

mammals. Therefore, incidental take authorization under the MMPA is warranted.

Summary

In 2014, we received four separate requests for authorization for take of marine mammals incidental to oil and gas industry geophysical surveys in the Atlantic Ocean. Upon review of these requests, we submitted questions, comments, and requests for additional information to the individual applicant companies. As a result of these interactions, the applicant companies provided revised versions of the applications and we have determined that these revised versions are sufficiently complete to begin processing.

On August 18, 2014, we received an application from Spectrum Geo Inc., followed by revised versions on November 25, 2014, May 14, 2015, and July 6, 2015. TGS-NOPEC Geophysical Company submitted an application on August 25, 2014, followed by revised versions on November 17, 2014, and July 21, 2015. We also received a request from ION GeoVentures on September 5, 2014, followed by a revised version on June 24, 2015. Finally, TDI-Brooks International, Inc. submitted a request for authorization on October 22, 2014.

All requested authorizations would be for the statutory maximum of one year from the date of effectiveness, with the exception of ION GeoVentures, which has requested a period of validity from July through December 2016. The first four applicants propose to conduct 2D marine seismic surveys using airgun arrays, whereas the fourth (TDI-Brooks) proposes to conduct deep water multibeam bathymetry and sub-bottom profiler data acquisition (*i.e.*, not using airgun arrays). Generally speaking, these surveys may occur within state and U.S. waters including the Exclusive Economic Zone and waters out to 350 nmi, from Delaware to approximately Cape Canaveral, Florida. Please see the applications for specific details of survey design.

Information Solicited

NMFS is seeking public input on these requests for authorization as outlined below and request that interested persons submit information, suggestions, and comments concerning the applications (see **ADDRESSES**). We will only consider comments that are relevant to marine mammal species that occur in U.S. waters of the Mid- and South Atlantic and the potential effects of geophysical survey activities on those species. NMFS is particularly interested

in information addressing the following topics:

- Best available scientific information and appropriate use of such information in assessing potential effects of the specified activities on marine mammals and their habitat;
- Application approaches to estimating acoustic exposure and take of marine mammals;
- Appropriate mitigation measures and monitoring requirements for these activities.

Comments indicating general support for or opposition to oil and gas exploration and development are not relevant to this request for information and will not be considered. Comments should be supported by data or literature citations as appropriate. We will consider all relevant information, suggestions, and comments related to the requests during the development of proposed authorizations governing the incidental taking of marine mammals.

Dated: July 23, 2015.

Perry F. Gayaldo,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XE041

Marine Mammals; File No. 19091

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

ACTION: Notice; receipt of application.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that the NMFS Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWFSC), 8901 La Jolla Shore Dr., La Jolla, CA 92037, [Responsible Party: Lisa Ballance, Ph.D.], has applied in due form for a permit to conduct research on five species of pinnipeds, over 50 species of cetaceans, and five species of sea turtles.

DATES: Written, telefaxed, or email comments must be received on or before August 28, 2015.

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. 19091 from the list of available applications.

These documents are also available upon written request or by appointment in the 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.

Written comments on this application should be submitted to the Chief, Permits and Conservation Division, at the address listed above. Comments may also be submitted by facsimile to (301) 713-0376, or by email to NMFS.Pr1Comments@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 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: Amy Hapeman or Brendan Hurley, (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.*), the regulations governing the taking, importing, and exporting of endangered and threatened species (50 CFR parts 222-226), and the Fur Seal Act of 1966, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1151 *et seq.*).

The SWFSC proposes to conduct research on over 55 species of marine mammals and five species of sea turtles in all oceans of the world, with special focus on the eastern Pacific Ocean. This includes research on ESA listed species: North Atlantic right (*Eubalaena glacialis*), North Pacific right (*E. japonica*), Southern right (*E. australis*), bowhead (*Balaena mysticetus*), sei (*Balaenoptera borealis*), Southern resident killer (*Orcinus orca*), humpback (*Megaptera novaeangliae*), fin (*Balaenoptera physalus*), sperm (*Physeter macrocephalus*), and blue (*Balaenoptera musculus*) whales; Steller sea lions (*Eumetopias jubatus*); and green (*Chelonia mydas*), hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricata*), leatherback (*Dermodochelys coriacea*), loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*), and olive ridley (*Lepidochelys olivacea*) sea turtles. The purpose of this research is to determine the abundance, distribution, movement patterns, dive behavior, demography and stock structure, and to monitor trends in recruitment of pinnipeds,

cetaceans, and sea turtles in U.S. territorial and international waters as mandated by the MMPA and ESA. These studies are conducted through ground, vessel, and aerial surveys for observation, photogrammetry, photo-identification, biological sample collection, and tagging animals. Researchers also may salvage and import/export specimens and biological samples of these species.

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), an initial determination has been made that the activity proposed is categorically excluded from the requirement to prepare an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement.

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: July 23, 2015.

Julia Harrison,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XD989

Endangered and Threatened Species; Take of Anadromous Fish

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

ACTION: Applications for six new scientific research permits, and fourteen research permit renewals.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that NMFS has received 20 scientific research permit application requests relating to Pacific salmon, sturgeon, and eulachon. The proposed research is intended to increase knowledge of species listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and to help guide management, conservation, and recovery efforts. The applications may be viewed online at: https://apps.nmfs.noaa.gov/preview/preview_open_for_comment.cfm.

DATES: Comments or requests for a public hearing on the applications must be received at the appropriate address or fax number (see **ADDRESSES**) no later

than 5 p.m. Pacific standard time on August 28, 2015.

ADDRESSES: Written comments on the applications should be submitted to the Protected Resources Division, NMFS, 777 Sonoma Avenue, Room 325, Santa Rosa, CA 95404. Comments may also be submitted via fax to 707-578-3435 or by email to nmfs.swr.apps@noaa.gov (include the permit number in the subject line of the fax or email).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jeff Abrams, Santa Rosa, CA (ph.: 707-575-6080), Fax: 707-578-3435, email: Jeff.Abrams@noaa.gov. Permit application instructions are available from the address above, or online at <https://apps.nmfs.noaa.gov>.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Species Covered in This Notice

The following listed species are covered in this notice:

Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*): Threatened California Coastal (CC); Threatened Central Valley spring-run (CVSR); endangered Sacramento River winter-run (SRWR).

Coho salmon (*O. kisutch*): Threatened Southern Oregon/Northern California Coast (SONCC); endangered Central California Coast (CCC).

Steelhead (*O. mykiss*): Threatened Northern California (NC); threatened CCC; threatened California Central Valley (CCV); threatened South-Central California Coast (S-CCC); endangered Southern California (SC).

North American green sturgeon (*Acipenser medirostris*): Threatened southern distinct population segment (sDPS).

Eulachon (*Thaleichthys pacificus*): Threatened sDPS.

Authority

Scientific research permits are issued in accordance with section 10(a)(1)(A) of the ESA (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*) and regulations governing listed fish and wildlife permits (50 CFR parts 222-227). NMFS issues permits based on findings that such permits: (1) Are applied for in good faith; (2) if granted and exercised, would not operate to the disadvantage of the listed species that are the subject of the permit; and (3) are consistent with the purposes and policy of section 2 of the ESA. The authority to take listed species is subject to conditions set forth in the permits.

Anyone requesting a hearing on an application listed in this notice should set out the specific reasons why a hearing on that application would be appropriate (see **ADDRESSES**). Such hearings are held at the discretion of the Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NMFS.

Applications Received

Permit 1440-2R

The Interagency Ecological Program (IEP), a consortium of nine state and federal agencies, is seeking to renew Permit 1440 for a period of five years. The permit would authorize IEP to take CVSR Chinook salmon, SRWR Chinook salmon, CCV steelhead, CCC steelhead and sDPS green sturgeon while conducting 11 surveys in the San Francisco Bay-Delta region. The studies would examine the abundance, and temporal and spatial distribution of various life stages of pelagic fishes of management concern, including listed species, and their food (*e.g.*, zooplankton) resources, along with environmental conditions. These IEP studies are intended to monitor/inform the effectiveness of water operations, aquatic habitat restoration, and fish management practices, thereby providing a benefit to listed fish. The 11 studies included are: (1) Adult Striped Bass, a striped bass population study; (2) Fall Midwater Trawl, which monitors the relative abundance of native and introduced fish species; (3) Sturgeon Tagging, a white sturgeon tagging program; (4) Summer Trawl, which targets delta smelt and young-of-the-year striped bass; (5) Estuarine and Marine Fish, a San Francisco Bay trawl study; (6) 20mm Survey, a study to monitor juvenile delta smelt distribution and relative abundance; (7) Yolo Bypass, a research effort to understand fish and invertebrate use of the Yolo Bypass seasonal floodplain; (8) Upper Estuary Zooplankton, which targets multiple zooplankters; (9) Spring Kodiak Trawl, which determines the relative abundance and distribution of spawning delta smelt; (10) Suisun Marsh Survey, monitoring to determine the effects of the Suisun Marsh Salinity Control Gates operation on fish, including listed salmonids; and (11) Smelt Larva Survey, which provides distribution data for longfin smelt larvae in the Delta. Listed fish would be captured by fyke net, gill net, midwater trawl, trammel net, hoop net, otter trawl, larval fish net, zooplankton net, Kodiak trawl net, rotary screw trap, and beach seine. The majority of captured fishes would be identified to species, enumerated, measured for standard length, and released. Juvenile SRWR and CVSR Chinook salmon would be identified using the Delta Model Length-at-Date-of-Capture Table. Listed species would be processed first and released. A subsample of wild juvenile SRWR and CVSR Chinook salmon sized captures would be tissue sampled for genetic analysis, and a subsample of hatchery