

the holder fails to abide by the conditions prescribed herein, or if NMFS determines the authorized taking is having more than a negligible impact on the species or stock of affected marine mammals.

Request for Public Comments

We request comment on our analyses, the draft authorization, and any other aspect of this Notice of Proposed IHA for the proposed taking of marine mammals incidental to seabird and pinniped research activities in central California. Please include with your comments any supporting data or literature citations to help inform our final decision on the request for MMPA authorization.

Dated: May 11, 2017.

Donna S. Wieting,

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

[FR Doc. 2017-09864 Filed 5-15-17; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XF415

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 these Exempted Fishing Permit applications contain all of the required information and warrant further consideration. These Exempted Fishing Permits would authorize three commercial fishing vessels to conduct independent projects testing the economic viability of using hook gear to selectively target healthy pollock and haddock stocks in the Western Gulf of Maine and Cashes Ledge Closure Areas (excluding Cashes Ledge Habitat Closed Area), and to temporarily retain undersized catch for measurement and data collection.

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 Exempted Fishing Permits.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before May 31, 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 Hook Gear Access to WGOM and Cashes Ledge Closure Areas EFP."

- *Mail:* John K. Bullard, Regional Administrator, NMFS, NE Regional Office, 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930. Mark the outside of the envelope "Comments on Hook Gear in WGOM and Cashes Ledge EFP."

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Claire Fitz-Gerald, Fishery Management Specialist, 978-281-9255, claire.fitzgerald@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Three commercial fishermen submitted separate and complete applications requesting an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) to conduct commercial fishing activities that the regulations would otherwise restrict. In total, these EFPs would authorize three commercial fishing vessels to fish a combined total of 200 trips in the Western Gulf of Maine (WGOM) and Cashes Ledge Closure Areas (excluding the Cashes Ledge Habitat Closed Area) with hook gear and to temporarily retain undersized catch for measurement and data collection.

This EFP would authorize the applicants to use hook gear to selectively target pollock and haddock while maintaining minimal bycatch. In addition, the applicants propose to leverage these exemptions to explore and develop premium markets to increase the value of the catch. This study would be conducted in the WGOM and Cashes Ledge Closure Areas (excluding habitat closed areas); the applicants have requested access to these areas based on reports that there is a high concentration of the target species located in these areas. The exemptions are necessary to conduct this study because vessels on commercial groundfish trips are prohibited from fishing for groundfish in these closed areas and from retaining undersized groundfish. EFP trips would occur year-round (excluding seasonal closures), although the majority of trips would occur in the summer and fall months. Participating vessels would take a combined total of 200 trips to closed areas. Trips would be roughly 24 hours or less in length. Estimated average catch would be between 1,000 and 2,000 lb (453.5 to 907.2 kg) of pollock and haddock, combined, per

trip. Bycatch is expected to be minimal; applicants estimate 50 to 100 lb (22.7 to 45.4 kg) of cod and 10 to 25 lb (4.5 to 11.3 kg) of redfish and cusk per trip. Participating vessels would use a combination of automated jigging machines and handlines to target pollock and haddock; one vessel would use two jigging machines and three rods; another would use four rods only; the final vessel would use three jigging machines only.

Because these vessels would be fishing in closed areas, the agency would monitor their catch closely to ensure minimal interactions with Gulf of Maine cod. Cod catch would be restricted to 5 percent of the total expected catch, to be applied cumulatively across each project. In the event that an applicant exceeds the vessel's cap, that EFP authorization would end. One-hundred-percent monitoring would be required for this EFP. A vessel may carry a Northeast Fishery Observer Program (NEFOP) or At-Sea Monitoring (ASM) observer assigned to the trip through the Pre-Trip Notification System (PTNS). In the event of a waiver, the applicant must secure data collection services from a third party ASM provider, at the vessel's expense. All observers would record lengths of kept and discarded fish, gear characteristics, and fishing location. Undersized fish would be sampled and returned to the water as quickly as possible. All legal-sized Northeast multispecies would be landed, and all catch would be attributed to the vessel's sector annual catch entitlement in accordance with standard catch accounting procedures. All proceeds from the sale of catch would be retained by the vessel. The applicant would maintain a record of all ex-vessel price information to inform the questions about the ability this gear to establish a premium market for the target species.

If approved, the applicant may request minor modifications and extensions to the EFP 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: May 11, 2017.

Karen H. Abrams,

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

[FR Doc. 2017-09879 Filed 5-15-17; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XF350

Marine Mammals; File No. 21045

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

ACTION: Notice; receipt of applications.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that the Matson Laboratory [Carolyn Nistler, Responsible Party], 135 Wooden Shoe Lane, Manhattan, MT 59741, has applied in due form for a permit to import, export, and receive marine mammal parts for scientific research.

DATES: Written, telefaxed, or email comments must be received on or before June 15, 2017.

ADDRESSES: The applications 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. 21045 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 either of these applications 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. 21045 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 Jennifer Skidmore, (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 222-226), and the Fur Seal Act of 1966, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1151 *et seq.*).

The applicant proposes to receive, import, and export teeth from pinnipeds to perform age analysis. Teeth may be received 500 individual harbor seals (*Phoca vitulina*), 1,000 individuals of each species of bearded (*Erignathus barbatus*) or spotted (*P. largha*) seals, 2,000 ringed seals (*P. hispida*) and up to 500 additional pinnipeds of any other species, excluding walrus, annually. The requested duration of the permit is five years.

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 activities proposed are 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 applications to the Marine Mammal Commission and its Committee of Scientific Advisors.

Dated: May 11, 2017.

Julia Harrison,

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

[FR Doc. 2017-09849 Filed 5-15-17; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XF394

New England Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

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

ACTION: Notice; public meeting.

SUMMARY: The New England Fishery Management Council (Council) is scheduling a public meeting of its Scallop Committee to consider actions affecting New England fisheries in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

Recommendations from this group will be brought to the full Council for formal consideration and action, if appropriate.

DATES: This meeting will be held on Thursday, June 1, 2017 at 9:30 a.m.

ADDRESSES: *Meeting address:* The meeting will be held at the Courtyard by Marriott Boston Logan Airport, 225 William McClennan Highway, Boston, MA 02128; phone: (617) 569-5250.

Council address: New England Fishery Management Council, 50 Water Street, Mill 2, Newburyport, MA 01950.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Thomas A. Nies, Executive Director, New England Fishery Management Council; telephone: (978) 465-0492.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Agenda

The Scallop Committee will review the general workload for 2017 based on Council priorities and a draft action plan for Scallop Framework 29 (FW29) and potentially identify recommendations for prioritizing work items in upcoming actions. They will also review progress on potential management measures that may be included in FW29, including: (1) Flatfish accountability measures; (2) Modifications to the management of the Northern Gulf of Maine area; (3) Measures to modify scallop access areas consistent with potential changes to habitat and groundfish mortality closed areas. The committee will also discuss the establishment of a control date that may limit the ability of Limited Access General Category (LAGC) permit holders to move between permit categories. They will provide research recommendations for the 2018/19 Scallop Research Set-Aside (RSA) federal funding announcement. Other business may be discussed as necessary.

Although non-emergency issues not contained in this agenda may come before this group for discussion, those issues may not be the subject of formal action during this meeting. Action will be restricted to those issues specifically listed in this notice and any issues arising after publication of this notice that require emergency action under section 305(c) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, provided the public has been notified of the Council's intent to take final action to address the emergency.

Special Accommodations

This meeting is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Thomas A. Nies, Executive Director, at (978) 465-0492, at least 5 days prior to the meeting date. Consistent with 16