Commodity	Parts per million
Cotton, undelinted seed	2.8

(b) *Section 18 emergency exemptions.* [Reserved]

(c) *Tolerances with regional registrations.* [Reserved]

(d) *Indirect or inadvertent residues.* [Reserved]

22. Section 180.312 is revised to read as follows:

§ 180.312 4-Aminopyridine; tolerances for residues.

(a) *General.* Tolerances are established for the bird repellent 4-aminopyridine in or on the following food commodities:

Commodity	Parts per million
Corn, forage	0.1(N)
Corn, field, grain	0.1(N)
Corn, pop, grain	0.1(N)
Corn, stover	0.1(N)
Corn, sweet, kernels plus cob with husks removed	0.1(N)
Sunflower, seed	0.1(N)

(b) *Section 18 emergency exemptions.* [Reserved]

(c) *Tolerances with regional registrations.* [Reserved]

(d) *Indirect or inadvertent residues.* [Reserved]

23. Section 180.316 is revised to read as follows:

§ 180.316 Pyrazon; tolerances for residues.

(a) *General.* Tolerances are established for combined residues of the herbicide pyrazon (5-amino-4-chloro-2-phenyl-3(2H)-pyridazinone) and its metabolites (calculated as pyrazon) in or on the following food commodities:

Commodity	Parts per million
Beet, garden, roots	0.1(N)
Beet, garden, tops	1
Beet, sugar, roots	0.1(N)
Beet, sugar, tops	1
Milk	0.01(N)

(b) *Section 18 emergency exemptions.* [Reserved]

(c) *Tolerances with regional registrations.* [Reserved]

(d) *Indirect or inadvertent residues.* [Reserved]

24. Section 180.318 is revised to read as follows:

§ 180.318 4-(2-Methyl-4-chlorophenoxy) butyric acid; tolerance for residues.

(a) *General.* A tolerance is established for the herbicide 4-(2-methyl-4-chlorophenoxy) butyric acid in or on the following food commodity:

Commodity	Parts per million
Pea	0.1(N)

(b) *Section 18 emergency exemptions.* [Reserved]

(c) *Tolerances with regional registrations.* [Reserved]

(d) *Indirect or inadvertent residues.* [Reserved]

25. Section 180.344 is revised to read as follows:

§ 180.344 4,6-Dinitro-o-cresol and its sodium salt; tolerance for residues.

(a) *General.* A tolerance is established for residues of the plant regulator 4,6-dinitro-*o*-cresol and its sodium salt, from application to apple trees at the blossom stage as a fruit-thinning agent, in or on the following food commodity:

Commodity	Parts per million
Apple	0.02(N)

(b) *Section 18 emergency exemptions.* [Reserved]

(c) *Tolerances with regional registrations.* [Reserved]

(d) *Indirect or inadvertent residues.* [Reserved]

26. Section 180.360 is revised to read as follows:

§ 180.360 Asulam; tolerance for residues.

(a) *General.* A tolerance is established for residues of the herbicide asulam (methyl sulfanilylcarbamate) in or on the following food commodity:

Commodity	Parts per million
Sugarcane, cane	0.1(N)

(b) *Section 18 emergency exemptions.* [Reserved]

(c) *Tolerances with regional registrations.* [Reserved]

(d) *Indirect or inadvertent residues.* [Reserved]

27. Section 180.488 is revised to read as follows:

§ 180.488 Hexaconazole; tolerance for residues.

(a) *General.* A tolerance is established for residues of the fungicide hexaconazole, [alpha-butyl-alpha-(2,4-dichlorophenyl)-1*H*-1,2,4-triazole-1-ethanol], in or on the following food commodity:

Commodity	Parts per million
Banana[1]	0.7

[1]There are no U.S. registrations as of June 30, 1999.

(b) *Section 18 emergency exemptions.* [Reserved]

(c) *Tolerances with regional registrations.* [Reserved]

(d) *Indirect or inadvertent residues.* [Reserved]

[FR Doc. 03–9484 Filed 4–17–03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6560–50–S

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

47 CFR Part 64

[CC Docket No. 94–129, FCC 03–42]

Implementation of the Subscriber Carrier Selection Changes Provisions of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, Policies and Rules Concerning Unauthorized Changes of Consumers' Long Distance Carriers

AGENCY: Federal Communications Commission.

ACTION: Notice of proposed rulemaking.

SUMMARY: In this document, the Commission seeks comment on whether to revise, clarify, or adopt any additional rules in order to more effectively carry out Congress' directives in the Communications Act to combat unauthorized changes in a subscriber's telecommunications providers (also known as ''slamming''). In order to maximize the accuracy and efficiency for consumers, carriers, and the Commission, additional minimum requirements for third party verification may be necessary. It is the Commission's experience that additional requirements may address issues that the Commission has seen repeatedly in our enforcement of the slamming rules. Therefore, we seek comment on whether third party verifiers should state the date during the taped verification process. We also seek comment on whether the verifier should be required to make additional statements and whether these additional statements would serve to lessen or heighten customer confusion.

DATES: Comments are due June 2, 2003 and reply comments are due June 17, 2003. Written comments by the public on the proposed information collections are due June 2, 2003. Written comments must be submitted by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) on the proposed information collection on or before June 17, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Parties who choose to file comment by paper must file an original and four copies to the Commission's Secretary, Marlene H. Dortch, Office of the Secretary, Federal Communications

Commission, 445 12th Street, SW, Room TW–A325, Washington, DC 20554. Comments may also be filed using the Commission's Electronic Filing System, which can be accessed via the Internet at *www.fcc.gov/e-file/ecfs.html*. In addition to filing comments with the Secretary, a copy of any comments on the information collections contained herein should be submitted to Les Smith, Federal Communications Commission, Room 1–A804, 445 12th Street, SW., Washington, DC 20554, or via the Internet to *Leslie.Smith@fcc.gov*.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Nancy Stevenson at 202–418–2512, Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau. For additional information concerning the information collection(s) contained in this document, contact Les Smith at 202–418–0217 or via the Internet at *Leslie.Smith@fcc.gov*.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This is a summary of the Commission's Second Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) in CC Docket No. 94–129, FCC 03–42, released March 17, 2003, that is contained in the *Third Order on Reconsideration*. This NPRM contains proposed information collection(s) subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (PRA). It will be submitted to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for review under the PRA. OMB, the general public, and other Federal agencies are invited to comment on the proposed information collection(s) contained in this proceeding. The full text of this document is available on the Commission's Web site Electronic Comment Filing System and for public inspection during regular business hours in the FCC Reference Center, Room CY–A257, 445 12th Street, SW., Washington, DC 20554.

Paperwork Reduction Act: This NPRM contains proposed information collection(s) subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (PRA). It will be submitted to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for review under the PRA. OMB, the general public, and other Federal agencies are invited to comment of the proposed information collection(s) contained in this proceeding. Public and agency comments are due at the same time as other comments on this NPRM; OMB notification of action is due 60 days from date of publication of this NPRM in the **Federal Register**. Comments should address: (a) Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the Commission, including whether the information shall have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the Commission's burden estimates; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information collected; and (d) ways to minimize the collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

OMB Control Number: 3060–0787.

Title: Implementation of the Subscriber Carrier Selection Changes Provisions of the Telecommunications Act of 1996. Policies and Rules Concerning Unauthorized Changes of Consumers' Long Distance Carriers.

Form Number: N/A.

Type of Review: New collection.

Number of Respondents: 1772.

Estimated Time Per Response: .010 hours.

Frequency of Response: On occasion.

Total Annual Burden: 17.72 hours.

Total Annual Costs: $163.91.

Needs and Uses: Based on the Commission's experience the need for additional minimum requirements for third party verifications may be necessary in order to maximize their accuracy and efficiency for consumers, carriers, and the Commission.

Synopsis of NPRM

1. *Background*. As noted, in the *Third Report and Order*, the Commission declined to mandate specific language to be used in third party verification calls. However, in order to eliminate uncertainty as to what constitutes necessary and acceptable practices, the Commission adopted minimum content requirements for third party verification. The Commission stated that minimum requirements for such calls would provide useful guidance to the third party verifiers and carriers without locking carriers into using a set script. In addition, the Commission stated that the requirements would also permit more streamlined enforcement by helping the Commission to determine the adequacy of steps taken by independent third parties in the verification process. Accordingly, the Commission concluded that scripts for third party verifications should elicit, at a minimum, the identity of the subscriber; confirmation that the person on the call is authorized to make the carrier change; confirmation that the person on the call wants to make the change; the names of the carriers affected by the change; the telephone numbers to be switched; and the types of service involved (*i.e.*, local, in-state toll, out-of-state toll, or international service). The Commission noted that these content requirements do not differ in substance from the rules regarding LOAs.

2. In addition, the Commission found that the third party verification must be conducted in the same language that was used in the underlying sales transaction, and that the entire third party verification transaction must be recorded. The Commission also reiterated that, consistent with its rules regarding verifications generally, submitting carriers must maintain and preserve the recordings for a minimum period of two years after obtaining such verification. The Commission observed that, if a slamming dispute arises, a recorded verification will help determine whether the subscriber was simply seeking information or was in fact agreeing to change carriers and, if so, which service(s) the subscriber had agreed to change.

3. *Discussion*. Based on our experience since the effective date of the *Third Report and Order*, we seek comment on the need for additional minimum requirements for third party verification calls in order to maximize their accuracy and efficiency for consumers, carriers, and the Commission. These additional possible requirements address issues we have seen repeatedly in our enforcement of the slamming liability rules. First, we seek comment on whether third party verifiers should state the date during the taped verification process. Through our slamming enforcement efforts, we have become aware of situations in which, for example, a carrier may have obtained a valid authorization for a past carrier change, but the customer has since switched away from the carrier and now alleges that he or she was switched back to that carrier without authorization. Without a clearly articulated date on the verification tapes, the carrier could use the former verification tape to defend itself against the subsequent unauthorized change.

4. Next, we seek comment on whether the verifier should explicitly state that, if the customer has additional questions for the carrier's sales representative regarding the carrier change after verification has begun, the verification will be terminated, and further verification proceedings will not be carried out until after the customer has finished speaking with the sales representative. We note that, according to our rules, final verification cannot be obtained until after the carrier's sales representative has ceased speaking to the customer. Accordingly, we seek comment as to whether such a requirement would lessen possible customer confusion in situations in which a verification is terminated because the customer seeks further discussions with the carrier's sales agent. We also seek comment on whether the verifier should convey to the customer that the carrier change can

be effectuated without any further contact with the customer once the verification has been completed in full. We have found that customers may not realize that a carrier cannot in most cases ''undo'' a PIC change after it has been submitted, even if the subscriber quickly requests cancellation of the change order.

5. We seek comment on whether verifiers should be required to make clear to a customer that he or she is not verifying an intention to retain existing service, but is in fact asking for a carrier change. We have observed instances in which, for example, carriers seeking to obtain customer authorization for a carrier change merely inform customers that they are consenting to an ''upgrade'' of the customers' service or to bill consolidation. We also note that it can be difficult to ascertain whether a subscriber has fully and knowingly provided an answer to each question posed by a third party verifier if some questions are presented as a group rather than individually. Accordingly, commenters should address whether each piece of information that a third party verifier must gather under our rules should be the subject of a separate and distinct third party verifier inquiry and subscriber response. Finally, we seek comment on whether, when verifying an interLATA service change, the verifier should specify that interLATA service encompasses both international and state-to-state calls, and whether a verifier should define the terms ''intraLATA toll'' and ''interLATA toll'' service. We have observed that carriers sometimes use differing terms for these services; for example, a carrier might refer to intraLATA service as ''short haul long distance, local toll, local long distance, or long distance calls within your state.'' Accordingly, we have received numerous complaints from consumers that assert they unknowingly gave up the flat rate for intraLATA service they paid to their LEC when consenting to a carrier change for different services.

Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis

1. As required by the Regulatory Flexibility Act (RFA), as amended, the Commission has prepared this present Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis (IRFA) of the possible significant economic impact on small entities by the policies and rules proposed in this *Third Order on Reconsideration and Second Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (Second Further NPRM).* Written public comments are requested on this IRFA. Comments must be identified as responses to the *Second Further NPRM.* The Commission will send a copy of the Notice, including this IRFA, to the Chief Counsel for Advocacy of the Small Business Administration. *See* 5 U.S.C. 603(a). In addition, the Notice and the IRFA (or summaries thereof) will be published in the **Federal Register**.

A. Need for, and Objectives of, the Proposed Rules

2. Section 258 prohibits any telecommunications carrier from submitting or executing an unauthorized change in a subscriber's selection of a provider of telephone exchange service or telephone toll service. This practice, known as ''slamming,'' distorts the telecommunications market by enabling companies that engage in fraudulent activity to increase their customer and revenue bases at the expense of consumers and law-abiding companies. In this *Order*, we address certain issues raised in petitions for reconsideration of the *Second Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking*, the *First Order on Reconsideration*, and the *Third Report and Order.* This *Order* also contains a Second Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, in which we propose several modifications to our carrier change rules. Specifically, we seek comment on rule modifications with respect to third party verifications.

B. Legal Basis

3. The *Second Further Notice* is adopted pursuant to Sections 1, 4(i), 4(j) of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended, 47 U.S.C.151, 154(i), 154(j), and § 1.429 of the Commission's Rules, 47 CFR 1.429.

C. Description and Estimate of the Number of Small Entities to Which the Proposed Rules Will Apply

4.The RFA directs agencies to provide a description of and, where feasible, an estimate of the number of small entities that may be affected by the proposed rules, if adopted. The RFA generally defines the term ''small entity'' as having the same meaning as the terms ''small business,'' ''small organization,'' and ''small governmental jurisdiction.'' In addition, the term ''small business'' has the same meaning as the term ''small business concern'' under section 3 of the Small Business Act. Under the Small business Act, a ''small business concern'' is one that: (1) Is independently owned and operated; (2) is not dominant in its field of operation; and (3) satisfies any additional criteria established by the Small Business Administration (SBA). A small organization is generally ''any not-for-profit enterprise which is independently owned and operated and is not dominant in its field.'' Nationwide, as of 1992, there were approximately 275,801 small organizations.

5. The definition of ''small governmental jurisdiction'' is one with populations of fewer than 50,000. There are approximately 85,006 governmental entities in the nation. This number includes such entities as states, counties, cities, utility districts and school districts. There are no figures available on what portion of this number has populations of fewer than 50,000. However, this number includes 38,978 counties, cities and towns, and of those, 37,556, or ninety-six percent, have populations of fewer than 50,000. The Census Bureau estimates that this ratio is approximately accurate for all government entities. Thus, of the 85,006 governmental entities, we estimate that ninety-six percent, or about 81,600, are small entities that may be affected by our rules.

6. We have included small incumbent LECs in this RFA analysis. As noted above, a ''small business'' under the RFA is one that, inter alia, meets the pertinent small business size standard (*e.g.*, a wireline telecommunications business having 1,500 or fewer employees), and ''is not dominant in its field of operation.'' The SBA's Office of Advocacy contends that, for RFA purposes, small incumbent LECs are not dominant in their field of operation because any such dominance is not ''national'' in scope. We have therefore included small incumbent LECs in this RFA analysis, although we emphasize that this RFA action has no effect on the Commission's analyses and determinations in other, non-RFA contexts.

7. *Incumbent Local Exchange Carriers.* Neither the Commission nor the SBA has developed a specific small business size standard for providers of incumbent local exchange services. The closest applicable size standard under the SBA rules is for Wired Telecommunications Carriers. Under that standard, such a business is small if it has 1,500 or fewer employees. According to the FCC's *Telephone Trends Report* data, 1,329 incumbent local exchange carriers reported that they were engaged in the provision of local exchange services. Of these 1,329 carriers, an estimated 1,024 have 1,500 or fewer employees and 305 have more than 1,500 employees. Consequently, we estimate that the majority of providers of local exchange service are small entitles that may be affected by the rules and policies adopted herein.

8. *Competitive Local Exchange Carriers.* Neither the Commission nor

the SBA has developed a specific small business size standard for providers of competitive local exchange services. The closest applicable size standard under the SBA rules is for Wired Telecommunications Carriers. Under that standard, such a business is small if it has 1,500 or fewer employees. According to the FCC's *Telephone Trends Report* data, 532 companies reported that they were engaged in the provision of either competitive access provider services or competitive local exchange carrier services. Of these 532 companies, an estimated 411 have 1,500 or fewer employees and 121 have more than 1,500 employees. Consequently, the Commission estimates that the majority of providers of competitive local exchange service are small entities that may be affected by the rules.

9. *Competitive Access Providers.* Neither the Commission nor the SBA has developed a specific size standard for competitive access providers (CAPS). The closest applicable standard under the SBA rules is for Wired Telecommunications Carriers. Under that standard, such a business is small if it has 1,500 or fewer employees. According to the FCC's *Telephone Trends Report* data, 532 CAPs or competitive local exchange carriers and 55 other local exchange carriers reported that they were engaged in the provision of either competitive access provider services or competitive local exchange carrier services. Of these 532 competitive access providers and competitive local exchange carriers, an estimated 411 have 1,500 or fewer employees and 121 have more than 1,500 employees. Of the 55 other local exchange carriers, an estimated 53 have 1,500 or fewer employees and 2 have more than 1,500 employees. Consequently, the Commission estimates that the majority of small entity CAPS and the majority of other local exchange carriers may be affected by the rules.

10. *Local Resellers.* The SBA has developed a specific size standard for small businesses within the category of Telecommunications Resellers. Under that standard, such a business is small if it has 1,500 or fewer employees. According to the FCC's *Telephone Trends Report* data, 134 companies reported that they were engaged in the provision of local resale services. Of these 134 companies, an estimated 131 have 1,500 or fewer employees and 3 have more than 1,500 employees. Consequently, the Commission estimates that the majority of local resellers may be affected by the rules.

11. *Toll Resellers.* The SBA has developed a specific size standard for small businesses within the category of Telecommunications Resellers. Under that SBA definition, such a business is small if it has 1,500 or fewer employees. According to the FCC's *Telephone Trends Report* data, 576 companies reported that they were engaged in the provision of toll resale services. Of these 576 companies, an estimated 538 have 1,500 or fewer employees and 38 have more than 1,500 employees. Consequently, the Commission estimates that a majority of toll resellers may be affected by the rules.

12. *Interexchange Carriers.* Neither the Commission nor the SBA has developed a specific size standard for small entities specifically applicable to providers of interexchange services. The closest applicable size standard under the SBA rules is for Wired Telecommunications Carriers. Under that standard, such a business is small if it has 1,500 or fewer employees. According to the FCC's *Telephone Trends Report* data, 229 carriers reported that their primary telecommunications service activity was the provision of interexchange services. Of these 229 carriers, an estimated 181 have 1,500 or fewer employees and 48 have more than 1,500 employees. Consequently, we estimate that a majority of IXCs may be affected by the rules.

13. *Operator Service Providers.* Neither the Commission nor the SBA has developed a specific size standard for small entities specifically applicable to operator service providers. The closest applicable size standard under the SBA rules is for Wired Telecommunications Carriers. Under that standard, such a business is small if it has 1,500 or fewer employees. According to the FCC's *Telephone Trends Report* data, 22 companies reported that they were engaged in the provision of operator services. Of these 22 companies, an estimated 20 have 1,500 or fewer employees and two have more than 1,500 employees. Consequently, the Commission estimates that a majority of local resellers may be affected by the rules.

14. *Prepaid Calling Card Providers.* The SBA has developed a size standard for small businesses within the category of Telecommunications Resellers. Under that size standard, such a business is small if it has 1,500 or fewer employees. According to the FCC's *Telephone Trends Report* data, 32 companies reported that they were engaged in the provision of prepaid calling cards. Of these 32 companies, an estimated 31 have 1,500 or fewer employees and one has more than 1,500 employees. Consequently, the Commission estimates that a majority of prepaid calling providers may be affected by the rules.

15. *Other Toll Carriers.* Neither the Commission nor the SBA has developed a specific size standard for small entities specifically applicable to ''Other Toll Carriers.'' This category includes toll carriers that do not fall within the categories of interexchange carriers, operator service providers, prepaid calling card providers, satellite service carriers, or toll resellers. The closest applicable size standard under the SBA rules is for Wired Telecommunications Carriers. Under that standard, such a business is small if it has 1,500 or fewer employees. According to the FCC's *Telephone Trends Report* data, 42 carriers reported that they were engaged in the provision of ''Other Toll Services.'' Of these 42 carriers, an estimated 37 have 1,500 or fewer employees and five have more than 1,500 employees. Consequently, the Commission estimates that a majority of ''Other Toll Carriers'' may be affected by the rules.

D. Description of Projected Reporting, Recordkeeping, and Other Compliance Requirements for Small Entities

16. As noted, we have sought comment on the need for additional minimum requirements for third party verification calls in order to maximize their accuracy and efficiency for consumers, carriers, and the Commission. These additional possible requirements address issues we have seen repeatedly in our enforcement of the slamming liability rules. We do not believe that adoption of any or all of the proposals would create the need for any additional professional skills beyond those already employed to comply with the current third party verification rules.

E. Steps Taken To Minimize Significant Economic Impact on Small Entities, and Significant Alternatives Considered

17. The RFA requires an agency to describe any significant alternatives that it has considered in reaching its proposed approach, which may include the following four alternatives (among others): (1) The establishment of differing compliance or reporting requirements or timetables that take into account the resources available to small entities; (2) the clarification, consolidation, or simplification of compliance or reporting requirements under the rule for small entities; (3) the use of performance, rather than design standards; and (4) an exemption from coverage of the rule, or any part thereof, for small entities.

18. *Third Party Verification.* The Commission is considering additional requirements which would address issues we have seen in the enforcement of our slamming rules, and we therefore seek comment on the need for additional minimum requirements for third party verification calls and of the impact of any additional requirements on small entities. We especially seek information addressing the possible financial impact on smaller carriers.

F. Federal Rules That May Duplicate, Overlap, or Conflict With the Proposed Rules

19. None.

List of Subjects in 47 CFR Part 64

Telephone.

Federal Communications Commission.

William F. Caton,

Deputy Secretary.

[FR Doc. 03–9119 Filed 4–17–03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6712–01–P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 600

[I.D. 040703D]

Magnuson-Stevens Act Provisions; General Provisions for Domestic Fisheries; Application for Exempted Fishing Permits (EFPs)

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

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

SUMMARY: NMFS announces that the Administrator, Northeast Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator) has made a preliminary determination that an application to issue EFPs to six longline and tub trawl vessels, submitted by the Maine Department of Marine Resources (Maine DMR), contains all the information required by the regulations governing exempted experimental fishing under the provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) and, therefore, warrants further consideration. The Regional Administrator has also made a preliminary determination that the activities authorized under these EFPs would be consistent with the goals and objectives of the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan (FMP) and is within the scope of earlier analyses of the impacts. However, further review and consultation may be necessary before a final determination is made to issue six EFPs. Therefore, NMFS announces that the Regional Administrator proposes to issue EFPs that would allow six commercial longline or tub trawl vessels to conduct fishing operations that are otherwise restricted by the regulations governing the fisheries of the Northeastern United States.

Regulations under the Magnuson-Stevens Act require publication of this notification to provide interested parties the opportunity to comment on applications for proposed EFPs.

DATES: Comments on this notification must be received at the appropriate address or fax number (*see* **ADDRESSES**) on or before May 5, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Written comments should be sent to Patricia A. Kurkul, Regional Administrator, NMFS, Northeast Regional Office, One Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930. Mark the outside of the envelope ''Comments on Maine Halibut EFP Proposal.'' Comments may also be sent via facsimile to (978) 281–9135. Comments will not be accepted if submitted via e-mail or the Internet.

Copies of the Draft 2003 Supplement to the Environmental Assessment (EA) Prepared for the 2002 Experimental Halibut Fishery in Groundfish Closed Areas in the Eastern Gulf of Maine are available from the Northeast Regional Office at the same address.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Susan Chinn, Fishery Management Specialist, 978–281–9218.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NMFS announces that the Regional Administrator intends to issue EFPs to allow six federally permitted vessels to fish for, land, and possess Atlantic halibut (*Hippoglossus hippoglossus*) in excess of the allowable landing and possession limit specified at 50 CFR 648.86(c) within a portion of the Gulf of Maine Regulated Mesh Area (GOM RMA). The EFPs would also allow these vessels to possess temporarily Atlantic halibut less than the minimum size requirement of 36 inches (91.4 cm) specified at § 648.83(a)(1) for purposes of collecting scientific information. In addition, the EFPs would allow vessels access to GOM Rolling Closure Area IV.

Maine DMR submitted a proposal on December 1, 2002, to conduct an experimental Atlantic halibut fishery in a portion of the GOM RMA. The industry collaborative experiment involves Maine DMR, with consultation provided by the NMFS Northeast Fisheries Science Center (Center). The purpose of the experiment is to continue the collection of data on the distribution, relative abundance, migration, stock definition, mortality rates, stock size, yield, and other significant biological reference points of the Atlantic halibut resource to be used in the long-term management of the species. In addition, the experiment proposes to collect information on age and growth, size and sex composition, and rate and onset of sexual maturity. The proposed experiment is a continuation of experimental fisheries conducted by Maine DMR in 2000, 2001, and 2002.

Maine DMR proposed that the study would occur from April 1 through May 31, 2003, or for 60 consecutive days beginning from the actual start date, and would take place in a portion of the GOM RMA defined by the following coordinates:

Area Point	N. Latitude	W. Longitude
HAL 1	Mainland Maine Coastline	69° 00″
HAL 2	43o 12.3″	69°00″
HAL 3	43° 58.3″	67° 21.5″
HAL 4*	Mainland Maine Coastline and U.S./Canada Maritime Boundary	Mainland Maine Coastline and U.S./Canada Maritime Boundary

*Between points HAL 3 and HAL 4, the area follows the U.S./Canada maritime boundary.