

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; NOAA Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program

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

ACTION: Notice of information collection, request for comment.

SUMMARY: The Department of Commerce, in accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (PRA), invites 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. The purpose of this notice is to allow for 60 days of public comment preceding submission of the information collection request to OMB for review and approval.

DATES: To ensure consideration, comments regarding this proposed information collection must be received on or before November 3, 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 0648–0432 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 Seaberry Nachbar, NOAA Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program Manager, NOAA, 99 Pacific Street, Monterey, CA 93940, 831–647–4204, Seaberry.Nachbar@noaa.gov

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Abstract

This is a request for extension of an existing information collection.

NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries administers the Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program, authorized by 16 U.S.C. 1445c–1 and 16 U.S.C. 1445c, which recognizes outstanding achievement in master's and doctoral

degrees in oceanography, marine biology, or maritime archaeology—this can include but is not limited to ocean and/or coastal: engineering, social science, marine education, marine stewardship, or resource management disciplines. The scholarship supports independent graduate level research through financial support of graduate degrees in such fields. Gender and minority status are not considered when selecting award recipients. Scholarships are distributed by disciplines, institutions, and geography, and by degree sought, with selections within distributions based on financial need, the potential for success in a graduate level studies program (academic achievement), and the potential for achieving research and career goals. Data collection in the form of a pre-application, full application, letters of recommendation, grade point average documents, research outline, a letter of financial need statement, and a declaration statement are all required to apply for the scholarship. Applicants submit this information through *Grants.gov* system. This information is used for the review and selection of the individuals who will receive scholarship funds.

Selected awardees will also be requested to prepare a biographical sketch and photograph for NOAA's scholarship web page. Awardees are requested to prepare annual progress reports and participate in one exit interview.

II. Method of Collection

Information for the application is collected through an application submission, either electronically through the *Grants.gov* platform or if the internet is not available, applicants may submit applications via mail. Information from selected awardees is collected orally.

III. Data

OMB Control Number: 0648–0432.

Form Number(s): None.

Type of Review: Regular (extension of an approved collection).

Affected Public: Individuals.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 190 (pre-application), 50 (full application).

Estimated Time per Response: Pre-application: 3 hours; Application and transcripts: 5 hours; Letters of recommendation: 45 minutes; Biographical sketch and photograph of awardees: 1 hour; Annual progress reports: 2 hours; Exit interview: 15 minutes.

Estimated Total Annual Burden Hours: 570 burden hours for pre-application; 450 hours full application. Estimated Total Annual Cost to Public: \$0.

Respondent's Obligation: Voluntary.

Legal Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1445c–1 and 16 U.S.C. 1445c.

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 ICR. 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. 2026–18178 Filed 9–3–26; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–NK–P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648–XG015]

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 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), notification is hereby given that NMFS has modified the Letter of Authorization (LOA) issued to Future Energy Consultants (FEC) for the take of marine mammals incidental to geophysical survey activity in the GOA.

DATES: The LOA is effective through June 30, 2027.

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-mexico>. In case of problems accessing these documents, please call the contact listed below.

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).

On August 28, 2025, NMFS Office of Protected Resources received a request from NMFS Office of Policy for reimplementation of the current Incidental Take Regulation (ITR) to avoid a lapse in ITRs offering incidental take coverage for GOA geophysical survey activities. On October 20, 2025, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (the original petitioner for the current ITRs) submitted a request to be included in the process as a co-petitioner. In response to these requests, NMFS issued a new final rule, effective April 20, 2026, through April 19, 2031 (91 FR 20784, April 17, 2026).

The reimplementation of the regulations continues the established framework for authorization of incidental take through LOAs. The final rule made no changes to the specified activities or the specified geographical region in which those activities would be conducted, and there are no changes to the associated mitigation, monitoring, and reporting requirements.

NMFS issued a LOA to FEC on May 1, 2026, for the take of marine mammals incidental to a FloatSeis seismic field trial survey in the lease block LA5A, effective June 1, 2026, through December 31, 2026. Please see the **Federal Register** notice of issuance (91 FR 24809, May 7, 2026) for additional details regarding the LOA and the survey activity.

On August 3, 2026, FEC informed NMFS that the survey had a delayed start. Accordingly, they requested that the December 31, 2026, expiration date be extended to June 30, 2027, due to the delay. There are no other changes to the survey area or plan, which includes 5 days of sound source operation in zone 2. Since the survey timing now involves months for which take was not previously assessed, we have updated FEC's take estimates based on the revised schedule. The monthly distribution of survey days is not known in advance, though we assume that the planned 5 days of source operation would occur contiguously. Take estimates for each species are based on the period 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 modified LOA is consistent with the findings made for the total taking allowable under the regulations. See table 1 in this notice and table 7 of the rule (91 FR 20784, April 17, 2026).

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).

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 (91 FR 20784, April 17, 2026). For more information, please see NMFS’ discussion of small numbers in the 2026 final rule (91 FR 20784, April 17, 2026). The take numbers for authorization are determined as described above and in the **Federal Register** notice of issuance for the original LOA (91 FR 24809, May 7, 2026), are used by NMFS in making the necessary small numbers determinations, through comparison with the best available abundance estimates (see discussion at 91 FR 20784, 20812, April 17, 2026). For this

comparison, NMFS’ approach is to use the maximum theoretical population, determined through review of current Stock Assessment Reports (SARs; <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/marine-mammal-protection/marine-mammal-stock-assessments>) and model-predicted abundance information (<https://seamap.env.duke.edu/models/SEFSC/GOM>). Information supporting the small numbers determinations is provided in table 1.

TABLE 1—TAKE ANALYSIS ¹

Species	Authorized take	Abundance ²	Percent abundance
Rice’s whale	0	51	n/a
Sperm whale	0	2,451	n/a
Kogia spp	0	1,385	n/a
Beaked whales	0	1,038	n/a
Rough-toothed dolphin	14	4,853	0.3
Bottlenose dolphin	1,961	166,538	1.2
Clymene dolphin	0	6,136	n/a
Atlantic spotted dolphin	109	21,506	0.5
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 ³	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 The “blackfish” guild includes melon-headed whales, false killer whales, pygmy killer whales, and killer whales.

Based on the analysis contained herein of FEC’s proposed survey activity described in its LOA application, as subsequently modified by FEC, 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 modification 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 a modification to the LOA to FEC authorizing the take of marine mammals incidental to its geophysical survey activity, as described above.

Dated: September 1, 2026.
Kimberly Damon-Randall,
Director, Office of Protected Resources,
National Marine Fisheries Service.
[FR Doc. 2026–18142 Filed 9–3–26; 8:45 am]
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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; Reporting Requirements for the Ocean Salmon Fishery Off the Coasts of Washington, Oregon, and California

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 June 22, 2026, during a 60-day comment period. This notice allows for an additional 30 days for public comments.
Agency: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.
Title: Reporting Requirements for the Ocean Salmon Fishery Off the Coasts of Washington, Oregon, and California.
OMB Control Number: 0648–0433.
Form Number(s): None.
Type of Request: Regular submission (extension of a current information collection).
Number of Respondents: 40.
Average Hours per Response: 15 minutes.
Total Annual Burden Hours: 10 hours.
Needs and Uses: This is a request for an extension of a currently approved information collection. Ocean salmon