

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. 21386 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](mailto:NMFS.Pr1Comments@noaa.gov). Please include the File No. 21386 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.*), and the regulations governing the taking, importing, and exporting of endangered and threatened species (50 CFR parts 222-226).

The applicant proposes to collect, receive, import, and export biological

samples from pinnipeds and cetaceans annually for scientific research.

Pinniped samples may include up to 100 each of bearded (*Erignathus barbatus*), ringed (*Phoca hispida*), spotted (*P. larga*), and ribbon (*Histiophoca fasciata*) seals. Cetacean samples may include up to 100 beluga whales (*Delphinapterus leucas*), 70 bowhead whales (*Balaena mysticetus*), 10 each of minke (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*) and gray (*Eschrichtius robustus*) whales, and 10 harbor porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*). Receipt, import, and export is requested worldwide. The primary source of samples will be subsistence harvested marine mammals in Alaska, however additional sources of samples may include foreign subsistence harvests, marine mammal strandings in foreign countries, and other foreign and domestic authorized researchers. The requested duration of the permit is 5 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 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 20, 2017.

**Julia Harrison,**

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

[FR Doc. 2017-27738 Filed 12-22-17; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3510-22-P**

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

**Marine Mammals and Endangered Species**

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

**ACTION:** Notice; issuance of permits and permit amendments.

**SUMMARY:** Notice is hereby given that permits or permit amendments have been issued to the following entities under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) and the Endangered Species Act (ESA), as applicable.

**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:** Lisa Lierheimer (File No. 21217 and 21397), Sara Young (File No. 17152-02), and Shasta McClenahan (File No. 20556).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** Notices were published in the **Federal Register** on the dates listed below that requests for a permit or permit amendment had been submitted by the below-named applicants. To locate the **Federal Register** notice that announced our receipt of the application and a complete description of the research, go to [www.federalregister.gov](http://www.federalregister.gov) and search on the permit number provided in the table below.

File No.	RIN	Applicant	Previous <b>Federal Register</b> notice	Permit or amendment issuance date
17152-02 .....	0648-XC136	Point Blue Conservation Science (Responsible Party: Russell Bradley), 3820 Cypress Drive, #11, Petaluma, California 94954.	77 FR 48130; August 13, 2012	November 9, 2017.
20556 .....	0648-XF508	Georgia Department of Natural Resources (Responsible Party: Jonathan Ambrose) 2070 U.S. Highway 278 Southeast, Social Circle, GA 30025.	82 FR 32328; July 13, 2017	November 22, 2017.
21217 .....	0648-XF696	Aaron Roberts, Ph.D., University of North Texas, Biological Sciences, 1155 Union Circle, #310559, Denton, TX 76203.	82 FR 43944; September 20, 2017	November 6, 2017.
21397 .....	0648-XF696	Burke Museum, Mammalogy (Responsible Party: Julie Stein), University of Washington, Box 353010, Seattle, WA 98195.	82 FR 43944; September 20, 2017	November 6, 2017.

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 permits 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.

**Authority:** 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.

Dated: December 20, 2017.

**Julia Harrison,**

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

[FR Doc. 2017–27737 Filed 12–22–17; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3510–22–P**

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648–XF916

#### 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 Habitat 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 Tuesday, January 9, 2018 at 9:30 a.m.

**ADDRESSES:** The meeting will be held at the Four Points by Sheraton, 1 Audubon Road, Wakefield, MA 01880; phone: (781) 245–9300.

*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 Committee will review an updated coral management zone alternative including boundary changes and impacts analysis. They will then recommend final preferred deep-sea coral alternatives to the Council for action during its January 30–February 1 meeting, considering any recommendations from the Habitat Advisory Panel and Plan Development Team. Many aspects of the amendment have already been finalized. The remaining topic for consideration is a coral protection zone or zones along the continental slope, canyons, and seamounts south of Georges Bank. The Committee also plans to discuss next steps stemming from the anticipated January 4 NOAA Fisheries decision on Omnibus Essential Fish Habitat Amendment 2. This will include a discussion of alternatives development for the trailing action to consider clam dredge exemption areas on Georges Bank and Nantucket Shoals, as well as a discussion about how the decision on the amendment might influence 2018 management priorities. They will also discuss any updates related to offshore wind, oil and gas development, and recommend specific projects for the Council to comment on during early 2018. The Committee will hear a progress update on fishing impacts modeling efforts and receive updates on other habitat-related aspects of the Council's fishery management program, as needed, for example ongoing EFH consultation work. 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 these meetings. 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 U.S.C. 1852, a copy of the recording is available upon request.

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

Dated: December 20, 2017.

**Tracey L. Thompson,**

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

[FR Doc. 2017–27720 Filed 12–22–17; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3510–22–P**

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648–XF913

#### Fishing Capacity Reduction Program for the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery

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

**ACTION:** Notice of fee rate adjustment.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS issues this notice to decrease the fee rate to 4.5 percent for the Pacific Coast Groundfish fee-share fishery to repay the \$28,428,718.88 groundfish sub-loan of the \$35,662,471 reduction loan that financed the Pacific Coast Groundfish fishing capacity reduction program.

**DATES:** The Pacific Coast Groundfish program fee rate decrease for groundfish fishery will begin on landings starting on January 1, 2018. The first due date for fee payments with the decreased rate will be February 14, 2018.

**ADDRESSES:** Send questions about this notice to Paul Marx, Chief, Financial Services Division, National Marine Fisheries Service, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910–3282.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Paul Marx, (301) 427–8871.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

### I. Background

Background Sections 312(b) through (e) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1861a(b) through (e)) generally authorizes fishing capacity reduction programs. In particular, section 312(d) authorizes industry fee systems for repaying reduction loans that finance reduction program. Subpart L of 50 CFR part 600 is the framework rule generally implementing section 312(b) through (e). Sections 1111 and 1112 of the Merchant Marine Act, 1936 (46 App. U.S.C. 1279f and 1279g) generally authorizes reduction loans.

Enacted on February 20, 2003, section 212 of Division B, Title II, of Public Law 108–7 (section 212) specifically authorizes a fishing capacity reduction