

measures, such as forebay lighting. However, this may be off-set by low-water years and a greater percentage of fish exposed to the turbines. Therefore, based on estimates of juvenile coho salmon population sizes and the effects described above, the annual injury and mortality of salmonid juveniles each year during the interim period is estimated to be between 1,400 and 2,500 fish. Total mortality of adult coho salmon is estimated to be between 200 and 1,200 fish annually. On an annual basis for the four years of potential operation (three years approved and one potential extension), fish salvage operations in the fall and spring will result in additional levels of harm for juvenile salmon and rarely for adults. In the fall there is potential for one adult coho salmon to be encountered during the shutdown operations of SRD. Both spring and fall situations will result in approximately 130 juvenile SONC coho salmon captured and released during the salvage operations. It is expected that up to 10 of these may die.

Dated: March 30, 2007.

Angela Somma,

Chief, Endangered Species Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. E7-6412 Filed 4-5-07; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-S

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 031507B]

Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement; Seismic Surveys in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas, Alaska

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

ACTION: Notice of Availability of a Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement; notice of public hearings.

SUMMARY: NMFS and the Minerals Management Service (MMS) announce the availability of a Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (Draft PEIS) for Seismic Surveys in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas, Alaska and the times, dates, and locations for public hearings in order to receive comments from the public on the Draft PEIS.

DATES: Public hearings on the Draft PEIS are scheduled as follows:

1. April 10, 2007, 6:30 p.m. – 9 p.m., Anchorage, AK.
2. April 17, 2007, 7 p.m. – 10 p.m. Nuiqsuk, AK

3. April 18, 2007, 7 p.m. – 10 p.m. Barrow, AK

4. April 23, 2007, 7 p.m. – 10 p.m. Point Hope, AK

5. April 24, 2007, 7 p.m. – 10 p.m. Point Lay, AK

6. April 25, 2007, 7 p.m. – 10 p.m. Wainwright, AK

Written comments will be accepted at these hearings as well as during the comment period. Written comments must be postmarked no later than May 14, 2007.

ADDRESSES: Written comments on the Draft PEIS should be addressed to Mr. P. Michael Payne, Chief of the Permits, Conservation and Education Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910-3225. The mailbox address for providing e-mail comments is PR1.ALASKAEIS@noaa.gov. Comments sent via e-mail, including all attachments, must not exceed a 10-megabyte file size.

A copy of the Draft PEIS may be obtained by writing to this address or by telephoning the contact listed here and is also available at: <http://www.mms.gov/alaska/>.

The public hearings will be held at the following locations:

1. 3801 Centerpoint Drive, Anchorage, AK
2. City Hall, Nuiqsut, AK
3. Inupiat Heritage Center, Barrow, AK
4. Qalgi Center (City Hall), Point Hope, AK
5. High School Gymnasium, Point Lay, AK
6. Robert James Community Center, Wainwright, AK

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Kenneth R. Hollingshead, (301) 713-2289, ext 128.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Summary

On March 30, 2007, notice was published in the **Federal Register** of the availability of the subject Draft PEIS for review and comments. NMFS and MMS will hold public hearings under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to inform interested parties of the alternatives analyzed by NMFS and MMS and to accept comments on all aspects of the Draft PEIS.

Background

The NMFS and MMS have jointly prepared the subject Draft PEIS in order to fully describe and analyze the potential significant impacts on marine mammals, other Arctic marine life, and native subsistence lifestyles by

reasonably foreseeable proposed offshore oil and gas seismic surveys off Alaska. This document also addresses a number of mitigation measures that have been identified as alternatives for potentially reducing impacts on identified affected environments, particularly marine mammals and the endangered bowhead whale. This PEIS will be used for issuing: (1) permits for oil and gas exploration in the Arctic Ocean by MMS, and (2) Incidental Harassment Authorizations (IHAs) to the seismic industry by NMFS to take marine mammals incidental to oil and gas seismic surveys in the Arctic Ocean. As sounds generated by seismic survey operations and related activities have the potential to adversely impact marine mammals and other marine resources, IHAs would be warranted, under the Marine Mammal Protection Act, in order to legally harass marine mammals (particularly bowhead whales), incidental to conducting seismic surveys.

Summary of Draft PEIS

Activity

The Draft PEIS describes and analyzes the potential significant environmental impacts related to reasonably foreseeable proposed geophysical exploration using seismic surveys in waters of the Arctic Alaska Outer Continental Shelf. Specifically, the Draft PEIS assesses the environmental impacts of up to 6 consecutive surveys each in the Beaufort and Chukchi seas using deep-penetration 2D and 3D streamer and ocean bottom cable surveys, and high-resolution surveys and the issuance of IHAs to take marine mammals by these activities. As the sound generated by a seismic-survey operation and related activities has the potential to adversely impact marine mammals and other marine resources, IHAs would be warranted in order to incidentally harass marine mammals (particularly bowhead whales) while conducting seismic surveys.

Impacts

The best available scientific information indicates that marine seismic surveys may adversely impact archaeological sites, marine invertebrates, coastal and marine birds, essential fish habitat, marine fish, commercial fisheries, marine mammals, the sociocultural environment, and subsistence-harvest activities. Therefore, the analysis contained in the Draft PEIS focused on these resource categories. Of critical importance to NMFS for the proposed action of issuing IHAs are the impacts on marine mammals

(particularly bowhead whales) and subsistence harvests from acoustic sounds. However, we expect these impacts can be mitigated through incorporation of specified mitigation measures.

Alternatives/Mitigations

NMFS/MMS have identified 9 alternatives, including the no action alternative. Analyzed alternatives range from issuance of MMS permits with and without mitigation measures. Specifically, the alternatives include different combinations of safety and exclusion zones for preventing injury (180/190 dB), limiting behavioral harassment (160 dB) and limiting impacts on feeding and migrating bowhead cow calf pairs (160 dB/120 dB, respectively). An identified alternative to protecting feeding and migration areas through specific temporal/spatial/operational restrictions to further reduce impacts to feeding/socializing/migrating aggregations of bowhead and gray whales and bowhead cow/calf pairs has also been analyzed. At this time, MMS and NMFS have not identified a preferred alternative.

Special Accommodations

These meetings are accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to the person listed above (see **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**), at least five business days before the scheduled meeting date.

Dated: March 27, 2007.

P. Michael Payne,

Acting Deputy Director, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.
[FR Doc. E7-6414 Filed 4-5-07; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 030607A]

Taking of Marine Mammals Incidental to Specified Activities; Open Water Seismic Operations in Cook Inlet, Alaska

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

ACTION: Notice of issuance of two incidental harassment authorizations.

SUMMARY: In accordance with provisions of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) as amended, notification is

hereby given that Incidental Harassment Authorizations (IHAs) to take marine mammals, by harassment, incidental to conducting seismic operations in the northwest portion of Cook Inlet, Alaska, have been issued to ConocoPhillips Alaska, Inc. (CPAI) and Union Oil Company of California (UOCC) for a period between mid-March and mid-June, 2007.

DATES: The authorization for CPAI is effective from March 30 until May 31, 2007; and the authorization for UOCC is effective from May 1 until June 15, 2007.

ADDRESSES: A copy of the application, IHA, Environmental Assessment (EA), and/or a list of references used in this document may be obtained by writing to P. Michael Payne, Chief, Permits, Conservation and Education Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910-3225, or by telephoning one of the contacts listed here (see **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Shane Guan, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, (301) 713-2289, ext 137, or Brad Smith, Alaska Region, NMFS, (907) 271-3023.

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, notice of a proposed authorization is provided to the public for review.

An authorization shall be granted if NMFS finds that the taking will have a negligible impact on the species or stock(s) and will not have an unmitigable adverse impact on the availability of the species or stock(s) for subsistence uses and that the permissible methods of taking and requirements pertaining to the mitigation, monitoring and reporting of such taking 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 the species or stock through effects on annual rates of recruitment or survival.

Section 101(a)(5)(D) of the MMPA established an expedited process by which citizens of the United States can apply for an authorization to incidentally take small numbers of marine mammals by harassment. Except with respect to certain activities not pertinent here, the MMPA defines "harassment" as:

any act of pursuit, torment, or annoyance which (i) has the potential to injure a marine mammal or marine mammal stock in the wild [Level A harassment]; or (ii) has the potential to disturb a marine mammal or marine mammal stock in the wild by causing disruption of behavioral patterns, including, but not limited to, migration, breathing, nursing, breeding, feeding, or sheltering [Level B harassment].

Section 101(a)(5)(D) establishes a 45-day time limit for NMFS review of an application followed by a 30-day public notice and comment period on any proposed authorizations for the incidental harassment of small numbers of marine mammals. Within 45 days of the close of the comment period, NMFS must either issue or deny issuance of the authorization.

Summary of Request

On October 6 and on October 12, 2006, NMFS received applications from CPAI and UOCC, respectively, requesting Incidental Harassment Authorizations (IHAs) for the possible harassment of small numbers of the Cook Inlet beluga whale (*Delphinapterus leucas*), Steller lions (*Eumetopias jubatus*), Pacific harbor seals (*Phoca vitulina richardsi*), harbor porpoises (*Phocoena phocoena*), and killer whales (*Orcinus orca*) incidental to conducting open water seismic operations in portions of Cook Inlet, Alaska. A detailed description of these activities was published in the **Federal Register** on January 5, 2007 (72 FR 536). No change has been made to these proposed activities.

Both proposed operations use an ocean-bottom cable (OBC) system to conduct seismic surveys. OBC seismic surveys are used in waters that are too shallow for the data to be acquired using a marine-streamer vessel and/or too deep to have static ice in the winter. The proposed operations would be active 24 hours per day, but the airguns would only be active for 1 – 2 hours during each of the 3 – 4 daily slack tide periods. The source for the proposed OBC seismic surveys would be a 900-in³ BOLT airgun array situated on the source vessel, the *Peregrine Falcon*. The array would be made up of 2 sub-arrays, each with 2 3-airgun clusters separated by 1.5 m (4.9 ft) off the stern of the vessel. One cluster will consist of 3 225-in³ airguns and the second cluster