

artifacts and areas that represent the United States' (U.S.) diverse cultural heritage. The effects of these losses are significant and jeopardize the social and economic fabric of the nation.

In the U.S. and around the world, marine protected areas (MPA) are increasingly recognized as an important and promising management tool for mitigating or buffering these impacts. When used effectively and as a part of a broader ecosystem-based approach to management, MPAs can help to restore and maintain healthy Great Lakes and marine environments by contributing to the overall protection of critical marine habitats and resources. In this way, effective MPAs also can offer social and economic opportunities for current and future generations, such as tourism, biotechnology, fishing, education, and scientific research.

There are nearly 2,000 existing MPAs in the U.S. that have been established by federal, state, territorial, and local governments to protect and conserve the nation's rich natural and cultural marine heritage and sustainable production resources. These MPAs have been designated to achieve a myriad of conservation objectives, ranging from conservation of biodiversity hotspots, to preservation of sunken historic vessels, to protection of spawning aggregations important to commercial and recreational fisheries. Similarly, the level of protection provided by these MPAs ranges from no-take marine reserves to allowing multiple uses, including fishing.

Recognizing the significant role that U.S. MPAs play in conserving marine heritage and sustainable use, and the lack of a national framework for comprehensive MPA planning, coordination and support, Presidential Executive Order 13158 (Order) calls for the development of a National System of Marine Protected Areas (national system). The Order clearly calls for a *national* and not a *federal* system, and requires collaboration with federal agencies, as well as coastal states and territories, tribes, Federal Fishery Management Councils, and other entities, as appropriate, including the MPA Federal Advisory Committee. It further specifies that the national system be scientifically based, comprehensive, and represent the nation's diverse marine ecosystems and natural and cultural resources.

In order to provide a roadmap for building the national system, the Order calls for the development of a framework for a national system of MPAs and establishes the MPA Center within NOAA to lead its development and implementation. This Revised Draft

Framework is the second draft. The first draft Framework has been revised with due consideration of over 11,000 comments and recommendations received during its September 2006 to March 2007 public comment period.

The intent of this document is to summarize and respond to comments received on the initial draft document during the September 2006 through February 2007 public comment period, and solicit additional public input on the proposed Revised Draft Framework in order to develop a final document that meets the nation's interests in the National System. When submitting comments on the Revised Draft Framework, please remember that comments submitted by e-mail are preferred; however, those submitted by mail and fax will also be accepted.

Classification

Regulatory Planning and Review

This action is not a regulatory action subject to E.O. 12866 (58 FR 51735, October 4, 1993).

Energy Effects

NOAA and DOI have determined that this action will have no effect on energy supply, distribution, or use and is therefore not a "significant energy action" as defined by Executive Order 13211 (66 FR 28355, May 18, 2001). No Statement of Energy Effects is required and therefore none has been prepared.

Government to Government Relationship With Tribes

E.O. 13175—Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments—outlines the responsibilities of the Federal Government regarding its policies with tribal implications, i.e., regulations, legislative comments or proposed legislation, and other policy statements or actions that have substantial direct effects on one or more Indian tribes, on the relationship between the Federal Government and Indian tribes, or on the distribution of power and responsibilities between the Federal Government and Indian tribes (65 FR 67249, November 9, 2000). Pursuant to E.O. 13175, we will consult with tribal governments as the National System is developed.

Administrative Procedure Act

Pursuant to authority at 5 U.S.C. 533(b)(A), prior notice and an opportunity for public comment are not required to be given, as this document concerns agency procedure or practice. Nevertheless, NOAA and DOI want the benefit of the public's comment and are

hereby giving prior notice and opportunity for public comment.

Dated: March 6, 2008.

John H. Dunnigan,

Assistant Administrator for Ocean Services and Coastal Zone Management, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

RIN 0648-XF79

Marine Mammals and Endangered Species; National Marine Fisheries Service File No. 932-1905; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service File No. PRT-009526

AGENCIES: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice; receipt of application.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that the NMFS Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program (MMHSRP), Silver Spring, MD (Dr. Teri Rowles, Principal Investigator) has applied in due form for a permit to conduct enhancement and research activities on marine mammals.

DATES: Written, telefaxed, or e-mail comments must be received on or before April 16, 2008.

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

Permits, Conservation and Education Division, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13705, Silver Spring, MD 20910; phone (301)713-2289; fax (301)713-0376; and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Division of Management Authority, 4401 North Fairfax Drive, Room 212, Arlington, VA 22203 (1-800-358-2104).

Written comments or requests for a public hearing on this application should be mailed to the Chief, Permits, Conservation and Education Division, F/PR1, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13705, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Those individuals requesting a hearing should set forth the specific reasons why a hearing on this particular request would be appropriate.

Comments may also be submitted by facsimile at (301)713-0376, provided the facsimile is confirmed by hard copy submitted by mail and postmarked no later than the closing date of the comment period.

Comments may also be submitted by e-mail. The mailbox address for providing e-mail comments is NMFS.Pr1Comments@noaa.gov. Include in the subject line of the e-mail comment the following document identifier: File No. 932-1905/PRT-009526.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Amy Sloan or Carrie Hubbard, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, (301)713-2289.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The subject permit is requested under the authority of the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, as amended (MMPA; 16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*), the regulations governing the taking and importing of marine mammals (50 CFR parts 18 and 216), the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*), the regulations governing the taking, importing, and exporting of endangered and threatened species (50 CFR parts 17 and 222-226), and the Fur Seal Act of 1966, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1151 *et seq.*).

The applicant requests authorization to (1) carry out activities pursuant to section 109(h), 112(c), and Title IV of the MMPA that involve threatened and endangered marine mammal species under NMFS jurisdiction; (2) harass marine mammals incidental to all MMHSRP activities in the U.S.; (3) conduct research activities on marine mammals in the U.S.; and (4) collect, receive, transfer, import, export, analyze, and curate marine mammal specimens.

All threatened and endangered marine mammal species under NMFS jurisdiction are considered target species for stranding/emergency response activities. All species under NMFS jurisdiction are target species for research activities. Specimens from all species of marine mammals under NMFS or USFWS jurisdiction may be received, transferred, imported, exported, analyzed, and archived.

Type and manner of take includes Level A harassment during emergency response and research activities including capture; sedation/anesthesia; biological sampling (e.g., blood, blubber, muscle, respiratory gases, swabs); and removing entangling gear/material. Level B harassment may occur from close approach, hazing away from hazardous or harmful situations, photo-

identification, and aerial and vessel surveys.

The number of threatened and endangered animals that may be rescued and/or sampled is dependent on the number of incidents that occur and the ability to respond. The number of marine mammals that may be involved in research annually is as follows: approximately 400 pinnipeds (all species); 200 small cetaceans (all species); and 100 large whales (all species). An unlimited number of marine mammal specimens may be received, collected, imported, or exported annually.

Non-target animals that may be incidentally harassed during any MMHSRP activity in the U.S. include any marine mammal under NMFS and USFWS jurisdictions. Geographic locations of the takes could include any area in the U.S. and U.S. waters. Specimen samples may be imported/exported world-wide. The applicant has requested a 5-year permit.

The NMFS MMHSRP has prepared a draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*). The DEIS includes analysis of activities proposed in this permit application. The DEIS is available on the following web site: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/health/eis.htm>.

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.

Dated: March 7, 2008.

P. Michael Payne,

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

Dated: March 7, 2008.

Timothy J. VanNorman,

Chief, Branch of Permits, Division of Management Authority, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

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BILLING CODES 3510-22-S, 4310-55-S

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN: 0648-XG35

North 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 North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) and its advisory committees will hold public meetings, April 1-7, 2008, in Anchorage, AK.

DATES: The meetings will be held on April 1, 2008 through April 7, 2008. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for specific dates and times.

ADDRESSES: The meetings will be held at the Hilton Hotel, 500 W 3rd Avenue, Anchorage, AK 99501.

Council address: North Pacific Fishery Management Council, 605 W. 4th Avenue, Suite 306, Anchorage, AK 99501-2252.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

David Witherell, Council staff, telephone: (907) 271-2809.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Council will begin its plenary session at 8 a.m. on Tuesday, April 1 continuing through Tuesday April 7, 2008. The Council's Advisory Panel (AP) will begin at 8 a.m., Monday, March 31 and continue through Friday April 4. The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) will begin at 8 a.m. on Monday, March 31 and continue through Wednesday March 2, 2008. The Enforcement Committee will meet Tuesday, April 2, from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. in the Iliamna Room. The Ecosystem Committee will meet Wednesday, April 2, from 5:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. in the Dillingham/Katmai Room. The Council will meet Tuesday, April 8, with Alaska Board of Fisheries, and may discuss any of the items listed in this notice, or other issues involving state/federal authorities for parallel fisheries or Board proposals with federal waters relevance. All meetings are open to the public, except executive sessions.

Council Plenary Session: The agenda for the Council's plenary session will include the following issues. The Council may take appropriate action on any of the issues identified.

1. Reports

Executive Director's Report
NMFS Management Report (NMFS Enforcement/NOAA General Counsel)
Alaska Department of Fish & Game Report

U.S. Coast Guard Report
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Report
Protected Species Report (including Aleutian Island Pollock EFP report)

2. Steller Sea lion (SSL) Issues: Review final SSL Recovery Plan; SSL Mitigation Committee report on proposals and preliminary recommendations on measures.