

ACTION: Notice; receipt of application.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that Ann Pabst, Ph.D., University of North Carolina Wilmington, Biology and Marine Biology, 601 S. College Road, Wilmington, NC 28403, 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 18, 2017.

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. 20527 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: Shasta McClenahan or Carrie Hubard, (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 222-226).

The applicant proposes to take marine mammals to: (1) Document the presence of North Atlantic right (*Eubalaena glacialis*) and humpback (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) whales in the mid-Atlantic, and (2) describe the distribution and abundance of cetaceans within specific regions used for U.S.

Navy training or other activities. Research activities may occur year-round in the Atlantic Ocean from Delaware Bay to Cape Canaveral, FL, and will include aerial and vessel surveys to conduct counts, photo-identification, photogrammetry, and behavioral observations. ESA-listed species include up to 40 blue (*Balaenoptera musculus*), 100 fin (*B. physalus*), 200 North Atlantic right, 40 sei (*B. borealis*), and 150 sperm (*Physeter macrocephalus*) whales. Non-listed species include 100 Cuvier's beaked (*Ziphius cavirostris*), 100 false killer (*Pseudorca crassidens*), 100 Gervais' beaked (*Mesoplodon europaeus*), 200 humpback, 50 killer (*Orcinus orca*), 100 melon-headed (*Peponocephala electra*), 100 minke (*B. acutorostrata*), 5,000 pilot (*Globicephala spp.*), 100 pygmy and dwarf sperm (*Kogia spp.*), 100 pygmy killer (*Feresa attenuata*), 100 True's beaked (*M. mirus*), and 100 unidentified beaked whales; 5,000 Atlantic spotted (*Stenella frontalis*), 8,000 bottlenose (*Tursiops truncatus*), 1,000 Clymene (*S. clymene*), 1,000 common (*Delphinus delphis*), 100 Fraser's (*Lagenodelphis hosei*), 100 pantropical spotted (*S. attenuata*), 2,500 Risso's (*Grampus griseus*), 500 rough-toothed (*Steno bredanensis*), 200 spinner (*S. longirostris*), and 1,000 striped (*S. coeruleoalba*) dolphins; and 100 harbor porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*). The permit would be valid for 5 years from the date of issuance.

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: December 13, 2016.

Julia Harrison,

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

[FR Doc. 2016-30415 Filed 12-16-16; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XE417, 0648-XE061, 0648-XE815, and 0648-XE908

Marine Mammals and Endangered Species; File Nos. 19225, 19257, 19315, 19674, and 20599

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

ACTION: Notice; issuance of permits.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that permits have been issued to the following entities:

Permit No. 19225: James D. Darling, Ph.D., Whale Trust, P.O. Box 384, Tofino, BC V0R2Z0 Canada;

Permit No. 19257: Ann M. Zoidis, Director, Cetos Research Organization, 11 Des Isle Avenue, Bar Harbor, ME 04609;

Permit No. 19315: Center for Coastal Studies, Right Whale Ecology Program, 5 Holway Avenue, P.O. Box 1036, Provincetown, MA 02657 [Responsible Party: Richard Delaney];

Permit No. 19674: Scott Kraus, Ph.D., New England Aquarium, Edgerton Research Lab, Central Wharf, Boston MA 02110; and

Permit No. 20599: NMFS Southwest Fisheries Science Center, Antarctic Ecosystem Research Division, La Jolla, California [Responsible Party: George Watters, Ph.D.].

ADDRESSES: The permits 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: Rosa González (File Nos. 19225 and 19257), Carrie Hubard (File Nos. 19225 and 19257), Amy Hapeman (File Nos. 19315 and 19674), and Sara Young (File Nos. 19315, 19674, 20599).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Notices were published in the **Federal Register** that requests for a permit had been submitted by the above-named applicants. The requested permits have been issued under 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), as applicable.

Permit No. 19225: The requested permit (81 FR 5990, November 1, 2016) authorizes Dr. Darling to use passive acoustic monitoring, active playbacks, suction cup and dart tagging, biopsy sampling, underwater photography/videography, photo ID and photogrammetry during aerial and vessel surveys to address a variety of questions regarding social organization, behavior, and communication of humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*). Research may occur off Hawaii (primarily off west Maui), and Alaska. Incidental harassment is authorized for the following non-target species: North Pacific right whales (*Eubalaena japonica*); false killer whales (*Pseudorca crassidens*); Dall's porpoises (*Phocoenoides dalli*); spinner (*Stenella longirostris*), pantropical spotted (*S. attenuata*), and bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*); killer whales (*Orcinus orca*); Hawaiian monk seals (*Neomonachus schauinslandi*); harbor seals (*Phoca vitulina*); and Steller sea lions (*Eumetopias jubatus*). The permit is valid until October 31, 2021.

Permit No. 19257: The requested permit (80 FR 59736, November 1, 2016) authorizes Ms. Zoidis to use passive acoustic monitoring, suction cup tagging, biopsy sampling, underwater photography/videography, and photo ID during vessel surveys in Hawaii and the Mariana Islands (Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) to address a variety of questions regarding population size, habitat use, and behavior of baleen and odontocete species. The research would target humpback whales and 25 other species of whales and dolphins. Species may undergo all methodologies (except right whales, which will not be tagged). Incidental harassment for all species is also authorized. Research would take place throughout the year. The permit is valid until October 31, 2021.

Permit No. 19315: The requested permit (81 FR 59192, August 29, 2016) authorizes researchers to conduct vessel and aerial surveys of North Atlantic right whales (*Eubalaena glacialis*) and bowhead whales (*Balaena mysticetus*) opportunistically in Atlantic waters from Maine to New Jersey to gain a better understanding of right whale population status, relationship to habitat conditions, distribution and abundance, movement patterns, and interactions with human activities. Surveys may involve approach for observation, photo-identification, and prey mapping. Up to 16 other species of cetaceans and four species of pinnipeds

may be incidentally harassed during surveys. The request to suction cup tag a subset of right whales was denied. The permit is valid for five years from the date of issuance.

Permit No. 19674: The requested permit (81 FR 59192, August 29, 2016) authorizes Dr. Kraus to conduct vessel and aerial surveys of North Atlantic right whales in U.S. and international waters of the North Atlantic from Florida to Iceland to assess, quantify, and track trends in the demographic characteristics of right whales; and to identify, quantify and monitor the long term trends in anthropogenic impacts on the species. Surveys may involve approach for observation, photo-identification, and biopsy and blow sampling, thermal imaging, passive acoustic recording, collection of sloughed skin and feces, photogrammetry, and/or incidental harassment of right whales. Right whale parts may be received, imported or exported. Humpback whales, harbor porpoises (*Phocoena phocoena*), and Atlantic white-sided dolphins (*Lagenorhynchus acutus*) may be incidentally harassed during vessel surveys. The permit is valid for five years from the date of issuance.

Permit No. 20599: The requested permit (81 FR 66928, September 29, 2016) authorizes researchers to take Antarctic fur seals (*Arctocephalus gazella*), southern elephant seals (*Mirounga leonina*), crabeater seals (*Lobodon carcinophagus*), leopard seals (*Hydrurga leptonyx*), Ross seals (*Ommatophoca rossii*), and Weddell seals (*Leptonychotes weddellii*) for life history studies and census surveys for abundance and distribution of pinnipeds in the South Shetland Islands, Antarctica, as part of a long-term ecosystem monitoring program established in 1986. The applicant also requests permission to import tissue samples collected from any animals captured and from salvaged carcasses of any species of pinniped or cetacean found in the study area. The permit is valid for five years from the date of issuance.

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

As required by the ESA, as applicable, issuance of these permit was based on a finding that such permits: (1) Were applied for in good faith; (2) will not operate to the disadvantage of such endangered species; and (3) are

consistent with the purposes and policies set forth in section 2 of the ESA.

Dated: December 13, 2016.

Julia Harrison,

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

[FR Doc. 2016–30414 Filed 12–16–16; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Programmatic Environmental Assessment

AGENCY: National Ocean Service (NOS), NOAA, Department of Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare a programmatic environmental assessment; request for Comments.

SUMMARY: NOAA is issuing this notice to advise the public that NOS is preparing a programmatic environmental assessment (PEA) in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to evaluate the environmental impacts of NOS hydroacoustic surveys, mapping, and other related data gathering activities. NOS offices that conduct hydroacoustic surveys, mapping, and other related data-gathering activities which may be covered under this PEA include: Center for Operational Oceanographic Products and Services, National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science, Office of Coast Survey, Office for Coastal Management, Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, Office of Response and Restoration, Office of National Geodetic Survey, and the U.S. Integrated Ocean Observing System Program Office. The PEA will encompass the environment of all geographic areas where NOS conducts these activities, to include terrestrial areas, but primarily focusing on U.S. waters from the coastline to the limits of the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone, which extends no more than 200 nautical miles from the territorial sea baseline.

NOAA provides this notice to advise other Federal and State agencies, Territories, Tribal Governments, local governments, private parties, and the public of our intent to prepare a PEA, to provide information on the nature of the analysis, and to invite input.

DATES: Comments must be received by January 18, 2017.

ADDRESSES: Comments may be submitted by mail, email, or FAX. Mail: