

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The National Advisory Committee on Windstorm Impact Reduction (NACWIR) was established in accordance with the requirements of the National Windstorm Impact Reduction Act Reauthorization of 2015, Public Law 114–52. The NACWIR is charged with offering assessments and recommendations on—

- trends and developments in the natural, engineering, and social sciences and practices of windstorm impact mitigation;
- the priorities of the Strategic Plan for the National Windstorm Impact Reduction Program (Program);
- the coordination of the Program;
- the effectiveness of the Program in meeting its purposes; and
- any revisions to the Program which may be necessary.

Background information on NWIRP and the Committee is available at <https://www.nist.gov/news-events/news/2016/07/nist-leads-federal-effort-save-lives-and-property-windstorms>.

Pursuant to the Federal Advisory Committee Act, as amended, 5 U.S.C. App., notice is hereby given that the NACWIR will hold a webinar initiating the work of the Committee via video conference on Wednesday, May 17, 2017, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Eastern Time. This will be the first meeting of the Committee and is intended to provide Committee members and the public with a description of the statutory requirements and scope of work of the Committee, an overview of the NWIRP and the draft NWIRP Strategic Plan, and to propose timeframes and milestones for the work of the Committee. The agenda and meeting materials will be posted on the NACWIR Web site at <https://www.nist.gov/el/mssd/nwirp-national-advisory-committee-windstorm-impact-reduction>.

All participants of the meeting are required to pre-register. Please submit your first and last name, email address, and phone number to Steve Potts at Stephen.potts@nist.gov or (301) 975–5412. After pre-registering, participants will be provided with detailed instructions on how to join the video conference remotely. Approximately 15 minutes will be reserved from 12:35 p.m.–12:50 p.m. Eastern Time for public comments. Speaking times will be assigned on a first-come, first-served basis. The amount of time per speaker will be determined by the number of requests received. Speakers who wish to expand upon their oral statements, those who had wished to speak but could not be accommodated, and those who were unable to participate are

invited to submit written statements to NACWIR, National Institute of Standards and Technology, 100 Bureau Drive, MS 8611, Gaithersburg, Maryland 20899, or electronically by email to stephen.potts@nist.gov.

Dated: April 27, 2017.

Kevin Kimball,
Chief of Staff.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648–XF392

Magnuson-Stevens Act Provisions; General Provisions for Domestic Fisheries; Application for Exempted Fishing Permits

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

ACTION: Notice; request for comments.

SUMMARY: The Assistant Regional Administrator for Sustainable Fisheries, Greater Atlantic Region, NMFS, has made a preliminary determination that two Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) applications contain all of the required information and warrant further consideration. These EFPs would allow commercial fishing vessels to land Atlantic halibut under the minimum size limit and in excess of the possession limit for studies by the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, School for Marine Science and Technology, and The Nature Conservancy.

Regulations under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act require publication of this notification to provide interested parties the opportunity to comment on applications for proposed EFPs.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before May 18, 2017.

ADDRESSES: You may submit written comments by any of the following methods:

- *Email:* NMFS.GAR.EFP@noaa.gov. Include in the subject line “Comments on SMAST and TNC Atlantic halibut EFPs.”

- *Mail:* John K. Bullard, Regional Administrator, NMFS, Northeast Regional Office, 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930. Mark the outside of the envelope “SMAST and TNC Atlantic Halibut EFPs.”

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Spencer Talmage, Fishery Management Specialist, 978–281–9232, Spencer.Talmage@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, School for Marine Science and Technology (SMAST) and the Nature Conservancy submitted complete applications for two EFPs on March 17, 2017, and March 27, 2017, to conduct commercial fishing activities that regulations would otherwise restrict. The EFPs would authorize commercial fishing vessels to land Atlantic halibut in excess of the possession limit and that are smaller than the legal size limit.

The two EFPs would support a project studying Atlantic halibut stock structure, seasonal movement, behavior, and life history being conducted with funding from the Saltonstall-Kennedy Grant Program. The goal of the project is to address identified information gaps to improve future Atlantic halibut stock assessments. The project consists of two components: Tagging, and biological sampling. Project Investigators have requested two EFPs and a scientific Letter of Acknowledgement (LOA) for the project. The LOA was issued on March 31, 2017, for research trips to conduct at-sea tagging during summer 2017.

The SMAST EFP would support the tagging component of the research project. The EFP would allow one vessel to land Atlantic halibut in excess of the possession limit as described in 50 CFR 648.86(c) and below the minimum size limit as described in § 648.83(a)(1). Up to 10 Atlantic halibut would be landed under the tagging component of the project. Once these fish have been landed, no additional Atlantic halibut above the possession limit or below the minimum size limit would be landed. These fish would be held by SMAST to test preliminary tagging techniques prior to field tagging that will be conducted under the LOA this summer. Fish would be caught during regular fishing operations by the exempted vessel. This testing is necessary to ensure that tagging conducted in the course of the main project is effective. The exemption from the minimum size limit is necessary to ensure testing is completed on all size ranges of halibut expected to be tagged during the course of the main project.

Fishing under the SMAST tagging EFP would occur from April 2017 through July 2017. On average, the fishing vessel would conduct three to five tows per day on seven day trips, with each tow lasting three to five hours. Fishing would occur east of Cape

Cod, only in statistical area 521. While fishing under the tagging EFP, the vessel would be using a groundfish otter trawl with a 7-inch (17.8 cm) mesh codend.

For biological sampling component, TNC requested exemptions from the Atlantic halibut possession limit as described in § 648.86(c) and the Atlantic halibut minimum size limit as described in § 648.83(a)(1). The EFP would be issued to 21 commercial fishing vessels, and fish would be caught during regular fishing operations by the exempted vessels. A maximum of two halibut may be biologically sampled per trip.

Atlantic halibut under the minimum size limit may be landed and transferred to SMAST researchers. Fish above the minimum size limit would be sampled at sea and landed for commercial sale. A total of 250 halibut would be sampled under this EFP, and approximately 165 fish would be under the minimum size limit. Sampling would include recording of fish length and weight, as well as removal of gonads, otoliths, and genetic material. The exemption from the minimum size limit would allow for researchers to acquire data from all sizes of halibut, which is necessary to ensure that results of the project are accurate and reflective of the halibut population. The exemption from the possession limit is necessary to ensure that the researchers are able to obtain sufficient biological samples to conduct their research. No halibut above the possession limit or below the minimum size limit could be landed for sale.

Fishing under the biological sampling EFP would occur during the 2017 fishing years, from May 1, 2017 through April 30, 2018. Multiple gear types, including handline/jig, longline, sink gillnet, and otter trawl would be used by vessels fishing under the EFP. Fishing under the biological sampling EFP would occur throughout both the Gulf of Maine and the Georges Bank Regulated Mesh Areas. Statistical areas 514, 521, 522, 525, and 526 would be most commonly fished by vessels participating in the biological sampling EFP.

If approved, the applicants may request minor modifications and extensions to the EFPs throughout the year. EFP modifications and extensions may be granted without further notice if they are deemed essential to facilitate completion of the proposed research and have minimal impacts that do not change the scope or impact of the initially approved EFP request. Any fishing activity conducted outside the scope of the exempted fishing activity would be prohibited.

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

Dated: April 27, 2017.

Karen H. Abrams,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN: 0648-XF286

Takes of Marine Mammals Incidental to Specified Activities; Taking Marine Mammals Incidental to Site Characterization Surveys Off the Coast of New Jersey

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

ACTION: Notice; proposed incidental harassment authorization; request for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS has received an application from Ocean Wind, LLC (Ocean Wind), for an Incidental Harassment Authorization (IHA) to take marine mammals, by harassment, incidental to high-resolution geophysical (HRG) and geotechnical survey investigations associated with marine site characterization activities off the coast of New Jersey in the area of the Commercial Lease of Submerged Lands for Renewable Energy Development on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS-A 0498) (Lease Area). Pursuant to the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), NMFS is requesting comments on its proposal to issue an IHA to Ocean Wind to incidentally take marine mammals during the specified activities.

DATES: Comments and information must be received no later than June 2, 2017.

ADDRESSES: Comments on Ocean Wind's IHA application should be addressed to Jolie Harrison, Chief, Permits and Conservation Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910. The mailbox address for providing email comments is itp.mccue@noaa.gov.

Instructions: NMFS is not responsible for comments sent by any other method, to any other address or individual, or received after the end of the comment period. Comments received electronically, including all attachments, must not exceed a 25-megabyte file size. Attachments to electronic comments will be accepted in Microsoft Word or Excel or Adobe PDF

file formats only. All comments received are a part of the public record and will generally be posted to the Internet at www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/permits/incidental/energy_other.htm without change. All personal identifying information (e.g., name, address) voluntarily submitted by the commenter may be publicly accessible. Do not submit confidential business information or otherwise sensitive or protected information.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Laura McCue, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, (301) 427-8401. Electronic copies of the applications and supporting documents, as well as a list of the references cited in this document, may be obtained online at: www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/permits/incidental/energy_other.htm. In case of problems accessing these documents, please call the contact listed above.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Sections 101(a)(5)(A) and (D) of the MMPA (16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*) direct the Secretary of Commerce to allow, upon request, the incidental, but not intentional, taking of small numbers of marine mammals by U.S. citizens who engage in a specified activity (other than commercial fishing) within a specified geographical region if certain findings are made and either regulations are issued or, if the taking is limited to harassment, a notice of a proposed authorization is provided to the public for review.

An authorization for incidental takings shall be granted if NMFS finds that the taking will have a negligible impact on the species or stock(s), will not have an unmitigable adverse impact on the availability of the species or stock(s) for subsistence uses (where relevant), and if the permissible methods of taking and requirements pertaining to the mitigation, monitoring and reporting of such takings are set forth.

NMFS has defined "negligible impact" as an impact resulting from the specified activity that cannot be reasonably expected to, and is not reasonably likely to, adversely affect the species or stock through effects on annual rates of recruitment or survival.

The MMPA states that the term "take" means to harass, hunt, capture, kill or attempt to harass, hunt, capture, or kill any marine mammal.

Except with respect to certain activities not pertinent here, the MMPA defines "harassment" as: Any act of pursuit, torment, or annoyance which (i) has the potential to injure a marine