finds that the advice and suggestions provided by PWS RCAC was within the scope of the purposes of the PWS RCAC in their role to review and advise on the adequacy of oil spill prevention and contingency plans for the terminal facilities and crude oil tankers operating in Prince William Sound.

Three commenters believe that PWS RCAC has shown an increasing tendency to expand its scope beyond ''environmental monitoring for terminal facilities in Prince William Sound and the crude oil tankers operating in Prince William Sound.'' However, the PWS RCAC may be recertificated so long as it fosters the general goals and purposes of the Act and is broadly representative of the communities and interests in the vicinity of the terminal facilities and Prince William Sound.