DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648–XD873

Endangered and Threatened Species; Take of Anadromous Fish

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

ACTION: Application for one new scientific research permit.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that NMFS has received a permit application request for a new scientific research permit. The proposed research is intended to increase knowledge of species listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and to help guide management, conservation, and recovery efforts. The application may be viewed online at: *https://apps.nmfs.noaa.gov/preview/preview_open_for_comment.cfm.*

DATES: Comments or requests for a public hearing on the application must be received at the appropriate address or fax number (see **ADDRESSES**) no later than 5 p.m. Pacific standard time on May 8, 2015.

ADDRESSES: Written comments on the application should be submitted to the Protected Resources Division, NMFS, 777 Sonoma Avenue, Room 325, Santa Rosa, CA 95404. Comments may also be submitted via fax to 707–578–3435 or by email to *nmfs.swr.apps@noaa.gov* (include the permit number in the subject line of the fax or email).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jeffrey Jahn, Santa Rosa, CA (ph.: 707–575–6097), Fax: 707–578–3435, email: *Jeffrey.Jahn@noaa.gov*). Permit application instructions are available from the address above, or online at *https://apps.nmfs.noaa.gov.*

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Species Covered in This Notice

The following listed species are covered in this notice:

Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*): threatened Snake River spring/summer-run (SR spr/sum); threatened Lower Columbia River (LCR); threatened California Coastal (CC); threatened Central Valley spring-run (CVSR), endangered Sacramento River winter-run (SRWR).

Coho salmon (*O. kisutch*): threatened Southern Oregon/Northern California Coast (SONCC); endangered Central California Coast (CCC).

Steelhead (*O. mykiss*): threatened Northern California (NC); threatened Central California Coast (CCC), threatened California Central Valley (CCV).

Authority

Scientific research permits are issued in accordance with section 10(a)(1)(A) of the ESA (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*) and regulations governing listed fish and wildlife permits (50 CFR parts 222–227). NMFS issues permits based on findings that such permits: (1) Are applied for in good faith; (2) if granted and exercised, would not operate to the disadvantage of the listed species that are the subject of the permit; and (3) are consistent with the purposes and policy of section 2 of the ESA. The authority to take listed species is subject to conditions set forth in the permits.

Anyone requesting a hearing on an application listed in this notice should set out the specific reasons why a hearing on that application would be appropriate (see **ADDRESSES**). Such hearings are held at the discretion of the Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NMFS.

Application Received

Permit 19320

The NMFS Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWFSC), Fisheries Ecology Division (FED) is requesting a permit to annually take sub-adult and juvenile listed salmon and steelhead for a period of five years. The permit would authorize research designed to (1) determine the inter-annual and seasonal variability in growth, feeding, and energy status among juvenile salmonids in the coastal ocean off northern and central California; (2) determine migration paths and spatial distribution among genetically distinct salmonid stocks during their early ocean residence; (3) characterize the biological and physical oceanographic features associated with juvenile salmon ocean habitat from the shore to the continental shelf break; (4) identify potential links between coastal geography, oceanographic features, and salmon distribution patterns; and (5) identify and test ecological indices for salmon survival. This research would benefit listed fish by informing comprehensive lifecycle models that incorporate both freshwater and marine conditions and recognize the relationship between the two habitats; it would also identify and predict sources of salmon mortality at sea and thereby help managers develop indices of salmonid survival in the marine environment.

Listed fish would be captured primarily via surface trawling, however midwater trawling and beach seining would be used occasionally. Sub-adult salmonids (*i.e.,* fish larger than 250 mm) that survive capture would have fin tissue and scale samples taken, and then be released. Any subadult salmonids that do not survive capture, and all juvenile salmonids (*i.e.,* fish larger than 80 mm but less than 250 mm) would be lethally sampled (*i.e.,* intentional directed mortality) in order to collect (1) otoliths for age and growth studies; (2) coded wire tags for origin and age of hatchery fish; (3) muscle tissue for stable isotopes and/or lipid assays; (4) stomachs and contents for diet studies; and (5) other tissues including the heart, liver, intestines, pyloric caeca, and kidney for special studies upon request.

This notice is provided pursuant to section 10(c) of the ESA. NMFS will evaluate the applications, associated documents, and comments submitted to determine whether the applications meet the requirements of section 10(a) of the ESA and Federal regulations. The final permit decisions will not be made until after the end of the 30-day comment period. NMFS will publish notice of its final action in the **Federal Register**.

Dated: April 2, 2015.

Angela Somma,

Chief, Endangered Species Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 2015–07945 Filed 4–7–15; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–22–P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648–XD413

Pacific Island Fisheries; Marine Conservation Plan for American Samoa

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

ACTION: Notice of agency decision.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces approval of a marine conservation plan (MCP) for American Samoa.

DATES: This agency decision is effective from April 1, 2015, through March 31, 2018.

ADDRESSES: You may obtain a copy of the MCP, identified by NOAA–NMFS–2014–0095, from the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal, *www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=NOAA-NMFS-2014-0095,* or from the Western Pacific

Fishery Management Council (Council), 1164 Bishop St., Suite 1400, Honolulu, HI 96813, tel 808–522–8220, *www.wpcouncil.org.*

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Bob Harman, Sustainable Fisheries, NMFS Pacific Islands Regional Office, 808–725–5170.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Section 204(e) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) authorizes the Secretary of State, with the concurrence of the Secretary of Commerce (Secretary) and in consultation with the Council, to negotiate and enter into a Pacific Insular Area fishery agreement (PIAFA). A PIAFA would allow foreign fishing within the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) adjacent to American Samoa, Guam, or the Northern Mariana Islands with the concurrence of, and in consultation with, the Governor of the Pacific Insular Area to which the PIAFA applies. Before entering into a PIAFA, the appropriate Governor, with the concurrence of the Council, must develop a 3-year MCP providing details on uses for any funds collected by the Secretary under the PIAFA.

The Magnuson-Stevens Act requires payments received under a PIAFA to be deposited into the United States Treasury and then conveyed to the Treasury of the Pacific Insular Area for which funds were collected. In the case of violations by foreign fishing vessels in the EEZ around any Pacific Insular Area, amounts received by the Secretary attributable to fines and penalties imposed under the Magnuson-Stevens Act, including sums collected from the forfeiture and disposition or sale of property seized subject to its authority, shall be deposited into the Treasury of the Pacific Insular Area adjacent to the EEZ in which the violation occurred, after direct costs of the enforcement action are subtracted. The government may use funds deposited into the Treasury of the Pacific Insular Area for fisheries enforcement and for implementation of an MCP.

An MCP must be consistent with the Council's fishery ecosystem plans, must identify conservation and management objectives (including criteria for determining when such objectives are met), and must prioritize planned marine conservation projects. Although no foreign fishing is being considered at this time, at its 160th meeting held June 24–27, 2014, in Honolulu, the Council reviewed and approved the MCP for American Samoa and recommended its submission to the Secretary for approval. On March 16, 2015, the Governor of American Samoa submitted the MCP to NMFS, the designee of the Secretary, for review and approval.

The American Samoa MCP contains six conservation and management objectives, listed below. Please refer to the MCP for planned projects and activities designed to meet each objective, the evaluative criteria, and priority rankings.

MCP Objectives

1. Maximize social and economic benefits through sustainable fisheries development.
2. Support quality scientific research to assess and manage fisheries.
3. Promote an ecosystem approach in fisheries management, reduce waste in fisheries and minimize interactions between fisheries and protected species.
4. Recognize the importance of island culture and traditional fishing in managing fishery resources and foster opportunities for participation.
5. Promote education and outreach activities and regional collaboration regarding fisheries conservation.
6. Encourage development of technologies and methods to achieve the most effective level of enforcement and to ensure safety at sea.

This notice announces that NMFS has determined that the American Samoa MCP satisfies the requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Act and approves the MCP for the 3-year period from April 1, 2015, through March 31, 2018. This MCP supersedes the one approved for the period August 11, 2012, through August 10, 2015 (77 FR 58813, September 24, 2012).

Dated: April 3, 2015.

Alan D. Risenhoover,

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

[FR Doc. 2015–08070 Filed 4–7–15; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–22–P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648–XD885

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

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

ACTION: Notice; request for comments.

SUMMARY: The Assistant Regional Administrator for Sustainable Fisheries, Greater Atlantic Region, NMFS (Assistant Regional Administrator), has made a preliminary determination that an exempted fishing permit application contains all of the required information and warrants further consideration. This exempted fishing permit would allow up to three commercial fishing vessels to conduct exploratory fishing in year-round groundfish closed areas (Closed Areas I and II) for the purposes of obtaining fisheries dependent catch information. This research is being conducted by Atlantic Trawlers Fishing, Inc.

Regulations under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act require publication of this notification to provide interested parties the opportunity to comment on applications for proposed exempted fishing permits.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before April 23, 2015.

ADDRESSES: You may submit written comments by any of the following methods:

- Email *nmfs.gar.efp@noaa.gov.* Include in the subject line ''Comments on Exploratory Closed Area Fishing EFP.''
- Mail: John K. Bullard, Regional Administrator, NMFS, NE Regional Office, 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930. Mark the outside of the envelope ''Comments on Closed Area Exploratory Fishing EFP.''

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Brett Alger, Fisheries Management Specialist, 978–675–2153, *brett.alger@noaa.gov.*

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: In a 2014 proposed rule for Northeast Multispecies Sectors that would have allowed vessels using selective trawl gear into portions of year-round Georges Bank (GB) groundfish closed areas (CAs) I and II, we announced interest in gathering catch data from these areas through exempted fishing permits (EFPs) (79 FR 14639, March 17, 2014). Because many of these areas have been closed to groundfish bottom trawling for nearly 20 years, fisheries dependent data collected through an EFP would help inform whether to allow conditional access to CAs I and II to sector vessels through the sector exemption process. Data from vessels operating under an EFP may be used to characterize catch rates of target and non-target species in the CAs, as well as help inform industry on the economic feasibility of industry-funded monitoring for trips into CAs I and II.

In April 2014, we announced our intention to issue an EFP to Atlantic Trawlers Fishing, Inc. (79 FR 23940,