

taking, importing, and exporting of endangered and threatened species (50 CFR parts 222–226), as applicable.

Permit No. 19225: The requested permit (81 FR 5990, November 1, 2016) authorizes Dr. Darling to use passive acoustic monitoring, active playbacks, suction cup and dart tagging, biopsy sampling, underwater photography/videography, photo ID and photogrammetry during aerial and vessel surveys to address a variety of questions regarding social organization, behavior, and communication of humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*). Research may occur off Hawaii (primarily off west Maui), and Alaska. Incidental harassment is authorized for the following non-target species: North Pacific right whales (*Eubalaena japonica*); false killer whales (*Pseudorca crassidens*); Dall's porpoises (*Phocoenoides dalli*); spinner (*Stenella longirostris*), pantropical spotted (*S. attenuata*), and bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*); killer whales (*Orcinus orca*); Hawaiian monk seals (*Neomonachus schauinslandi*); harbor seals (*Phoca vitulina*); and Steller sea lions (*Eumetopias jubatus*). The permit is valid until October 31, 2021.

Permit No. 19257: The requested permit (80 FR 59736, November 1, 2016) authorizes Ms. Zoidis to use passive acoustic monitoring, suction cup tagging, biopsy sampling, underwater photography/videography, and photo ID during vessel surveys in Hawaii and the Mariana Islands (Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) to address a variety of questions regarding population size, habitat use, and behavior of baleen and odontocete species. The research would target humpback whales and 25 other species of whales and dolphins. Species may undergo all methodologies (except right whales, which will not be tagged). Incidental harassment for all species is also authorized. Research would take place throughout the year. The permit is valid until October 31, 2021.

Permit No. 19315: The requested permit (81 FR 59192, August 29, 2016) authorizes researchers to conduct vessel and aerial surveys of North Atlantic right whales (*Eubalaena glacialis*) and bowhead whales (*Balaena mysticetus*) opportunistically in Atlantic waters from Maine to New Jersey to gain a better understanding of right whale population status, relationship to habitat conditions, distribution and abundance, movement patterns, and interactions with human activities. Surveys may involve approach for observation, photo-identification, and prey mapping. Up to 16 other species of cetaceans and four species of pinnipeds

may be incidentally harassed during surveys. The request to suction cup tag a subset of right whales was denied. The permit is valid for five years from the date of issuance.

Permit No. 19674: The requested permit (81 FR 59192, August 29, 2016) authorizes Dr. Kraus to conduct vessel and aerial surveys of North Atlantic right whales in U.S. and international waters of the North Atlantic from Florida to Iceland to assess, quantify, and track trends in the demographic characteristics of right whales; and to identify, quantify and monitor the long term trends in anthropogenic impacts on the species. Surveys may involve approach for observation, photo-identification, and biopsy and blow sampling, thermal imaging, passive acoustic recording, collection of sloughed skin and feces, photogrammetry, and/or incidental harassment of right whales. Right whale parts may be received, imported or exported. Humpback whales, harbor porpoises (*Phocoena phocoena*), and Atlantic white-sided dolphins (*Lagenorhynchus acutus*) may be incidentally harassed during vessel surveys. The permit is valid for five years from the date of issuance.

Permit No. 20599: The requested permit (81 FR 66928, September 29, 2016) authorizes researchers to take Antarctic fur seals (*Arctocephalus gazella*), southern elephant seals (*Mirounga leonina*), crabeater seals (*Lobodon carcinophagus*), leopard seals (*Hydrurga leptonyx*), Ross seals (*Ommatophoca rossii*), and Weddell seals (*Leptonychotes weddellii*) for life history studies and census surveys for abundance and distribution of pinnipeds in the South Shetland Islands, Antarctica, as part of a long-term ecosystem monitoring program established in 1986. The applicant also requests permission to import tissue samples collected from any animals captured and from salvaged carcasses of any species of pinniped or cetacean found in the study area. The permit is valid for five years from the date of issuance.

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 permit 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.

Dated: December 13, 2016.

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

Programmatic Environmental Assessment

AGENCY: National Ocean Service (NOS), NOAA, Department of Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare a programmatic environmental assessment; request for Comments.

SUMMARY: NOAA is issuing this notice to advise the public that NOS is preparing a programmatic environmental assessment (PEA) in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to evaluate the environmental impacts of NOS hydroacoustic surveys, mapping, and other related data gathering activities. NOS offices that conduct hydroacoustic surveys, mapping, and other related data-gathering activities which may be covered under this PEA include: Center for Operational Oceanographic Products and Services, National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science, Office of Coast Survey, Office for Coastal Management, Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, Office of Response and Restoration, Office of National Geodetic Survey, and the U.S. Integrated Ocean Observing System Program Office. The PEA will encompass the environment of all geographic areas where NOS conducts these activities, to include terrestrial areas, but primarily focusing on U.S. waters from the coastline to the limits of the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone, which extends no more than 200 nautical miles from the territorial sea baseline.

NOAA provides this notice to advise other Federal and State agencies, Territories, Tribal Governments, local governments, private parties, and the public of our intent to prepare a PEA, to provide information on the nature of the analysis, and to invite input.

DATES: Comments must be received by January 18, 2017.

ADDRESSES: Comments may be submitted by mail, email, or FAX. Mail:

DOC/NOAA/NOS, Environmental Compliance Coordinator, SSMC4-Station 13612, 1305 East West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Email: nosaa.ec@noaa.gov. FAX: 301-713-4269. Comments may also be submitted through the NOS Environmental Compliance Web site: <http://oceanservice.noaa.gov/about/environmental-compliance.html>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Giannina DiMaio, Environmental Compliance Coordinator for NOS, at nosaa.ec@noaa.gov or 240-533-0918.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NEPA requires that NOAA consider all reasonably foreseeable environmental effects of our proposed actions, and to involve and inform the public in our decision making process. The main goal of this scoping process is to help NOS focus the analysis of the PEA on the relevant environmental and socioeconomic issues.

NOS uses hydroacoustic surveys to map the ocean floor to provide reliable nautical charts, benthic habitat condition and distribution maps, fishery distribution maps, current and tide charts, and other products necessary for safe navigation, economic security, environmental sustainability, and sound marine resource decision-making in U.S. ocean and coastal waters. These charts and maps are needed to provide reliable navigation, ecosystem distribution and condition information to the public, private users, and decision makers. Up-to-date navigation charts are used to ensure safety, efficiency of transit, and economic well-being.

NOS will take other environmental compliance steps concurrently with the preparation of this PEA to include: application for a 5-year Letter of Authorization pursuant to Section 101 of the Marine Mammal Protection Act; completion of a section 7 consultation under the Endangered Species Act; consultation on the Essential Fish Habitat provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act; consultations in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act; and completion of federal consistency determinations for compliance with the Coastal Zone Management Act. Analysis conducted in support of consultations, including quantitative analysis for estimating acoustic impacts on marine species, will be included in the PEA as appropriate.

NOS has not yet identified action alternatives to be analyzed in the PEA. NOS recommends that programmatic NEPA documents examine at least three

alternatives, including the no-action alternative.

NOS will use input provided by Federal and State agencies, Territories, Tribal Governments, local governments, private parties, and the public during this scoping process in the preparation of the PEA. Publication of this notice initiates the public scoping process to solicit public and agency comment regarding the full spectrum of environmental issues and concerns relating to the scope and content of the PEA including:

- Analyses of the human and marine resources that could be affected;
- the nature and extent of the potential impacts on those resources;
- a reasonable range of alternatives to the proposed action; and
- mitigation and monitoring measures.

Comments and questions concerning this PEA should be directed to the NOS contact at the address provided above.

Authority: 42 U.S.C. 4321-4347; 40 CFR 1500 *et seq.*; NOAA Administrative Order 216-6A.

Dated: December 9, 2016.

W. Russell Callender,

Assistant Administrator for Ocean Services and Coastal Management.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0649-XF088

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

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

ACTION: Notice of a public meeting.

SUMMARY: The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council will hold a one and a half day meeting of its Standing, Reef Fish, Coastal Migratory Pelagics (CMP) and Socioeconomics Scientific and Statistical Committees (SSC).

DATES: The meeting will convene on Tuesday, January 10, 2017, from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. and Wednesday, January 11, 2017, from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., EDT.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held at the Mayfair Hotel, located at 3000 Florida Avenue, Coconut Grove, Miami, FL 33133; telephone: (305) 441-0000.

Council address: Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, 2203 N. Lois Avenue, Suite 1100, Tampa, FL 33607; telephone: (813) 348-1630.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Steven Atran, Senior Fishery Biologist, Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council; steven.atran@gulfcouncil.org, telephone: (813) 348-1630.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Tuesday, January 10, 2017; 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. and Wednesday, January 11, 2017; 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

- I. Introductions and Adoption of Agenda
- II. Approval Minutes
 - a. Sept. 20-21, 2016 Standing, Reef Fish, Mackerel and Shrimp meeting summary
 - b. Sept. 20-21, 2016 Standing, Reef Fish, Mackerel and Shrimp verbatim minutes
 - c. Nov. 22, 2016 Standing and Reef Fish webinar summary
- III. Selection of SSC representative at January 30-February 2 Council meeting
- IV. Review of Updated National Standard Guidelines (webinar)
- Mackerel SSC Session
- V. Gulf migratory group king mackerel updated OFL and ABC yield streams for 2017/18 to 2019/20
- Reef Fish SSC Session
- VI. SEDAR 49 Data-limited Species Assessment, Part 1
 - a. Introduction and discussion of management framework (no final results until March)
- VII. Gag Update Assessment
- VIII. Mechanism for Allowing Carryover of Quota Underharvest
 - a. SEFSC analysis of carryover levels
- IX. Analysis of time for stocks to recover from MSST under different life history characteristics
- Socioeconomic SSC Session
- X. Discussion on economic and social implications of catch limits
 - a. Discussion of catch limits with respect to National Standard 5
 - b. Discussion of catch limits with respect to National Standard 8

Other Items

- XI. Dates for future SSC meetings
— Meeting Adjourns —

The meeting will be broadcast via webinar. You may register for SSC Meeting: Standing, Reef Fish, Mackerel and Socioeconomic on January 10-11, 2017 at: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/3383291116212545537>

The Agenda is subject to change, and the latest version along with other meeting materials will be posted on the Council's file server. To access the file server, the URL is <https://public.gulfcouncil.org:5001/webman/index.cgi>, or go to the Council's Web