

otherwise sensitive or protected information. NMFS will accept anonymous comments (enter "N/A" in the required fields if you wish to remain anonymous).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Joshua Lindsay, West Coast Region, NMFS, (562) 980-4034, joshua.lindsay@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On June 25, 2018, NMFS published a final rule (83 FR 29461) to implement Pacific sardine harvest specifications for the 2018-2019 fishing year off the U.S. West Coast, which began on July 1. This final rule imposed a 7,000 metric ton (mt) annual catch limit (ACL) and a prohibition on primary directed fishing for Pacific sardine off the coasts of Washington, Oregon, and California. This prohibition against "primary directed fishing" covers any targeting of Pacific sardine, except very small-scale artisanal harvests, live bait harvests, and harvests by the Quinault Indian Nation. At the April 2018 Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) meeting, the Council voted in support of two exempted fishing permit (EFP) proposals requesting an exemption from the prohibition on primary directed fishing for Pacific sardine. The Council structured the 2018-2019 Pacific sardine harvest specifications so that up to 610 mt (the combined total of the anticipated harvests under the two EFP proposals the Council reviewed) of the ACL could be harvested under EFPs. The California Wetfish Producers Association (CWPA) requested an EFP to directly harvest up to 600 mt of Pacific sardine for its Coastal Pelagic Species Near-shore Cooperative Survey (CPS-NCS).

Since 2012 the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, in partnership with the CWPA, has been conducting aerial surveys to estimate the biomass and distribution of sardine and certain other CPS species in nearshore waters in the Southern California Bight, and in the Monterey-San Francisco area since the summer of 2017. Currently, there is uncertainty in the biomass estimates from aerial spotter pilots. The CPS-NCS survey under the proposed EFP is part of a research project designed to quantify that level of uncertainty by capturing CPS schools identified by aerial spotter pilots and validating the biomass and species composition of the schools. A portion of each point set (*i.e.* an individual haul of fish captured with a purse seine net) will be retained for biological sampling, and the remainder will be sold by the participating fishermen and processors to offset

research costs and avoid unnecessary discard. This research is part of a broader effort to understand the biomass of CPS located in shallower, nearshore areas that NOAA's CPS offshore acoustic trawl survey is unable to access.

If NMFS issues this EFP, the CPS-NCS will survey nearshore waters of the Southern California Bight for 7 days in late August 2018. Any harvest under this EFP would count against the ACL for Pacific sardine. If NMFS does not issue this EFP, then the 600 mt that might have been harvested under this EFP would still be available for harvest under the ACL.

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

Dated: July 13, 2018.

Margo B. Schulze-Haugen,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XG343

Marine Mammals; File No. 22272

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 Shaw Institute, 55 Main Street, Blue Hill, ME 04614 (Responsible Party: Susan Shaw), has applied in due form for a permit receive, import, and export marine mammal parts for scientific research.

DATES: Written, telefaxed, or email comments must be received on or before August 17, 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 (APPS) home page, <https://apps.nmfs.noaa.gov>, and then selecting File No. 22272 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. 22272 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:

Shasta McClenahan or Jennifer Skidmore, (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.*), the regulations governing the taking and importing of marine mammals (50 CFR part 216), the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA; 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*), the regulations governing the taking, importing, and exporting of endangered and threatened species (50 CFR parts 222-226), and the Fur Seal Act of 1966, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1151 *et seq.*).

The applicant proposes to receive, import, and export biological samples for scientific research from up to 700 individual cetaceans and pinnipeds (excluding walrus) annually for a multi-year international study to measure the combined stress of man-made pollutants and climate change on marine sentinel species. The requested duration of the permit is 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: July 13, 2018.

Julia Marie Harrison,

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

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