

trajectories, efforts to ensure minimum negligible impacts of Delta II launches on harbor seals and other pinnipeds are proposed for inclusion in the Incidental Harassment Authorization. These proposals include:

1. Avoidance whenever possible of launches during the harbor seal pupping season of February through May; and

2. Preference for night launches during the period of the year when harbor seals are hauled out in any numbers along the coast of North Vandenberg.

#### Monitoring

NMFS proposes that the holder of the Incidental Harassment Authorization would monitor the impact of Delta II launches on the harbor seal haulouts in the vicinity of Spur Road and Purisima Point. The applicant proposes to conduct at least 3 sets of seal abundance and behavioral observations with the first no more than 7 days prior to the launch and the final set as soon as practicable after the launch. Video monitoring of daylight launches would also be required. A report on this monitoring program would be required to be submitted prior to next year's authorization request, unless the monitoring indicated that serious injuries or mortalities had occurred that might relate to the launching. In this case, the authorization would require immediate notification of this fact to the Southwest Regional Director, NMFS.

#### Conclusions

The short-term impact of the launching of Delta II rockets is expected to result at worst, in a temporary reduction in utilization of the haulout as seals or sea lions leave the beach for the safety of the water. Launchings are not expected to result in any reduction in the number of pinnipeds, and they are expected to continue to occupy the same area. In addition, there will not be any impact on the habitat itself. Based upon studies conducted for previous space vehicle launches at Vandenberg, significant long-term impacts on pinnipeds at Vandenberg and the northern Channel Islands are unlikely.

#### Proposed Authorization

NMFS proposes to issue an incidental harassment authorization for 1 year for launches of the Delta II rocket at SLC-2W, provided the above-mentioned monitoring and reporting requirements are incorporated. NMFS has preliminarily determined that the proposed launches of the Delta II at SLC-2W would result in the harassment taking of only small numbers of harbor seals and possibly other pinniped

species, will have a negligible impact on pinniped stocks in the SCB and will not have an unmitigable adverse impact on the availability of these stocks for subsistence uses.

#### Information Solicited

NMFS requests interested persons to submit comments, information, and suggestions concerning this request (see **ADDRESSES**).

Dated: August 23, 1996.

Rennie S. Holt,

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

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[I.D. 082096E]

#### North Pacific Fishery Management Council; Committee Meetings

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

**ACTION:** Notice of public meetings.

**SUMMARY:** The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) and its advisory bodies will hold public meetings.

**ADDRESSES:** Sitka Centennial Building, 330 Harbor Drive, Sitka, AK 99835.

*Council address:* North Pacific Fishery Management Council, 605 W. 4th Ave., Suite 306, Anchorage, AK 99501-2252.

**DATES:** The meetings will be held during the week of September 16, 1996. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for specific dates and times.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Council staff, Phone: 907-271-2809.

#### **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

Committee meetings scheduled include the Ecosystems Committee and the Enforcement Committee. Other committee and workgroup meetings may be held on short notice during the week; notices will be posted at the meeting site. All meetings are open to the public with the exception of Council executive sessions to discuss personnel, international issues, and litigation. An executive session is tentatively scheduled for noon on September 19, 1996. The Advisory Panel (AP) and the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) will begin on September 16, 1996, at 8:00 a.m. The SSC will conclude their meeting on September 18, 1996, and the AP will conclude their meeting by September 19, 1996. The Council will begin their meeting on September 18, 1996, at 8:00 a.m. and conclude on September 22, 1996. The Enforcement

Committee and the Ecosystems Committee are both scheduled for 7:00 p.m. on September 18, 1996. The agenda for the meetings will include the following subjects:

1. Reports from the National Marine Fisheries Service and Alaska Department of Fish and Game on the current status of the fisheries off Alaska, reports on enforcement, the Bering Sea ecosystem, and the results from the socio-economic studies report on the sablefish and halibut individual fisheries quota program.

2. Report and recommendations from an industry committee on crab caps and closures in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands (BSAI) and final action on Tanner crab prohibited species caps (PSC).

3. Final action on measures to improve retention and utilization in the groundfish fisheries off Alaska.

4. Status report on modified pay-as-you-go observer program and initial review of a regulatory amendment to require additional observer coverage on shore plants and motherships during the pollock "A" season.

5. Under groundfish management, the following subjects will be discussed and appropriate action taken:

- (a) Review of BSAI and Gulf of Alaska (GOA) Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation reports for the 1997 groundfish fisheries and approval for public review.

- (b) Approve preliminary harvest and bycatch specifications for 1997 groundfish fisheries in the BSAI and GOA, including discard mortality rates for halibut and Vessel Incentive Program rate standards.

- (c) Initial review of an amendment to remove dusky rockfish from the GOA pelagic shelf rockfish complex.

- (d) Final action on revised directed fishing standards for turbot, Pacific cod and pollock in the arrowtooth fisheries and northern rockfish in the shorttraker/rougheye fisheries and proposed electronic reporting requirements.

- (e) Initial review of amendments to ban night trawling for Pacific cod in the BSAI, to prohibit a directed fishery on forage fish, and to reduce percentage allowances for accounting for slime and ice on fish.

- (f) Review of a proposed rule for seamount restrictions.

6. Under staff tasking the Council will review proposals received for amendments to the BSAI and GOA Groundfish Fishery Management Plans and for amendments to the Sablefish and Halibut IFQ Program and give direction to staff for further analysis. The IFQ proposals will be forwarded to the Industry IFQ Implementation Team

for review and comment prior to tasking staff with analyses.

#### Special Accommodations

These meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Helen Allen, 907-271-2809, at least 5 working days prior to the meeting date.

Dated: August 21, 1996.

Richard H. Schaefer,

*Director, Office of Fisheries Conservation and Management, National Marine Fisheries Service.*

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[I.D. 082096F]

#### Western Pacific Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

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

**ACTION:** Notice of public meeting.

**SUMMARY:** The Western Pacific Fishery Management Council will hold a meeting of its Bottomfish Task Force.

**DATES:** The meeting will be held on September 24, 1996, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

**ADDRESSES:** The meeting will be held at the Executive Center, 1088 Bishop St., Room 4003, Honolulu, HI; telephone: (808) 539-3000.

*Council address:* Western Pacific Fishery Management Council, 1164 Bishop St., Suite 1405, Honolulu, HI 96813.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Kitty M. Simonds, Executive Director; telephone: (808) 522-8220.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The task force will hold its third meeting to discuss and formulate limited entry alternatives for the Mau Zone bottomfish fishery in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands and consider other business as required.

#### Special Accommodations

This meeting is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Kitty M. Simonds, (808) 522-8220 (voice) or (808) 522-8226 (fax), at least 5 days prior to meeting date.

Dated: August 21, 1996.

Richard H. Schaefer,

*Director, Office of Fisheries Conservation and Management, National Marine Fisheries Service.*

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#### West Coast Salmon Fisheries; Northwest Emergency Assistance Plan (NEAP)—License Buy Out Program (LBOP)

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

**ACTION:** Notice of proposed program; request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** This notice requests public comment on new bidding options for the 1996 Washington State Salmon Vessel License Buy Out Program (LBOP) to be administered by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) through a cooperative agreement with NMFS. The objectives of the program are to provide financial assistance to commercial salmon fishermen adversely impacted by the salmon fishery disaster, and to aid the long-term viability of the fishery resource. This notice also responds to comments submitted on the notice of proposed 1996 LBOP, which was published in the Federal Register on April 23, 1996 (61 FR 17879). In that notice, NMFS announced certain administrative changes to the NEAP and requested comments on proposed NEAP revisions for the Habitat Restoration Program and the Data Collection Jobs Program, as well as the LBOP. On August 1, 1996, NMFS published a Federal Register notice (61 FR 40197) implementing the final program for the Habitat Restoration Jobs Program and Data Collection Jobs Program, and also announced that final decisions on the administration of the 1996 LBOP will be deferred until the public is provided with notice and an opportunity to comment on new bidding options developed as a result of comments received on the initial notice.

**DATES:** Written comments must be received on or before September 27, 1996.

**ADDRESSES:** Comments should be sent to Stephen P. Freese, Northwest Emergency Assistance Plan, Trade and Industry Services Division, Northwest Regional Office, National Marine

Fisheries Service, BIN C15700, 7600 Sand Point Way NE, Seattle, WA 98115.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Stephen Freese, (206) 526-6113.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** On August 2, 1995, the Secretary of Commerce (Secretary) declared that a fishery resource disaster continued in 1995 for the salmon fisheries of the Pacific States of California (north of San Francisco), Oregon, and Washington, excluding Puget Sound. Under the authority of the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act (IFA) of 1986 (16 U.S.C. 4107(d)), as amended, an additional \$12.7 million in Federal financial assistance was made available for affected salmon fishermen.

In the April 23, 1996, Federal Register notice (61 FR 17879), NMFS announced its decision to continue the basic structure of the Habitat Restoration Jobs Program and the Data Collection Jobs Program, as first established on October 11, 1994 (59 FR 51419), with subsequent amendments published on January 31, 1995 (60 FR 3908), and June 22, 1995 (60 FR 32507). NMFS decided to modify certain limitations, terms, and conditions of the NEAP programs to enable more fishermen to benefit from the assistance available from the jobs programs and to further reduce fishing capacity under the LBOP. The public was asked in the notice to comment on these new terms, limitations, and conditions prior to final implementation.

With respect to the 1996 LBOP, four options were presented for public comment, as follows:

*Option 1*—Eligible fishermen submit new bids or maintain the bids that they submitted to the 1995 LBOP. Starting with the lowest offers, licenses are accepted and retired by WDFW until available funding is exhausted.

*Option 2*—Starting with the lowest unsuccessful 1995 LBOP offer, WDFW would purchase licenses until available funding is exhausted.

*Option 3*—Unsuccessful bidders in the 1995 LBOP are offered set fixed prices for each license: Salmon troll and delivery—\$24,894, Salmon gill net—\$38,000, and Salmon charter—\$21,300. Remaining funds would be applied to new applications starting with the lowest offer.

*Option 4*—Applicants submit bids and uninsured loss estimates. Starting with the lowest ratio of bid to uninsured loss, WDFW would purchase licenses until available funding is exhausted.

In response to the April 23, 1996, notice of proposed program, NMFS received 27 comment letters from 10 fishing associations, 14 fishermen, 1 tribe, and 2 government entities. Most of