

**DATES:** The Council will hold meetings in Honolulu, Oahu on Tuesday, February 4, 2020, between 6 p.m. and 8 p.m.; in Kona, HI on Wednesday, February 5, 2020, between 6 p.m. and 8 p.m.; in Hilo, HI on Thursday, February 6, 2020, between 6 p.m. and 8 p.m.; in Kahului, Maui on Monday, February 10, 2020, between 6 p.m. and 8 p.m.; in Lihue, Kauai on Tuesday, February 11, 2020, between 6 p.m. and 8 p.m.; and in Kaneohe, Oahu on Thursday, February 13, 2020, between 6 p.m. and 8 p.m. All times listed are local island times. For specific times and agendas, see **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION.**

**ADDRESSES:** The Honolulu, Oahu meeting will be held at the Washington Intermediate School Cafeteria, 1633 S King St., Honolulu, HI 96826. The Kona, Hawaii meeting will be held at the West Hawaii Civic Center, Building G, 74–5044 Ane Keohokalole Hwy., Kailua-Kona, HI 96740. The Hilo, Hawaii meeting will be held at Aunt Sally Kaleohano's Luau Hale, 799 Piilani St., Hilo, HI 96720. The Kahului, Maui meeting will be held at the Lihikai Elementary School Cafeteria, 355 S Papa Ave., Kahului, HI 96732. The Kauai meeting will be held at the Chiefess Kamakahahei Middle School Cafeteria, 4431 Nuhou St., Lihue, HI 96766. The Kaneohe, Oahu meeting will be held at the Benjamin Parker Elementary School Cafeteria, 45–259 Waikalua Rd., Kaneohe, HI 96744.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Kitty M. Simonds, Executive Director, Western Pacific Fishery Management Council; telephone: (808) 522–8220.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** Public scoping and comment periods will be provided in the agenda. The order in which agenda items are addressed may change. The meetings will run as late as necessary to complete scheduled business.

#### **Schedule and Agenda for All Meetings**

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Public Scoping Session Goals and Objectives
3. Informational Briefing
  - a. Background on the Hawaii Small-boat Pelagic Fishery
  - b. Potential Management Scenarios
  - c. Discussion Questions
4. Public Comment/Scoping Session
5. Report on Next Steps

#### **Special Accommodations**

These meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Kitty M. Simonds, (808) 522–8220 (voice) or (808) 522–

8226 (fax), at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.

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

Dated: January 16, 2020.

**Tracey L. Thompson,**

*Acting Deputy Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.*  
[FR Doc. 2020–00944 Filed 1–21–20; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3510–22–P**

## **DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

### **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

[RTID 0648–XX023]

#### **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 an application submitted by the Cape Cod Commercial Fishermen's Alliance to revise an existing Exempted Fishing Permit contains all of the required information and warrants further consideration. The revised Exempted Fishing Permit would allow two commercial fishing vessels participating in an electronic monitoring program to fish with benthic longline gear in portions of the Cashes Ledge Closure Area. Regulations under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act require publication of this notice to provide interested parties the opportunity to comment on applications for proposed Exempted Fishing Permits.

**DATES:** Comments must be received on or before February 6, 2020.

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

- **Email:** [NMFS.GAR.EFP@NOAA.gov](mailto:NMFS.GAR.EFP@NOAA.gov). Include in the subject line "LONGLINE AMENDMENT TO EM EFP."
- **Mail:** Michael Pentony, Regional Administrator, NMFS, Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office, 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930. Mark the outside of the envelope "LONGLINE AMENDMENT TO EM EFP."

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Maria Vasta, Fishery Management Specialist, 978–281–9196.

#### **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

On May 1, 2019, NMFS granted an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) to the Cape Cod Commercial Fishermen's Alliance, in partnership with The Nature Conservancy, the Maine Coast Fishermen's Association, the Gulf of Maine Research Institute, and fishermen, to continue developing an audit model electronic monitoring (EM) program for catch accounting in the groundfish fishery. Fifteen vessels using a variety of gear types (e.g., jig, benthic longline, sink gillnet, bottom trawl) are participating in the project.

Vessels participating in this EFP are required to use EM on 100 percent of groundfish trips. Camera systems are used in lieu of human at-sea monitors, and in addition to Northeast Fishery Observer Program observers. Vessels must adhere to a vessel-specific monitoring plan detailing at-sea catch handling protocols. Vessels must also submit haul-level electronic vessel trip reports with count and weight estimates for all groundfish discards. To incentivize participation in this program and because vessels are fully accountable, the audit model EM EFP exempts certain participating vessels from several Federal closed area regulations. One of these exemptions allows vessels fishing with jig gear (jigging machines, handgear) to fish in the Cashes Ledge Closure Area, excluding the Ammen Rock Habitat Management Area (HMA).

The Cape Cod Commercial Fishermen's Alliance subsequently submitted a request to revise this EFP to allow two additional vessels to fish with benthic longline gear in portions of the Cashes Ledge Closure Area. Both vessels are currently participating in the audit model EM EFP. The revised EFP would exempt the two participating benthic longline vessels from the Cashes Ledge Closure Area excluding the Ammen Rock HMA at 50 CFR 648.81(a)(3). These vessels would continue to be required to use EM systems on 100 percent of groundfish trips and to adhere to their specific vessel-monitoring plans. Existing catch accounting, video review, and other EM protocols would remain in effect during these operations.

The revised EFP would be effective through the end of fishing year 2019 (April 31, 2019). Project partners estimate that the two participating vessels would collectively take 20 benthic longline trips in the Cashes Ledge Closure Area under the amended EFP. Each trip would last for approximately 18 hours in duration. Cumulative catch estimates from these

benthic longline 20 trips are presented in Table 1.

**TABLE 1—CUMULATIVE CATCH ESTIMATES FOR BENTHIC LONGLINE VESSELS FISHING IN THE CASHES LEDGE CLOSURE AREA**

Species	Cumulative catch estimates
Haddock .....	70,000 lb (31,752 kg).
Spiny dogfish .....	4,000 lb (1,814 kg).
Atlantic cod .....	2,500 lb (1,134 kg).
Cusk .....	2,000 lb (907 kg).
Atlantic wolffish .....	200 lb (91 kg).
Winter skate .....	200 lb (91 kg).
Smooth skate .....	200 lb (91 kg).
Thorny skate .....	200 lb (91 kg).
Red hake .....	200 lb (91 kg).
White hake .....	200 lb (91 kg).
Sculpin .....	200 lb (91 kg).
Atlantic halibut .....	10 individuals.
Winter flounder .....	2 individuals.
Barndoor skate .....	2 individuals.

Prior to setting benthic longline gear, participating vessels would test their intended fishing area for the presence of target species. Once testing was complete, participating vessels would set an average of 10 lines per trip (five lines per tide, two tides per trip). Each line would be rigged with 1,000 hooks, and average soak time would be approximately 2.5 hours.

Participating vessels would continue to develop EM for catch accounting in the groundfish fishery. The applicant states that allowing benthic longline vessels to fish in portions of the Cashes Ledge Closure Area would give these vessels additional flexibility to extend their fishing season and improve their ability to target haddock, which is a healthy groundfish stock. The applicant additionally states that permitting benthic longline vessels access to portions of the Cashes Ledge Closure Area would provide additional opportunities for hook fishermen to set their gear in areas that are not congested with gillnet and mobile gear.

Since benthic longline fishing inside the Cashes Ledge Closure Area is outside of the scope of the project as described in the original Scientific Research Plan, we are taking public comment on the revision request. Atlantic halibut are caught in the Cashes Ledge Closure Area by vessels fishing with hook gear. We are also interested in comments regarding the potential Atlantic halibut catch, and how the exemption may affect other fixed gear fishing vessels operating in the Cashes Ledge Closure Area.

If approved, the project partners may request minor modifications and extensions to the EFP throughout the

study period. 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: January 15, 2020.

**Karyl K. Brewster-Geisz,**  
*Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.*

[FR Doc. 2020-00887 Filed 1-21-20; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3510-22-P**

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

[RTID 0648-XR087]

**Takes of Marine Mammals Incidental to Specified Activities; Taking Marine Mammals Incidental to Construction at the City Dock and Ferry Terminal, Tenakee Springs, Alaska**

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

**ACTION:** Notice; issuance of incidental harassment authorization.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS has received a request from the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT) for the re-issuance of a previously issued incidental harassment authorization (IHA) with the only change being effective dates. The initial IHA authorized take of seven species of marine mammals, by Level B harassment, incidental to construction associated with the city dock and ferry terminal improvement project in Tenakee Springs, Alaska. The project has been delayed and none of the work covered in the initial IHA has been conducted. The initial IHA was effective from June 1, 2019, through May 31, 2020. ADOT has requested re-issuance with new effective dates of June 1, 2020, through May 31, 2021. The scope of the activities and anticipated effects remain the same, authorized take numbers are not changed, and the required mitigation, monitoring, and reporting remains the same as included in the initial IHA. NMFS is, therefore, issuing a second IHA to cover the incidental take analyzed and authorized in the initial IHA.

**DATES:** This authorization is effective from June 1, 2020, through May 31, 2021.

**ADDRESSES:** An electronic copy of the final 2019 IHA previously issued to ADOT, ADOT’s application, and the **Federal Register** notices proposing and issuing the initial IHA may be obtained by visiting <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/action/incidental-take-authorization-city-dock-and-ferry-terminal-construction-tenakee-springs>. In case of problems accessing these documents, please call the contact listed below (see **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**).

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Ben Laws, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, (301) 427-8401.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

**Background**

Sections 101(a)(5)(A) and (D) of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA; 16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*) direct the Secretary of Commerce (as delegated to NMFS) 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” in 50 CFR 216.103 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 mammal or marine mammal stock in the wild (Level A harassment); or (ii) has the potential to disturb a marine