

NMFS, P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802-1668; phone (907)586-7235; fax (907)586-7012; and

File 821-1588: Assistant Regional Administrator for Protected Resources, Southeast Region, NMFS, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701, phone (727)824-5312; fax (727)824-5309. Written comments or requests for a public hearing on these applications should be mailed to the Chief, Permits, Conservation and Education Division, F/PR1, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13705, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Those individuals requesting a hearing should set forth the specific reasons why a hearing on these particular requests would be appropriate.

Comments may also be submitted by facsimile at (301)427-2521, provided the facsimile is confirmed by hard copy submitted by mail and postmarked no later than the closing date of the comment period.

Comments may also be submitted by e-mail. The mailbox address for providing email comments is NMFS.Pr1Comments@noaa.gov. Include in the subject line of the e-mail comment the following document identifier: File No. 358-1787 or 821-1588.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Ruth Johnson or Tammy Adams (301)713-2289.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The subject permit and permit amendment are requested under the authority of the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, as amended (MMPA; 16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*), the Regulations Governing the Taking and Importing of Marine Mammals (50 CFR part 216), and the Fur Seal Act of 1966, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1151 *et seq.*).

Permit Application

File No. 358-1787: The ADF&G has requested a permit to conduct scientific research on harbor seals (*Phoca vitulina*), spotted seals (*P. largha*), ringed seals (*P. hispida*), ribbon seals (*P. fasciata*) and bearded seals (*Erignathus barbatus*). The seals would be captured, handled, sampled, tagged and released. The overall objective is to describe the ecology and behavior of these seal species. Harbor seals are the primary species to be studied to: monitor harbor seal population trends in Alaska, describe the movements, diving behavior, and haulout patterns; determine feeding habits and prey requirements; assess health status and physiology; and examine life history parameters. The applicant requests authority for incidental mortality of five

harbor seals and one each of the ice seals annually. Seals would be incidentally harassed during capture activities and fecal collection.

Permit Amendment

Permit No. 821-1588-02 authorizes the Holder to capture, sample, handle, and tag Weddell seals (*Leptonychotes weddelli*) on McMurdo Sound, Antarctica, and elephant seals (*Mirounga angustirostris*) on Ano Nuevo Island, California. The Permit also authorizes the Holder to approach, photograph, biopsy sample, and tag sperm whales (*Physeter macrocephalus*), conduct Level B harassment activities on small cetaceans in the Gulf of Mexico, and import/export marine mammal parts.

The Holder now requests to amend the permit to allow capture, sampling, handling and tagging of Northern fur seals (*Callorhinus ursinus*) on the Pribilof Islands, Alaska. The objective of this study is to characterize the movements, foraging behavior and habitat-associations of northern fur seal pups during their first winter at sea. Concurrent with the publication of this notice in the **Federal Register**, NMFS is forwarding copies of this application to the Marine Mammal Commission and its Committee of Scientific Advisors.

Dated: June 16, 2005.

Stephen L. Leathery,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 051005C]

Marine Mammals; Files No. 369-1757-00 and 522-1785-00

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

ACTION: Issuance of permits.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that Bruce R. Mate, Ph.D., Holder/Principal Investigator, Oregon State University, Hatfield Marine Science Center, 2030 SE Marine Science Drive, Newport, OR 97365, and Randall S. Wells, Ph.D., Sarasota Dolphin Research Program, c/o Mote Marine Laboratory, 1600 Ken Thompson Parkway, Sarasota, FL 34236, have each been issued a permit to take marine mammals for scientific research.

ADDRESSES: The permit and related documents are available for review upon written request or by appointment (See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for addresses).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Ruth Johnson or Carrie Hubbard, (301)713-2289 or email: ruth.johnson@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On August 3, 2004 (69 FR 46521) and March 21, 2005 (70 FR 13481), notice was published in the **Federal Register** that a request for a scientific research permit to take marine mammals had been submitted by the above-named individuals. The requested permits have been issued under the authority of the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*), the Regulations Governing the Taking and Importing of Marine Mammals (50 CFR part 216), 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).

Permit 369-1757-00 authorizes the Holder to approach and harass during tagging/biopsy sampling activities, up to 25 of the following species per stock not to exceed 50 of each species within a year: humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*), blue whales (*Balaenoptera musculus*), fin whales (*Balaenoptera physalus*), gray whales (*Eschrichtius robustus*), southern right whales (*Eubalaena australis*), bowhead whales (*Balaena mysticetus*), and sperm whales (*Physeter macrocephalus*) in U.S. and foreign waters of the North Atlantic (including Gulf of Mexico), North Pacific (including Hawaii), Arctic and Indian Oceans, Beaufort, Bering and Chukchi Seas, and international waters of the Mediterranean Sea annually for five years. Up to 200 of each species may be incidentally harassed annually. Some whales will be tagged twice. After tagging, whales will be approached for photo-identification, behavioral observation and assessment of possible tag effects. North Pacific right whales and North Atlantic right whales are not authorized in this permit. The permit also authorizes opportunistic tagging of up to 100 killer whales (*Orcinus orca*) over a five-year period not to exceed 20 in a single year. Southern resident killer whales are not authorized in this permit. Additionally, the permit allows non-invasive Level B harassment (photo-identification and behavioral observation) of other non-target non-listed marine mammal species encountered during tagging activities, and import/export of biopsy specimens

and baleen from beach-cast whales. These samples may be imported/exported on a worldwide basis.

Permit 522-1785-00 authorizes the Holder to capture 120 individual bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) and examine, sample, mark, tag and release in the shallow coastal waters of central west Florida and photo-id and biopsy sample of 500 dolphins over a five-year period. Observational studies of population structure, population dynamics, life history, social structure, genetic structure including paternity patterns, and human interactions are being conducted. In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), an environmental assessment was prepared analyzing the effects of the permitted activities. After a Finding of No Significant Impact, the determination was made that it was not necessary to prepare an environmental impact statement.

Issuance of this permit, as required by the ESA, was based on a finding that such permit: (1) was applied for in good faith; (2) will not operate to the disadvantage of such endangered species; and (3) is consistent with the purposes and policies set forth in section 2 of the ESA.

Documents are available and may be reviewed in the following locations:

All permits: Permits, Conservation and Education Division, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13705, Silver Spring, MD 20910; phone (301)713-2289; fax (301)427-2521;

File 369-1757-00: Northwest Region, NMFS, 7600 Sand Point Way NE, BIN C15700, Bldg. 1, Seattle, WA 98115-0700; phone (206)526-6150; fax (206)526-6426;

File 369-1757-00: Alaska Region, NMFS, P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802-1668; phone (907)586-7221; fax (907)586-7249;

File 369-1757-00: Southwest Region, NMFS, 501 West Ocean Blvd., Suite 4200, Long Beach, CA 90802-4213; phone (562)980-4001; fax (562)980-4018;

File 369-1757-00: Pacific Islands Regional Office, NMFS, 2570 Dole Street, Room 106, Honolulu, HI 96822-2396; phone (808)943-1221; fax (808)943-1240;

File 369-1757-00: Northeast Region, NMFS, One Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930-2298; phone (508)281-9250; fax (508)281-9371; and

File 369-1757-00 and 522-1785-00: Southeast Region, NMFS, 9721 Executive Center Drive North, St.

Petersburg, FL 33702-2432; phone (727)570-5301; fax (727)570-5300.

Dated: May 30, 2005.

Stephen L. Leathery,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 060105A]

Notice of Availability of Draft Stock Assessment Reports

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

ACTION: Notice of availability; request for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS reviewed the Alaska, Atlantic, and Pacific regional marine mammal stock assessment reports (SARs) in accordance with the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA). SARs for marine mammals in the Alaska, Atlantic, and Pacific regions were revised according to new information. NMFS solicits public comments on draft 2005 SARs.

DATES: Comments must be received by September 26, 2005.

ADDRESSES: Send comments or requests for copies of reports to: Chief, Marine Mammal Conservation Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910-3226, Attn: Stock Assessments. Comments may also be sent via facsimile (fax) to 301-427-2580 or via email to mmsar.2005@noaa.gov.

Copies of the Pacific Regional SARs may be requested from Cathy Campbell, Southwest Regional Office, NMFS, 501 West Ocean Boulevard, Long Beach, CA 90802-4213.

Copies of the Alaska Regional SARs may be requested from Robyn Angliss, Alaska Fisheries Science Center, NMFS, 7600 Sand Point Way, NE BIN 15700, Seattle, WA 98115-0070.

Copies of the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Regional SARs may be requested from Gordon Waring, Northeast Fisheries Science Center, 166 Water St., Woods Hole, MA 02543.

Copies of the Pacific Regional SARs may be requested from Cathy Campbell, Southwest Regional Office, NMFS, 501 West Ocean Boulevard, Long Beach, CA 90802-4213.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Tom Eagle, Office of Protected Resources, 301-713-2322, ext. 105, e-mail Tom.Eagle@noaa.gov; Robyn Angliss 206-526-4032, e-mail Robyn.Angliss@noaa.gov, regarding Alaska regional stock assessments; Gordon Waring, 508-495-2311, e-mail Gordon.Waring@noaa.gov, regarding Atlantic regional stock assessments; or Cathy Campbell, 562-280-4060, e-mail Cathy.E.Campbell@noaa.gov, regarding Pacific regional stock assessments.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Electronic Access

The 2005 draft stock assessment reports are available in electronic form via the Internet at http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/PR2/Stock_Assessment_Program/sars.html.

Background

Section 117 of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) (16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*) requires NMFS and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) to prepare stock assessments for each stock of marine mammals occurring in waters under the jurisdiction of the United States. These reports must contain information regarding the distribution and abundance of the stock, population growth rates and trends, estimates of annual human-caused mortality and serious injury from all sources, descriptions of the fisheries with which the stock interacts, and the status of the stock. Initial reports were completed in 1995.

The MMPA requires NMFS and FWS to review the SARs at least annually for strategic stocks and stocks for which significant new information is available, and at least once every 3 years for non-strategic stocks. NMFS and the FWS are required to revise a SAR if the status of the stock has changed or can be more accurately determined. NMFS, in conjunction with the Alaska, Atlantic, and Pacific Scientific Review Groups (SRGs), reviewed the status of marine mammal stocks as required and revised reports in the Alaska, Atlantic, and Pacific regions to incorporate new information. NMFS solicits public comments on the draft 2005 SARs.

SARs for marine mammal stocks in the Alaska and Atlantic regions were updated to include all new information that has become available since the 2003 reports were completed. In the Alaska region, reports for 27 stocks were revised, and nine were not changed. For the Atlantic region, 43 revised reports are available, and 12 SARs were not revised. Reports in the Pacific region were updated with information