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means of poisons, drugs, other chemicals, spears, nets, hooks, or explosives.

[61 FR 34572, July 2, 1996, as amended at 62 FR 35450, July 1, 1997; 63 FR 20540, Apr. 27, 1998; 64 FR 36822, July 8, 1999]

§ 660.49 At-sea observer coverage.

All fishing vessels subject to this subpart and subpart B of this part must carry an observer when requested to do so by the Regional Director.

§ 660.50 Harvest limitation program.

(a) *General.* Harvest guidelines for the Necker Island Lobster Grounds, Gardner Pinnacles Lobster Grounds, Maro Reef Lobster Grounds, and General NWHI Lobster Grounds for Permit Area 1 will be set annually for the calendar year and shall:

(1) Apply to the total catch of spiny and slipper lobsters.

(2) Be expressed in terms of numbers of lobsters.

(b) *Harvest guideline.* (1) The Regional Administrator shall use information from daily lobster catch reports and lobster sales reports from previous years, and may use information from research sampling and other sources to establish the annual harvest guideline in accordance with the FMP after consultation with the Council.

(2) NMFS shall publish a document indicating the annual harvest guideline in the FEDERAL REGISTER by February 28 of each year and shall use other means to notify permit holders of the harvest guideline for the year.

(3) The Regional Administrator shall determine, on the basis of the information reported to NMFS by the operator of each vessel fishing, when the harvest guideline for each lobster ground will be reached.

(4) Notice of the date when the harvest guideline for a lobster ground is expected to be reached and specification of the closure date of the lobster grounds will be provided to each permit holder and/or operator of each permitted vessel at least 24 hours in advance of the closure. After a closure, the harvest of lobster in that lobster ground is prohibited, and the possession of lobster traps on board the vessel in that lobster ground is prohibited unless allowed under § 660.48(a)(8).

(5) With respect to the notification in paragraph (b)(4) of this section, NMFS shall provide each permit holder and operator of each permitted vessel with the following information, as appropriate:

(i) Determination of when the overall harvest guideline for Crustaceans Permit Area 1 will be reached;

(ii) Closure date after which harvest of lobster or possession of lobster traps on board the vessel in a lobster grounds is prohibited;

(iii) Closure date after which the possession of lobster traps on board the vessel in Crustaceans Permit Area 1 is prohibited by any permitted vessel that is not operating a VMS unit certified by NMFS; and

(iv) Specification of when further landings of lobster will be prohibited by permitted vessels not carrying an operational VMS unit, certified by NMFS, on board.

(c) *Monitoring and adjustment.* The operator of each vessel fishing during the open season shall report lobster catch (by species) and effort (number of trap hauls) data while at sea to NMFS in Honolulu. The Regional Director shall notify permit holders of the reporting method, schedule, and logistics at least 30 days prior to the opening of the fishing season.

[61 FR 34572, July 2, 1996, as amended at 62 FR 35450, July 1, 1997; 63 FR 20541, Apr. 27, 1998; 64 FR 36822, July 8, 1999]

§ 660.51 Monk seal protective measures.

(a) *General.* This section establishes a procedure that will be followed if the Regional Director receives a report of a monk seal death that appears to be related to the lobster fishery in Permit Area 1.

(b) *Notification.* Upon receipt of a report of a monk seal death that appears to be related to the lobster fishery, the Regional Director will notify all interested parties of the facts known about the incident. The Regional Director will also notify them that an investigation is in progress, and that, if the investigation reveals a threat of harm to the monk seal population, protective measures may be implemented.

(c) *Investigation.* (1) The Regional Director will investigate the incident reported and will attempt to:

- (i) Verify that the incident occurred.
- (ii) Determine the extent of the harm to the monk seal population.
- (iii) Determine the probability of a similar incident recurring.
- (iv) Determine details of the incident such as:
 - (A) The number of animals involved.
 - (B) The cause of the mortality.
 - (C) The age and sex of the dead animal(s).
 - (D) The relationship of the incident to the reproductive cycle, for example, breeding season (March-September), non-breeding season (October-February).
 - (E) The population estimates or counts of animals at the island where the incident occurred.
 - (F) Any other relevant information.
- (v) Discover and evaluate any extenuating circumstances.
- (vi) Evaluate any other relevant factors.

(2) The Regional Director will make the results of the investigation available to the interested parties and request their advice and comments.

(d) *Determination of relationship.* The Regional Director will review and evaluate the results of the investigation and any comments received from interested parties. If there is substantial evidence that the death of the monk seal was related to the lobster fishery, the Regional Director will:

- (1) Advise the interested parties of his or her conclusion and the facts upon which it is based.
- (2) Request from the interested parties their advice on the necessity of protective measures and suggestions for appropriate protective measures.

(e) *Determination of response.* The Regional Director will consider all relevant information discovered during the investigation or submitted by interested parties in deciding on the appropriate response. Protective measures may include, but are not limited to, changes in trap design, changes in gear, closures of specific areas, or closures for specific periods of time.

(f) *Action by the Regional Director.* If the Regional Director decides that protective measures are necessary and ap-

propriate, the Regional Director will prepare a document that describes the incident, the protective measures proposed, and the reasons for the protective measures; provide it to the interested parties; and request their comments.

(g) *Implementation of protective measures.* (1) If, after completing the steps described in paragraph (f) of this section, the Regional Director concludes that protective measures are necessary and appropriate, the Regional Director will recommend the protective measures to the Assistant Administrator and provide notice of this recommendation to the Chairman of the Council and the Director of the Division of Aquatic Resources, Department of Land and Natural Resources, State of Hawaii.

(2) If the Assistant Administrator concurs with the Regional Director's recommendation, NMFS will publish an action in the FEDERAL REGISTER that includes a description of the incident that triggered the procedure described in this section, the protective measures, and the reasons for the protective measures.

(h) *Notification of "no action."* If, at any point in the process described in this section, the Regional Director or Assistant Administrator decides that no further action is required, the interested parties will be notified of this decision.

(i) *Effective dates.* (1) The protective measures will take effect 10 days after the date of publication in the FEDERAL REGISTER.

(2) The protective measures will remain in effect for the shortest of the following time periods:

- (i) Until the Crustaceans FMP and this section are amended to respond to the problem;
- (ii) Until other action that will respond to the problem is taken under the ESA;
- (iii) Until the Assistant Administrator, following the procedures set forth in paragraph (j) of this section, decides that the protective measures are no longer required and repeals the measures; or

(iv) For the period of time set forth in the FEDERAL REGISTER notification, not to exceed 3 months. The measures

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may be renewed for 3 months after again following procedures in paragraphs (b) through (g) of this section.

(j) *Repeal.* (1) If the Assistant Administrator decides that protective measures may no longer be necessary for the protection of monk seals, the interested parties will be notified of this preliminary decision and the facts upon which it is based. The Assistant Administrator will request advice on the proposed repeal of the protective measures.

(2) The Assistant Administrator will consider all relevant information obtained by the Regional Director or submitted by interested parties in deciding whether to repeal the protective measures.

(3) If the Assistant Administrator decides to repeal the protective measures—

(i) Interested parties will be notified of the decision; and

(ii) Notification of repeal and the reasons for the repeal will be published in the FEDERAL REGISTER.

§ 660.52 Monk seal emergency protective measures.

(a) *Determination of emergency.* If, at any time during the process described in § 660.51, the Regional Director determines that an emergency exists involving monk seal mortality related to the lobster fishery and that measures are needed immediately to protect the monk seal population, the Regional Director will—

(1) Notify the interested parties of this determination and request their immediate advice and comments.

(2) Forward a recommendation for emergency action and any advice and comments received from interested parties to the Assistant Administrator.

(b) *Implementation of emergency measures.* If the Assistant Administrator agrees with the recommendation for emergency action—

(1) The Regional Director will determine the appropriate emergency protective measures.

(2) NMFS will publish the emergency protective measures in the FEDERAL REGISTER.

(3) The Regional Director will notify the interested parties of the emergency protective measures. Holders of per-

mits to fish in Permit Area I will be notified by certified mail. Permit holders that the Regional Director knows are on the fishing grounds also will be notified by radio.

(c) *Effective dates.* (1) Emergency protective measures are effective against a permit holder at 12:01 a.m., local time, of the day following the day the permit holder receives actual notice of the measures.

(2) Emergency protective measures are effective for 10 days from the day following the day the first permit holder is notified of the protective measures.

(3) Emergency protective measures may be extended for an additional 10 days, if necessary, to allow the completion of the procedures set out in § 660.51.

§ 660.53 Framework procedures.

(a) *Introduction.* New management measures may be added through rule-making if new information demonstrates that there are biological, social, or economic concerns in Permit Areas 1, 2, or 3. The following framework process authorizes the implementation of measures that may affect the operation of the fisheries, gear, harvest guidelines, or changes in catch and/or effort.

(b) *Annual report.* By June 30 of each year, the Council-appointed Crustaceans Plan Team will prepare an annual report on the fisheries in the management area. The report shall contain, among other things, recommendations for Council action and an assessment of the urgency and effects of such action(s).

(c) *Procedure for established measures.*

(1) Established measures are management measures that, at some time, have been included in regulations implementing the FMP, and for which the impacts have been evaluated in Council/NMFS documents in the context of current conditions.

(2) Following the framework procedures of Amendment 9 to the FMP, the Council may recommend to the Regional Director that established measures be modified, removed, or re-instituted. Such recommendation shall include supporting rationale and analysis, and shall be made after advance