

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

[I.D. 031198B]

Incidental Take of Marine Mammals; Taking of Ringed Seals Incidental to On-Ice Seismic Activities

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

ACTION: Notice of issuance of letters of authorization.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) as amended and with implementing regulations, notification is hereby given that letters of authorization to take ringed and bearded seals incidental to on-ice seismic operations in the Beaufort Sea off Alaska were issued on March 16, 1998, to BP Exploration, Western Geophysical, and Northern Geophysical of America, all of Anchorage, AK.

DATES: These letters of authorization are effective from March 16, 1998, through May 31, 1998.

ADDRESSES: The applications and letters are available for review in the following offices: Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910, and Western Alaska Field Office, NMFS, 701 C Street, Anchorage, AK 99513.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Kenneth R. Hollingshead, NMFS, (301) 713-2055 or Brad Smith, Western Alaska Field Office, NMFS, (907) 271-5006.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Section 101(a)(5)(A) of the MMPA (16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*) directs NMFS to allow, on request, the incidental, but not intentional, taking of small numbers 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 by NMFS and regulations are issued. Under the MMPA, the term "taking" means to harass, hunt, capture, or kill or to attempt to harass, hunt, capture or kill marine mammals.

Permission may be granted for periods up to 5 years if NMFS finds, after notification and opportunity for public comment, that the taking will have a negligible impact on the species or stock(s) of marine mammals and will not have an unmitigable adverse impact on the availability of the species or stock(s) for subsistence uses. In addition, NMFS must prescribe

regulations that include permissible methods of taking and other means effecting the least practicable adverse impact on the species and its habitat and on the availability of the species for subsistence uses, paying particular attention to rookeries, mating grounds, and areas of similar significance. The regulations must include requirements pertaining to the monitoring and reporting of such taking. Regulations governing the taking of ringed and bearded seals incidental to on-ice seismic surveys were published on February 2, 1998 (63 FR 5277), and remain in effect until December 31, 2002.

Summary of Request

NMFS received requests for letters of authorization on February 24, 1998, from Northern Geophysical; February 26, 1998, from BP Exploration (Alaska); and May 20, 1997 (as amended on December 22, 1997, and March 3, 1998), from Western Geophysical. These letters requested a take by harassment of a small number of ringed and bearded seals incidental to the described activity.

Issuance of these letters of authorization are based on findings that the total takings by this activity will have a negligible impact on the ringed and bearded seal stocks of the Western Beaufort Sea and that the applicants have met the requirements contained in the implementing regulations.

Dated: March 16, 1998.

Patricia A. Montanio,
Deputy Director, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.
[FR Doc. 98-7458 Filed 3-20-98; 8:45 am]
BILLING CODE 3510-22-F

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

[I.D. 031098B]

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

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

ACTION: Notice of cancellation of two public meetings.

SUMMARY: The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) has cancelled the public meeting of the Special Crustacean Stock Assessment Panel (SAP) that was scheduled for Monday, March 30, 1998, through Wednesday, April 1, 1998. The Council

has also cancelled the public meeting of the Finfish SAP that was scheduled for Monday, April 6, 1998, through Thursday, April 9, 1998. The meetings were announced in the **Federal Register** on March 16, 1998.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Richard Leard, Senior Fishery Biologist, Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council; telephone: 813-228-2815.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The initial notice published on March 16, 1998 (63 FR 12784). The purpose of these meetings was for the SAPs to develop alternatives for the overfishing criteria as required by the Sustainable Fisheries Act. These alternative and recommendations would be provided to the Council. The meetings will be rescheduled at a future date after NMFS has published the guidelines for National Standard 1 which will define criteria for setting the overfishing thresholds.

Dated: March 17, 1998.

Bruce C. Morehead,
Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.
[FR Doc. 98-7459 Filed 3-20-98; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

[I.D. 031698A]

Pacific Fishery Management Council; Public Meetings

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

ACTION: Notice of public meetings.

SUMMARY: The Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) and its advisory entities will hold public meetings.

DATES: The Council, and its advisory entities will meet during the week of April 5-10, 1998. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for specific dates and times.

ADDRESSES: The meetings will be held at the Doubletree Hotel, Columbia River, 1401 N. Hayden Island Drive, Portland, OR 97217; telephone: (503) 283-2111.

Council address: Pacific Fishery Management Council, 2130 SW Fifth Avenue, Suite 224, Portland, OR 97201.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Lawrence D. Six, Executive Director; telephone: (503) 326-6352.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Council meeting will begin on Monday,

April 6, at 1 p.m. with a closed session to discuss litigation and personnel matters. The open session begins at 1:30 p.m. The Council will reconvene Tuesday, April 7 through Friday, April 10, at 8 a.m. in open session. The Council will meet as late as necessary each day to complete its scheduled business.

The following items are on the Council agenda, but not necessarily in this order:

- A. Call to Order
 1. Opening Remarks, Introductions, Roll Call;
 2. Approve Agenda; and
 3. Approve November 1997 and March 1998 Meeting Minutes;
- B. Salmon Management
 1. Tentative Adoption of 1998 Ocean Salmon Measures for Analysis;
 2. Clarify Council Direction, If Necessary;
 3. Review of Draft Plan Amendments;
 4. Methodology Reviews for 1998;
 5. Identification of Stocks Not Meeting Escapement Goals for three Consecutive Years; and
 6. Final Action on 1998 Measures;
- C. Habitat Issues - Report of the Steering Group
- D. Coastal Pelagic Species Management
 1. Review of Draft Plan Amendments;
 - E. Groundfish Management
 1. NMFS Report on Regulations, Research Projects, etc.;
 2. Status of Fisheries and Inseason Adjustments;
 3. Comprehensive Observer Program;
 4. Review of Draft Plan Amendments;
 5. Lingcod and Rockfish Allocation;
 6. Capacity Reduction Program; and
 7. Groundfish Management Team, Staff, and NMFS Workload;
 - F. Pacific Halibut Management
 1. Area 2A Bycatch Calculation; and
 - G. Administrative and Other Matters
 1. Scoping Session on Marine Protected Areas;
 2. Research and Data Needs;
 3. Update on Dungeness Crab and Other Legislation;
 4. Report of the Budget Committee;
 5. Appointments to Advisory Entities; and
 6. Draft June 1998 Agenda.

Advisory Meetings

The Salmon Technical Team will meet as necessary Monday through Friday, April 6-10, 1998, to address salmon management items on the Council agenda.

The Habitat Steering Group meets at 10 a.m. on Monday, April 6, to address issues and actions affecting habitat of fish species managed by the Council.

The Salmon Advisory Subpanel will convene on Monday, April 6, at 9 a.m.,

and will continue to meet throughout the week as necessary to address salmon management items on the Council agenda.

The Scientific and Statistical Committee will convene on Monday, April 6, at 8 a.m., and on Tuesday, April 7, at 8 a.m.

The Groundfish Management Team will convene on Sunday, April 5, at 2 p.m., and on Monday, April 6, at 8 a.m., and will continue to meet throughout the week as necessary to address groundfish management items on the Council agenda.

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel will convene on Monday, April 6, at 1 p.m., and on Tuesday, April 7, at 8 a.m., and will continue to meet throughout the week as necessary to address groundfish management items on the Council agenda.

The Buyback Committee will convene on Monday, April 6 at 8 a.m., to address capacity reduction items on the Council agenda.

The Enforcement Consultants meet at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, April 7, to address enforcement issues relating to Council agenda items.

The Budget Committee meets on Monday, April 6, at 11 a.m., to review the status of the 1998 Council budget.

Although other issues not contained in this agenda may come before this Council for discussion, in accordance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, those issues may not be the subject of formal Council action during this meeting. Council action will be restricted to those issues specifically identified in the agenda listed in this notice.

Special Accommodations

These meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Mr. Eric W. Greene at (503) 326-6352 at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.

Dated: March 17, 1998.

Bruce C. Morehead,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.
[FR Doc. 98-7462 Filed 3-20-98; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 031698B]

Western Pacific Fishery Management Council; Public Meetings

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

ACTION: Notice of public meetings.

SUMMARY: The Western Pacific Fishery Council will hold its 95th meeting in Pago Pago, American Samoa.

DATES: The Council's Standing Committees will meet on April 14, 1998. The full Council will meet on April 15-16, 1998. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for specific dates and times.

ADDRESSES: The 95th Council meeting will be held at the American Samoa Legislature, Fono Guest House, Pago Pago, American Samoa; telephone: (684) 633-4456.

Council address: Western Pacific Fishery Management Council, 1164 Bishop St., Suite 1400, Honolulu, HI 96813.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Kitty M. Simonds, Executive Director; telephone: 808-522-8220.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The meetings are as follows:

Tuesday, April 14, 1998
 7:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.—Enforcement;
 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.—Crustaceans;
 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.—Vessel Monitoring System (VMS);
 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.—Pelagics and Bottomfish;
 1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.—Indigenous Fishing Rights and Ecosystem & Habitat;
 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.—Precious Corals and Executive/Budget & Programming.

The full Council will meet on April 15-16, 1998, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., each day.

The full Council will address the agenda items below. The order in which agenda items will be addressed may change. The Council will meet as late as necessary to complete its scheduled business.

Wednesday, April 15, 1998

A. Call to order, opening remarks, introductions

1. Approval of Agenda and 94th Council Minutes; and
2. Guest Speaker: Ueta Fasili, Assistant Director Dept. of Agriculture, Forests & Fisheries, Samoa