

In accordance with 7 CFR 1714.5, the interest rates are established as shown in the following table for all interest rate terms that begin at any time during the fourth calendar quarter of 1996.

Interest rate term ends in (year)	RUS rate (0.000 percent)
2017 or later	5.750
2016	5.750
2015	5.750
2014	5.625
2013	5.625
2012	5.500
2011	5.500
2010	5.500
2009	5.375
2008	5.250
2007	5.125
2006	5.125
2005	5.000
2004	4.875
2003	4.750
2002	4.625
2001	4.625
2000	4.500
1999	4.375
1998	4.125
1997	3.875

Dated: September 13, 1996.
 Wally Beyer,
 Administrator, Rural Utilities Service.
 [FR Doc. 96-23972 Filed 9-18-96; 8:45 am]
 BILLING CODE 3410-15-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 050196A]

Taking and Importing of Marine Mammals; Offshore Seismic Activities in the Beaufort Sea

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

ACTION: Notice of modification of an incidental harassment authorization.

SUMMARY: In accordance with provisions of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) as amended, notification is hereby given that an Incidental Harassment Authorization (IHA) issued on July 18, 1996, to BP Exploration (Alaska), 900 East Benson Boulevard, Anchorage, AK 99519 (BPXA) to take small numbers of bowhead whales and other marine mammals by harassment incidental to conducting seismic surveys in the Northstar Unit and nearby waters, in the Beaufort Sea in state and federal waters has been

modified. These modifications will: Increase the marine mammal safety zones around the seismic array by 100 meters (m) (328 ft); allow the activity to move to an area adjacent to the area requested in the application due to severe ice conditions; remove the requirement for use of Big-Eye binoculars because their use diverts observers from performing key observer tasks; require the final report be submitted on or before April 1, 1997, rather than 160 days after completion of the 1996 season; and note the correct scientific name for the bowhead whale.

EFFECTIVE DATE: The authorization is effective from July 18, 1996, until November 1, 1996.

ADDRESSES: The application, authorization, modifications, revised monitoring plan, and environmental assessment are available by writing to the Chief, Marine Mammal Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910-3225, by telephoning one of the contacts listed below or by leaving a voice mail request at (301) 713-4070.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Kenneth R. Hollingshead, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, (301) 713-2055, Ron Morris, Western Alaska Field Office, NMFS, (907) 271-5006.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Section 101(a)(5)(A) and (D) of the MMPA (16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*) directs the Secretary of Commerce to allow, upon request, the incidental, but not intentional taking of marine mammals by U.S. citizens who engage in a specified activity (other than commercial fishing) within a specified geographical region if certain findings are made and either regulations are issued or, if the taking is limited to harassment, notice of a proposed authorization is provided to the public for review.

Permission may be granted if NMFS finds that the taking will have a negligible impact on the species or stock(s), will not have an unmitigable adverse impact on the availability of the species or stock(s) for subsistence uses, and the permissible methods of taking and requirements pertaining to the monitoring and reporting of such taking are set forth.

On April 10, 1996 (61 FR 15884), NMFS published an interim rule establishing, among other things, procedures for issuing authorizations under section 101(a)(5)(D) of the MMPA in Arctic waters. For additional

information on the procedures that were followed for this authorization, please refer to that document.

On March 18, 1996, NMFS received an application from BPXA requesting an authorization for the harassment of small numbers of several species of marine mammals incidental to conducting seismic surveys during the open water season in waters in the Northstar Unit and in nearby waters, located in the U.S. Beaufort Sea. The survey is expected to take place between approximately July 20 and October 20, 1996, but would continue longer if ice conditions permit. A detailed description of the work planned is contained in the application and is available upon request (see **ADDRESSES**). A notice of receipt of the application and proposed authorization was published on May 28, 1996 (61 FR 26501) and a 30-day public comment period was provided. An incidental harassment authorization was issued to BPXA on July 18, 1996, and a notice of issuance was published in the Federal Register on July 25, 1996 (61 FR 38715).

On July 23, 1996, NMFS received a letter from Dr. W. John Richardson, Executive Vice-President, LGL Limited. His letter, on behalf of BPXA, recommended three changes to the IHA. Dr. Richardson recommended that: (1) The IHA be amended to note the correct scientific name for bowhead whales; (2) the requirement for use of Big-Eye binoculars be eliminated because their use diverts observers from performing key tasks; and (3) the final report be required on or before April 1, 1997, rather than 160 days after completion of the 1996 season. NMFS has reviewed and concurs with these recommended modifications. Accordingly, conditions 3(b), 6(b)(5), and 7(b) of the IHA were modified on July 26, 1996.

In addition, on August 29 and 30, 1996, NMFS received two letters from BPXA. In the August 29, 1996 letter, NMFS was notified that BPXA wanted to conduct seismic operations in an area west of the original operating area due to ice conditions in and around the Northstar Unit. This letter requested NMFS to modify the IHA to cover this additional area for the incidental harassment of marine mammals during seismic operations. NMFS has reviewed the application and notes that the new area is within the Western Beaufort Sea adjacent to the area proposed for seismic exploration as delineated in figure 2 of the application. As this location removes seismic operations further away from the area used by the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission (AEWC) members for the fall bowhead hunt; the AEWC has indicated its

approval of this geographic extension; and this area is neither expected to increase the number of marine mammals taken by harassment, nor result in additional marine mammal species being taken, NMFS modified the IHA on September 9, 1996, to include the waters offshore from the Colville River Delta, Alaska.

The August 30, 1996, letter notified NMFS that, in accordance with the results of the transmission loss (TL) test required by condition 5(d) of the IHA, the safety ranges around the source for pinnipeds and cetaceans should be increased by 100 m (328 ft) to 250 and 750 m (820 and 2,460 ft), respectively. Further investigation determined that these increased safety ranges would be appropriate for the seismic array only, and would not apply to the use of single airguns, which had a 20 dB (re 1 μ Pa @ 1 m) lower amplitude. NMFS understands that these increased safety ranges were immediately implemented by BPXA. NMFS has reviewed the preliminary results of the TL test and concurs with this recommended modification. Accordingly, condition 5(b) of the IHA has been modified.

Dated: September 11, 1996.

Rennie S. Holt,

Acting Director, Office of Protected Resources,
National Marine Fisheries Service.

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[I.D. 091196B]

Marine Mammals; Scientific Research Permit No. 1013 (P617)

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

ACTION: Issuance of permit.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that Cynthia K. Riseling, California State Polytechnic University at Pomona, 12659 16th Street, Chino, California 91710, has been issued a permit to sample California sea lions for scientific purposes.

ADDRESSES: The permit and related documents are available for review upon written request or by appointment in the following office(s):

Permits Division, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13130, Silver Spring, MD 20910 (301/713-2289); and Director, Southwest Region, NMFS, 501 West Ocean Blvd., Long Beach, CA 90802-4213 (310/980-4001).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On July 9, 1996, notice was published in the

Federal Register (61 FR 36036) that a request for a scientific research permit to sample California sea lions (*Zalophus californianus*) currently held in rehabilitation centers had been submitted by the above-named individual. The requested permit has been issued under the authority of the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*) and the Regulations Governing the Taking and Importing of Marine Mammals (50 CFR part 216).

Dated: September 12, 1996.

Ann D. Terbush,

Chief, Permits and Documentation Division,
Office of Protected Resources, National
Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 96-23983 Filed 9-18-96; 8:45 am]

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Technology Administration

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September 1996.

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