

Dated: March 13, 1997.

Ann D. Terbush,

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

[FR Doc. 97-6975 Filed 3-19-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-F

[I.D. 031397D]

Marine Mammals; Scientific Research Permit (PHF# 662-1345)

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

ACTION: Receipt of application.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that Dena Matkin, Box 22, Gustavus, Alaska 99826, has applied in due form for a permit to take killer whales (*Orcinus orca*) and humpback whales (*Megaptera novaengliae*) for purposes of scientific research.

DATES: Written comments must be received on or before April 21, 1997.

ADDRESSES: The application 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
Regional Administrator, Alaska Region, P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802-1668 (907/586-7221).

Written data or views, or requests for a public hearing on this request, should be submitted to the Director, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13130, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Those individuals requesting a hearing should set forth the specific reasons why a hearing on this application would be appropriate.

Concurrent with the publication of this notice in the Federal Register, NMFS is forwarding copies of this application to the Marine Mammal Commission and its Committee of Scientific Advisors.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The subject permit is requested under the authority of the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*), the Regulations Governing the Taking and Importing of Marine Mammals (50 CFR part 216), the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*), and the regulations governing the taking, importing, and exporting of endangered fish and wildlife (50 CFR part 222.23).

The application requests authorization to unintentionally harass

up to 400 killer whales and 100 humpback whales annually over a five year period. The purpose of the research is to continue long-term, year-round photo-identification work in Southeastern Alaska to define the population size, structure and range of killer whales; and to obtain identification of photographs of humpback whales opportunistically in conjunction with the killer whale research.

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), an initial determination has been made that the activity proposed is categorically excluded from the requirement to prepare an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement.

Dated: March 14, 1997.

Ann D. Terbush,

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

[FR Doc. 97-7056 Filed 3-19-97; 8:45 am]

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[I.D. 031397A]

Marine Mammals; Permit No. 957 (P771#71)

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

ACTION: Receipt of application for amendment.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that the National Marine Mammal Laboratory, Alaska Fisheries Science Center, NMFS, 7600 Sand Point Way NE., BIN C15700, Seattle, WA 98115-0070, has requested a amendment to permit No. 957.

DATES: Written comments must be received on or before April 21, 1997.

ADDRESSES: The amendment request 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
Regional Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS, P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802-1668 (907/586-7221).

Written data or views, or requests for a public hearing on this request should be submitted to the Director, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13130, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Those individuals requesting a hearing should set forth the specific reasons why a hearing on this

particular amendment request would be appropriate.

Concurrent with the publication of this notice in the Federal Register, NMFS is forwarding copies of this application to the Marine Mammal Commission and its Committee of Scientific Advisors.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The subject amendment to permit no. 957, issued on May 31, 1995 (60 FR 30065) is requested 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).

Permit no. 957 authorizes the permit holder to: satellite tag up to 50 beluga whales (*Delphinapterus leucas*) over a 5-year period, but not more than 10 in any one year; and to unintentionally harass up to 900 annually. Activities are authorized to occur in Cook Inlet and along the western Alaska coastline.

The permit holder requests authorization to increase the number of animals taken to 30 annually for the next 3 years (1997 through 1999).

Dated: March 14, 1997.

Ann D. Terbush,

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

[FR Doc. 97-7057 Filed 3-19-97; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Department of the Army

Corps of Engineers

Columbia River System Operation Review, Selection of a System Operation Strategy (Record of Decision (ROD))

AGENCY: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, DoD.

ACTION: Notice of availability of Record of Decision.

SUMMARY: In 1990, the three Federal agencies responsible for management of the Federal Columbia River Power System; the Corps of Engineers, the Bureau of Reclamation, and Bonneville Power Administration; began the System Operation Review (SOR) for the purpose of developing and implementing a coordinated system operating strategy for managing the multiple uses of the system while

meeting the biological needs of species protected under the Endangered Species Act. Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, selection of a system operation strategy preferred alternative is documented in the SOR Final Environmental Impact Statement, November 1995. This Record of Decision documents the decision of the Corps of Engineers to implement existing and modified plans for reservoir regulation and project operation for the following Corps projects: Bonneville, The Dalles, John Day, and McNary; Oregon and Washington: Ice Harbor, Lower Monumental, Little Goose, Lower Granite, and Chief Joseph; Washington: Dworshak and Albeni Falls, Idaho; and Libby, Montana. The Record of Decision was signed on February 20, 1997.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Copies of the record of decision and further information may be requested from: Division Engineer, US Army Engineer Division, North Pacific Division, 220 NW 8th Ave., Portland, Oregon 97209-3589, PO Box 2870, 97208-2870, Attention: Ray Jaren, Telephone (503) 326-5194 ((503) 808-3857 after March 21, 1997).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Copies of the Record of Decision are available for inspection and review at the following Corps of Engineers offices:

Office, Chief of Engineers, 20 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20314-1000.

Portland District, Robert Duncan Plaza, 333 SW First Ave., Portland, OR 97204-3495, (503) 326-5268.

Seattle District, 4735 East Marginal Way South, Seattle, WA 98134-2385, (206) 764-6578.

Walla Walla District, 201 North 3rd Ave., Walla Walla, WA 99362-1876, (509) 527-7244.

Robert H. Griffin,
Brigadier General, U.S. Army, Division Engineer.

[FR Doc. 97-7005 Filed 3-19-97; 8:45 am]

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Intent To Prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Eastern Arkansas Region Comprehensive Study, Grand Prairie Area Demonstration Project, General Reevaluation

AGENCY: Memphis District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Department of Defense.

ACTION: Notice of intent.

SUMMARY: The purpose of this general reevaluation is to develop a plan of improvement that addresses all of the identified water resource problems and opportunities within the Grand Prairie project area. It will evaluate and determine the optimum plan for providing agricultural water supply and conservation while incorporating water quality, fish and wildlife, recreation, and environmental protection/restoration measures. The general reevaluation is being conducted in response to congressional direction and funding provided by Energy and Water Development Appropriations Acts. It is a continuation of preconstruction, engineering, and design of the Eastern Arkansas Region Comprehensive Study authorized by the Committee on Public Works and Transportation of the U.S. House of Representatives on September 23, 1982. The Grand Prairie—Bayou Metro Project was reauthorized by the Water Resources Development Act of 1996.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Ken Bright, telephone (901) 544-0745, CELMM-PD-F, 167 North Main Street B-202, Memphis, TN 38103-1894. Questions regarding the DEIS may be directed to Mr. Edward Lambert, telephone (901) 544-0707, CELMM-PD-R.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

1. Proposed Action

A Corps feasibility study, completed in 1990, identified the Grand Prairie as one of five geographic areas within eastern Arkansas exhibiting critical groundwater depletion problems as a result of agricultural irrigation demands on the alluvial aquifer. Subsequent congressional appropriation acts directed the Corps to select and develop implementation plans for one of the five areas to serve as an agricultural water supply demonstration project. The Grand Prairie was selected because groundwater depletion is comparably more severe within this area. The Grand Prairie Area Demonstration Project general reevaluation proposes to develop an economically feasible and environmentally acceptable plan to supply and conserve irrigation water in such a manner as to allow stabilization of the aquifer. An elaborate water distribution system, water conservation measures, groundwater management strategies, retrofit of existing farm irrigation systems, and new on-farm storage reservoirs will be integral components of this plan. In addition, harvested rice fields will be flooded to benefit migratory waterfowl and shore

birds. Since a vast tallgrass prairie historically occupied this area, native prairie grasses will be planted within project rights-of-way. This project area encompasses 362,662 acres and includes significant portions of Prairie and Arkansas counties and small portions of Monroe and Lonoke counties.

2. Alternatives

Alternatives being considered include plans that provide various on-farm water conservation measures and additional water storage and plans that combine conservation measures and additional storage with irrigation water supply from the White River. These plans will be compared to the No Action alternative.

3. Scoping Process

An intensive public involvement program has been maintained throughout this study to (1) solicit input from individuals and interested parties so that problems, needs, and opportunities within the project area could be properly identified and addressed and (2) provide status updates to concerned organizations and the general public. A formal public meeting was held in Stuttgart, Arkansas, on December 8, 1992, to provide information on the general reevaluation and proposed project alternatives and to discuss project related issues and concerns with the general public. Numerous meetings with the local public, sponsor coordination meetings, interagency environmental meetings, and public project briefings/presentations have been conducted. Also, project displays have been exhibited at county fairs and outdoors festivals. No additional public scoping meetings are anticipated, but interagency environmental meetings will continue. Significant issues being analyzed include potential project impacts (negative and positive) to fisheries, water quality, wetlands, upland forests, waterfowl, endangered species, and cultural resources. It is anticipated that the DEIS will be available for public review during the fall or winter of 1997. A public meeting will be held during the review period to receive comments and address questions concerning the DEIS.

Josef R. Hallatschek,

Major, Corps of Engineers, Deputy District Engineer.

[FR Doc. 97-7006 Filed 3-19-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3710-KS-M