

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Publication of the LOF, which places all U.S. commercial fisheries into three categories based on their levels of incidental mortality and serious injury of marine mammals, is required by section 118 of the MMPA. Background information on the history of the LOF and a discussion of the fishery classification criteria are provided in the proposed LOF for 1997 (61 FR 37035, July 16, 1996). The fishery classification criteria are specified in the implementing regulations for section 118 of the MMPA (50 CFR part 229).

Registration Requirements for Vessels Participating in Category I and II Fisheries

Vessel or gear owners participating in Category I or II fisheries must register under the MMPA, as required by 50 CFR 229.4. Registration under the MMPA is administered by NMFS regional offices. Thus, the procedures and fees associated with registration differs between Regions. Under 50 CFR 229.4, the granting and administration of Authorization Certificates is to be integrated and coordinated with existing state and Federal fishery license, registration, or permit systems and related programs, whenever possible. Alternative registration programs have been or are being implemented in the Alaska Region, Northwest Region, and Northeast Region. Special procedures and instructions for registration in these Regions are provided in the next section (see Region-Specific Registration Requirements).

If the granting and administration of authorizations has not been integrated with state licensing, registration, or permitting systems, owners of vessels or gear must obtain registration packets from the NMFS Region in which their fishery operates. NMFS Regional Offices will endeavor to send these packets to known participants in Category I or II fisheries; however, it is the responsibility of fishers to ensure that these packets are obtained and submitted to NMFS at least 30 days in advance of fishing. The registration packet will typically include an MMAP registration form, a list of those fisheries in each region that require authorization in order to incidentally kill or injure marine mammals (Category I and II fisheries), and an explanation of the management regime, including instructions on reporting requirements. The registration packet may also include an explanation of the changes in the fishery classification criteria, guidance on deterring marine mammals, and a reminder that intentional lethal takes of marine mammals are no longer

permitted except under certain specific conditions.

Vessel owners must submit the registration form and a \$25 fee to the NMFS Regional Office in which their fishery operates. NMFS will send the vessel owner an Authorization Certificate, program decals, and reporting forms within 60 days of receiving the registration form and application fee.

If the granting and administration of authorizations under 50 CFR 229.4 is not integrated or coordinated with existing fishery licenses, registrations, or related programs, requests for registration forms and completed registration forms should be sent to the NMFS Regional Offices listed in this notice under **ADDRESSES**.

Procedures for registering in each NMFS region are outlined in the following section.

Region-Specific Registration Requirements for Category I and II Fisheries

Alaska Region MMAP Registration for 1997

In 1997, registration in the MMAP for fishing vessels or set net permit holders participating in Alaska Category II fisheries will be integrated with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) system for registering commercial vessels and permitting set net fishing. The information required for MMAP registration will be obtained by NMFS directly from ADF&G and will be automatically incorporated into the NMFS MMAP database. Vessel owners must indicate on their ADF&G vessel registration form which Category II fishery they intend to participate in during 1997. If a fishery is not indicated, the vessel will not be registered in the MMAP. Registered vessel owners and set net operators will then be sent an MMAP certificate for 1997, an MMAP decal, a program information sheet, marine mammal injury and mortality reporting forms, and a written statement to be signed and returned to NMFS indicating whether any marine mammals had been injured or killed during the vessel's commercial fishing operations in 1996. The vessel or set net MMAP certificate will not be considered valid until the statement indicating any injuries or mortalities to marine mammals during 1996 fishing operations is returned to NMFS. There will be no fee charged for MMAP registration for 1997.

Northwest Region (NWR) MMAP Registration for 1997

In the Northwest Region, the States of Washington and Oregon have agreed to continue their assistance in issuing Authorization Certificates for Category I and II fishers as part of the fishing license renewal process. There will be no additional charge to the fishers for this service, and the registration instructions will remain the same for 1997 as they were in 1996.

Southwest Region (SWR) MMAP Registration for 1997

SWR is in the process of integrating MMAP registration for Category I and II fisheries that occur in California with the California Department of Fish and Game's commercial fishery permit registration program. However, this integration will not be completed before 1998. For this reason, Category I and II vessel owners in California will continue to register with SWR. In December 1996, vessel owners who engaged in a Category I or II fishery in 1996 will receive a registration packet in the mail. Any Category I or II vessel owner who has not received an application package by December 1, 1996, may request one from NMFS SWR (see **ADDRESSES**).

Southeast Region (SER) MMAP Registration for 1997

SER is in the process of integrating MMAP registration for Category I and II fisheries that occur in the southeast U.S. Atlantic Ocean with existing fishery registration programs. However, this integration will not be completed before 1998.

The only state fisheries in Category I or II that are under SER jurisdiction occur in North Carolina. State fishers in North Carolina should expect to receive a registration packet in the mail. If a fisher plans to participate in any state or Federal fishery in Category I or II and a registration packet is not received, fishers should contact SER (see **ADDRESSES**).

Northeast Region (NER) MMAP Registration for 1997

NER is integrating MMAP registration with state and Federal permitting processes for the following fisheries: Gulf of Maine, U.S. mid-Atlantic lobster fishery, Atlantic squid, mackerel, butterfish trawl, and the New England multispecies sink gillnet fishery (including but not limited to species as defined in the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan, dogfish, and monkfish). The Category I sink gillnet fishery includes regulated and non-regulated fisheries. Participants in the