

protocol, summarize the data recorded during monitoring, and estimate the number of marine mammals that may have been harassed.

(b) If comments are received from NMFS Office of Protected Resources on the draft report, a final report shall be submitted to NMFS within 30 days thereafter. If no comments are received from NMFS, the draft report will be considered to be the final report.

(c) In the unanticipated event that the construction activities clearly cause the take of a marine mammal in a manner prohibited by this Authorization (if issued), such as an injury, serious injury, or mortality, WSDOT shall immediately cease all operations and immediately report the incident to the Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, and the West Coast Regional Stranding Coordinators. The report must include the following information:

(i) Time, date, and location (latitude/longitude) of the incident;

(ii) description of the incident;

(iii) status of all sound source use in the 24 hours preceding the incident;

(iv) environmental conditions (*e.g.*, wind speed and direction, sea state, cloud cover, visibility, and water depth);

(v) description of marine mammal observations in the 24 hours preceding the incident;

(vi) species identification or description of the animal(s) involved;

(vii) the fate of the animal(s); and

(viii) photographs or video footage of the animal (if equipment is available).

(d) Activities shall not resume until NMFS is able to review the circumstances of the prohibited take. NMFS shall work with WSDOT to determine what is necessary to minimize the likelihood of further prohibited take and ensure MMPA compliance. WSDOT may not resume their activities until notified by NMFS via letter, email, or telephone.

(e) In the event that WSDOT discovers an injured or dead marine mammal, and the lead PSO determines that the cause of the injury or death is unknown and the death is relatively recent (*i.e.*, in less than a moderate state of decomposition as described in the next paragraph), WSDOT will immediately report the incident to the Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, and the West Coast Regional Stranding Coordinators. The report must include the same information identified above. Activities may continue while NMFS reviews the circumstances of the incident. NMFS will work with WSDOT to determine whether modifications in the activities are appropriate.

(f) In the event that WSDOT discovers an injured or dead marine mammal, and the lead PSO determines that the injury or death is not associated with or related to the activities authorized in the IHA (*e.g.*, previously wounded animal, carcass with moderate to advanced decomposition, or scavenger damage), WSDOT shall report the incident to the Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, and the West Coast Regional Stranding Coordinators, within 24 hours of the discovery. WSDOT shall provide photographs or video footage (if available) or other documentation of the stranded animal sighting to NMFS and the Marine Mammal Stranding Network. WSDOT can continue its operations under such a case.

8. This Authorization may be modified, suspended or withdrawn if 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.

9. A copy of this Authorization must be in the possession of each contractor who performs the construction work at the Bremerton and Edmonds ferry terminals.

Request for Public Comments

We request comment on our analyses, the proposed authorization, and any other aspect of this Notice of Proposed IHA for the proposed WSDOT dolphin relocation project at Bremerton and Edmonds ferry terminals. We also request comment on the potential for renewal of this proposed IHA as described in the paragraph below. Please include with your comments any supporting data or literature citations to help inform our final decision on the request for MMPA authorization.

On a case-by-case basis, NMFS may issue a second one-year IHA without additional notice when (1) another year of identical or nearly identical activities as described in the Specified Activities section is planned or (2) the activities would not be completed by the time the IHA expires and a second IHA would allow for completion of the activities beyond that described in the Dates and Duration section, provided all of the following conditions are met:

- A request for renewal is received no later than 60 days prior to expiration of the current IHA.

- The request for renewal must include the following:

(1) An explanation that the activities to be conducted beyond the initial dates either are identical to the previously analyzed activities or include changes so minor (*e.g.*, reduction in pile size)

that the changes do not affect the previous analyses, take estimates, or mitigation and monitoring requirements.

(2) A preliminary monitoring report showing the results of the required monitoring to date and an explanation showing that the monitoring results do not indicate impacts of a scale or nature not previously analyzed or authorized.

Upon review of the request for renewal, the status of the affected species or stocks, and any other pertinent information, NMFS determines that there are no more than minor changes in the activities, the mitigation and monitoring measures remain the same and appropriate, and the original findings remain valid.

Dated: April 11, 2018.

Elaine T. Saiz,

Acting Deputy Director, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XF592

Marine Mammals; File No. 21158-02

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

ACTION: Notice; receipt of application for permit amendment.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that Robert Garrott, Ph.D., Montana State University, 310 Lewis Hall, Bozeman, MT 59717, has applied for an amendment to Scientific Research Permit No. 21158-01.

DATES: Written, telefaxed, or email comments must be received on or before May 16, 2018.

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 home page, <https://apps.nmfs.noaa.gov>, and then selecting File No. 21158 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: Sara Young or Carrie Hubbard, (301) 427-8401.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The subject amendment to Permit No. 21158-01 is requested under the authority of the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*) and the regulations governing the taking and importing of marine mammals (50 CFR part 216).

Permit No. 21158, issued on September 25, 2017 (82 FR 48985; October 23, 2017), authorizes the permit holder to continue long-term studies of the Erebus Bay, Antarctica, Weddell seal (*Leptonychotes weddellii*) population to evaluate how temporal variation in the marine environment affects individual life histories and the population dynamics of long-lived mammal. The permit holder is requesting the permit be amended to increase take numbers for Weddell seals due to a population boom observed by their long-term research. We issued a major amendment on (83 FR 7166; February 20, 2018) to increase take for the 2017-18 field season to allow researchers to continue their work, increasing take of pups from 675 to 1,000 for one field season only. However, due to the population boom, the permit holder is requesting an increase of take by 35 percent to all life stages. The amendment would increase: Pups tagged from 515 to 800, pups retagged due to lost tags from 10 to 20, tagging adults from 285 to 385, adults harassed for tag reading from 1325 to 1800, and number of pups harassed from tag reading from 675 to 910, annually. The permit holder would also like to increase the number of carcasses salvaged from 10 to 35. The permit expires on September 30, 2022.

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 this application to the Marine Mammal Commission and its Committee of Scientific Advisors.

Dated: April 11, 2018.

Julia Harrison,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XG129

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 Acting Assistant Regional Administrator for Sustainable Fisheries, Greater Atlantic Region, NMFS, has made a preliminary determination that Exempted Fishing Permits, to facilitate the use of fishing year 2018 monkfish research set-aside days-at-sea, warrants further consideration. This notice provides interested parties the opportunity to comment on the proposed Exempted Fishing Permits.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before May 1, 2018.

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 2018 Monkfish RSA EFP."
- *Mail:* Michael Pentony, Regional Administrator, NMFS, Greater Atlantic Regional Office, 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930. Mark the outside of the envelope "Comments on 2018 Monkfish RSA EFP."

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Cynthia Hanson, Fishery Management Specialist, 978-281-9180, Cynthia.Hanson@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Exempted Fishing Permits (EFPs) that waive monkfish landing limits have been routinely approved since 2007 to increase operational efficiency and optimize research funds generated from the Monkfish Research Set-Aside (RSA)

Program. These EFPs would facilitate compensation fishing in support of the projects funded under the 2018 monkfish RSA competition. Project proposals for this year are currently under review, with selection expected in late April, just prior to the May 1 start of the 2018 fishing year. Consistent with previous years of the monkfish RSA program, these RSA compensation fishing EFPs would authorize an exemption from participating vessels from days-at-sea (DAS) landing limit restrictions in the Monkfish Northern and Southern Fishery DAS would be allowed to harvest monkfish in excess of the usual landing limits associated with their Federal permits.

The monkfish RSA program is allocated 500 monkfish RSA DAS annually, as established by the New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils in Amendment 2 to the Monkfish FMP (70 FR 21929; April 28, 2005). Each year, these monkfish RSA DAS may be divided between research award recipients and sold to fishermen to fund approved monkfish research projects. Award recipients receive an allocation of RSA DAS and a maximum amount that may be landed under available DAS. Projects are constrained to the total DAS, maximum available landing weight, or award timetable, whichever is reached first. To calculate a maximum weight allocation that is similar to the Councils' original intent to be harvested under the allocated 500 RSA DAS, NMFS uses twice the landing limit for Permit Category A and C monkfish vessel fishing in the Southern Fishery Management Area (4,074 lb (2 mt) whole weight) for each RSA DAS. This means that annually, a maximum of 2,037,000 lb (924 mt) of whole weight may be harvested across all Monkfish RSA projects. Allowing vessels an exemption from monkfish landing limits provides an incentive for vessels to purchase and fish under RSA DAS to catch more monkfish per trip, while constraining each project to a maximum available harvest limit ensures that the overall monkfish RSA catch will not be an excessive burden on the fishery as a whole.

If approved, the applicants 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 of the initially approved EFP request. Any fishing activity conducted outside the scope of