

incidental to the playbacks because these species can co-occur and are difficult to distinguish from each other in the field and at the distances at which they are counted. The minor amendment did not change the expiration date.

The permit holder is requesting the permit be amended to include harassment takes of an additional 172 humpback whales (*Megaptera novaengliae*), 172 minke whales (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*), and 902 killer whales (*Orcinus orca*). These three species are currently only taken incidental to activities directed at target species. The amendment would convert them to additional focal species subject to tagging and intentional exposure to sound playbacks with associated observations.

A draft environmental assessment (EA) has been prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), to examine whether significant environmental impacts could result from issuance of the proposed scientific research permit. The draft EA is available for review and comment simultaneous with the scientific research permit application.

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: December 2, 2011.

Tammy C. Adams,

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

[FR Doc. 2011-31564 Filed 12-8-11; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XA848

Endangered Species; File No. 16134

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

ACTION: Notice; receipt of application.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that Virginia Aquarium and Marine Science Center Foundation [Responsible Party: Mark Swingle], 717 General Booth Blvd. Virginia Beach, VA 23451, has applied in due form for a permit to take green (*Chelonia mydas*), Kemp's ridley (*Lepidochelys kempii*), hawksbill

(*Eretmochelys imbricata*), leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*), and loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*) sea turtles for purposes of scientific research.

DATES: Written, telefaxed, or email comments must be received on or before January 9, 2012.

ADDRESSES: The application and related documents are available for review by selecting "Records Open for Public Comment" from the *Features* box on the Applications and Permits for Protected Species (APPS) home page, <https://apps.nmfs.noaa.gov>, and then selecting File No. 16134 from the list of available applications.

These documents are also available upon written request or by appointment in the following offices:

Permits and Conservation Division,
Office of Protected Resources, NMFS,
1315 East-West Highway, Room
13705, Silver Spring, MD 20910;
phone (301) 427-8401; fax (301) 713-0376;

Northeast Region, NMFS, 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930; phone (978) 281-9328; fax (978) 281-9394; and

Southeast Region, NMFS, 263 13th Avenue South, Saint Petersburg, FL 33701; phone (727) 824-5312; fax (727) 824-5309.

Written comments on this application should be submitted to the Chief, Permits and Conservation Division.

- By email to NMFS.Pr1Comments@noaa.gov (include the File No. in the subject line of the email),

- By facsimile to (301) 713-0376, or
- At the address listed above.

Those individuals requesting a public hearing should submit a written request to the Chief, Permits and Conservation Division at the address listed above. The request should set forth the specific reasons why a hearing on this application would be appropriate.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Kristy Beard or Amy Hapeman, (301) 427-8401.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The subject permit is requested under the authority of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA; 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*) and the regulations governing the taking, importing, and exporting of endangered and threatened species (50 CFR parts 222-226).

The applicant requests a five-year permit to conduct research on leatherback, loggerhead, green, hawksbill, and Kemp's ridley sea turtles in mid-Atlantic waters from North Carolina to New Jersey. The purposes of the research are to: (1) Update current

knowledge of loggerhead and Kemp's ridley sea turtle abundance, distribution, health, and nutrition in Chesapeake Bay and nearshore Virginia waters, (2) compare the relative abundance, size distribution, sex ratio, health parameters and genetic diversity of loggerhead and Kemp's ridley sea turtles in U.S. mid-Atlantic coastal waters, and (3) build baseline data on less common sea turtle species in the region. Researchers would directly capture turtles using tangle nets, trawl, or hand/dip net. Subject turtles would also be acquired from other legal sources: Virginia pound net fisheries and dredge mitigating trawls. The following procedures would be conducted on sea turtles: Epibiota removal, satellite tag, temporarily mark the carapace, attach flipper and passive integrated transponder tags, measure, photograph, oral swab, weigh, and sample blood, feces, keratin, and tissue. Sea turtles would then be released. A subset of animals would be transported back to the laboratory for laparoscopy, ultrasound, imaging, and muscle, lesion, and fat biopsy. Up to two sea turtles of any species could be lethally taken annually during trawling.

Dated: December 5, 2011.

P. Michael Payne,

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

[FR Doc. 2011-31671 Filed 12-8-11; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XA861

Marine Mammals; File No. 16473

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

ACTION: Notice; receipt of application.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that D. Ann Pabst, Ph.D., University of North Carolina Wilmington, has applied in due form for a permit to conduct research on marine mammals.

DATES: Written, telefaxed, or email comments must be received on or before January 9, 2012.

ADDRESSES: The application and related documents are available for review by selecting "Records Open for Public Comment" from the *Features* box on the Applications and Permits for Protected Species (APPS) home page, <http://>

apps.nmfs.noaa.gov, and then selecting File No. 16473 from the list of available applications.

These documents are also available upon written request or by appointment in the following offices:

Permits and Conservation Division,
Office of Protected Resources, NMFS,
1315 East-West Highway, Room
13705, Silver Spring, MD 20910;
phone (301) 427-8401; fax (301) 713-
0376;

Northeast Region, NMFS, 55 Great
Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA
01930; phone (978) 281-9328; fax
(978) 281-9394; and

Southeast Region, NMFS, 263 13th
Avenue South, Saint Petersburg, FL
33701; phone (727) 824-5312; fax
(727) 824-5309.

Written comments on this application should be submitted to the Chief, Permits, Conservation and Education Division, at the address listed above. Comments may also be submitted by facsimile to (301) 713-0376, or by email to *NMFS.PrComments@noaa.gov*. Please include the File No. in the subject line of the email comment.

Those individuals requesting a public hearing should submit a written request to the Chief, Permits, Conservation and Education Division at the address listed above. The request should set forth the specific reasons why a hearing on this application would be appropriate.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:
Kristy Beard or Carrie Hubbard, (301)
427-8401.

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 part 216), the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA; 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*), and the regulations governing the taking, importing, and exporting of endangered and threatened species (50 CFR parts 222-226).

The permit would be valid for five years from the date of issuance and would authorize level B harassment of marine mammals, including five species listed as endangered. Proposed research would take place throughout the year, from Delaware Bay to Cape Canaveral, Florida out to 120 nm offshore. The primary research objectives are: (1) To document the presence of North Atlantic right and humpback whales in the mid-Atlantic and (2) To describe the distribution and abundance of all cetaceans within specific geographic regions that are currently used for U.S. Navy training activities or may be in the

future. Research activities include aerial and vessel surveys to conduct counts, photo-identification, and behavioral observations. Up to 200 humpback (*Megaptera novaeangliae*), 100 fin (*Balaenoptera physalus*), 150 sperm (*Physeter macrocephalus*), 200 North Atlantic right whales (*Eubalaena glacialis*), 40 sei (*B. borealis*), 100 minke (*B. acutorostrata*), 100 dwarf and pygmy sperm (*Kogia spp.*), 100 unidentified beaked, 50 killer (*Orcinus orca*), 5,000 pilot (*Globicephala spp.*), 100 false killer (*Pseudorca crassidens*), 100 pygmy killer (*Feresa attenuata*), and 100 melon-headed (*Peponocephala electra*) whales, 8,000 bottlenose (*Tursiops truncatus*), 5,000 Atlantic spotted (*Stenella frontalis*), 2,500 Risso's (*Grampus griseus*), 100 Fraser's (*Lagenodelphis hosei*), 1,000 rough-toothed (*Steno bredanensis*), 100 pantropical spotted (*S. attenuata*), 500 striped (*S. coeruleoalba*), 250 clymene (*S. clymene*), 100 spinner (*S. longirostris*), and 1,000 short-beaked common dolphins (*Delphinus delphis*), and 100 harbor porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*) would be taken annually.

A draft environmental assessment (EA) has been prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), to examine whether significant environmental impacts could result from issuance of the proposed scientific research permit. The draft EA is available for review and comment simultaneous with the scientific research permit application.

Concurrent with the publication of this notice in the **Federal Register**, NMFS is forwarding copies of the application to the Marine Mammal Commission and its Committee of Scientific Advisors.

Dated: December 6, 2011.

P. Michael Payne,

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

[FR Doc. 2011-31669 Filed 12-8-11; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

United States Patent and Trademark Office

Submission for OMB Review; Comment Request

The United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) will submit to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for clearance the following proposal for collection of information

under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act (44 U.S.C. Chapter 35).

Agency: United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO).

Title: Patent Prosecution Highway (PPH) Program.

Form Number(s): PTO/SB/20AT/AU/BR/CA/CN/DE/DK, PTO/SB/20EP/ES/FI/HU/IL/IS/JP/KR/MX/NO/RU/SG/TW/UK, and PTO/SB/20PCT-AT/PCT-AU/PCT-CA/PCT-CN/PCT-EP/PCT-ES/PCT-FI/PCT-JP/PCT-KR/PCT-NPI/PCT-RU/PCT-SE/PCT-US.

Agency Approval Number: 0651-0058.

Type of Request: Revision of a currently approved collection.

Burden: 7,800 hours annually.

Number of Respondents: 3,900 responses per year.

Avg. Hours per Response: The USPTO estimates that it will take the public approximately two hours to gather the necessary information, prepare the appropriate form, and submit a completed request to the USPTO.

Needs and Uses: Patent Prosecution Highway (PPH) pilot programs have been established between the USPTO and the intellectual property offices of several other countries. Some of the pilot programs, such as those with Japan, Canada, and South Korea, have become permanent.

The PPH program allows applicants whose claims are determined to be patentable in the office of first filing to have the corresponding application that is filed in the office of second filing be advanced out of turn for examination. At the same time, the PPH program allows the office of second filing to exploit the search and examination results of the office of first filing, which increases examination efficiency and improves patent quality. The PCT-PPH pilot program is an expansion to the PPH program based on the framework of the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT). Information collected for the PCT is approved under OMB control number 0651-0021.

This information collection is necessary so that patent applicants may participate in the PPH or PCT-PPH programs between the USPTO and other patent offices in order to receive the benefits of more efficient examination. The forms in this collection allow participants to file a request in a corresponding U.S. application and petition to make the U.S. application special under the PPH or PCT-PPH program.

The USPTO is proposing to add two forms to this collection (PTO/SB/20NO and PTO/SB/20IS) for new participants in the PPH pilot program. The USPTO launched the PPH pilot program with