

on July 29, 2015 (80 FR 45197). Permit 19400 was issued to ICF consulting on December 23, 2015 and expires on December 31, 2020.

Permit 19400 authorizes ICF consulting to take juvenile CVSR Chinook salmon and SRWR Chinook salmon while conducting a study to investigate if longfin smelt in San Pablo Bay shift their vertical distribution under different environmental and biological conditions. Although this study principally targets longfin smelt, ESA listed Chinook salmon will be encountered during sampling. ICF will collect data that will be useful to local researchers on captured and/or photographed listed Chinook salmon, including abundance, length, and potentially tissue samples. Fish will be sampled using a midwater trawl, however the majority of tows will be conducted with only a video device (*i.e.*, SmeltCam) acting as the codend. Therefore, the majority of take will be observe/harass. The fish camera image program will be able to determine the length, and thereby an estimate of the race/run/listing status, of salmon that pass through the net. In order to verify the results of the SmeltCam, some tows will be conducted with both the video device and a traditional codend. Physically captured juvenile salmonids will be placed in a bucket with aerated water, handled (*i.e.*, measured to fork length and possibly fin tissue sampled for genetic analysis), and released. The researchers are not proposing to kill any of the fish they capture.

Dated: January 12, 2016.

Perry F. Gayaldo,

Deputy Director, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.
[FR Doc. 2016-00747 Filed 1-14-16; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XE394

Endangered and Threatened Species; Status Update on Preparation of Record of Decision, Mitchell Act Hatcheries Environmental Impact Statement

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

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) released its final Environmental Impact Statement

(EIS) to Inform Columbia River Basin Hatchery Operations and the Funding of Mitchell Act Hatchery Programs in September 2014 (also known as the Mitchell Act Hatchery EIS). This notice serves as an update on preparation of the agency's record of decision (ROD).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: James Dixon, (360) 534-9329 or email: james.dixon@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On September 3, 2004 (69 FR 53892), NMFS announced its intent to prepare an EIS pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*) and to conduct public scoping related to the allocation and distribution of Mitchell Act funds for Columbia River hatchery operations. Subsequently, in 2009, NMFS announced its decision to expand the scope of the EIS to include analysis of the environmental effects of all hatchery programs in the Columbia River Basin, regardless of the hatchery funding source, in a way that would inform future NMFS decisions about Endangered Species Act compliances for all Columbia River hatchery programs (74 FR 10724, March 12, 2009). A draft EIS was published in August 2010 (75 FR 47591, August 6, 2010). The final EIS was published in September 2014 (79 FR 54707, September 12, 2014) with a public review period through November 12, 2014.

NMFS has been preparing its ROD through careful consideration of a range of comments received during public review of the final EIS. NMFS is also considering the anticipated effects of its preferred policy direction on species listed under the Endangered Species Act. It is anticipated that the ROD will be published in 2016.

Dated: January 12, 2016.

Perry F. Gayaldo,

Deputy Director, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.
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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XE348

Endangered Species; File No. 17225

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 NMFS Northeast Fisheries Science Center [Responsible Party: William Karp], 166 Water Street, Woods Hole, MA 02543, has applied in due form for a permit to take Atlantic sturgeon (*Acipenser oxyrinchus oxyrinchus*), loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*), Kemp's ridley (*Lepidochelys kempi*), green (*Chelonia mydas*), hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) and leatherback (*Dermochelys coraicea*) sea turtles for purposes of scientific research.

DATES: Written, telefaxed, or email comments must be received on or before February 16, 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. 17225 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. 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: Malcolm Mohead or Amy Hapeman, (301) 427-8401.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The subject permit is requested under the authority of 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 parts 222-226).

The applicant requests a five-year permit to conduct research on sea turtles and Atlantic sturgeon in the U.S. Atlantic exclusive economic zone from Massachusetts to Georgia. The purpose of the research is to evaluate bycatch reduction devices for commercial fishing gear to mitigate sea turtle and

sturgeon interactions under two projects: Project A (Northern region) and Project B (Southern region). For Project A, up to 223 Atlantic sturgeon, 51 loggerhead, six Kemp's ridley, six green, and six leatherback sea turtles could be targeted for research sampling over the course of the permit that have been legally bycaught in a Federal commercial fishery. For Project B, researchers would capture by experimental or control trawls or gillnets up to 204 Atlantic sturgeon, 148 loggerhead, 62 Kemp's ridley, 10 green, eight leatherback and eight hawksbill sea turtles over the course of the permit. All animals would be measured, weighed, tissue sampled, passive integrated transponder (PIT) and/or flipper tagged, and photographed before release. In addition, up to six sea turtles (any species) and six Atlantic sturgeon may accidentally die or be harmed as a result of research activities over the life of the permit.

Dated: December 22, 2015.

Julia Harrison,

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

[FR Doc. 2016-00724 Filed 1-14-16; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XE395

Notice of Intent To Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for Hatchery Programs Along the Oregon Coast

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

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement; request for comments.

SUMMARY: Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), this notice announces that NMFS intends to obtain information necessary to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Hatchery and Genetic Management Plans (HGMPs) submitted by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) for NMFS's evaluation and determination under Limit 5 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) 4(d) Rule for threatened salmon and steelhead. The HGMPs specify the propagation of salmon, steelhead, and trout released in rivers, streams, and lakes throughout the Oregon Coast region.

NMFS provides this notice to: (1) Advise other agencies and the public of its plans to analyze effects related to the action, and (2) obtain suggestions and information that may be useful to the scope of issues and alternatives to include in the EIS. This notice further serves to notify the public of the availability of the HGMPs for comment prior to a decision by NMFS on whether to approve the proposed hatchery programs.

DATES: Written or electronic scoping comments must be received at the appropriate address or email mailbox (see **ADDRESSES**) no later than 5 p.m. Pacific Time February 16, 2016.

ADDRESSES: Written comments may be sent by any of the following methods:

- Email to the following address:

OregonCoastHatcheryEIS.wcr@noaa.gov with the following identifier in the subject line: Oregon Coast Hatchery EIS.

- Mail or hand-deliver to NMFS Sustainable Fisheries Division, 2900 NW Stewart Parkway, Roseburg, OR 97471.

- Fax to (541) 957-3386.

Comments received will be available for public inspection, by appointment, during normal business hours at the above address. All Personal Identifying Information (for example, name, address, etc.) voluntarily submitted by the commenter may be publicly accessible. Do not submit Confidential Business Information or otherwise sensitive or protected information.

Additional information to assist with consideration of the notice of intent, as well as the HGMPs themselves, is available on the Internet at www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Lance Kruczic, NMFS, by phone at (541) 957-3381, or email to lance.kruczic@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

ESA-Listed Species Covered in This Notice

Coho salmon (*O. kisutch*): Threatened, naturally-produced and specified artificially-produced stocks in the Southern Oregon/Northern California Coast and Oregon Coast Evolutionarily Significant Units (ESUs).

Background

The ODFW has submitted HGMPs for all hatchery programs along the Oregon Coast to NMFS, pursuant to Limit 5 of the 4(d) Rule for salmon and steelhead promulgated under the ESA (65 FR 42422, July 10, 2000). Before a decision is made by NMFS on these HGMPs, NEPA requires Federal agencies to

conduct environmental analyses of proposed actions to fully consider their effects on the human environment. NMFS's action of evaluating ODFW's HGMPs under Limit 5 of the 4(d) Rule is a major Federal action subject to environmental review under NEPA. Therefore, NMFS is seeking public input on the scope of the required NEPA analysis, including the range of reasonable alternatives, recommendations for relevant analysis methods, and information associated with impacts of the alternatives to the resources listed below or other relevant resources.

The hatchery facilities to be considered in the analysis are Cole Rivers Hatchery, Indian Hatchery, Elk Hatchery, Bandon Hatchery, Rock Hatchery (Umpqua River), Alsea Hatchery, Salmon Hatchery, Cedar Hatchery, Trask Hatchery, Nehalem Hatchery, and associated satellite facilities. Hatchery fish are released into the following waterbodies: Chetco, Rogue, Elk, Coquille, Coos Umpqua, Siuslaw, Alsea, Yaquina, Siletz, Salmon, Nestucca, Trask, Wilson, and Nehalem Rivers, Tenmile Creek, and various coastal lakes. A list of all of the hatchery programs, including links to the HGMPs themselves, is available on the Internet (see **ADDRESSES**).

NMFS will perform an environmental review of the Oregon Coast HGMPs (and associated hatchery facilities) and prepare an EIS that will evaluate potentially significant direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts on the following resources identified to have a potential for effect from the proposed action:

- Water quantity and water quality
- Fish and wildlife species and their habitats
- Socioeconomics
- Environmental Justice
- Cumulative impacts

NMFS will rigorously explore and objectively evaluate a full range of reasonable alternatives in the EIS, including the proposed action (implementation of ODFW's HGMPs) and a no-action alternative. Additional alternatives could include a reduction in artificial production and/or elimination of the hatchery programs along the Oregon Coast.

For all potentially significant impacts, the EIS will identify measures to avoid, minimize, and mitigate the impacts, where feasible, to a level below significance.

Request for Comments

NMFS provides this notice to: (1) Advise other agencies and the public of