the Kattegat inward (south/east) to and including the Baltic Sea proper.

Significance

The identified discrete Baltic subpopulation does not persist in an ecological setting unusual or unique for the taxon. Differences seen in harbor porpoise morphological characteristics (skull and tooth analyses) may be related to differences in environment, but available information is not informative enough at this point to link these characteristics to distinct habitats or specific adaptations at present. The habitat utilization reported for the Baltic harbor porpoise does not differ from general descriptions of the species' habitat preference. They are found in the shallow coastal areas of the Baltic region and their preference for shallow water calving and nursing does not differ from the general preference of the species. The opportunistic feeding nature of the Baltic harbor porpoise also does not show it to persist in a unique ecological setting. They target high lipid content fish to fulfill large energetic requirements, similar to the general preference of the species.

There are insufficient data to conclude that loss of the identified discrete Baltic subpopulation would result in a significant gap in the range of the taxon. The Baltic subpopulation comprises only a small geographic area in the total range of the species and even the subspecies. There are purported to be around ten other subpopulations in the North Atlantic (Tolley *et al.,* 1999) and other harbor porpoise populations in the North Pacific and Black Sea. Additionally, available information reveals movement and some level of gene flow throughout the Baltic region through evidence of shared haplotypes, which is discussed further below. Although there are caveats to determining the exact level of mixing between the North Sea and Baltic region (and vice versa), there is evidence to show at least some level of mixing, such that a loss of the Baltic subpopulation would not lead to a significant gap in the range of the taxon. There is evidence of continued admixture and gene flow between these regions. This gene flow may be sustained by the high dispersal capacity and movement of these animals, and the lack of obvious physical barriers between the regions.

While multiple studies confirm divergence between individuals from the North Sea and those inhabiting the Baltic region past the Kattegat Sea, the absolute extent of divergence is consistently weak. For instance, all analyses of mitochondrial haplotype distribution have revealed shared haplotypes throughout the region, even across the Kattegat 'transition zone' (Tiedemann *et al.,* 1996; Wang and Berggren, 1997; Wiemann *et al.,* 2010). In Wiemann *et al.* (2010), an abrupt shift in microsatellite haplotype distribution was observed between the North Sea and Baltic region past the Kattegat Sea, but the two most abundant haplotypes only differ by a single point mutation. No physical barrier exists between the Kattegat and the North Sea, porpoises are known to move long distances (Teilmann *et al.,* 2009), and evidence suggests that genetic connectivity can occur among harbor porpoises separated thousands of kilometers in the North Atlantic (Tolley *et al.,* 1999; Fontaine *et al.,* 2007). So, while the weak divergence (separating the North Sea from the Baltic region) is well supported, continued genetic exchange, connectivity, and ongoing reproduction among animals throughout the region is likely.

There is no evidence that the identified discrete Baltic subpopulation represents the only surviving natural occurrence of a taxon that may be more abundant elsewhere as an introduced population outside its historical range. Harbor porpoises are historically widespread in the northern hemisphere. As stated previously, within the North Atlantic subspecies, genetic studies differentiate harbor porpoises between the Eastern and Western Atlantic, with some level of mixing. The Baltic subpopulation does not represent the only surviving natural occurrence of a taxon that may be more abundant elsewhere as an introduced population outside its historical range, as there are clearly many other existing natural populations.

There is no evidence that the identified discrete Baltic population differs markedly from other populations of the species in its genetic characteristics. The attachment of skull characters to unique environments or conditions would show evidence of adaptive genetic characteristics; however, the available harbor porpoise skull information from the Baltic region does not definitively attach characters to environmental connections to show that any skull differences are adaptive. One harbor porpoise skull study suggests that skull morphology could be attached to particular environments or conditions (Galatius *et al.,* 2012). However, this is not supported by the weight of genetic evidence and is not even supported by other skull analyses, as they did not test adaptive skull characteristics and attach them to local or unique environmental conditions in the Baltic region. In addition, we did not find much discussion in the available literature about how differences in skull character for harbor porpoises may relate to adaptation to a particular prey item. Most of these skull studies attempt to delineate a population structure without testing the attachment of particular skull distinctions or characteristics.

Conclusion Regarding Significance

In conclusion, we find that the Baltic harbor porpoise subpopulation, while it may be discrete, does not meet any factors under the significance criterion. As such, we conclude that the Baltic harbor porpoise subpopulation is not a DPS as defined by our joint DPS Policy.

Finding

We find that the Baltic harbor porpoise subpopulation does not meet the DPS Policy criteria for qualifying as a DPS. Therefore, listing the petitioned entity under the ESA is not warranted.

References Cited

A complete list of all references cited in this notice can be found on our Web site and is available upon request (see **ADDRESSES**).

Authority

The authority for this action is the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).

Dated: March 18, 2015.

Samuel D. Rauch, III,

Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 2015–06749 Filed 3–23–15; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–22—P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Institute of Standards and Technology

Synthetic Biology Standards Consortium—Kick-off Workshop

AGENCY: National Institute of Standards & Technology (NIST), Department of Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of public workshop.

SUMMARY: NIST announces the Synthetic Biology Standards Consortium (SBSC)—Kick-off Workshop to be held on Tuesday March 31, 2015 from 9 a.m.–4:30 p.m. Pacific time. The SBSC will be convened as a standards setting consortium focused on the shared standards development needs of consortium participants. It will provide safe harbor for collaborative work through the formation of technical standards-setting working groups.

Successful working groups will be organized around a clear vision of specific metrology products—standards, including reference materials, reference data, reference methods, and documentary standards—that will enable interoperability and reproducibility. The goal of the workshop is to identify several initial working groups with critical mass, leadership teams, and a clear path forward to deliver standards that support the growth of the bioeconomy.

DATES: The Synthetic Biology Standards Consortium Kick-Off meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 31, 2015 from 9 a.m.–4:30 p.m. Pacific time.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held at Li Ka Shing Conference Center at Stanford University, 291 Campus Drive, Stanford, CA 94305. To register, go to *http://tinyurl.com/sbsc-0315.* There is no registration fee. Space is limited so please register early. Travel and parking information can be found on the registration page listed above.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For further information contact Matthew Munson by email at *mmunson@nist.gov* or by phone at (650) 690–6761, or Sarah Munro by email at *smunro@nist.gov* or by phone at (650) 690–6796, or Marc Salit by email at *salit@nist.gov* or by phone at (650) 350–2338.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Synthetic biology will realize its full contributions to the bioeconomy when a robust metrology infrastructure is in place to enable coordination of labor and reuse of materials. Metrology products—standards, including reference materials, reference data, reference methods, and documentary standards—can enable business-to-business transactions at scale. The NIST-hosted Synthetic Biology Standards Consortium (SBSC) will collectively build the infrastructure to support a fully integrated global synthetic biology enterprise. NIST will provide standards development support for some consortium activities, as well as facilitation and technical leadership.

The SBSC will be convened as a standards setting consortium focused on the shared standards development needs of consortium members. It will provide safe harbor for collaborative work through the formation of technical standards-setting working groups. Successful working groups will be organized around a clear vision of specific metrology products that will enable interoperability and reproducibility.

Example metrology products might include a reference material such as a standard proteome set from whole cell lysates to be used as a benchmark for mass spectroscopy; reference data such as a DNA watermark repository; a reference method for DNA sequence verification; and a documentary standard for minimum information standards for biological protocol interoperability.

The goal of the workshop is to identify several initial working groups with critical mass, leadership teams, and a clear path forward to deliver standards. Participants are invited to put forth proposals—*your input is essential to the success of this work.* Some candidate working groups are listed on the registration page. Proposals for working groups are strongly solicited and may be contributed via the workshop registration page (*http://tinyurl.com/sbsc-0315*), SBSC Trello page (*http://tinyurl.com/NIST–SBSC*), or email to the NIST team (*sbsc@nist.gov*). The portfolio of working groups and the technical projects within working groups will be dynamic as needs shift and arise.

At present, we expect that the workshop will conclude with:

- A prioritized list of working groups with well-defined customers, scope, and initial products
- Working group leadership teams to begin to coordinate technical implementation
- A plan for continued engagement within the consortium, including ways of working together
- Establishment of consortium operations, *e.g.,* steering committee and advisory board

The SBSC—Kick-off Workshop will be held on Tuesday March 31, 2015 from 9:00 a.m.–4:30 p.m. Pacific time. The workshop will be held in the Li Ka Shing Conference Center at Stanford University in Stanford, California. To register, go to *http://tinyurl.com/sbsc-0315.* There is no registration fee. Space is limited so please register early. Travel and parking information can be found on the registration page listed above.

There is no cost for participating in the consortium or the workshop. No proprietary information will be shared at the workshop.

Richard Cavanagh,

Acting Associate Director for Laboratory Programs.

[FR Doc. 2015–06839 Filed 3–20–15; 4:15 pm]

BILLING CODE 3510–13–P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Proposed Information Collection; Comment Request; Economic Survey of Gulf of Mexico (GOM) Captains and Crew Associated With the Gulf of Mexico (GOM) Grouper-Tilefish Individual Fishing Quota (GT–IFQ) Program

AGENCY: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Department of Commerce, as part of its continuing effort to reduce paperwork and respondent burden, invites the general public and other Federal agencies to take this opportunity to comment on proposed and/or continuing information collections, as required by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995.

DATES: Written comments must be submitted on or before May 26, 2015.

ADDRESSES: Direct all written comments to Jennifer Jessup, Departmental Paperwork Clearance Officer, Department of Commerce, Room 6616, 14th and Constitution Avenue NW., Washington, DC 20230 (or via the Internet at *JJessup@doc.gov).*

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Requests for additional information or copies of the information collection instrument and instructions should be directed to Dr. Larry Perruso, (305) 361–4278 or *Larry.perruso@noaa.gov.*

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Abstract

This request is for a new information collection.

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) proposes to collect economic and attitudinal data from hired captains and crew regarding the performance of the GOM Grouper-Tilefish IFQ Program five years after its implementation. These data will be used to estimate the effects of the GT–IFQ Program on these stakeholders for the five-year program review mandated by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*). The population targeted by the economic survey is hired captains and crew that participate in the GOM Grouper-Tilefish fishery. In addition, the information will be used to strengthen and improve fishery management decision-making, and satisfy legal mandates under Executive Order 12866, the Regulatory Flexibility Act, the Endangered Species Act, the