

National Car Rental System, Inc.  
 PHH Vehicle Management Services  
 Ryder System, Inc. (Both rental and  
 leasing operations)  
 U-Haul International, Inc. (Subsidiary of  
 AMERCO)  
 USL Capital Fleet Services  
 Wheels Inc.

Issued on: April 4, 2000.

**Stephen R. Kratzke,**

*Acting Associate Administrator for Safety  
 Performance Standards.*

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**BILLING CODE 4910-59-P**

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

#### 50 CFR Parts 600 and 648

[I.D. 032400C]

#### **Magnuson-Stevens Act Provisions; General Provisions for Domestic Fisheries; Applications for Exempted Fishing Permits (EFPs) to Conduct Experimental Fishing**

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

**ACTION:** Notification of EFP proposals to  
 conduct experimental fishing; request  
 for comments.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS announces that the  
 Administrator, Northeast Region, NMFS  
 (Regional Administrator), has made a  
 preliminary determination to issue EFPs  
 to conduct experimental fishing to two  
 vessels participating in separate  
 fisheries that would permit these vessels  
 to conduct operations otherwise  
 restricted by regulations governing the  
 fisheries of the Northeastern United  
 States. The EFPs would exempt vessels  
 from regulations regarding: Days-at-sea  
 (DAS) while fishing for, retaining, and  
 landing Atlantic sea scallops; fishing in  
 the scallop closed areas; and limiting  
 the vessel's scallop and bycatch harvest.  
 Regulations under the Magnuson-  
 Stevens Fishery Conservation and  
 Management Act require publication of  
 this notification to provide interested  
 parties the opportunity to comment on  
 the proposed EFP to conduct  
 experimental fishing. A decision to  
 approve or disapprove the EFPs will be  
 made following the comment period.

**DATES:** Comments on this notification  
 must be received on or before 5:00 p.m.,  
 local time, on April 24, 2000.

**ADDRESSES:** Comments should be sent to  
 Patricia A. Kurkul, Regional

Administrator, NMFS, Northeast  
 Regional Office, 1 Blackburn Drive,  
 Gloucester, MA 01930. Mark on the  
 outside of the envelope "Comments on  
 Proposed Scallop EFP Proposals."

Comments also may be sent via  
 facsimile (fax) to (978) 281-9135.  
 Comments will not be accepted if  
 submitted via e-mail or Internet.

#### **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

David Gouveia, Fishery Policy Analyst,  
 978-281-9280.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The  
 Virginia Institute of Marine Science  
 (VIMS) proposes a scallop resource  
 depletion study in selected locations  
 within the Hudson Canyon and Virginia  
 Beach Closure Areas chosen in  
 consultation with the Northeast  
 Fisheries Science Center's scallop  
 survey stations. In addition, this study  
 proposes to collect information on  
 bycatch, habitat effects, and bio-fouling  
 of sea scallops. Depending on the  
 funding available, this study may also  
 attempt to use an autonomous  
 underwater vehicle to verify tow tracks  
 and habitat modifications.

On a tow-by-tow basis, scientific staff  
 and designated crew members will  
 enumerate bycatch and estimate  
 quantities of non-bycatch debris  
 (mollusk shells) and will report on their  
 general physical condition. The overall  
 objective of the study is to assess the  
 increased availability of commercial sea  
 scallop biomass resulting from the area  
 closures that commenced 2 years ago. A  
 similar study in Georges Bank Closed  
 Area II was not performed until 4 years  
 after the closure. It is thought that more  
 knowledge could be gained from a post-  
 dredge survey conducted closer to the  
 cessation of mobile gear activity.

The survey would be conducted  
 during the period June through July  
 2000 and would employ the use of two  
 15-ft (4.57-m) commercial sea scallop  
 dredges at 400 pre-designated stations.  
 Sampling densities of approximately  
 one station per 7.5 nm<sup>2</sup> in the Hudson  
 Canyon South Closure Area, and one  
 station per 5.0 nm<sup>2</sup> in the Virginia  
 Beach Closure Area are proposed.  
 Sampling density will be increased to  
 one station per 5.0 nm<sup>2</sup> on or near the  
 edges of closed area boundaries. Set tow  
 times of 10 minutes at a speed of 4.5  
 knots will be used to calibrate area gear  
 coverage (width of gear x length of  
 dredge path). The dredge gear will  
 comply with all mesh size and gear  
 configuration provisions of Amendment  
 4 to the Atlantic Sea Scallop Fishery  
 Management Plan (FMP). Therefore, no  
 special twine-top configurations or rock  
 chains will be used.

No other species besides Atlantic sea  
 scallops will be retained or landed,  
 except for unusual specimens of interest  
 to scientists and only at the discretion  
 of the chief scientist in charge of at-sea  
 cruise operations. All fishing activities  
 conducted by the participating vessel  
 must only be research activities. All  
 commercial operations would be  
 prohibited. The participating vessel  
 would be exempt from regulations on  
 scallop harvest and bycatch (50 CFR  
 648.52 and 648.53) but would be  
 allowed to retain and land no more than  
 9,100 lb (4,127.76 kg) (650 lb/day  
 (294.84 kg/day)) of Atlantic sea scallops.  
 It would also be exempt from the  
 Atlantic Sea Scallop DAS program when  
 fishing under the EFP (50 CFR 648.10).  
 Based on this landing limit, participants  
 would be required to commit a  
 maximum of 14 days to the study.

The vessel's crew will be instructed  
 that low value sea scallops may not be  
 discarded in favor of retaining high  
 value sea scallops (high grading). VIMS'  
 chief scientist is charged with  
 monitoring all stages of the proposed  
 cruise operations in support of the study  
 objectives, and will ensure maximum  
 integrity of data collection and  
 organization of deck operations. The  
 second proposal, submitted by  
 Coonamessett Farm, proposes to test  
 new gear designs to reduce yellowtail  
 flounder and skate bycatch rates. The  
 experimental dredge will have two  
 modifications. The first modification  
 adds a 10-inch (25.40-cm) mesh panel  
 between the depressor plate and the  
 dredge bale that will follow the angle of  
 the depressor plate. The second  
 modification adds the equivalent of an  
 old-style locomotive cow catcher under  
 the bale frame that would direct skates  
 and flatfish above the bale, along the  
 mesh panel, and over the dredge frame.  
 The applicant requests one 7-day trip to  
 the Georges Bank and South Channel  
 sea scallop stock areas. The  
 participating vessel would be allowed to  
 retain up to 850 lb (385.56 kg) of scallop  
 meats per day, not to exceed 5,950 lb  
 (2,698.9 kg) of scallop meats for the  
 entire trip. An EFP issued to the vessel  
 participating in the Coonamessett Farm  
 proposal would exempt the vessel from  
 the DAS restrictions (50 CFR 648.53)  
 and limit the vessel's scallop and  
 bycatch harvest (50 CFR 648.52 and  
 648.53). Although the dredge gear used  
 by Coonamessett Farm is modified, the  
 changes to the dredge are within the  
 current dredge specifications found in  
 the Atlantic Sea Scallop FMP.  
 Therefore, no exemption of the dredge  
 gear is necessary.

Coonamessett Farm and VIMS would  
 each conduct experimental fishing

activities with a single commercial vessel with a Federal limited access Atlantic sea scallop permit. The vessels will be allowed to land and sell sea scallops caught during the conduct of the experiment, up to a maximum, which is determined based on the average scallop catch per DAS for the most recent 12-month period available for the Atlantic sea scallop stock areas.

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

Dated: April 3, 2000.

**Bruce C. Morehead,**

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

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

#### 50 CFR Parts 600 and 648

[I.D. 032300D]

#### Magnuson-Stevens Act Provisions; General Provisions for Domestic Fisheries; Application for Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) to Conduct Experimental Fishing

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

**ACTION:** Notification of EFP proposal to conduct experimental fishing; request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS announces that the Administrator, Northeast Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has made a

preliminary determination to issue an EFP to that would allow a single vessel to conduct operations otherwise restricted by regulations governing the fisheries of the Northeastern United States. Mount Desert Oceanarium of Southwest Harbor, Maine, submitted a complete application for an EFP, which warrants further consideration. The experimental fishery would involve fishing for, retention of, and landing of small numbers of regulated multispecies and various unmanaged species for the purpose of public education. Regulations issued under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act require publication of this notification to provide interested parties the opportunity to comment on the proposed EFP to conduct experimental fishing.

**DATES:** Comments on this notification must be received at the appropriate address or fax number (See **ADDRESSES**) on or before 5:00 p.m., local time, on April 24, 2000.

**ADDRESSES:** Written comments should be sent to Patricia Kurkul, Regional Administrator, NMFS, Northeast Regional Office, 1 Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930. Mark on the outside of the envelope "Comments on Proposed EFP Proposal." Comments also may be sent via facsimile (fax) to (978) 281-9135. Comments will not be accepted if submitted via e-mail or Internet.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Tom Warren, Fishery Management Specialist, 978-281-9347.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The Mount Desert Oceanarium, of Southwest

Harbor, Maine, submitted an application for an EFP on February 15, 2000, to collect various species of animals for public education. A single chartered vessel will use a modified 50-ft (15.2-m) shrimp trawl to collect marine animals on 3 days during the time period from May 1, 2000, to May 20, 2000. The animals will be brought to shore, maintained in tanks for public display, and most will be returned to the sea in October 2000. Collection will be from the Small Mesh Northern Shrimp Fishery Exemption Area, off Maine. If the target species cannot be located in this area, collection will be farther east or southeast from the Gulf of Maine/ Georges Bank Regulated Mesh Area. The target species will include dabs, blackback and yellowtail flounder, plaice, halibut, monkfish, eel pouts, sculpins, sea ravens, cod, wolffish, spiny dogfish, little skate, barndoor skate, and unidentified species of the Phyla Arthropoda and Echinodermata. The vessel will collect a maximum of six individuals per species, juvenile and adult, with the exception of halibut, which will be limited to a total of one individual, with a minimum total length of 36 inches (91.4 cm).

EFPs are required to exempt the vessel from the possession prohibition, mesh size, minimum fish size, and days-at-sea restrictions of the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan.

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

Dated: March 31, 2000.

**Bruce C. Morehead,**

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

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