

information collection must be received on or before July 6, 2026.

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 0648–0566 in the subject line of your comments. All comments received are part of the public record and will generally be posted on <https://www.regulations.gov> without change. 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 Louis Forristall, Fishery Management Specialist, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, 1201 NE Lloyd Blvd. #1100, Portland, OR 97232, (503) 230–5410, and louis.forristall@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Abstract

This is a request for renewal of an approved information collection. This collection is necessary under the regulations implementing the Coastal Pelagic Species (CPS) Fishery Management Plan (FMP) at 50 CFR 660.520.

On May 30, 2007, NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) published a final rule (72 FR 29891) implementing a requirement under the CPS FMP to report any interactions that may occur between a CPS vessel and/or fishing gear and sea otters. In accordance with the regulations implementing the Endangered Species Act (ESA), NMFS initiated an ESA section 7 consultation with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) regarding the effects of implementing the final rule (72 FR 29891), which codified Amendment 11 to the CPS FMP. USFWS determined that formal consultation was necessary on the possible effects to the threatened southern sea otter. USFWS completed a biological opinion for this action and although it was concluded that fishing activities were not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the southern sea otter, that there remained the potential to incidentally take southern sea otters. USFWS determined that certain measures should be put in place to ensure the continued protection of the species, including certain reporting requirements.

Specifically, these reporting requirements are:

(1) If a southern sea otter is entangled in a net, regardless of whether the animal is injured or killed, the vessel operator must report this interaction within 24 hours to the Regional Administrator.

(2) While fishing for CPS, vessel operators must record all observations of otter interactions (defined as otters within encircled nets or coming into contact with nets or vessels, including but not limited to entanglement) with their purse seine net(s) or vessel(s). With the exception of an entanglement, which must be initially reported as described in paragraph (1) of this section, all other observations must be reported within 20 days to the Regional Administrator.

(3) When contacting NMFS after an interaction, vessel operators must provide the location (latitude and longitude) of the interaction and a description of the interaction itself. If available, location information should also include water depth, distance from shore, and relation to port or other landmarks. Descriptive information of the interaction should include: whether or not the otters were seen inside or outside the net; if inside the net, had the net been completely encircled; whether any otters came in contact with either the net or the vessel; the number of otters present; duration of interaction; the otter's behavior during interaction; measures taken to avoid interaction.

II. Method of Collection

The information will be collected by mail to the Regional Administrator, as defined under 50 CFR 660.

III. Data

OMB Control Number: 0648–0566.

Form Number(s): None.

Type of Review: Regular submission (extension of a current information collection).

Affected Public: Business or other for-profit organizations.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 2.

Estimated Time per Response: 15 minutes.

Estimated Total Annual Burden Hours: 0.5 hours.

Estimated Total Annual Cost to Public: \$10 reporting costs.

Respondent's Obligation: Mandatory.

Legal Authority: 50 CFR 660.520(a).

IV. Request for Comments

We are soliciting public comments to permit the Department/Bureau to: (a) Evaluate whether the proposed information collection is necessary for the proper functions of the Department, including whether the information will have practical utility; (b) Evaluate the

accuracy of our estimate of the time and cost burden for this proposed collection, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used; (c) Evaluate ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) Minimize the reporting burden on those who are to respond, including the use of automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

Comments that you submit in response to this notice are a matter of public record. We will include or summarize each comment in our request to OMB to approve this information collection request. Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you may ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Sheleen Dumas,

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

[FR Doc. 2026–09091 Filed 5–6–26; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–22–P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648–XF162]

Endangered and Threatened Species; File No. 27490

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

ACTION: Notice; issuance of permit.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth School for Marine Science and Technology (SMASST) has been issued a permit for the incidental take of Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed sea turtles and sturgeon associated with the otherwise lawful fisheries survey activities.

ADDRESSES: The incidental take permit, final Environmental Assessment, and other related documents are available on the NMFS Office of Protected Resources website at <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/endangered-species-conservation/incidental-take-permits>

under the section heading Related Documents for the Incidental Take Permit to the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth School for Marine Science and Technology (Sea Turtles and Sturgeon).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Celeste Stout, NMFS, Office of Protected Resources at Celeste.stout@noaa.gov, 301-427-8436.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Section 9 of the ESA and Federal regulations prohibit the ‘taking’ of a species listed as endangered or threatened. The ESA defines “take” to mean harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or to attempt to engage in any such conduct. NMFS may issue permits, under limited circumstances, to take listed species incidental to, and not the purpose of, otherwise lawful activities. Section 10(a)(1)(B) of the ESA provides a mechanism for authorizing incidental take of listed species. NMFS regulations governing permits for threatened and endangered species are located at 50 CFR 222.307.

Species Covered in This Permit

The following species are included in this permit:

Endangered

Kemp’s ridley (*Lepidochelys kempii*) and leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*) sea turtles, and the New York Bight, Chesapeake, Carolina, and South Atlantic distinct population segments (DPSs) of Atlantic sturgeon (*Acipenser oxyrinchus oxyrinchus*).

Threatened

North Atlantic DPSs of green (*Chelonia mydas*) and Northwest

Atlantic Ocean DPS of loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*) sea turtles, and the Gulf of Maine DPS of Atlantic sturgeon (*Acipenser oxyrinchus oxyrinchus*).

Background

NMFS received a draft permit application and conservation plan from SMAST on September 29, 2022. Based on our review of the draft application, we requested further information and clarification. After several draft submissions and reviews, on June 13, 2023, SMAST submitted a revised application and NMFS determined SMAST’s application to be adequate and complete. On July 6, 2023, we published a notice of receipt (88 FR 43082) of the application and conservation plan from SMAST for an incidental take permit. In that notice, we made the Incidental Take Permit (ITP) application and associated conservation plan available for a 30-day public comment period. Two requests to extend the comment period were submitted on August 7, 2023, the last day of the open comment period. In response to the extension requests, on August 16, 2023, NMFS published a notice in the **Federal Register** (88 FR 55668) reopening the comment period for 15 days. The second public comment period ended on August 31, 2023, and three comments were received. The comments received and their accompanying responses are located in Appendix A of the Environmental Assessment (EA). In response to public comments and after additional discussions between NMFS and the applicant, additional revisions were made to the application and conservation plan to address these

comments, as appropriate, and a revised application was submitted to NMFS for review on November 30, 2023. The application and conservation plan were further revised to remove a project from the “covered activities,” and an updated version was submitted to NMFS on December 3, 2024. Revisions applicable to the SMAST’s proposed action and conservation plan were included in the draft EA. On January 8, 2025, NMFS published a **Federal Register** notice to inform the public of the availability of and request for comments on the draft EA (90 FR 1448). The public comment period ended on February 7, 2025, and no comments were received. Revisions applicable to SMAST’s proposed action and conservation plan are included in the Final EA. SMAST agreed to implement additional monitoring and avoidance measures, and NMFS updated the EA, as well as the findings of the section 7 Biological Opinion, to incorporate those measures.

NMFS has issued the requested incidental take permit under the authority of the ESA, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*) and the section 10 implementing regulations (50 CFR part 222).

Incidental take by species in rolling 2-year (ITP year) intervals for the 10-year ITP duration that are authorized under the permit were based on calculated interaction rates using observed takes in similar fisheries surveys (*i.e.*, Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) trawl surveys), and sea turtle takes were further informed by observed sea turtle takes in commercial fisheries (please see section 2.2.2.2, Requested number of incidental takes in the final EA) see table 1 below.

TABLE 1—AUTHORIZED NON-LETHAL INCIDENTAL TAKE BY SPECIES

Species	Authorized 2-year rolling take	Maximum authorized take for 10-year ITP duration
Atlantic Sturgeon (Gulf of Maine, Carolina, Chesapeake Bay, New York Bight, South Atlantic DPSs)	10	50
Green (North Atlantic DPS)	2	10
Kemp’s Ridley	2	10
Leatherback	2	10
Loggerhead (Northwest Atlantic Ocean DPS)	2	10

Incidental take of Atlantic sturgeon is allocated based on their respective DPS. Below, we describe the approximate assignment of DPS from the estimated Atlantic sturgeon take across the 10 years of the requested ITP, based on proportions provided in Kazyk *et al.* (2021) for the geographic area “MID Offshore.” The approximate assignment

by DPS from the estimated Atlantic sturgeon takes for the 2-year intervals across the 10 years of the ITP are indicated in table 2 below. Take of Atlantic sturgeon will affect five DPSs, at a rate of up to 55.3 percent of the New York Bight DPS, 22.9 percent of the Chesapeake Bay DPS, 13.6 percent of the South Atlantic DPS, 5.8 percent of

the Carolina DPS, and 2.4 percent of the Gulf of Maine DPS. Due to uncertainty about the exact proportion of each DPS in the offshore waters of the MA/RI WEA, the estimated breakdown may not perfectly represent the actual proportion of each DPS. This expected variation is influenced by natural seasonal and annual fluctuations in the proportions

of each DPS. Therefore, it is not possible to precisely estimate the exact number of individual takes and proportion of each DPS to be taken.

TABLE 2—ANTICIPATED ASSIGNMENT OF DPS IN SMAST TRAWL SURVEY DERIVED FROM NEFSC TRAWL SURVEYS ¹

Atlantic Sturgeon Disp.	Maximum authorized take for 10-year ITP duration	New York Bight DPS (55.3%)	Chesapeake DPS (22.9%)	South Atlantic DPS (13.6%)	Carolina DPS (5.8%)	Gulf of Maine DPS (2.4%)
Live	50	10	10	10	10	10

¹ DPS percentages listed are the percentage values representing the genetics mixed stock analysis results above (Kazyak *et al.*, 2021). Rounding up fractions of animals to a whole number, this results in one Atlantic sturgeon captured per year from each DPS.

Conservation Plan

As part of their conservation plan, SMAST will implement measures to monitor, minimize, and mitigate take of ESA-listed species. These measures include the use of trained observers aboard the research vessel, adherence to safe handling and release procedures for captured ESA-listed species, and commitment to data collection and reporting protocols for any ESA-listed species observed or taken during covered activities (please see Section 4.2 Measures to minimize, mitigate and monitor protected species in the SMAST conservation plan and 2.2.2.1 Monitoring, Minimization, and Mitigation of Potential Interactions and Impacts of Interactions in the EA).

SMAST assures that funds will be available to conduct the proposed work and associated monitoring, minimization, and mitigation strategies. The estimated cost for implementing the conservation plan is \$100,000. The associated project developer provides funding for the surveys and the implementation of the conservation plan to SMAST. SMAST has committed to ensuring the availability of funding to process all genetic samples acquired from Atlantic sturgeon and has committed to having trained observers on board the vessel with proper training in handling protocols for protected species.

Criteria for Issuing an Incidental Take Permit

Issuance criteria are described in ESA section 10(a)(2)(B) and associated implementing regulations (50 CFR 222.307(c)(2)). Under section 10(a)(2)(B) of the ESA, NMFS shall issue the requested incidental take permit, if NMFS finds that the following criteria are met:

- (i) The taking will be incidental;
- (ii) The applicant will, to the maximum extent practicable, monitor, minimize, and mitigate the impacts of such taking;
- (iii) The taking will not appreciably reduce the likelihood of the survival and recovery of the species in the wild;

(iv) The applicant has amended the conservation plan to include any measures (not originally proposed by the applicant) that the Assistant Administrator determines are necessary or appropriate; and

(v) There are adequate assurances that the conservation plan will be funded and implemented, including any measures required by the Assistant Administrator.

NMFS found that SMAST met the criteria for the issuance of an incidental take permit, and as such, NMFS issued an incidental take permit to SMAST for the incidental take of ESA-listed sea turtles and sturgeon associated with the otherwise lawful fisheries survey activities within and adjacent to the MA/RI WEA in southern New England offshore waters.

Dated: May 5, 2026.

Kimberly Damon-Randall,

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

[FR Doc. 2026-09076 Filed 5-6-26; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648-XF436]

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

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

ACTION: Notice; issuance of Letters 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), notification is hereby given that NMFS has issued six separate Letters of Authorization (LOAs) to WesternGeco, LLC (WesternGeco), TGS, Future Energy Consultants (FEC), bp Exploration & Production Inc. (bp), Viridien, and LLOG Exploration Offshore, L.L.C. (LLOG), for the take of marine mammals incidental to geophysical survey activity in the GOA.

DATES: The LOA issued to WesternGeco is effective from April 20, 2026, through August 31, 2026. The LOA issued to TGS is effective from April 20, 2026, through May 31, 2026. The LOA issued to FEC is effective from June 1, 2026, through December 31, 2026. The LOA issued to bp is effective from May 1, 2026, through August 31, 2026. The LOA issued to Viridien is effective from June 1, 2026, through May 31, 2027. The LOA issued to LLOG is effective from June 1, 2026, through April 19, 2031.

ADDRESSES: The LOAs, LOA requests, and supporting documentation are available online at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/action/incidental-take-authorization-oil-and-gas-industry-geophysical-survey>. 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