

Chukchi seas; (3) seismic shut-down criteria to protect bowhead and gray whales when inside the 120-dB or 160-dB monitoring-safety zones; and (4) a joint industry cooperative program on marine mammal research in the Chukchi Sea. A copy of the MMS Final PEA for this activity is available upon request and is available online (see **ADDRESSES**).

Preliminary Conclusions

Summary

Based on the information provided in Conoco's application and the MMS PEA, and dependent upon the implementation of the required mitigation and monitoring measures, NMFS has determined that the impact of Conoco conducting seismic surveys in the northeastern Chukchi Sea in 2006 will have a negligible impact on marine mammals and that there will not be any unmitigable adverse impacts to subsistence communities, provided the mitigation measures required under the authorization are implemented and a CAA is implemented.

Potential Impacts on Marine Mammals

NMFS has preliminarily determined that the relatively short-term impact of conducting seismic surveys in the U.S. Chukchi Sea may result, at worst, in a temporary modification in behavior by small numbers of certain species of marine mammals and/or low-level physiological effects (Level B Harassment). While behavioral and avoidance reactions may be made by these species in response to the resultant noise, this behavioral change is expected to have a negligible impact on the affected species and stocks of marine mammals.

While the number of potential incidental harassment takes will depend on the distribution and abundance of marine mammals (which vary annually due to variable ice conditions and other factors) in the area of seismic operations, the number of potential harassment takings is estimated to be relatively small in light of the population size (see Table 1). NMFS anticipates the actual take of individuals to be lower than the numbers depicted in the table because those numbers do not reflect either the implementation of the mitigation numbers or the fact that some animals will avoid the the sound at levels lower than those expected to result in harassment. Additionally, for both ringed seals and bearded seals, the abundance estimates used to calculate the percentages only represent part of the population (which means the estimated percentages are further over

estimates). Further, for ringed seals, the numbers are even lower because the density used for the calculation did not account for the fact that ringed seals are much denser near the shore and ice than they are in the open ocean where the seismic survey is primarily being conducted.

In addition, no take by death and/or serious injury is anticipated, and the potential for temporary or permanent hearing impairment will be avoided through the incorporation of the required mitigation measures described in this document. This determination is supported by (1) the likelihood that, given sufficient notice through slow ship speed and ramp-up of the seismic array, marine mammals are expected to move away from a noise source that it is annoying prior to its becoming potentially injurious; (2) TTS is unlikely until levels above 180 dB re 1 μ Pa are reached; (3) the fact that injurious levels of sound are only likely very close to the vessel; and (4) the likelihood that marine mammal detection ability by trained observers is close to 100 percent during daytime and remains high at night close to the vessel.

Finally, aside from the migration pathway (which has been addressed in this document) no known rookeries, mating grounds, areas of concentrated feeding, or other areas of special significance for marine mammals are known to occur within or near the planned areas of operations during the season of operations.

Potential Impacts on Subsistence Uses of Marine Mammals

NMFS believes that the seismic activity by Conoco in the northern Chukchi Sea in 2006 will not have an unmitigable adverse impact on the subsistence uses of bowhead whales and other marine mammals. This determination is supported by the following: (1) Seismic activities in the Chukchi Sea will not begin until after July 10 by which time the spring bowhead hunt is expected to have ended; (2) the fall bowhead whale hunt in the Beaufort Sea will be governed by a CAA between Conoco and the AEWC and village whaling captains, which includes conditions that will significantly reduce impacts on subsistence uses; (4) while it is possible, but unlikely, that accessibility to belugas during the spring subsistence beluga hunt could be impaired by the survey, very little of the planned survey is within 25 km (15.5 mi) of the Chukchi coast, meaning the vessel will usually be well offshore away from areas where seismic surveys would influence beluga hunting by communities; and (5)

because seals (ringed, spotted, bearded) are hunted in nearshore waters and the seismic survey will remain offshore of the coastal and nearshore areas of these seals, it should not conflict with harvest activities.

Authorization

As a result of these preliminary determinations, NMFS has issued an IHA to Conoco for conducting a seismic survey in the northern Chukchi Sea in 2006, provided the previously mentioned mitigation, monitoring, and reporting requirements are incorporated.

Dated: July 7, 2006.

James H. Lecky,

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

[FR Doc. 06-6584 Filed 7-28-06; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-C

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 072606B]

Caribbean Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

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

ACTION: Notice of public meetings.

SUMMARY: The Caribbean Fishery Management Council (Council) and its Administrative Committee will hold meetings.

DATES: The meetings will be held on August 15-16, 2006. The Council will convene on Tuesday, August 15, 2006, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and the Administrative Committee will meet from 5:15 p.m. to 6 p.m., on that same day. The Council will reconvene on Wednesday, August 16, 2006, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., approximately.

ADDRESSES: The meetings will be held at The Buccaneer Hotel, 5007 Estate Shoys, Lt. 7, St. Croix, Christiansted, U.S.V.I.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Caribbean Fishery Management Council, 268 Munoz Rivera Avenue, Suite 1108, San Juan, Puerto Rico 00918-1920, telephone: (787) 766-5926.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Council will hold its 122nd regular public meeting to discuss the items contained in the following agenda:

August 15, 2006

9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Call to Order

Election of Officials
Adoption of Agenda
Consideration of 121st Council Meeting
Verbatim Transcription
Executive Director's Report
Update on NOAA/NOS Integrated Coral Reef Ecosystem Mapping Monitoring Studies in the U.S. Caribbean - Mark Monaco

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) Puerto Rico - Maria del Mar Lopez
Update on Research: Trap Impacts on Coral Reefs and Associated Habitats in the USVI and Puerto Rico - Ron Hill
International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) - Bill Hogarth
Billfish Strategies P.R. Update - Jamitza Rodriguez

5:15 p.m. - 6 p.m.

Administrative Committee Meeting
Advisory Panel (AP)/Scientific and Statistical Committee/Habitat AP Membership

Budget 2006, 2007
Other Business

August 16, 2006

9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Bycatch Strategies - Milagros Cartagena
Marine Recreational Fishery Statistics Survey (MRFSS) Report Puerto Rico - Zulena Cortes
Puerto Rico Fisheries from a Global Perspective - Manual Valdes-Pizzini
Queen Conch Manual Proposal - Monica Valle

Enforcement Reports
Puerto Rico
U.S. Virgin Islands
NOAA
U.S. Coast Guard

Administrative Committee
Recommendations (August 15, 2006 meeting)

Meetings Attended by Council Members and Staff
Other Business
Next Council Meeting

The meetings are open to the public, and will be conducted in English. Fishers and other interested persons are invited to attend and participate with oral or written statements regarding agenda issues.

Although non-emergency issues not contained in this agenda may come before this group for discussion, those issues may not be the subject of formal action during this meeting. Action will be restricted to those issues specifically identified in this notice and any issues arising after publication of this notice that require emergency action under

section 305(c) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, provided the public has been notified of the Council's intent to take final action to address the emergency.

Special Accommodations

These meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. For more information or request for sign language interpretation and/or other auxiliary aids, please contact Mr. Miguel A. Rolon, Executive Director, Caribbean Fishery Management Council, 268 Munoz Rivera Avenue, Suite 1108, San Juan, Puerto Rico 00918-2577, telephone: (787) 766-5926, at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.

Dated: July 26, 2006.

Tracey L. Thompson,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.
[FR Doc. E6-12231 Filed 7-28-06; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-S

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 072606D]

Gulf of Mexico 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 Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council will convene public meetings.

DATES: The meetings will be held August 14-17, 2006.

ADDRESSES: These meetings will be held at the Baton Rouge Marriott, 5500 Hilton Avenue, Baton Rouge, LA 70808.

Council address: Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, 2203 North Lois Avenue, Suite 1100, Tampa, FL 33607.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Wayne E. Swingle, Executive Director, Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council; telephone: (813) 348-1630.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Council

Wednesday, August 16, 2006

12 noon - Convene.

12:15 p.m. - 2:30 p.m. - Receive public testimony on "A Framework Measure to Address the Bycatch Reduction Criterion for Shrimp Trawls in the Gulf of Mexico West of Cape San Blas,

Florida Under the Fishery Management Plan for the Shrimp Fishery of the Gulf of Mexico Including Environmental Assessment, Regulatory Impact Review, and Regulatory Flexibility Act Analysis, as well as exempted fishing permits (if any).

2:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. - Receive the Reef Fish Committee Report.

3:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. - Open public comment period regarding any fishery issue or concern.

4:30 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. - Convene the Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review Panel (SEDAR) Selection Committee and the Advisory Panel (AP) Selection Committee (CLOSED SESSION).

Thursday, August 17, 2006

8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m. - Continue with the Reef Fish Committee Report.

9:30 a.m. - 9:45 a.m. - Publicly report the Council action on the SEDAR Selection Committee and AP Selection Committee/Council sessions.

9:45 a.m. - 12 noon - Receive the Joint Reef Fish/Shrimp Committees Report.

1:30 p.m. - 2 p.m. - Receive the Sustainable Fisheries/Ecosystem Committee Report.

2 p.m. - 2:15 p.m. - Receive the Administrative Policy Committee Report.

2:15 p.m. - 2:45 p.m. - Receive the Migratory Species Committee Report.

2:45 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. - Receive the Mackerel Committee Report.

3:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. - Other Business (Includes miscellaneous written reports filed under Tabs O, P, Q, and R of briefing book), as well as any special announcements.

4:30 p.m. - 4:45 p.m. - Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman

Committees

Monday, August 14, 2006

8:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. - Conduct an Orientation Session for new Council members.

1 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. - The Reef Fish Management Committee will meet to receive a report on the Madison-Swanson and Steamboat Lumps Marine Protected Areas Monitoring Program by NMFS and a status report on the development of an Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) system for the grouper fishery. The Committee will also review stock assessments for greater amberjack, vermilion snapper, gray triggerfish, and gag along with recommendations from the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) and Reef Fish AP. The Committee will also consider scheduling stock assessment updates for red snapper and goliath grouper.