

Small Numbers

As noted above, only small numbers of incidental take may be authorized under Section 101(a)(5)(D) of the MMPA for specified activities other than military readiness activities. The MMPA does not define small numbers; so, in practice, where estimated numbers are available, NMFS compares the number of individuals taken to the most appropriate estimation of abundance of the relevant species or stock in our determination of whether an authorization is limited to small numbers of marine mammals. Additionally, other qualitative factors may be considered in the analysis, such as the temporal or spatial scale of the activities. Table 8 provides numbers of take by Level A harassment and Level B harassment authorized. These are the numbers we use for purposes of the small numbers analysis.

The numbers of marine mammals that we authorize to be taken, for all species and stocks, would be considered small relative to the relevant stocks or populations (less than 7 percent for all species and stocks). Based on the analysis contained herein of the planned activity (including the mitigation and monitoring measures) and the anticipated take of marine mammals, NMFS finds that small numbers of marine mammals will be taken relative to the population size of the affected species or stocks.

Unmitigable Adverse Impact Analysis and Determination

There are no relevant subsistence uses of the affected marine mammal stocks or species implicated by this action. Therefore, NMFS has determined that the total taking of affected species or stocks will not have an unmitigable adverse impact on the availability of such species or stocks for taking for subsistence purposes.

Endangered Species Act (ESA)

Section 7(a)(2) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*) requires that each Federal agency insure that any action it authorizes, funds, or carries out is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any endangered or threatened species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of designated critical habitat. To ensure ESA compliance for the issuance of IHAs, NMFS consults internally, in this case with the ESA Interagency Cooperation Division, whenever we propose to authorize take for endangered or threatened species.

The NMFS Permits and Conservation Division are authorizing the incidental

take of 5 species of marine mammals which are listed under the ESA: The humpback whale (Mexico DPS), sei whale, fin whale, blue whale and sperm whale. Under Section 7 of the ESA, we initiated consultation with the NMFS OPR Interagency Cooperation Division for the issuance of this IHA. In September, 2017, the NMFS OPR Interagency Cooperation Division issued a Biological Opinion with an incidental take statement, which concluded that the issuance of the IHA was not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the humpback whale (Mexico DPS), sei whale, fin whale, blue whale and sperm whale. The Biological Opinion also concluded that the issuance of the IHA would not destroy or adversely modify designated critical habitat for these species.

Authorization

NMFS has issued an IHA to the SIO for the potential harassment of small numbers of 27 marine mammal species incidental to a low-energy marine geophysical survey in the northeast Pacific Ocean, provided the previously mentioned mitigation, monitoring and reporting requirements are incorporated.

Dated: October 19, 2017.

Donna S. Wieting,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS), NIDIS Executive Council Meeting

AGENCY: Climate Program Office (CPO), Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce (DOC).

ACTION: Notice of open meeting.

SUMMARY: The National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS) Program Office will hold an organizational meeting of the NIDIS Executive Council on October 24, 2017.

DATES: The meeting will be held Tuesday, October 24, 2017 from 9:00 a.m. EST to 4:00 p.m. EST. These times and the agenda topics described below are subject to change.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held at the National Association of Counties, 660 North Capitol St. NW., Washington, DC 20001.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Veva Deheza, NIDIS Executive Director, David Skaggs Research Center, Room GD102, 325 Broadway, Boulder CO 80305. Email: Vevea.Deheza@noaa.gov; or visit the NIDIS Web site at www.drought.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Status: This meeting will be open to public participation. Individuals interested in attending should register at <https://cpaess.ucar.edu/meetings/2017/fall-2017-nidis-executive-council-meeting>. Please refer to this Web page for the most up-to-date meeting times and agenda. Seating at the meeting will be available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Special Accommodations: This meeting is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for special accommodations may be directed no later than 12:00 p.m. on October 18, 2017, to Elizabeth Ossowski, Program Coordinator, David Skaggs Research Center, Room GD102, 325 Broadway, Boulder CO 80305; Email: Elizabeth.Ossowski@noaa.gov.

Matters To Be Considered: The meeting will include the following topics: (1) NIDIS implementation updates and 2017–2018 priorities, (2) Executive Council member updates and 2017–2018 priorities, (3) Federal coordination around drought early warning, (4) Sub-seasonal to seasonal prediction, (5) Private sector and non-governmental partner engagement, and (6) open discussion on advancing the goals of the NIDIS Public Law and Reauthorization.

The National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS) was established by Public Law 109–430 on December 20, 2006, and reauthorized by Public Law 113–86 on March 6, 2014, with a mandate to provide an effective drought early warning system for the United States; coordinate, and integrate as practicable, Federal research in support of a drought early warning system; and build upon existing forecasting and assessment programs and partnerships. See 15 U.S.C. 313d. The Public Law also calls for consultation with “relevant Federal, regional, State, tribal, and local government agencies, research institutions, and the private sector” in the development of NIDIS. 15 U.S.C. 313d(c). The NIDIS Executive Council provides the NIDIS Program Office with an opportunity to engage in individual consultation with senior resource officials from NIDIS’s Federal partners, as well as leaders from state and local government, academia,

nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector.

Dated: September 28, 2017.

David Holst,

Acting Chief Financial Officer/CAO, Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

[FR Doc. 2017-21577 Filed 10-23-17; 11:15 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XF788

North Pacific Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

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

ACTION: Notice of public meeting.

SUMMARY: The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) Groundfish Plan Team will meet November 13 through November 17, 2017.

DATES: The meeting will be held on Monday, November 13, 2017 to Friday, November 17, 2017, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Pacific Time.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held at the Alaska Fishery Science Center, Traynor Room 2076, 7600 Sand Point Way NE., Building 4, Seattle, WA 98115.

Council address: North Pacific Fishery Management Council, 605 W. 4th Ave., Suite 306, Anchorage, AK 99501-2252; telephone: (907) 271-2809.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Diana Stram or Jim Armstrong, Council staff; telephone: (907) 271-2809.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Agenda

Monday, November 13 to Friday, November 17, 2017

The Plan Teams will compile and review the annual Groundfish Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) reports, (including the Economic Report, the Ecosystems/assessment and status report, and the stock assessments for BSAI and GOA groundfishes), and recommend final groundfish harvest specifications for 2017/2018.

The Agenda is subject to change, and the latest version will be posted at <http://www.npfmc.org/fishery-management-plan-team/goa-bsai-groundfish-plan-team/>.

Special Accommodations

These meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Shannon Gleason at (907) 271-2809 at least 7 working days prior to the meeting date.

Dated: October 20, 2017.

Tracey L. Thompson,

Acting Deputy Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XF507

Takes of Marine Mammals Incidental to Specified Activities; Taking Marine Mammals Incidental to Boost-Back and Landing of Falcon 9 Rockets

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

ACTION: Notice; proposed incidental harassment authorization; request for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS has received a request from Space Exploration Technology Corporation (SpaceX) for authorization to take marine mammals incidental to boost-back and landing of Falcon 9 rockets at Vandenberg Air Force Base in California, and at contingency landing locations in the Pacific Ocean. Pursuant to the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), NMFS is requesting comments on its proposal to issue an incidental harassment authorization (IHA) to SpaceX to incidentally take marine mammals, by Level B harassment only, during the specified activity. NMFS will consider public comments prior to making any final decision on the issuance of the requested MMPA authorizations and agency responses will be summarized in the final notice of our decision.

DATES: Comments and information must be received no later than November 24, 2017.

ADDRESSES: Comments should be addressed to Jolie Harrison, Chief, Permits and Conservation Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service. Physical comments should be sent to 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910 and electronic comments should be sent to ITP.Carduner@noaa.gov.

Instructions: NMFS is not responsible for comments sent by any other method, to any other address or individual, or received after the end of the comment period. Comments received electronically, including all attachments, must not exceed a 25-megabyte file size. Attachments to electronic comments will be accepted in Microsoft Word or Excel or Adobe PDF file formats only. All comments received are a part of the public record and will generally be posted online at www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/permits/incidental/research.htm without change. All personal identifying information (e.g., name, address) voluntarily submitted by the commenter may be publicly accessible. Do not submit confidential business information or otherwise sensitive or protected information.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Jordan Carduner, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, (301) 427-8401. Electronic copies of the application and supporting documents, as well as a list of the references cited in this document, may be obtained online at: www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/permits/incidental/research.htm. In case of problems accessing these documents, please call the contact listed above.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Sections 101(a)(5)(A) and (D) of the MMPA (16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*) direct the Secretary of Commerce to allow, upon 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 and either regulations are issued or, if the taking is limited to harassment, a notice of a proposed authorization is provided to the public for review.

An authorization for incidental takings shall 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 (where relevant), and if the permissible methods of taking and requirements pertaining to the mitigation, monitoring and reporting of such takings are set forth.

NMFS has defined “negligible impact” in 50 CFR 216.103 as an impact resulting from the specified activity that cannot be reasonably expected to, and is not reasonably likely to, adversely affect