

Oscillation and its continued relevance as an indicator in the ESR. This review of science topics may potentially inform future annual reports to the Pacific Council on the state of the California Current Ecosystem. The SSC ES meeting is open to the public. A detailed meeting agenda will be available on the Pacific Council's website prior to the meeting.

Although non-emergency issues not contained in the meeting agenda may be discussed, those issues may not be the subject of formal action during this meeting. Action will be restricted to those issues specifically listed in this document and any issues arising after publication of this document 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 intent to take final action to address the emergency.

Special Accommodations

Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Mr. Kris Kleinschmidt (kris.kleinschmidt@pcouncil.org, (503) 820-2412) at least 10 days prior to the meeting date.

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

Dated: September 15, 2025.

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-XF174]

Taking and Importing Marine Mammals; Taking Marine Mammals Incidental to Geophysical Surveys Related to Oil and Gas Activities in the Gulf of America (formerly Gulf of Mexico)

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

ACTION: Notice; issuance of letter of authorization.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), as amended, its implementing regulations, and NMFS' MMPA regulations for taking marine mammals incidental to geophysical surveys related to oil and gas activities in the Gulf of America (GOA), originally

published as "Taking Marine Mammals Incidental to Geophysical Surveys Related to Oil and Gas Activities in the Gulf of Mexico," notification is hereby given that a Letter of Authorization (LOA) has been issued to Echo Offshore LLC (Echo) for the take of marine mammals incidental to geophysical survey activity in the GOA.

DATES: The LOA is effective from September 15, 2025 through April 19, 2026.

ADDRESSES: The LOA, LOA request, and supporting documentation are available online at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/action/incidental-take-authorization-oil-and-gas-industry-geophysical-survey-activity-gulf-america>. In case of problems accessing these documents, please call the contact listed below (see **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jenna Harlacher, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, (301) 427-8401.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Sections 101(a)(5)(A) and (D) of the MMPA (16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*) direct the Secretary of Commerce 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 issued or, if the taking is limited to harassment, a notice of a proposed authorization is provided to the public for review.

An authorization for incidental takings shall be granted if NMFS finds that the taking will have a negligible impact on the species or stock(s), will not have an unmitigable adverse impact on the availability of the species or stock(s) for subsistence uses (where relevant), and if the permissible methods of taking and requirements pertaining to the mitigation, monitoring and reporting of such takings are set forth. NMFS has defined "negligible impact" in 50 CFR 216.103 as an impact resulting from the specified activity that cannot be reasonably expected to, and is not reasonably likely to, adversely affect the species or stock through effects on annual rates of recruitment or survival.

Except with respect to certain activities not pertinent here, the MMPA defines "harassment" as: any act of pursuit, torment, or annoyance which (i) has the potential to injure a marine mammal or marine mammal stock in the wild (Level A harassment); or (ii) has the potential to disturb a marine

mammal or marine mammal stock in the wild by causing disruption of behavioral patterns, including, but not limited to, migration, breathing, nursing, breeding, feeding, or sheltering (Level B harassment).

On January 19, 2021, we issued a final rule with regulations to govern the unintentional taking of marine mammals incidental to geophysical survey activities conducted by oil and gas industry operators, and those persons authorized to conduct activities on their behalf (collectively "industry operators"), in U.S. waters of the GOA¹ over the course of 5 years (86 FR 5322, January 19, 2021). The rule was based on our findings that the total taking from the specified activities over the 5-year period will have a negligible impact on the affected species or stock(s) of marine mammals and will not have an unmitigable adverse impact on the availability of those species or stocks for subsistence uses, and became effective on April 19, 2021.

The regulations at 50 CFR 217.180 *et seq.* allow for the issuance of LOAs to industry operators for the incidental take of marine mammals during geophysical survey activities and prescribe the permissible methods of taking and other means of effecting the least practicable adverse impact on marine mammal species or stocks and their habitat (often referred to as mitigation), as well as requirements pertaining to the monitoring and reporting of such taking. Under 50 CFR 217.186(e), issuance of an LOA shall be based on a determination that the level of taking will be consistent with the findings made for the total taking allowable under these regulations and a determination that the amount of take authorized under the LOA is of no more than small numbers.

NMFS subsequently discovered that the 2021 rule was based on erroneous take estimates. We conducted another rulemaking using correct take estimates and other newly available and pertinent information relevant to the analyses supporting some of the findings in the 2021 final rule and the taking allowable under the regulations. We issued a final rule in April 2024, effective May 24, 2024 (89 FR 31488, April 24, 2024).

The 2024 final rule made no changes to the specified activities or the specified geographical region in which

¹ Pursuant to Executive Order 14172, "Restoring Names That Honor American Greatness," and Department of the Interior Secretarial Order 3423, "The Gulf of America," the body of water formerly known as the Gulf of Mexico is now called the Gulf of America. Accordingly, NMFS amended the incidental take regulations to reflect the change. See 90 FR 38001 (August 7, 2025).

those activities would be conducted, nor to the original 5-year period of effectiveness. In consideration of the new information, the 2024 rule presented new analyses supporting affirmance of the negligible impact determinations for all species, and affirmed that the existing regulations, which contain mitigation, monitoring, and reporting requirements, are consistent with the “least practicable adverse impact” standard of the MMPA.

Summary of Request and Analysis

Echo plans to conduct a two-dimensional (2D) high-resolution seismic survey in lease block VR178 in the Vermillion area, with water depths ranging from approximately 29.3–29.9 meters (m). See section F of the LOA application for a map of the area. Echo plans to use a single, 20-cubic inch (in³) (327.7 cubic centimeter (cm³) airgun, in addition to three other high-resolution geophysical (HRG) acoustic sources. Please see the LOA application for additional detail.

Consistent with the preamble to the final rule, the survey effort proposed by Echo in its LOA request was used to develop LOA-specific take estimates based on the acoustic exposure modeling results described in the preamble (89 FR 31488, April 24, 2024). In order to generate the appropriate take number for authorization, the following information was considered: (1) survey

type; (2) location (by modeling zone ²); (3) number of days; (4) source; and (5) month.³ The acoustic exposure modeling performed in support of the rule provides 24-hour exposure estimates for each species, specific to each modeled source and survey type in each zone and month.

Exposure modeling results were generated using the single airgun proxy. Because those results assume use of a 90-in³ (1,474.8 cm³) airgun, the take numbers authorized through this LOA are considered conservative (*i.e.*, they likely overestimate take) due to differences in the sound source planned for use by Echo, as compared to those modeled for the rule.

The survey will take place over approximately 1.5 days with 1 day of sound source operation in Zone 2. The monthly distribution of survey days is not known in advance. Take estimates for each species are based on the month that produces the greatest value.

Based on the results of our analysis, NMFS has determined that the level of taking expected for this survey and authorized through the LOA is consistent with the findings made for the total taking allowable under the regulations. See table 1 in this notice and table 6 of the rule (89 FR 31488, April 24, 2024).

Small Numbers Determination

Under the rule, NMFS may not authorize incidental take of marine

mammals in an LOA if it will exceed “small numbers.” In short, when an acceptable estimate of the individual marine mammals taken is available, if the estimated number of individual animals taken is up to, but not greater than, one-third of the best available abundance estimate, NMFS will determine that the numbers of marine mammals taken of a species or stock are small (see 89 FR 31535, May 24, 2024). For more information please see NMFS’ discussion of small numbers in the 2021 final rule (86 FR 5438, January 19, 2021).

The take numbers for authorization, determined as described above in the Summary of Request and Analysis section, are used by NMFS in making the necessary small numbers determinations, through comparison with the best available abundance estimates (see discussion at 86 FR 5322, 5391, January 19, 2021). For this comparison, NMFS’ approach is to use the maximum theoretical population, determined through review of current stock assessment reports (SAR; <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/marine-mammal-protection/marine-mammal-stock-assessments>) and model-predicted abundance information (<https://seamap.env.duke.edu/models/Duke/GOM/>). Information supporting the small numbers determinations is provided in table 1.

TABLE 1—TAKE ANALYSIS

| Species | Authorized take ¹ | Abundance ² | Percent abundance |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| Rice’s whale | 0 | 51 | n/a |
| Sperm whale | 0 | 2,451 | n/a |
| <i>Kogia</i> spp. | 0 | 1,385 | n/a |
| Beaked whales | 0 | 1,038 | n/a |
| Rough-toothed dolphin | ³ 14 | 4,853 | 0.3 |
| Bottlenose dolphin | 31 | 166,538 | 0.0 |
| Clymene dolphin | 0 | 6,136 | n/a |
| Atlantic spotted dolphin | ⁴ 26 | 21,506 | 0.1 |
| Pantropical spotted dolphin | 0 | 50,209 | n/a |
| Spinner dolphin | 0 | 2,991 | n/a |
| Striped dolphin | 0 | 16,102 | n/a |
| Fraser’s dolphin | 0 | 1,665 | n/a |
| Risso’s dolphin | 0 | 1,974 | n/a |
| Blackfish ⁵ | 0 | 9,535 | n/a |
| Short-finned pilot whale | 0 | 3,277 | n/a |

¹ Scalar ratios were not applied in this case due to brief survey duration.

² Best abundance estimate. For most taxa, the best abundance estimate for purposes of comparison with take estimates is considered here to be the model-predicted abundance (Garrison *et al.*, 2023). For Rice’s whale, Atlantic spotted dolphin, spinner dolphin, and Risso’s dolphin, the estimated SAR abundance estimate is used.

³ Modeled take of 1 increased to account for potential encounter with a group of average size (Maze-Foley and Mullin, 2006)

⁴ Modeled take of 7 increased to account for potential encounter with a group of average size (Maze-Foley and Mullin, 2006)

⁵ The “blackfish” guild includes melon-headed whales, false killer whales, pygmy killer whales, and killer whales.

² For purposes of acoustic exposure modeling, the GOA was divided into seven zones. Zone 1 is not included in the geographic scope of the rule.

³ Acoustic propagation modeling was performed for two seasons: Winter (December–March) and Summer (April–November). Marine mammal

density data is generally available on a monthly basis, and therefore further refines take estimates temporally.

Based on the analysis contained herein of Echo's proposed survey activity described in its LOA application and the anticipated take of marine mammals, NMFS finds that small numbers of marine mammals will be taken relative to the affected species or stock sizes (*i.e.*, less than one-third of the best available abundance estimate) and therefore the taking is of no more than small numbers.

Authorization

NMFS has determined that the level of taking for this LOA request is consistent with the findings made for the total taking allowable under the incidental take regulations and that the amount of take authorized under the LOA is of no more than small numbers. Accordingly, we have issued an LOA to Echo authorizing the take of marine mammals incidental to its geophysical survey activity, as described above.

Dated: September 15, 2025.

Kimberly Damon-Randall,

*Director, Office of Protected Resources,
National Marine Fisheries Service.*

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Agency Information Collection Activities; Submission to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for Review and Approval; Comment Request; West Coast Groundfish Trawl Logbook

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

ACTION: Notice of information collection, request for comment.

SUMMARY: The Department of Commerce will submit the following information collection request to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for review and clearance in accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, on or after the date of publication of this notice. We invite the general public and other Federal agencies to comment on proposed and continuing information collections, which helps us assess the impact of our information collection requirements and minimize the public's reporting burden. Public comments were previously requested via the **Federal Register** on March 31, 2025 (90 FR 14252), during a 60-day comment period. This notice allows for

an additional 30 days for public comments.

DATES: To ensure consideration, comments regarding this proposed information collection must be received on or before October 20, 2025.

ADDRESSES: Interested persons are invited to submit written comments to Adrienne Thomas, NOAA PRA Officer, at NOAA.PRA@noaa.gov. Please reference OMB Control Number 0648-0782 in the subject line of your comments. Do not submit Confidential Business Information or otherwise sensitive or protected information.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Requests for additional information or specific questions related to collection activities should be directed to Keeley Kent, National Marine Fisheries Service, 7600 Sand Point Way NE, Bldg. 1, Seattle, WA 98115-6349, by phone at (206) 526-4655 or by email at Keeley.Kent@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Abstract

This request is for a revision and extension of a current information collection.

The success of fisheries management programs depends significantly on the availability of fishery data. As part of this fishery data, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) requires groundfish fishermen in the trawl and non-trawl fisheries to complete a logbook (see 50 CFR 660.13). The logbook used is a standard format developed by the Pacific Fishery Management Council to collect information necessary to effectively manage the fishery on a coast-wide basis. The logbook collects haul or set-level effort data including time, location, gear type, target strategy, and estimated pounds of fish caught per set. Each logbook entry represents a single fishing trip.

NMFS contracts with the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC) to distribute and collect the logbook data. These data are used regularly by NMFS, the Council, the West Coast Groundfish Observer Program, NMFS Office of Law Enforcement, and the Coast Guard for fisheries management and enforcement.

Previously, the trawl logbook and non-trawl logbook information collections were separate, this revision would merge the non-trawl logbook information collection from 0648-0804 into the trawl logbook information collection. OMB Control Number 0648-0804 be discontinued upon approval of the revision to 0648-0782.

II. Method of Collection

The non-trawl logbook is a fully electronic collection utilizing an application operated by PSMFC. The trawl logbook has both paper and electronic options, both administered by PSMFC.

III. Data

OMB Control Number: 0648-0782.

Form Number(s): None.

Type of Review: Regular Submission (revision and extension of a currently approved collection).

Affected Public: Business or other for-profit organizations.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 338.

Estimated Time per Response: 0.5 hour for non-trawl form and 8 hours for trawl form.

Estimated Total Annual Burden Hours: 4,552 hours.

Estimated Total Annual Cost to Public: \$792.

Respondent's Obligation: Mandatory.

Legal Authority: The regulations at § 660.13(a) specify reporting requirements for trawl and non-trawl logbooks.

IV. Request for Comments

This information collection request may be viewed at www.reginfo.gov. Follow the instructions to view the Department of Commerce collections currently under review by OMB.

Written comments and recommendations for the proposed information collection should be submitted within 30 days of the publication of this notice on the following website www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAMain. Find this particular information collection by selecting "Currently under 30-day Review—Open for Public Comments" or by using the search function and entering either the title of the collection or the OMB Control Number 0648-0782.

Sheleen Dumas,

Departmental PRA Compliance Officer, Office of the Under Secretary for Economic Affairs, Commerce Department.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648-XF186]

Marine Mammals; File No. 29090

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and