

Resilience Workshop and other habitat-related updates. The Monkfish Committee report will be next. The Council will take final action on Framework Adjustment 15 to the Monkfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP). This framework is a joint action with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council to reduce monkfish and spiny dogfish large-mesh gillnet fishery interactions with Atlantic sturgeon. Next, the Council will receive a progress report on Amendment 10 to the Atlantic Herring FMP, which is an action to: (1) minimize user conflicts; (2) contribute to optimum yield; (3) support rebuilding of Atlantic herring; and (4) enhance river herring and shad avoidance and catch reduction. The full Council then will adjourn for the day. Shortly afterward, at 6 p.m., in the same meeting room, the Council will hold a public scoping meeting on Atlantic Herring Amendment 10.

Thursday, April 18, 2024

The Council will lead off the third day of its meeting with the Northeast Trawl Advisory Panel (NTAP) report, which will include overviews of: (1) NTAP's recent Bigelow Contingency Plan Working Group meeting; (2) continued discussions on the Industry-Based Survey Pilot Project; and (3) other NOAA Ship Henry B. Bigelow contingency options. Next, members of the public will have the opportunity to speak during an open comment period on issues that relate to Council business but are not included on the published agenda for this meeting. The Council asks the public to limit remarks to 3–5 minutes. These comments will be received both in person and through the webinar. A guide for how to publicly comment through the webinar is available on the Council website at <https://s3.amazonaws.com/nefmc.org/NEFMC-meeting-remote-participation-generic.pdf>. The comment period will be followed by the Groundfish Committee report. The Council will receive an SSC subpanel report on an Atlantic cod stock structure management strategy evaluation (MSE) review. The Council then will receive an update on upcoming public workshops and the proposed phases of work related to its Atlantic Cod Management Transition Plan. The Council also will discuss options for incorporating the four biological stock units of Atlantic cod into the Northeast Multispecies (Groundfish) Fishery Management Plan. Finally, the Council will receive an update on work to review flatfish sub-annual catch limits and accountability measures. The

Council then will close out the meeting with other business.

Although non-emergency issues not contained on this agenda may come before the Council for discussion, those issues may not be the subject of formal action during this meeting. Council 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 Fishery Conservation and Management Act, provided the public has been notified of the Council's intent to take final action to address the emergency. The public also should be aware that the meeting will be recorded. Consistent with 16 U.S.C. 1852, a copy of the recording is available upon request.

Special Accommodations

This meeting is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Executive Director Cate O'Keefe (see **ADDRESSES**) at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.

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

Dated: March 26, 2024.

Rey Israel Marquez,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648-XD829]

Marine Mammals; File No. 27973

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

ACTION: Notice; receipt of application.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that the Texas A&M University—Corpus Christi, Department of Life Sciences, Tidal Hall 231, Corpus Christi, TX 78412 (Responsible Party: Dara Orbach, Ph.D.), has applied in due form for a permit to conduct research on bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*).

DATES: Written comments must be received on or before April 29, 2024.

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. 27973 from the list of available applications. These documents are also available upon written request via email to NMFS.Pr1Comments@noaa.gov.

Written comments on this application should be submitted via email to NMFS.Pr1Comments@noaa.gov. Please include File No. 27973 in the subject line of the email comment.

Those individuals requesting a public hearing should submit a written request via email to NMFS.Pr1Comments@noaa.gov. The request should set forth the specific reasons why a hearing on this application would be appropriate.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Amy Hapeman or Erin Markin, Ph.D., (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.*), and the regulations governing the taking and importing of marine mammals (50 CFR part 216).

The applicant proposes to continue to study the population biology, behavior, and health of common bottlenose dolphins in Central and South Texas waters (bays, sounds, estuaries). The research aims to: (1) establish dolphin spatiotemporal patterns; (2) maintain a photo-identification catalog of dolphins; (3) analyze dolphin behavior relative to anthropogenic disturbance; and (4) determine the health condition of dolphins. Researchers would harass up to 3,081 dolphins annually during unmanned aircraft surveys and vessel-based surveys for photo-identification, observations, and passive acoustic monitoring. A subset of 90 dolphins would also be biopsy sampled annually. The permit would be valid for 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: March 26, 2024.

Julia M. Harrison,

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

[FR Doc. 2024-06727 Filed 3-28-24; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648-XD826]

Takes of Marine Mammals Incidental to Specified Activities; Taking Marine Mammals Incidental to Phase II of the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge Restoration Project in Richmond, California

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

ACTION: Notice; issuance of renewal incidental harassment authorization.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the regulations implementing the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), as amended, notification is hereby given that NMFS has issued a renewal incidental harassment authorization (IHA) to California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to incidentally harass marine mammals incidental to Phase II of the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge Restoration Project in Richmond, California.

DATES: This renewal IHA is valid from April 1, 2024 through March 30, 2025.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Craig Cockrell, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, (301) 427-8401. Electronic copies of the original application, Renewal request, and supporting documents (including NMFS **Federal Register** notices of the original proposed and final authorizations, and the previous IHA), as well as a list of the references cited in this document, may be obtained online at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/action/incidental-take-authorization-california-department-transportations-richmond-san-rafael>. In case of problems accessing these documents, please call the contact listed above.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The MMPA prohibits the “take” of marine mammals, with certain exceptions. Sections 101(a)(5)(A) and (D) of the 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 promulgated or, if the taking is limited to harassment, an IHA is issued.

Authorization for incidental takings shall be granted if NMFS finds that the taking will have a negligible impact on the species or stock(s) and will not have an unmitigable adverse impact on the availability of the species or stock(s) for taking for subsistence uses (where relevant). Further, NMFS must prescribe the permissible methods of taking and other “means of effecting the least practicable adverse impact” on the affected species or stocks and their habitat, paying particular attention to rookeries, mating grounds, and areas of similar significance, and on the availability of such species or stocks for taking for certain subsistence uses (referred to here as “mitigation measures”). NMFS must also prescribe requirements pertaining to monitoring and reporting of such takings. The definition of key terms such as “take,” “harassment,” and “negligible impact” can be found in the MMPA and NMFS’s implementing regulations (see 16 U.S.C. 1362; 50 CFR 216.103).

NMFS’ regulations implementing the MMPA at 50 CFR 216.107(e) indicate that IHAs may be renewed for additional periods of time not to exceed 1 year for each reauthorization. In the notice of proposed IHA for the initial IHA, NMFS described the circumstances under which we would consider issuing a renewal for this activity, and requested public comment on a potential renewal under those circumstances. Specifically, on a case-by-case basis, NMFS may issue a one-time 1-year renewal IHA following notice to the public providing an additional 15 days for public comments when (1) up to another year of identical, or nearly identical, activities as described in the Detailed Description of Specified Activities section of the initial IHA issuance notice is planned or (2) the activities as described in the Description of the Specified Activities and Anticipated Impacts section of the initial IHA issuance notice would not be completed by the time the initial IHA expires and a renewal would allow for completion of the activities beyond that described in the **DATES** section of the notice of issuance of the initial IHA, provided all of the following conditions are met:

1. A request for renewal is received no later than 60 days prior to the needed

renewal IHA effective date (recognizing that the renewal IHA expiration date cannot extend beyond 1 year from expiration of the initial IHA).

2. The request for renewal must include the following:

- An explanation that the activities to be conducted under the requested renewal IHA are identical to the activities analyzed under the initial IHA, are a subset of the activities, or include changes so minor (*e.g.*, reduction in pile size) that the changes do not affect the previous analyses, mitigation and monitoring requirements, or take estimates (with the exception of reducing the type or amount of take).

- 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.

3. 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 will remain the same and appropriate, and the findings in the initial IHA remain valid.

An additional public comment period of 15 days (for a total of 45 days), with direct notice by email, phone, or postal service to commenters on the initial IHA, is provided to allow for any additional comments on the proposed renewal. A description of the renewal process may be found on our website at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/marine-mammal-protection/incidental-harassment-authorization-renewals>.

History of Request

On July 31, 2023, NMFS issued an IHA to Caltrans to take marine mammals incidental to Phase II of the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge Restoration Project in Richmond, California (88 FR 51778, August 4, 2023), effective from August 1, 2023 through March 30, 2024. On February 7, 2023, NMFS received an application for the renewal of that initial IHA. As described in the application for renewal, the activities for which incidental take is requested consist of activities that are covered by the initial authorization but will not be completed prior to its expiration. As required, the applicant also provided a preliminary monitoring report (available at <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/action/incidental-take-authorization-california-department-transportations-richmond-san-rafael>) which confirms