

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration****Coral Reef Conservation Program**

AGENCY: Coral Reef Conservation Program, Office for Coastal Management, National Ocean Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of public meeting, notice of public comment.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given of a public meeting of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force (USCRTF). The meeting will be held in Washington, DC, at the U.S. Department of Interior South Building, 1925 Constitution Avenue NW. The meeting provides a forum for coordinated planning and action among federal agencies, state and territorial governments, and nongovernmental partners. The meeting will be held Thursday, February 18, 2016. Additional workshops will be on Tuesday February 16; Wednesday, February 17; and Friday, February 19. Registration is requested for all events associated with the meeting.

This meeting has time allotted for public comment. All public comments must be submitted in written format. A written summary of the meeting will be posted on the USCRTF Web site within two months of occurrence. For information about the meeting, registering and submitting public comments, go to <http://www.coralreef.gov>.

Commenters may address the meeting, the role of the USCRTF, or general coral reef conservation issues. Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comments, you should be aware that your entire comment, including personal identifying information may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Established by Presidential Executive Order 13089 in 1998, the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force mission is to lead, coordinate and strengthen U.S. government actions to better preserve and protect coral reef ecosystems. Co-chaired by the Departments of Commerce and Interior, Task Force members include leaders of 12 federal agencies, seven U.S. states and territories and three freely associated states.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Jennifer Koss, NOAA USCRTF Steering Committee Point of Contact, NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program, 1305 East-West Highway, N/OCRM, Silver Spring, MD 20910 at 301-533-0777 or Cheryl Fossani, USCRTF Executive Secretary, U.S. Department of Interior, MS-3530-MIB, 1849 C Street NW., Washington, DC 20240 at (202) 208-5004 or visit the USCRTF Web site at <http://www.coralreef.gov>

Dated: December 30, 2015.

Donna Rivelli,

Deputy Associate Assistant Administrator for Management and Deputy CFO/CAO, Ocean Services and Coastal Zone Management, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

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BILLING CODE P**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE****National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

RIN 0648-XB157

Marine Mammals; File Nos. 14856 and 14809

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

ACTION: Notice; issuance of permit amendments.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that major amendments to Permit No. 14809-01 and Permit No. 14856-03 have been issued to Douglas Nowacek, Ph.D., Duke University Marine Laboratory, 135 Duke Marine Lab Rd., Beaufort, NC 28516 and Bruce R. Mate, Ph.D., Hatfield Marine Science Center, Oregon State University, Newport, OR 97365, respectively.

ADDRESSES: The permit amendments and related documents are available for review 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.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Amy Hapeman or Carrie Hubard, (301) 427-8401.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On June 29, 2015 and April 2, 2015, notices were published in the **Federal Register** (80 FR 36975 and 80 FR 17721, respectively) that a request for amendments to Permit Nos. 14809-01 and 14856-03 to conduct research on

marine mammals had been submitted by the above-named applicants. The requested permit amendments have been issued under the authority of the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, as amended (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).

Permit No. 14809-01 authorizes Dr. Nowacek to conduct comparative research on 34 species/stocks of cetaceans in the North Atlantic, North Pacific and Southern Oceans. Authorized activities include suction cup tagging, acoustic playbacks, passive acoustics, biopsy sampling, photo-identification, behavioral observations, and incidental harassment during vessel surveys. The research objectives are to: (1) Document baseline foraging and social behavior of cetacean species under different ecological conditions; (2) place these behaviors in a population-level context; and (3) determine how these species respond to various natural sound sources. The permit has been amended (No. 02) to authorize the use of dart/barb tags during tagging efforts on Cuvier's beaked whales (*Ziphius cavirostris*), short-finned pilot whales (*Globicephala macrorhynchus*), Risso's dolphins (*Grampus griseus*), Arnoux's beaked whales (*Berardius arnuxii*), Antarctic minke whales (*Balaenoptera bonaerensis*) and endangered humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) during vessel surveys. The permit is valid through March 31, 2019.

Permit No. 14856-03 authorizes Dr. Mate to take 66 species of cetaceans and 12 species of pinnipeds in U.S. and international waters worldwide for scientific research. The purposes of the research are to: (1) Identify migration routes; (2) identify specific feeding and breeding grounds; (3) characterize local movements and dive habits in both feeding and breeding grounds, and during migration; (4) examine the relationships between movements/dive habits and prey distribution, time of day, geographic location, or physical and biological oceanographic conditions; (5) characterize whale vocalizations; (6) characterize sound pressure levels to which whales are exposed; and (7) gather photo-identification and behavioral information. Researchers are authorized to conduct aerial and vessel surveys and a suite of research activities including: Observations, biopsy sampling, tagging,