

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

[I.D. 032306B]

International Whaling Commission; 58th Annual Meeting; Announcement of Public Meeting

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

ACTION: Notice of meeting.

SUMMARY: This notice announces the date and location of the public meeting being held prior to the 58th annual International Whaling Commission (IWC) meeting.

DATES: The public meeting will be held May 5, 2006, at 10 a.m.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held in the NOAA Science Center Room, 1301 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Cheri McCarty, 301-713-9090, extension 183.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Secretary of Commerce is charged with the responsibility of discharging the obligations of the United States under the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling, 1946. The U.S. Commissioner has primary responsibility for the preparation and negotiation of U.S. positions on international issues concerning whaling and for all matters involving the IWC. He is staffed by the Department of Commerce and assisted by the Department of State, the Department of the Interior, Marine Mammal Commission, and by other agencies.

Once the draft agenda for the annual IWC meeting is completed, it will be posted on the IWC Secretariat's Web site at <http://www.iwcoffice.org>.

Each year NOAA holds a meeting prior to the annual IWC meeting to discuss the tentative U.S. positions for the upcoming IWC meeting. Because the meeting discusses U.S. positions, the substance of the meeting must be kept confidential. Any U.S. citizen with an identifiable interest in U.S. whale conservation policy may participate, but NOAA reserves the authority to inquire about the interests of any person who appears at a meeting and to determine the appropriateness of that person's participation.

Persons who represent foreign interests may not attend. These stringent measures are necessary to protect the confidentiality of U.S. negotiating

positions and are a necessary basis for the relatively open process of preparing for IWC meetings.

The meeting will be held at 10 a.m. at the NOAA Science Center Room, 1301 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Photo identification is required to enter the building.

Special Accommodations

These meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to the Cheri McCarty, 301-713-9090 by April 28, 2006.

Dated: March 27, 2006.

William T. Hogarth,

Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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

[I.D. 032406C]

Endangered Species; File No. 1540

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

ACTION: Notice; receipt of application for modification of a scientific research permit.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR), Marine Resources Division, P.O. Box 12559, Charleston, S.C. 29422-2559, has requested a modification to scientific research Permit No. 1540.

DATES: Written, telefaxed, or e-mail comments must be received on or before May 1, 2006.

ADDRESSES: The modification request 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)427-2521; and Southeast Region, NMFS, 263 13th Ave South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701; phone (727)824-5312; fax (727)824-5309.

Written comments or requests for a public hearing on this request should be submitted 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 modification request would be appropriate.

Comments may also be submitted by facsimile at (301)427-2521, 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 email comments is NMFS.Pr1Comments@noaa.gov. Include in the subject line of the e-mail comment the following document identifier: File No. 1540.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Kate Swails or Patrick Opay, (301)713-2289.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The subject modification to Permit No. 1540, issued on February 6, 2006 (71 FR 7019) is requested under the authority of 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 and threatened species (50 CFR 222-226).

Permit No. 1540 currently authorizes the permit holder to study loggerhead (Caretta caretta), Kemp's ridley (*Lepidochelys kempii*), green (*Chelonia mydas*), leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*), and hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) sea turtles. The purpose of the research is to continue to document in-water relative abundances, size distributions, sex ratios, genetic contributions, and the health of sea turtles in coastal waters in the southeastern U.S. SCDNR is authorized to capture 146 loggerhead, 48 Kemp's ridley, 15 green, 1 leatherback, and 3 hawksbill sea turtles, during the first year of the permit's five-year period. The permit authorizes research on up to 346 loggerhead, 48 Kemp's ridley, 15 green, 1 leatherback, and 3 hawksbill sea turtles annually for the remaining four-years. Turtles are captured by trawls, handled, blood sampled, measured, flipper and PIT tagged, photographed, and released. A subsample of animals have barnacles and keratin removed from their shell, have cloacal samples taken, have laparoscopic and ultrasound exams, and have satellite transmitters attached. Up to 7 loggerhead and 1 leatherback may potentially be taken as accidental mortalities over the course of the entire permit. Additionally, up to 5 Kemp's ridley, green, or hawksbill sea turtles (combined total but no more than two of any given species) may potentially be