

MEMORANDUM

TO: Council, SSC and AP Members  
FROM: Clarence G. Pautzke  
Executive Director  
DATE: April 4, 1996  
SUBJECT: Experimental Fishing Permit

ESTIMATED TIME  
4 HOURS  
(for all D-1 items)

**ACTION REQUIRED**

Review request for Experimental Fishing Permit

**BACKGROUND**

Item D-1(d)(1) is an application for an experimental fishing permit in area 650, Southeast Alaska. Its primary purpose is to determine the viability of a pelagic trawl fishery for rockfish species and provide information on whether a restriction on use of midwater trawls for seabastes is really warranted. The applicant requests 250 mt of the seabastes complex, with limitations on catches of yellowtail and widow rockfish, and 100 mt of pollock. These species will be retained and sold. Fishing will occur outside 100 m depth to avoid DSR, during a one-month period between May 1 and August 1. The applicant is particularly interested in demonstrating there is no need for the complete trawl restrictions in Southeast Outside and East Yakutat that were made part of the Council's license limitation program. The NMFS Regional Director has requested comments from the Council.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

National Marine Fisheries Service

P.O. Box 21668

Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668

AGENDA D-1(d)(1)

APRIL 1996

March 28, 1996



Clarence G. Pautzke  
Executive Director  
North Pacific Fishery Management Council  
605 West 4th Avenue, Suite 306  
Anchorage, Alaska 99501-2252

Dear Clarence:

We have received an application for an experimental fishing permit (EFP) from David Fraser for purposes of investigating the viability of using pelagic trawl gear to conduct directed fisheries on rockfish species in the Gulf of Alaska. Issuance of experimental fishing permits is authorized by the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska and its implementing regulations at 50 CFR § 672.6.

These regulations require the Regional Director, in consultation with the Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC), to review each application for an experimental fishing permit, and to make a preliminary determination whether the application contains all the information necessary to determine if the proposal constitutes a valid fishing experiment appropriate for further consideration.

We have consulted with the AFSC have determined that the proposal warrants further consideration. We are initiating consultation with the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) by forwarding the application to you as required by regulations. You should notify the applicant of a meeting at which the Council will consider the application and invite the applicant to appear in support of the application if the applicant desires.

We will publish a notice of the application in the Federal Register with a brief description of the proposal. Attached is a copy of Mr. Fraser's application.

Sincerely,

*Ronald J. Berg*  
Steven Pennoyer  
Director, Alaska Region

For  
//

Attachment



December 26, 1995

Steve Pennoyer  
RD NMFS  
PO Box 21668  
Juneau, Alaska 99802

Dear Steve,

The following letter is an application for an experimental fishing permit pursuant to CFR 672.6 b.

1. Date:

12/26/95

2. Applicant:

dave fraser, PO Box 771, Port Townsend WA, 98368, 360-385-6248

3. Purpose and Goal:

The primary purpose of this permit is to determine the viability of a targeted pelagic-only trawl fishery for certain sebastes species in area 650. The goal is to provide, for the Secretary of Commerce and the NPFMC, information on whether a restriction on MW trawls in the sebastes fishery is necessary to avoid potential habitat and bycatch concerns, and whether an economically viable gear type is being precluded. In the course of conducting this project, it is anticipated that information will be gathered which will be relevant to a number of other issues being dealt with by the agency and the council. (see attached note)

The applicant hopes to demonstrate that some species of sebastes can be harvested with MW gear with no habitat impact and essentially zero bycatch of species of concern.

An experimental permit is necessary because vessels will not forego the use of more efficient bottom gear during the short openings of the regular fishery, nor will they target on the components of the complex most likely to be available to MW gear due to their relatively lower value. An experimental permit is the only way to gather the needed data.

All sebastes species harvested during the course of the experimental fishery will be retained and sold to defray the costs.

4.i. Amounts of fish:

For purposes of this permit the applicant requests a total of 250 MT of sebastes complex, of which no more than 75 MT shall be POP, no more than 75 MT shall be Yellowtail rockfish, no more than 150 MT shall be Widow rockfish, and no more than 75 MT shall be all other sebastes. Additionally the applicant requests 100 MT of pollock, as there is a potential to encounter pollock bycatch. No retainable amounts of other groundfish are requested.

All seabastes will be retained and sold. They will be offered to processors in Sitka, if no market is available there, they will be delivered to Borenstien Seafoods in either Bellingham or Prince Rupert. Pollock will be retained and sold if there is a processor in Sitka who will accept it. No other groundfish will be retained, as it is not anticipated that any other groundfish can be effectively harvested with MW gear.

4. ii. Time and Area:

The experimental fishery will be conducted in area 650 outside 100 meters (to minimize the potential for encounters of DSR). It will occur during a one month period between May 1st and August 1st, depending on the vessel's schedule in other fisheries.

4. iii. Vessel and Gear:

The vessel will be either the Tracy Anne or the Muir Milach. The gear will be conventional 1000 HP MW nets with single layer 4.5 inch mesh codends. For purposes of this fishery MW gear is defined as in the CFRs at 672.2(7), with the additional restriction on bottom contact which in the older version of the CFRs applied to foreign fishery.

4. iv. Experimental design:

To fulfill the permit objectives the fishery will be pursued in three phases or legs, based on a design employed in a rockfish assessment conducted on board the Muir Milach off Washington in 1980 by Don Gunderson of the UW Fisheries School, with Doug Eggers and Paula Cullenberg. The approach is an adaptive sampling design based on a hierarchy of hydroacoustic sampling, trawl sampling, and attempted commercial exploitation. Though the design is described as three distinct legs, there will probably be some temporal overlap.

In leg 1 the vessel will spend up to one week doing a hydroacoustic survey of the area to ascertain when and where pelagic concentrations occur. Hydroacoustic data will be stored on a computer utilizing SeaState plotting software, which records bathymetry and biomass information on the vessel's survey trackline.

After completion of the hydroacoustic survey, the second leg will be the conduct of actual fishing on identified pelagic concentrations using MW gear for short sample tows to identify species. Haul data will be recorded for each haul as per standard NMFS trawl surveys (L/L, time, duration, depth, water temp, speed, weather, gear characteristics, etc.). Duplicates of NMFS survey forms will be employed, additionally the SeaState software will be used to record most of these data fields, together with a plot of the vessel trackline and echosound data, to facilitate GIS analysis of data. Netsonde data will also be saved for each tow indicating depth of gear and proximity to bottom. Depending on the netsonde being employed the data may be either recorded on paper or video.

Catches will be sampled by the observer for species composition and estimated weight, and CPUEs calculated by species. Additionally, actual weights of seabastes catches will be determined upon delivery to a processor. Fish will be segregated by haul in separate bins by tow.

After species composition of pelagic aggregations are determined by sample tows, leg three will be an attempt to target commercial quantities of three seabastes species - POP, Yellowtail and Widow rockfish. The same haul, species comp, CPUE, and netsonde data will be gathered for all phase three hauls. Additionally variable cost data will be collected (fuel, etc.). The

applicant will work with AFSC survey personnel to determine what other useful data might be gathered incidentally for other purposes.

4.v. Reports:

Haul and species composition data will be stored on computer using MS Access database software. After the completion of the experimental fishery, the data will be assembled into a report based on the format of the AFSC published reports for trawl surveys, including summary tables on bycatches of any non target species. An assessment of the economic viability of targeting seabastes with pelagic gear will also be prepared. Copies of the completed report will be provided to the RD and NPFMC, additionally all raw data and hydroacoustic data will be provided to the survey division at AFSC.

5. Observer:

It is the intention of the applicant to employ a NMFS certified observer at his cost to do the sampling and verify the gear used. The applicant would also invite one person per leg from interested staff of either NPFMC or NMFS/AFSC at their own cost. Both vessels under consideration have been employed in NMFS survey charter work and have workspace and accommodations standard for 90' trawl vessels.

6. Coordination:

Primary coordination will be done by the applicant, dave fraser. Communications with the vessel and logistical support will be provided by Crystal Fisheries (120 Lakeside Ave. Seattle WA 98122, 206-860-1380), the management office for the vessels.

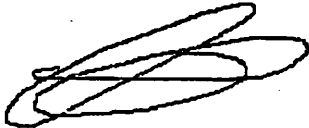
7. Vessel information:

Only one vessel will be actually employed, but two vessels are being considered, the Muir Milach and the Tracy Anne.

- i. Muir Milach
- ii. Muir Milach Inc. 120 Lakeside Ave. Seattle WA 98122, 206-860-1380, master - dave fraser.
- iii. CG document # 611524, AK # 41021
- iv. Home port - Port Townsend WA
- v. Length - 86'
- vi. Net tons - 126
- vii. Gross tons - 176

- i. Tracy Anne
- ii. Tracy Anne Inc. 120 Lakeside Ave. Seattle WA 98122, 206-860-1380, master - David Wilmore
- iii. CG document # 904859, AK # 54654
- iv. Home port - Seattle, WA
- v. Length - 95'
- vi. Net tons - 93
- vii. Gross tons - 138

8. Signature:




9. Additional Information:

The applicant is prepared to modify design or gather additional data if requested. Additionally, outside the scope of this permit, the applicant intends to deploy a vessel in the July area 650 fishery using conventional bottom gear, and will gather similar baseline data for comparison of CPUE, species composition and variable costs.

See the attached note for further detail on the relevance of the experimental design to other issues before the NPFMC, NMFS and AFSC.

Thank you for your review and consideration of this permit application.

Sincerely,



dave fraser  
PO Box 771  
Port Townsend WA 98368

cc:  
NPFMC  
Russ Nelson, AFSC

**Notes on issues for which proposed research will provide relevant information.**

1. Gear restrictions under proposed LEP
2. Lack of adequate assessment of pelagic component of seabastes and pollock stocks
3. Pelagic shelf rockfish complex
4. POP rebuilding

**Gear Restrictions Under Proposed LEP**

In June the NPFMC adopted a no-trawl provision in the LE Plan, which applied to both bottom and pelagic trawls. The limited analysis in the EARIR referenced concerns of potential habitat damage and bycatch impacts from bottom trawls. There was nothing in the analysis indicating a similar concern about MW trawls. However, in public testimony Larry Cotter referred to a conversation with myself and said that there was no point in allowing MW trawling because they were not feasible.

My personal comments to Mr. Cotter referred to POP fishing off Washington and the potential for expensive gear damage if MW nets were used in contact with bottom in the kind of areas inhabited by seabastes. In fact, we have successfully used MW gear for other seabastes species off Washington, and are aware that MW gear has been used in some areas for POP. MW gear is not the gear of choice for most seabastes fishing when bottom trawling is legal because bottom trawling is generally more efficient, particularly for the higher value components of the complex.

If the LEP restriction on all trawl gear is approved by the SOC, it is unlikely that OY can be attained for many groundfish species in area 650. This situation can be avoided for some groundfish species to the extent it can be demonstrated that MW gear can harvest these species without the impacts attributed to bottom trawl gear.

The applicant believes he can demonstrate that MW gear will have no habitat impact as a function of not having bottom contact (in contrast to pot, longline, and bottom trawl gear). The applicant further anticipates there will be essentially no bycatch of halibut, sablefish, or thornyheads which might have social impacts if such bycatch occurred in a magnitude that would close other fisheries.

**Lack of Adequate Assessment of Pelagic Component of Seabastes and Pollock Stocks**

An ongoing concern about the AFSC bottom trawl survey in the GOA is its inability to adequately assess the pelagic component of the stock of some species, particularly pollock and various seabastes species.

The experimental design proposed by the applicant may begin to assist in evaluating the incorporation of routine gathering of hydroacoustic data by chartered survey vessels into the assessment process, as well as assisting in the development of methods for sampling pelagic components of these stocks. The software used to gather and store hydroacoustic data samples echoes on a selectable time interval, sums target strength over a definable portion of the water