

of bycatch, economic discard and regulatory discard, or for chartering arrangements.” Further, 50 CFR 635.32 (g) indicates “we may consolidate requests for the purpose of obtaining public comment for Atlantic HMS EFPs. In such cases, we may file with the Office of the Federal Register, on an annual or more frequent basis as necessary, a notification of previously authorized activities and information concerning applications that we may receive in the forthcoming year.” The annual NOI meets the requirements of both 50 CFR 635.32 (a)(1) and 50 CFR 600.745 in most cases and, in cases where the requested activity is outside the scope of general scientific sampling and tagging, a separate notice is provided. Other relevant information related to the statutory authority for issuance of EFPs and related permits is described in the NOI published on November 20, 2012, and is not repeated here.

The majority of EFPs and related permits described within the annual NOI relate to scientific sampling and tagging of Atlantic HMS. The majority of these types of permits and the impacts of the activities conducted under these permits have been previously analyzed in various environmental assessments and environmental impact statements for Atlantic HMS. As such, generally, we do not receive significant comments from the public. Because our intent to issue such permits has not changed, we will issue these types of permits without public comment beyond the opportunity provided in the annual NOI. However, occasionally we do receive applications for permits that were not anticipated or where the research being conducted is outside the scope of general scientific sampling and tagging of Atlantic HMS. When we receive such applications, we will provide the public additional opportunity to comment, consistent with regulations in 50 CFR 600.745.

On the November 2012 NOI, we received numerous public comments, the majority of which expressed concern regarding EFP applications that may request access to the Florida East Coast or Charleston Bump time/area closures using pelagic longline vessels to conduct research. Commenters on this subject did not support this type of research. At this time, we have not received any applications requesting access to these, or other closed areas, using pelagic longline vessels. Rather, similar to NOIs published in the past for the Atlantic HMS EFP program, the goal of this past NOI was to inform the public that the Agency may be receiving applications for this type of research in 2013. As is true for any application, if

applications are received in 2013 that are beyond the scope of the NOI, we would complete additional analyses evaluating the impacts on the human environment of this type of research and, if warranted, allow additional opportunity for the public to comment on the proposed activities before issuing any formal authorization or EFP. Specifically on closed area research, compensation fishing, and aquaculture requests that require exemption from regulation, we will provide additional opportunities for public comment when complete applications are received and necessary analyses have been conducted.

We also received comments in opposition to the issuance of EFPs for the culture of bluefin tuna without additional opportunity for public comment. This comment stemmed from the issuance of an EFP in 2012 to scientists interested in conducting experiments to culture yellowfin and bluefin tuna in land-based recirculating tanks. The 2012 EFP authorized the collection of up to six yellowfin and bluefin tuna using rod and reel. The 2012 permit was issued without the Agency seeking additional public comment on the activity because of the limited scope of the activity and the fact that no tuna captured under the authority of the permit would be sold or released back into the ocean. The applicants did not catch any bluefin tuna that were under the recreational size limit in 2012. As stated above, due in part to the comment received on the NOI, we will provide additional opportunities for public comment when complete applications on aquaculture, closed area research, or compensation fishing are received and necessary analyses have been conducted.

A comment was received citing a requirement at 50 CFR 600.745 (b)(3)(i) that we seek public comment for 15–45 days on every application, prior to issuing a permit. As described above, we believe the annual NOI provides the opportunity for public comment in most cases. However, we will provide additional opportunity for the public to comment in 2013 if applications are beyond the scope of general scientific sampling and tagging of HMS, and specifically for any applications received that involve aquaculture, closed area research, or compensation fishing.

We also received several comments in support of issuance of Display Permits for collection of Atlantic HMS for public display and education.

Final decisions on the issuance of any EFPs, SRPs, Display Permits, and Chartering Permits will depend on the

submission of all required information about the proposed activities; public comments received on the November 20, 2012, NOI; an applicant’s reporting history on past permits issued, any prior violations of marine resource laws administered by NOAA; consistency with relevant NEPA documents; and any consultations with appropriate Regional Fishery Management Councils, states, or Federal agencies. We do not anticipate any significant environmental impacts from the issuance of EFPs and related permits as assessed in the 1999 Fishery Management Plan, Amendment 2 to the 2006 Consolidated HMS FMP, 2011 Bluefin Tuna Specifications, and 2012 Swordfish Specifications.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 971 *et seq.* and 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: February 26, 2013.

Kara Meckley,

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

[FR Doc. 2013–04820 Filed 2–28–13; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–22–P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648–XC462

Incidental Taking of Marine Mammals; Taking of Marine Mammals Incidental to the Explosive Removal of Offshore Structures in the Gulf of Mexico

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

ACTION: Notice; issuance of Letters of Authorization (LOA).

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) and implementing regulations, notification is hereby given that NMFS has issued one-year LOAs to take marine mammals incidental to the explosive removal of offshore oil and gas structures (EROS) in the Gulf of Mexico.

DATES: These authorizations are effective from February 27, 2013 through July 19, 2013.

ADDRESSES: The application and LOAs are available for review by writing to P. Michael Payne, Chief, Permits and Conservation Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910–3235 or by telephoning the contact listed here (see **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**), or online at:

<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/permits/incidental.htm>. Documents cited in this notice may be viewed, by appointment, during regular business hours, at the aforementioned address.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Howard Goldstein or Jolie Harrison, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 301-427-8401.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Section 101(a)(5)(A) of the MMPA (16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*) directs the Secretary of Commerce (who has delegated the authority to NMFS) to allow, upon request, the incidental, but not intentional, taking of small numbers of marine mammals by United States citizens who engage in a specified activity (other than commercial fishing) within a specified geographical region, if certain findings are made and regulations are issued. Under the MMPA, the term “take” means to harass, hunt, capture, or kill or to attempt to harass, hunt, capture, or kill any marine mammal.

Authorization for incidental taking, in the form of annual LOAs, may be granted by NMFS for periods up to five years if NMFS finds, after notice and

opportunity for public comment, that the total taking over the five-year period will have a negligible impact on the species or stock(s) of marine mammals, and will not have an unmitigable adverse impact on the availability of the species or stock(s) for subsistence uses (where relevant). In addition, NMFS must prescribe regulations that include permissible methods of taking and other means of effecting the least practicable adverse impact on the species and its habitat (i.e., mitigation), and on the availability of the species for subsistence uses, paying particular attention to rookeries, mating rounds, and areas of similar significance. The regulations also must include requirements pertaining to the monitoring and reporting of such taking.

Regulations governing the taking of marine mammals incidental to EROS were published on June 19, 2008 (73 FR 34875), and remain in effect through July 19, 2013. For detailed information on this action, please refer to that **Federal Register** notice. The species that applicants may take in small numbers during EROS activities are bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops*

truncatus), Atlantic spotted dolphins (*Stenella frontalis*), pantropical spotted dolphins (*Stenella attenuata*), Clymene dolphins (*Stenella clymene*), striped dolphins (*Stenella coeruleoalba*), spinner dolphins (*Stenella longirostris*), rough-toothed dolphins (*Steno bredanensis*), Risso’s dolphins (*Grampus griseus*), melon-headed whales (*Peponocephala electra*), short-finned pilot whales (*Globicephala macrorhynchus*), and sperm whales (*Physeter macrocephalus*). NMFS received requests for LOAs from Energy Resource Technology GOM, Inc. (ERT) and Demex International, Inc. (Demex) for activities covered by EROS regulations.

Reporting

NMFS Galveston Laboratory’s Platform Removal Observer Program (PROP) has provided reports for ERT’s removal of offshore structures during 2012. Demex does not have reports for any operations to date. NMFS PROP observers and non-NMFS observers reported the following during ERT’s EROS operations in 2012:

Company	Structure	Dates	Marine mammals sighted (individuals)	Biological impacts observed to marine mammals
ERT	South Marsh Island Area, Block 15, Platform A.	May 2 to 7, 2012	Bottlenose dolphins (99)	None.
ERT	East Cameron Area, Block 185, Platform C.	May 8 to 14, 2012	Spotted dolphins (28); Unidentified dolphins (6).	None.
ERT	East Cameron Area, Block 184, Platform A.	May 15 to 21, 2012.	Bottlenose dolphins (25); Spotted dolphins (13).	None.
ERT	Vermilion Area, Block 162, Platform C.	May 20 to 23, 2012.	Spotted dolphins (23)	None.
ERT	Vermilion Area, Block 250, Platform I.	May 23 to June 2, 2012.	None	None.
ERT	Vermilion Area, Block 182, Platform JA.	June 3 to 8, 2012	Spotted dolphins (22)	None.
ERT	South Timbalier Area, Block 63, Caisson #18.	June 3 to 4, 2012; June 17 to 19, 2012.	Bottlenose dolphins (51)	None.
ERT	South Timbalier Area, Block 63, Caisson #23.	June 5 to 8, 2012	Bottlenose dolphins (19)	None.
ERT	Vermilion Area, Block 182, Platform JB.	June 8 to 15, 2012.	Spotted dolphins (22)	None.
ERT	South Timbalier Area, Block 63, Caisson I.	June 9 to 14, 2012.	Bottlenose dolphins (22); Unidentified dolphins (50).	None.
ERT	South Timbalier Area, Block 63, Caisson J.	June 14 to 16, 2012.	None	None.
ERT	Ship Shoal Area, Block 223, Platform F.	August 15 to 20, 2012.	Bottlenose dolphins (23)	None.
ERT	South Timbalier Area, Block 63, Caisson 21.	August 21 to 22, 2012.	None	None.

Pursuant to these regulations, NMFS has issued LOAs to ERT and Demex. Issuance of the LOAs is based on a finding made in the preamble to the final rule that the total taking over the five-year period (with monitoring, mitigation, and reporting measures) will have a negligible impact on the affected

species or stock(s) of marine mammals and will not have an unmitigable adverse impact on subsistence uses. NMFS will review reports to ensure that the applicants are in compliance with meeting the requirements contained in the implementing regulations and LOA,

including monitoring, mitigation, and reporting requirements.

Dated: February 26, 2013.

Helen M. Golde,

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

[FR Doc. 2013-04791 Filed 2-28-13; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XC530

North Pacific Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

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

ACTION: Notice of a public committee meeting.

SUMMARY: The North Pacific Fishery Management Council's (Council) Steller Sea Lion Mitigation Committee (SSLMC) will meet in Anchorage, AK.

DATES: The meeting will be held on March 21-22, 2013, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., each day.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held in the North Pacific Research Board conference room, 100 W. 3rd Avenue, #1007, Anchorage, AK.

Council address: North Pacific Fishery Management Council, 605 W. 4th Ave., Suite 306, Anchorage, AK 99501-2252.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Steve MacLean, NPFMC; telephone: (907) 271-2809.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The purpose of the meeting is to review and discuss the draft Steller Sea Lion Mitigation Measures Environmental Impact Statement, and to develop comments for the Council. Additional information is posted on the Council Web site: <http://www.alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/npfmc/>. The meeting will be webcast at <http://npfmc.webex.com> to allow the public to watch and hear presentations. Comments will not be accepted via Webcast or teleconference.

Special Accommodations

These meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Gail Bendixen, (907) 271-2809, at least 5 working days prior to the meeting date.

Dated: February 26, 2013.

Tracey L. Thompson,

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

[FR Doc. 2013-04809 Filed 2-28-13; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XC523

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC); Public Meeting

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

ACTION: Notice of public meeting.

SUMMARY: The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) will hold a public meeting.

DATES: The meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 20, 2013 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held via webinar with a telephone-only connection option. Details on webinar registration and the telephone-only connection details are available at: <http://www.mafmc.org>.

Council address: Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, 800 North State Street, Suite 201, Dover, DE 19901; telephone: (302) 674-2331.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Christopher M. Moore, Ph.D., Executive Director, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, 800 North State Street, Suite 201, Dover, DE 19901; telephone: (302) 674-2331, extension 255.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Agenda items to be discussed include: (1) Review of Tilefish Industry AP Performance Report, (2) review information relevant to 2013-2014 Tilefish ABC recommendations, (3) SUN Subcommittee update on signpost development for multi-year ABC specifications, (4) MAFMC research priorities, and (5) SSC species lead assignments for 2013.

Special Accommodations

The meeting is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to M. Jan Saunders at the Mid-Atlantic Council Office, (302) 526-5251, at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.

Dated: February 26, 2013.

Tracey L. Thompson,

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

[FR Doc. 2013-04775 Filed 2-28-13; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XC524

North Pacific 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 North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) Ecosystem Committee will meet by teleconference in Anchorage, AK.

DATES: The teleconference will be held on March 19, 2013 from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. (Alaska Standard Time).

ADDRESSES: Listening sites will be held at the Council Office, 605 W 4th Avenue, Room 205, Anchorage, AK.

Council address: North Pacific Fishery Management Council, 605 W. 4th Ave., Suite 306, Anchorage, AK 99501-2252.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Diana Evans, Council staff; telephone: (907) 271-2809.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The agenda will be as follows: (1) Discussion on the Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) consultation regarding gold dredging in crab habitat in Nome; (2) Report on NOAA progress with implementing Ecosystem Based Management (EBM) science throughout the regions; and (3) Begin work on developing a roadmap for the Council for EBM.

Special Accommodations

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

Dated: February 26, 2013.

Tracey L. Thompson,

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

[FR Doc. 2013-04778 Filed 2-28-13; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-P