

than 5:00 p.m. EST on Friday, May 13, 2016, to ensure transmission to the Committee prior to the meeting. Comments received after that date will be distributed to the members but may not be considered at the meeting.

Copies of RE&EEAC meeting minutes will be available within 30 days following the meeting.

Dated: March 2, 2016.

Adam O'Malley,

Director, Office of Energy and Environmental Industries.

[FR Doc. 2016-05189 Filed 3-7-16; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-DR-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

International Trade Administration

[A-821-822]

Certain Cold-Rolled Steel Flat Products from the Russian Federation: Affirmative Preliminary Determination of Sales at Less Than Fair Value, Affirmative Preliminary Determination of Critical Circumstances, and Postponement of Final Determination

AGENCY: Enforcement and Compliance, International Trade Administration, Department of Commerce.

SUMMARY: The Department of Commerce (the "Department") preliminarily determines that cold-rolled steel flat products ("cold-rolled steel") from the Russian Federation ("Russia") are being, or are likely to be, sold in the United States at less than fair value ("LTFV"), as provided in section 733(b) of the Tariff Act of 1930, as amended ("the Act"). The period of investigation ("POI") is July 1, 2014, through June 30, 2015. The estimated weighted-average dumping margins of sales at LTFV are shown in the "Preliminary Determination" section of this notice. Interested parties are invited to comment on this preliminary determination.

DATES: Effective March 8, 2016.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Laurel LaCivita, Eve Wang, or Alex Rosen, AD/CVD Operations, Office III, Enforcement and Compliance, International Trade Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce, 14th Street and Constitution Avenue NW., Washington, DC 20230; telephone: (202) 482-4243, (202) 482-6231, or (202) 482-7814, respectively.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The Department published the notice of initiation of this investigation on

August 24, 2015.¹ For a complete description of the events that followed the initiation of this investigation, see the memorandum that is dated concurrently with this determination and hereby adopted by this notice.² A list of topics included in the Preliminary Decision Memorandum is included as Appendix II to this notice. The Preliminary Decision Memorandum is a public document and is on file electronically via Enforcement and Compliance's Antidumping and Countervailing Duty Centralized Electronic Service System ("ACCESS"). ACCESS is available to registered users at <https://access.trade.gov>, and to all parties in the Central Records Unit, room B8024 of the main Department of Commerce building. In addition, a complete version of the Preliminary Decision Memorandum can be found at <http://enforcement.trade.gov/frn/>. The signed Preliminary Decision Memorandum and the electronic version of the Preliminary Decision Memorandum are identical in content.

As explained in the memorandum from the Acting Assistant Secretary for Enforcement and Compliance, the Department exercised its discretion to toll deadlines as a result of the closure of the Federal Government for Snowstorm Jonas.³ All deadlines in this segment of the proceeding have been extended by four business days. The revised deadline for the preliminary determination of this investigation is now February 29, 2016.

Scope of the Investigation

The product covered by this investigation is cold-rolled steel from Russia. For a full description of the scope of this investigation, see the "Scope of the Investigation," in Appendix I.

¹ See *Certain Cold-Rolled Steel Flat Products From Brazil, the People's Republic of China, India, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Netherlands, the Russian Federation, and the United Kingdom: Initiation of Less-Than-Fair-Value Investigations*, 80 FR 51198 (August 24, 2015) ("Initiation Notice").

² See Memorandum from Christian Marsh, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Antidumping and Countervailing Duty Operations, to Paul Piquado, Assistant Secretary for Enforcement and Compliance, "Decision Memorandum for the Preliminary Determination in the Antidumping Duty Investigation of Certain Cold-Rolled Steel Flat Products from the Russian Federation" ("Preliminary Decision Memorandum"), dated concurrently with this notice.

³ See Memorandum to the file from Ron Lorentzen, Acting Assistant Secretary for Enforcement and Compliance, "Tolling of Administrative Deadlines as a Result of the Government Closure during Snowstorm 'Jonas,'" dated January 27, 2016.

Scope Comments

In accordance with the preamble to the Department's regulations,⁴ the *Initiation Notice* set aside a period of time for parties to raise issues regarding product coverage (*i.e.*, "scope").⁵ Certain interested parties commented on the scope of the investigation as it appeared in the *Initiation Notice*, as well as additional language proposed by the Department. For a summary of the product coverage comments and rebuttal responses submitted to the record for this preliminary determination, and accompanying discussion and analysis of all comments timely received, see the Preliminary Scope Decision Memorandum.⁶ The Department is preliminarily not modifying the scope language as it appeared in the *Initiation Notice*.

Methodology

The Department is conducting this investigation in accordance with section 731 of the Act. Export prices have been calculated in accordance with section 772(a) of the Act. Normal value ("NV") is calculated in accordance with section 773 of the Act. For a full description of the methodology underlying our preliminary conclusions, see the Preliminary Decision Memorandum.

Preliminary Affirmative Determination of Critical Circumstances

On October 30, 2015, Petitioners filed a timely critical circumstances allegation, pursuant to section 773(e)(1) of the Act and 19 CFR 351.206(c)(1), alleging that critical circumstances exist with respect to imports of the merchandise under consideration.⁷ In accordance with 19 CFR 351.206(c)(2)(i), when a critical circumstances allegation is submitted more than 20 days before the scheduled date of the preliminary determination, the Department must issue a preliminary finding whether there is a reasonable basis to believe or suspect that critical circumstances exist no later than the date of the preliminary

⁴ See *Antidumping Duties; Countervailing Duties*, 62 FR 27296, 27323 (May 19, 1997).

⁵ See *Initiation Notice*, 80 FR at 51199.

⁶ See Memorandum to Christian Marsh, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Antidumping and Countervailing Duty Operations, "Certain Cold-Rolled Steel Products From Brazil, the People's Republic of China, India, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, and the United Kingdom: Scope Comments Decision Memorandum for the Preliminary Determinations" dated concurrently with this preliminary determination.

⁷ See letter from Petitioners, "Certain Cold-Rolled Steel Flat Products From The People's Republic of China, Japan, and the Russian Federation: Petitioners' Critical Circumstances Allegation," dated October 30, 2015.

determination. We have conducted an analysis of critical circumstances in accordance with section 733(e) of the Act and 19 CFR 351.206, and preliminarily determine that: (1) There is a history of dumping and material injury by reason of dumped imports in the United States or elsewhere of the subject merchandise in accordance with section 733(e)(1)(A)(i) of the Act; and (2) imports of the subject merchandise have been massive over a relatively short period in accordance with section 733(e)(1)(B) of the Act. Therefore, we preliminarily determine that critical circumstances exist for all Russian producers/exporters of subject merchandise. For a full description of the methodology and results of our analysis, see the Preliminary Decision Memorandum.

All-Others Rate

Section 735(c)(5)(A) of the Act provides that the estimated all-others rate shall be an amount equal to the weighted average of the estimated weighted-average dumping margins established for exporters and producers individually investigated, excluding any zero or *de minimis* margins, and any margins determined entirely under section 776 of the Act. We based our calculation of the all-others rate on the margins calculated for Severstal Export GmbH and PAO Severstal (collectively "Severstal") and Novex Trading (Swiss) SA and Novolipetsk Steel OJSC (collectively "NLMK"), the two mandatory respondents in this investigation.

Preliminary Determination

The Department preliminarily determines that the following estimated weighted-average dumping margins exist:

Exporter/producer	Weighted-average margin (percent)
Severstal Export GmbH and PAO Severstal	12.62
Novex Trading (Swiss) SA and Novolipetsk Steel OJSC	16.89
All Others	14.76

Suspension of Liquidation

In accordance with section 733(d)(2) of the Act, we will direct U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to suspend liquidation of all entries of cold-rolled steel from Russia as described in the scope of the investigation section entered, or withdrawn from warehouse, for consumption on or after the date of

publication of this notice in the **Federal Register**.

Pursuant to section 733 (d)(1)(B) of the Act and 19 CFR 351.205(d), the Department will instruct CBP to require a cash deposit equal to the weighted-average amount by which the NV exceeds U.S. price as indicated in the chart above.⁸ These suspension-of-liquidation instructions will remain in effect until further notice.

Section 733(e)(2) of the Act provides that, given an affirmative determination of critical circumstances, any suspension of liquidation shall apply to unliquidated entries of merchandise entered, or withdrawn from warehouse, for consumption on or after the later of (a) the date which is 90 days before the date on which the suspension of liquidation was first ordered, or (b) the date on which notice of initiation of the investigation was published. As described above, we preliminarily find that critical circumstances exist for imports produced or exported by all Russian exporters. Therefore, in accordance with section 733(e)(2)(A) of the Act, the suspension of liquidation shall apply to unliquidated entries of merchandise entered, or withdrawn from warehouse, for consumption on or after the date which is 90 days before the publication of this notice.

Disclosure

We will disclose the calculations performed to interested parties in this proceeding within five days of the date of publication of this notice in accordance with 19 CFR 351.224(b). Interested parties are invited to comment on this preliminary determination. Case briefs or other written comments may be submitted to the Assistant Secretary for Enforcement and Compliance no later than seven days after the date on which the final verification report is issued in this proceeding, and rebuttal briefs, limited to issues raised in case briefs, may be submitted no later than five days after the deadline date for case briefs.⁹

⁸ The Department's companion countervailing duty investigation of cold-rolled steel flat products from the Russian Federation did not find that producers/exporters of covered merchandise received countervailable benefits by virtue of export subsidies. See *Countervailing Duty Investigation of Certain Cold-Rolled Steel Flat Products From the Russian Federation: Preliminary Affirmative Countervailing Duty Determination, Preliminary Negative Critical Circumstances Determination, and Alignment of Final Determination With Final Antidumping Duty Determination*, 80 FR 79564 (December 22, 2015) and accompanying Issues and Decision Memorandum. Therefore, we made no adjustments to the deposit rates for Severstal, NLMK or the companies subject to the all-others rate.

⁹ See 19 CFR 351.309.

Pursuant to 19 CFR 351.309(c)(2) and (d)(2), parties who submit case briefs or rebuttal briefs in this proceeding are encouraged to submit with each argument: (1) A statement of the issue; (2) a brief summary of the argument; and (3) a table of authorities.

Pursuant to 19 CFR 351.310(c), interested parties who wish to request a hearing must submit a written request to the Assistant Secretary for Enforcement and Compliance, U.S. Department of Commerce. All documents must be filed electronically using ACCESS. An electronically-filed request must be received successfully in its entirety by ACCESS by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time, within 30 days after the date of publication of this notice.¹⁰ Requests should contain the party's name, address, and telephone number, the number of participants, and a list of the issues to be discussed. If a request for a hearing is made, the Department intends to hold the hearing at the U.S. Department of Commerce, 14th Street and Constitution Avenue NW., Washington, DC 20230, at a time and date to be determined. Parties should confirm by telephone the date, time, and location of the hearing two days before the scheduled date.

Verification

As provided in section 782(i) of the Act, we intend to verify information relied upon in making our final determination.

Postponement of Final Determination and Extension of Provisional Measures

Section 735(a)(2) of the Act provides that a final determination may be postponed until not later than 135 days after the date of the publication of the preliminary determination if, in the event of an affirmative preliminary determination, a request for such postponement is made by exporters who account for a significant proportion of exports of the subject merchandise, or in the event of a negative preliminary determination, a request for such postponement is made by Petitioners. 19 CFR 351.210(e)(2) requires that requests by respondents for postponement of a final antidumping determination be accompanied by a request for extension of provisional measures from a four-month period to a period not more than six months in duration.

On February 23, 2016, pursuant to 19 CFR 351.210(b) and (e), Severstal requested that, contingent upon an affirmative preliminary determination of sales at LTFV for the respondents, the Department postpone the final

¹⁰ See 19 CFR 351.310(c).

determination and that provisional measures be extended to a period not to exceed six months.¹¹

In accordance with section 735(a)(2)(A) of the Act and 19 CFR 351.210(b)(2)(ii), because (1) our preliminary determination is affirmative; (2) the requesting exporter accounts for a significant proportion of exports of the subject merchandise; and (3) no compelling reasons for denial exist, we are postponing the final determination and extending the provisional measures from a four-month period to a period not greater than six months. Accordingly, we will make our final determination no later than 135 days after the date of publication of this preliminary determination, pursuant to section 735(a)(2) of the Act.¹²

International Trade Commission (“ITC”) Notification

In accordance with section 733(f) of the Act, we are notifying the ITC of our affirmative preliminary determination of sales at LTFV. If our final determination is affirmative, the ITC will determine before the later of 120 days after the date of this preliminary determination or 45 days after our final determination whether these imports are materially injuring, or threaten material injury to, the U.S. industry.

This determination is issued and published in accordance with sections 733(f) and 777(i)(1) of the Act and 19 CFR 351.205(c).

Dated: February 29, 2016.

Paul Piquado,

Assistant Secretary for Enforcement and Compliance.

Appendix I—Scope of the Investigation

The products covered by this investigation are certain cold-rolled (cold-reduced), flat-rolled steel products, whether or not annealed, painted, varnished, or coated with plastics or other non-metallic substances. The products covered do not include those that are clad, plated, or coated with metal. The products covered include coils that have a width or other lateral measurement (“width”) of 12.7 mm or greater, regardless of form of coil (e.g., in successively superimposed layers, spirally oscillating, etc.). The products covered also include products not in coils (e.g., in straight lengths) of a thickness less than 4.75 mm and a width that is 12.7 mm or greater and that measures at least 10 times the thickness. The products covered also include products not in coils (e.g., in straight lengths) of a thickness of 4.75 mm or more and a width exceeding 150 mm and measuring at least twice the thickness.

The products described above may be rectangular, square, circular, or other shape and include products of either rectangular or non-rectangular cross-section where such cross-section is achieved subsequent to the rolling process, *i.e.*, products which have been “worked after rolling” (e.g., products which have been beveled or rounded at the edges). For purposes of the width and thickness requirements referenced above:

- (1) Where the nominal and actual measurements vary, a product is within the scope if application of either the nominal or actual measurement would place it within the scope based on the definitions set forth above, and
- (2) where the width and thickness vary for a specific product (e.g., the thickness of certain products with non-rectangular cross-section, the width of certain products with non-rectangular shape, etc.), the measurement at its greatest width or thickness applies.

Steel products included in the scope of this investigation are products in which: (1) Iron predominates, by weight, over each of the other contained elements; (2) the carbon content is 2 percent or less, by weight; and (3) none of the elements listed below exceeds the quantity, by weight, respectively indicated:

- 2.50 percent of manganese, or
- 3.30 percent of silicon, or
- 1.50 percent of copper, or
- 1.50 percent of aluminum, or
- 1.25 percent of chromium, or
- 0.30 percent of cobalt, or
- 0.40 percent of lead, or
- 2.00 percent of nickel, or
- 0.30 percent of tungsten (also called wolfram), or
- 0.80 percent of molybdenum, or
- 0.10 percent of niobium (also called columbium), or
- 0.30 percent of vanadium, or
- 0.30 percent of zirconium

Unless specifically excluded, products are included in this scope regardless of levels of boron and titanium.

For example, specifically included in this scope are vacuum degassed, fully stabilized (commonly referred to as interstitial-free (IF)) steels, high strength low alloy (HSLA) steels, motor lamination steels, Advanced High Strength Steels (AHSS), and Ultra High Strength Steels (UHSS). IF steels are recognized as low carbon steels with micro-alloying levels of elements such as titanium and/or niobium added to stabilize carbon and nitrogen elements. HSLA steels are recognized as steels with micro-alloying levels of elements such as chromium, copper, niobium, titanium, vanadium, and molybdenum. Motor lamination steels contain micro-alloying levels of elements such as silicon and aluminum. AHSS and UHSS are considered high tensile strength and high elongation steels, although AHSS and UHSS are covered whether or not they are high tensile strength or high elongation steels.

Subject merchandise includes cold-rolled steel that has been further processed in a third country, including but not limited to annealing, tempering, painting, varnishing, trimming, cutting, punching, and/or slitting,

or any other processing that would not otherwise remove the merchandise from the scope of the investigation if performed in the country of manufacture of the cold-rolled steel.

All products that meet the written physical description, and in which the chemistry quantities do not exceed any one of the noted element levels listed above, are within the scope of this investigation unless specifically excluded. The following products are outside of and/or specifically excluded from the scope of this investigation:

- Ball bearing steels;¹³
- Tool steels;¹⁴
- Silico-manganese steel;¹⁵
- Grain-oriented electrical steels (GOES) as defined in the final determination of the U.S. Department of Commerce in Grain-Oriented Electrical Steel from Germany, Japan, and Poland.¹⁶
- Non-Oriented Electrical Steels (NOES), as defined in the antidumping orders issued by the U.S. Department of Commerce in Non-Oriented Electrical Steel From the People's Republic of China, Germany, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Sweden, and Taiwan.¹⁷

¹³ Ball bearing steels are defined as steels which contain, in addition to iron, each of the following elements by weight in the amount specified: (i) Not less than 0.95 nor more than 1.13 percent of carbon; (ii) not less than 0.22 nor more than 0.48 percent of manganese; (iii) none, or not more than 0.03 percent of sulfur; (iv) none, or not more than 0.03 percent of phosphorus; (v) not less than 0.18 nor more than 0.37 percent of silicon; (vi) not less than 1.25 nor more than 1.65 percent of chromium; (vii) none, or not more than 0.28 percent of nickel; (viii) none, or not more than 0.38 percent of copper; and (ix) none, or not more than 0.09 percent of molybdenum.

¹⁴ Tool steels are defined as steels which contain the following combinations of elements in the quantity by weight respectively indicated: (i) More than 1.2 percent carbon and more than 10.5 percent chromium; or (ii) not less than 0.3 percent carbon and 1.25 percent or more but less than 10.5 percent chromium; or (iii) not less than 0.85 percent carbon and 1 percent to 1.8 percent, inclusive, manganese; or (iv) 0.9 percent to 1.2 percent, inclusive, chromium and 0.9 percent to 1.4 percent, inclusive, molybdenum; or (v) not less than 0.5 percent carbon and not less than 3.5 percent molybdenum; or (vi) not less than 0.5 percent carbon and not less than 5.5 percent tungsten.

¹⁵ Silico-manganese steel is defined as steels containing by weight: (i) Not more than 0.7 percent of carbon; (ii) 0.5 percent or more but not more than 1.9 percent of manganese, and (iii) 0.6 percent or more but not more than 2.3 percent of silicon.

¹⁶ *Grain-Oriented Electrical Steel from Germany, Japan, and Poland: Final Determinations of Sales at Less Than Fair Value and Certain Final Affirmative Determination of Critical Circumstances*, 79 FR 42,501, 42,503 (Dep't of Commerce, July 22, 2014). This determination defines grain-oriented electrical steel as “a flat-rolled alloy steel product containing by weight at least 0.6 percent but not more than 6 percent of silicon, not more than 0.08 percent of carbon, not more than 1.0 percent of aluminum, and no other element in an amount that would give the steel the characteristics of another alloy steel, in coils or in straight lengths.”

¹⁷ *Non-Oriented Electrical Steel From the People's Republic of China, Germany, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Sweden, and Taiwan: Antidumping Duty Orders*, 79 FR 71,741, 71,741–42 (Dep't of Commerce, Dec. 3, 2014). The orders define NOES as “cold-rolled, flat-rolled, alloy steel products, whether or not in coils, regardless of width, having

¹¹ See Letter from Severstal, “Certain Cold-Rolled Steel Flat Products from the Russian Federation: Severstal’s Request for Postponement of Final Determination,” dated February 23, 2016.

¹² See also 19 CFR 351.210(e).

The products subject to this investigation are currently classified in the Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States (HTSUS) under item numbers: 7209.15.0000, 7209.16.0030, 7209.16.0060, 7209.16.0070, 7209.16.0091, 7209.17.0030, 7209.17.0060, 7209.17.0070, 7209.17.0091, 7209.18.1530, 7209.18.1560, 7209.18.2510, 7209.18.2520, 7209.18.2580, 7209.18.6020, 7209.18.6090, 7209.25.0000, 7209.26.0000, 7209.27.0000, 7209.28.0000, 7209.90.0000, 7210.70.3000, 7211.23.1500, 7211.23.2000, 7211.23.3000, 7211.23.4500, 7211.23.6030, 7211.23.6060, 7211.23.6090, 7211.29.2030, 7211.29.2090, 7211.29.4500, 7211.29.6030, 7211.29.6080, 7211.90.0000, 7212.40.1000, 7212.40.5000, 7225.50.6000, 7225.50.8080, 7225.99.0090, 7226.92.5000, 7226.92.7050, and 7226.92.8050. The products subject to the investigation may also enter under the following HTSUS numbers: 7210.90.9000, 7212.50.0000, 7215.10.0010, 7215.10.0080, 7215.50.0016, 7215.50.0018, 7215.50.0020, 7215.50.0061, 7215.50.0063, 7215.50.0065, 7215.50.0090, 7215.90.5000, 7217.10.1000, 7217.10.2000, 7217.10.3000, 7217.10.7000, 7217.90.1000, 7217.90.5030, 7217.90.5060, 7217.90.5090, 7225.19.0000, 7226.19.1000, 7226.19.9000, 7226.99.0180, 7228.50.5015, 7228.50.5040, 7228.50.5070, 7228.60.8000, and 7229.90.1000.

The HTSUS subheadings above are provided for convenience and U.S. Customs purposes only. The written description of the scope of the investigation is dispositive.

Appendix II—List of Topics Discussed in the Preliminary Decision Memorandum

- I. Summary
- II. Background
- III. Period of Investigation
- IV. Postponement of Final Determination and Extension of Provisional Measures
- V. Scope of the Investigation
- VI. Preliminary Determination of Critical Circumstances
 - A. Legal Framework
 - B. Critical Circumstances Allegation
 - C. Analysis
- VII. Application of Facts Available and Use of Adverse Inferences
- VIII. Discussion of Methodology
 - A. Determination of Comparison Method
 - B. Results of the Differential Pricing Analysis
- IX. Product Comparisons
- X. Date of Sale
- XI. Export Price
- XII. Normal Value

an actual thickness of 0.20 mm or more, in which the core loss is substantially equal in any direction of magnetization in the plane of the material. The term 'substantially equal' means that the cross grain direction of core loss is no more than 1.5 times the straight grain direction (*i.e.*, the rolling direction) of core loss. NOES has a magnetic permeability that does not exceed 1.65 Tesla when tested at a field of 800 A/m (equivalent to 10 Oersteds) along (*i.e.*, parallel to) the rolling direction of the sheet (*i.e.*, B800 value). NOES contains by weight more than 1.00 percent of silicon but less than 3.5 percent of silicon, not more than 0.08 percent of carbon, and not more than 1.5 percent of aluminum. NOES has a surface oxide coating, to which an insulation coating may be applied."

- A. Comparison Market Viability
 - B. Affiliated-Party Transactions and Arm's-Length Test
 - C. Level of Trade
 - D. Cost of Production Analysis
 1. Calculation of Cost of Production
 2. Test of Comparison Market Sale Prices
 3. Results of the COP Test
 - E. Calculation of NV Based on Comparison Market Prices
 - XIII. Currency Conversion
 - XIV. U.S. International Trade Commission Notification
 - XV. Disclosure and Public Comment
 - XVI. Verification
 - XVII. Conclusion
- [FR Doc. 2016-05000 Filed 3-7-16; 8:45 am]
BILLING CODE 3510-DS-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XE404

Marine Mammals; File No. 18978

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

ACTION: Notice; receipt of application.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that Pam Miller, Alaska Community Action on Toxics, 505 West Northern Lights Blvd., Suite 205, Anchorage, AK 99503, has applied in due form for a permit to receive, import, and export specimens of marine mammals for scientific research.

DATES: Written, telefaxed, or email comments must be received on or before April 7, 2016.

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. 18978 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. 18978 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: Brendan Hurley 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.*), and the regulations governing the taking, importing, and exporting of endangered and threatened species (50 CFR 222-226).

The applicant proposes to measure contaminant levels in subsistence-hunted Arctic marine mammals to determine marine mammal exposure to polybrominated diphenyl ethers and perfluorinated compounds. The proposed research will contribute to information about the levels of emerging contaminants in marine mammals. Researchers will work with Yupik households and local hunters to obtain samples from a maximum of 8 animals per year from minke whale (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*); ringed seal (*Pusa hispida*); bearded seal (*Erignathus barbatus*); and ribbon seal (*Histiophoca fasciata*). A maximum of 9 animals per year are requested from bowhead whale (*Balaena mysticetus*) and spotted seal (*Phoca largha*). Samples would include organs, meat, rendered oils, and blubber. No non-target species will be affected. Samples will come from animals subsistence hunted on St Lawrence Island, AK. The requested permit period is five 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.