meet this demand, satisfy Washington State Growth Management Act requirements, and further improve transportation quality and safety. These proposed transportation system improvements include a series of substantial capital projects that would likely require construction near water bodies, habitat for Puget Sound chinook salmon, bull trout, and other listed and unlisted species. In addition, the Department has identified specific drainage improvement needs in the affected basins. These drainage improvements would also involve a series of substantial capital projects that are likely to affect water bodies, habitat for Puget Sound chinook salmon, bull trout, and other listed and unlisted species. The Services and Department agree that project-by-project ESA compliance decreases project certainty, increases expense, and can result in a fragmented and uncoordinated approach to species conservation. The Department's proposal is to develop an HCP, which will provide long-term assurances for constructing, upgrading, and maintaining Snohomish County's transportation and drainage systems while ensuring that the County's activities are conducted in a way that meets the conservation needs of 3 listed species and 15 unlisted fish and wildlife species (including Dolly Varden, *Salvelinus malma*, proposed for listing under the ESA's similarity of appearance provisions, and Coho salmon, *Oncorhynchus kisutch*, a candidate for listing under the ESA) with specific provisions in the Permits should these species be listed in the future.

Snohomish County's transportation and drainage construction and maintenance activities can harm listed species. ESA section 10 provides for the issuance of incidental take permits to non-Federal entities whose otherwise lawful activities cause the take of endangered and threatened species. The issuance criteria for an incidental take permit require that the take is incidental to otherwise lawful activities, and will not appreciably reduce the likelihood of the survival and recovery of the species in the wild. In addition, the applicant must prepare and submit to the Services for approval an HCP containing a strategy for minimizing and mitigating the effects of any incidental take to the maximum extent practicable. The applicant must also ensure that adequate funding will be provided for implementation of the HCP, and meet any other requirements that the Secretaries of Commerce and Interior might require.

Snohomish County has initiated discussions with the Services regarding the possibility of receiving permits that would cover take of listed species incidental to the following otherwise lawful activities:

(1) Construction of new transportation facilities (roads and bridges, drainage and stormwater facilities, mitigation sites);

(2) Maintenance of existing transportation facilities (roads and bridges, drainage and stormwater facilities);

(3) Construction of new drainage infrastructure and facilities (drainage and stormwater facilities, culverts, mitigation sites);

(4) Maintenance of existing drainage facilities (drainage and stormwater facilities, culverts, mitigation sites); and

(5) Construction and maintenance of bank stabilization projects associated with county road rights-of-way (bank hardening).

The Snohomish County Public Works is currently considering the following types of conservation measures for the proposed HCP. These may include, but are not limited to:

(1) A program of land conservation for the preservation, enhancement, and/or creation of suitable habitats for species addressed in the HCP to mitigate impacts associated with proposed construction and maintenance activities;

(2) Development and implementation of construction and maintenance best management practices to avoid or minimize construction and maintenance impacts on species addressed in the HCP;

(3) Commitment to continuing certain activities that are currently voluntary, targeted at reducing anthropogenic caused ecological conditions that limit the natural production of salmonids in the HCP Area (may include, but is not limited to, the following types of activities: impervious surface removal, stormwater retrofitting, and fish passage barrier removal);

(4) Implementation of an adaptive management program with ongoing monitoring and adjustment of proposed covered activities; and

(5) Continuing landowner outreach, education, and Water Resource Inventory Area planning participation.

The Services will conduct an environmental review of the issuance of the proposed requested Permits and proposed HCP by preparing an EIS. The EIS will analyze the proposed action (issuing the requested Permits) and alternatives to the proposed action, by comparing the impacts of the action on the human and natural environment to those that would occur under each of a range of reasonable alternatives, including a No Action alternative. The Services will use the scoping process to develop alternatives to the proposed action. In addition to considering potential impacts on listed and other covered species and their habitats, the EIS could include information on potential impacts resulting from alternatives on other components of the human environment. Other components could include air quality, water quality and quantity, geology and soils, cultural resources, social resources, economic resources, and environmental justice.

The environmental review of this project will be conducted in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (42 USC 4321 *et seq.*), National Environmental Policy Act Regulations (40 CFR 1500–1508), other appropriate Federal laws and regulations, and policies and procedures of the Services for compliance with those regulations.

Date: June 12, 2003.

William F. Shake,

Acting, Deputy Regional Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 1.

Date: July 7, 2003.

Phil Williams,

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

[FR Doc. 03–17750 Filed 7–11–03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–22–S

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 070103A]

Fisheries of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic; Approved Vessel Monitoring Systems for use in the South Atlantic Rock Shrimp Fishery

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

ACTION: Notice of vessel monitoring systems; approval.

SUMMARY: This document provides notice of vessel monitoring systems (VMS) approved by NOAA for use by vessels participating in the limited access program for the Rock Shrimp Fishery of the South Atlantic Region and sets forth relevant features of the VMS.

ADDRESSES: To obtain copies of the list of NOAA approved VMS mobile

transmitting units and NOAA approved VMS communications service providers, or information regarding the status of VMS systems being evaluated by NOAA for approval, write to NOAA Fisheries Office for Law Enforcement (OLE), 8484 Georgia Avenue, Suite 415, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

To submit a completed and signed checklist, mail or fax it to NOAA Enforcement Southeast, 9721 Executive Center Drive North, Koger Building, St. Petersburg, FL 33702, fax: 727–570–5575.

For addresses regarding approved VMS, see the **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** section, under the heading VMS Provider Addresses.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For current listing information Mark Oswell, Outreach Specialist, phone: 301–427–2300, fax: 301–427–2055. For questions regarding status of evaluations, contact Jonathan Pinkerton, National VMS Program Manager, phone: 301–427–2300, fax: 301–427–2055. For questions regarding VMS installation or the installation checklist, contact Fred Kyle, Special Agent, or Beverly Lambert, Southeast Divisional VMS Program Manager, NOAA Enforcement Southeast, phone: 727–570–5344.

The public may acquire this notice, installation checklist, and relevant updates via the OLE/SE website *http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/ole/Southeast/SED/VesselMonitoringSystem.htm* Telephone requests can be made by calling 727–570–5344.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Background

NMFS issued a final rule on January 16, 2003 (68 FR 2188) to implement Amendment 5 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Shrimp Fishery off the Southern Atlantic States (Amendment 5) which was prepared by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council). That final rule established a limited access program for the rock shrimp fishery in the exclusive economic zone off Georgia and the east coast of Florida. The final rule requires an owner or operator of a vessel that has been issued a limited access endorsement for South Atlantic rock shrimp to ensure that such vessel has a NMFS-approved, operating VMS on board when on a trip in the South Atlantic. An operating VMS includes an operating mobile transmitting unit on the vessel and a functioning communication link between the unit and NMFS as provided by a NMFS-approved communication service provider. The VMS requirement is effective as of October 14, 2003, or 90 days after publication in the **Federal Register** of this notice listing the approved transmitting units and associated communications service providers, whichever is later. However, vessel owners and operators should not delay their purchase and installation of a mobile transceiver unit until the last day. Vendors may require extended periods of time to deliver a mobile transceiver unit and to complete its installation.

This notice provides a list of the currently approved VMS (mobile transceiver units and communication service providers) for the South Atlantic rock shrimp limited access fishery and sets forth the features of each VMS. The list of VMS approved by NOAA will be updated and revised as others are approved. The list will be published in the **Federal Register** and will be posted on the NMFS OLE website and will contain revisions when required.

Partial Reimbursement for Initial VMS Acquisition/Installation

Amendment 5 expressed the Council's intent that costs for an initial VMS acquisition and installation should not exceed $1200, for a vessel owner who receives an initial rock shrimp limited access endorsement. In keeping with that intent, through December 31, 2004, NMFS will partially reimburse such a vessel owner up to $775 for initial acquisition and installation of an approved VMS. The maximum $775 reimbursement is based on the estimated cost of acquisition and installation of the least expensive approved VMS unit ($1975) minus $1200. If actual costs are less than $1975, the reimbursement would be reduced accordingly; in some cases involving special circumstances pertaining to installation of the device, a somewhat larger reimbursement amount may be considered. An owner would be initially responsible for the entire cost. To receive the reimbursement, an owner must provide valid signed receipts for purchase and installation of an approved VMS to NMFS Southeast Regional Office, and confirm with NOAA Enforcement Southeast that the VMS is functioning. NMFS anticipates that most qualified vessel owners will acquire VMS as soon as possible; some may defer temporarily for a variety of reasons. No requests for reimbursement will be accepted after December 19, 2004, and no reimbursements will be granted after December 31, 2004. NMFS will provide additional details regarding the reimbursement procedures to qualified vessel owners.

II. Approved VMS Mobile Transceiver Units

INMARSAT-C Transceivers

The Inmarsat-C satellite communications VMS transmitting units that meet the minimum technical requirements for the South Atlantic Rock Shrimp Fishery are the Thrane & Thrane Fishery ''Capsat'' (part number TT–3022D-NMFS) and the Thrane & Thrane Fishery ''Mini-C'' (part number TT–3026–NMFS). The address for the Thrane & Thrane distributor (LandSea Systems) dealer contact is provided under the heading VMS Provider Addresses.

A. Thrane & Thrane TT–3022D-NMFS

The transceiver consists of an integrated GPS/Inmarsat-C unit in the wheelhouse and an antenna mounted atop the vessel. The unit is factory pre-configured for NMFS VMS operations (non-Global Maritime Distress & Safety System (non-GMDSS)). Satellite commissioning services are provided by LandSea Systems personnel.

Automatic GPS position reporting starts after transceiver installation and power activation onboard the vessel. The unit is a car-radio-sized transceiver using a floating 10 to 32 VDC power supply. The unit is configured for automatic reduced position transmissions when the vessel is stationary (i.e., in port). It allows for port stays without power drain or power shut down. The unit restarts normal position transmission automatically when the vessel goes to sea.

The outside antenna, model TT–3005M, is a compact omni-directional Inmarsat-C/GPS antenna, providing operation down to +/-15 deg. angles.

A configuration option is available to automatically send position reports to a private address, such as a fleet management company. Another available option is the ability to send and receive private e-mail and other messages with the purchase and installation of an input device such as a laptop, personal computer, or message display terminal.

B. Thrane & Thrane TT–3026–NMFS

The transceiver consists of an integrated GPS/Inmarsat-C unit mounted atop the vessel. The unit is factory pre-configured for NMFS VMS operations (non-Global Maritime Distress & Safety System (non-GMDSS)). Satellite commissioning services are provided by LandSea Systems personnel.

Automatic GPS position reporting starts after transceiver installation and power activation onboard the vessel.

The unit is an integrated transceiver/antenna/GPS design using a floating 10 to 32 VDC power supply. The unit is configured for automatic reduced position transmissions when the vessel is stationary (i.e., in port). It allows for port stays without power drain or power shut down. The unit restarts normal position transmission automatically when the vessel goes to sea.

The TT–3026–NMFS provides operation down to +/-15 degree angles. Although the unit has the capability of two-way communication to send and receive private e-mail and other messages; it can only use this capability when additional equipment not required by NMFS is purchased (i.e., a laptop, personal computer, or message display terminal). A configuration option is available to automatically send position reports to a private address, such as a fleet management company.

General Procedure for Acquiring and Installing Approved VMS

A vessel owner wishing to purchase either of the approved systems may contact the entity identified under the heading VMS Provider Addresses for Thrane & Thrane TT–3022D-NMFS and TT–3026–NMFS. The owner should identify himself or herself as a vessel owner in the ''U.S. South Atlantic Rock Shrimp Fishery.'' The Thrane & Thrane transceiver set the vessel owner purchases will be configured for the Rock Shrimp Fishery.

To use the TT–3022–NMFS or the TT–3026–NMFS, the vessel owner will need to establish an Inmarsat-C system use contract with an approved Inmarsat-C communications service provider. The owner will be required to complete the Inmarsat-C ''Registration for Service Activation for Maritime Mobile Earth Station.'' The owner should consult with LandSea Systems when completing this form.

LandSea Systems personnel will perform the following before shipment: (a) Configure the transceiver according to NOAA Fisheries Office for Law Enforcement specifications for the South Atlantic Rock Shrimp Fishery; (b) download the predetermined NMFS position reporting and broadcast command identification numbers into the unit; (c) test the unit to ensure operation when installation has been completed on the vessel; and (d) forward the Inmarsat service provider and the transceiver identifying information to the NOAA Fisheries Office for Law Enforcement.

III. Approved Communications Service Providers

NOAA Fisheries Office for Law Enforcement has approved the below-listed Telenor and Xantic satellite communications services for the South Atlantic Rock Shrimp Fishery.

A. Telenor Satellite Services/Inmarsat-C

Inmarsat-C is a store-and-forward data messaging service. Inmarsat C allows users to send and receive information virtually anywhere in the world, on land, at sea, and in the air. Inmarsat-C supports a wide variety of applications including Internet e-mail*, position and weather** reporting, a free daily news service*, and remote equipment monitoring and control. Mariners can use Inmarsat-C free of charge to send critical safety at sea messages as part of the U.S. Coast Guard's Automated Mutual-Assistance Vessel Rescue system and of the NOAA Shipboard Environmental Acquisition System programs**. (Features marked with * require use of attached laptop; features marked with ** can be accessed using the TT3022D.)

For the Telenor address, look under the heading VMS Provider Addresses.

Inmarsat-C features: Vessel owners wishing to use Inmarsat-C will need to purchase an Inmarsat-C transceiver approved for the fishery. The owner will need to complete an Inmarsat-C system use contract with Telenor, including a provision for a mobile earth station license (FCC requirement). The transceiver will need to be commissioned with Inmarsat according to Telenor instructions. The owner should refer to and follow the configuration, installation, and service activation procedures for the specific transceiver purchased.

B. Xantic

Xantic is a global leader in providing Vessel Monitoring Services to the fishing industry. By installing on the vessel an Inmarsat-C transceiver approved by NOAA Fisheries Office for Law Enforcement, fishermen can send and receive E-mail*, to and from land; the transceiver automatically sends vessel position reports to the NOAA Fisheries Office for Law Enforcement, and is fully compliant with the International Coast Guard Search and Rescue Centers**. (Features marked with * require use of attached laptop, features marked with ** can be accessed from the TT3022D.)

XANTIC Vessel Monitoring System Services are being sold through its Service Provider, LandSea Systems, Inc. For the LandSea and XANTIC addresses, look under the heading VMS Provider Addresses.

XANTIC Features offered through LandSea Systems: Customer Service supports the security and privacy of vessel accounts and messages with the following: (a) Password authentication for vessel owners or agents and for the NOAA Fisheries Office for Law Enforcement to prevent unauthorized changes or inquiries; and (b) separation of private messages from NOAA Fisheries Office for Law Enforcement messages. (The Office for Law Enforcement receives VMS-related position reports, only.)

Billing is separated between accounts for the vessel owner and the NOAA Fisheries Office for Law Enforcement. VMS position reports and vessel-initiated messaging are paid for by the vessel owner. Messaging initiated from the Office for Law Enforcement operations center is paid for by NOAA.

LandSea Systems provides customer service for XANTIC users to support and establish two-way transmission of transceiver unit configuration commands between the transceiver and land-based control centers. This supports the Office for Law Enforcement's message needs and, optionally, fishermen's private message needs.

The vessel owner can configure automatic position reports to be sent to a private address, such as to a fleet management company. The vessel can send and receive private e-mail and other messages when the transceiver has such an input device as a laptop or personal computer attached.

Vessel owners wishing to use XANTIC services will need to purchase an Inmarsat-C transceiver approved for the fishery. The owner will need to complete an Inmarsat-C system use contract with XANTIC, including a mobile earth station license (FCC requirement). The transceiver will need to be commissioned with Inmarsat according to XANTIC's instructions. The owner should refer to and follow the configuration, installation, and service activation procedures for the specific transceiver purchased.

General Procedures Regarding Communication Service Providers

It is recommended that the vessel owner keep for his or her records and that Telenor and Xantic have on record the following identifying information: (a) Signed and dated receipts and contracts; (b) transceiver serial number; (c) Telenor or Xantic customer number, user name and password; (d) e-mail address of transceiver; (e) Inmarsat identification number; (f) owner name;

(g) vessel name; (h) vessel documentation or registration number; and (i) mobile earth station license (FCC license).

Pursuant to 50 CFR 622.9(b), the Agency will provide an installation and activation checklist which the vessel owner must follow. The vessel owner must sign a statement on the checklist certifying compliance with the installation procedures and return the checklist to NOAA Enforcement Southeast. Installation can be performed by experienced crew or by an electronics specialist.

The owner should confirm the TT–3022–NMFS or TT–3026–NMFS operation and communications service to ensure that position reports are automatically sent to and received by NOAA Enforcement Southeast, before leaving on a fishing trip under VMS. NOAA Enforcement Southeast does not regard the fishing vessel as meeting the requirements of 50 CFR 622.9 until position reports are automatically received. For confirmation purposes, contact NOAA Enforcement Southeast in St. Petersburg, FL, at 727–570–5344.

IV. VMS Provider Addresses

For Thrane & Thrane TT–3022–NMFS or TT–3026–NMFS information, contact Ken Ravenna, Marine Products, LandSea Systems, Inc., 509 Viking Drive, Suite K, L & M, Virginia Beach, VA 23452; voice: 757–463–9557; fax: 757–463–9581, e-mail: *KCR@LandSeaSystems.com.*; website: *http://www.landseasystems.com*.

For Telenor information, contact Telenor Satellite Services, 6560 Rock Spring Drive, Bethesda, MD 20817; Telenor Customer Care, phone: 800–685–7898 or 301–838–7700; e-mail: *customercare@telenor-usa.com.*; website: *www.telenor-usa.com*. Alternate Contact: Courtney Coleman, Manager COMSAT-C Services Marketing, 6560 Rock Spring Dr., Bethesda, MD 20817; phone: 301–214–3293; e-mail: *courtney.coleman@telenor-usa.com*.

For XANTIC information, contact LandSea Systems Inc., Donna Sherman, 509 Viking Drive, Suite K, L, M, Virginia Beach, VA 23452; voice: 757 463–9557; fax: 757 463–9581 e-mail: *airtime@landseasystems.com*. Alternate contacts: XANTIC, Folef Hooft Graafland, 6100 Hollywood Boulevard, Suite 410, Hollywood, FL 33024; voice: 954–962–9908 Ext. 11; fax: 954–962–1164; Cellular: 954–214–2609; e-mail: *folef.hooftgraafland@XANTIC.net*; Andre Cortese, 1211 Connecticut Ave., NW, Suite 504, Washington, DC 20036; telephone number: 202–785–5615; e-mail: *andre.cortese@XANTIC.net*; Bobbie Thach, 1211 Connecticut Ave, NW, Suite 504, Washington, DC 20036; voice: 202–785–5614; fax: 202–785–5616; e-mail: *bobbie.thach@XANTIC.net*. Customer Service, contact LandSea Systems, Inc., 509 Viking Drive, Suite K, L & M, Virginia Beach, VA 23452; voice: 757–463–9557; fax: 757–463–9581, e-mail: *KCR@LandSeaSystems.com.*; or XANTIC Netherlands, toll free: 1–888–440–8988; website: *www.XANTIC.net*.

V. Additional Information

The NOAA Fisheries Office for Law Enforcement is constantly evaluating new and emerging technologies for inclusion in the VMS program. Additional units may be approved for use the South Atlantic Rock Shrimp Fishery at a later date.

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

Dated: July 9, 2003.

Bruce C. Morehead,

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

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BILLING CODE 3510–22–S

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 070803D]

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

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

ACTION: Notice of public meeting.

SUMMARY: The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Gulf Council) and South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (South Atlantic Council) in cooperation with the Florida Marine Research Institute (FMRI) of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FFWCC) and the Southeast Fisheries Science Center of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) will convene an Assessment Review Workshop as part of the 2003 Southeast Data Assessment and Review (SEDAR) process. The Gulf Council's Standing Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) will also be convened as a component of the Assessment Review Workshop.

DATES: The workshop will be held beginning at 1:30 p.m. on Monday July 28, 2003 through noon on Thursday, July 31, 2003.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held at the Hilton Tampa Airport Westshore, 2225 Lois Avenue, Tampa, FL; telephone: 813–877–6688.

Council address: Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, 3018 U.S. Highway 301 North, Suite 1000, Tampa, FL 33619.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Phil Steele, NMFS Southeast Regional Office, 9721 North Executive Center Drive, St. Petersburg, FL 33702; telephone: 727–570–5305.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The purpose of the Assessment Review Workshop will be to evaluate the results of a SEDAR Yellowtail Snapper Stock Assessment Workshop that was held June 9–13, 2003. Yellowtail snapper off the U.S. mainland straddle the jurisdictional boundaries of the Gulf Council, South Atlantic Council and FFWCC, and are considered to be a single stock. Yellowtail snapper in the Caribbean appear to be a different population, based on preliminary genetic analyses, and are not included in this assessment.

The Assessment Review Workshop is the third of three meetings held as part of the SEDAR process. A Data Review Workshop was held March 3–7, 2003, to review available data on yellowtail snapper. A Stock Assessment Workshop was held June 9–13, 2003, to analyze the data and prepare a preliminary stock assessment for review by the Assessment Review Workshop.

The Assessment Review Workshop will consist of representatives of the Gulf Council's and South Atlantic Council's SSCs, staff from the Gulf Council, South Atlantic Council, FFWCC and NMFS, representatives of recreational and commercial fishing communities, representatives of environmental organizations, outside stock assessment biologists who were not involved in the Stock Assessment Workshop, and scientists from the University of Miami's Center of Independent Experts.

The preliminary yellowtail snapper stock assessment will be available from the Gulf Council's website (*http://www.gulfcouncil.org*) prior to the meeting, and a final stock assessment will be prepared following the meeting. The Assessment Review Workshop reports and recommendations will be presented to the Gulf Council, South Atlantic Council and FFWCC, which may set year a 2004 total allowable catch (TAC) as well as other management measures for the yellowtail snapper stock within the respective jurisdictions of each management agency.