

have implemented the Southeast Data, Assessment and Review (SEDAR) process for determining the status of fish stocks in the Southeast Region. SEDAR is a three-step process including: (1) Data Workshop, (2) Assessment Process including a workshop and webinars, and (3) Review Workshop. The product of the Data Workshop is a data report which compiles and evaluates potential datasets and recommends which datasets are appropriate for assessment analyses. The product of the Assessment Process is a stock assessment report which describes the fisheries, evaluates the status of the stock, estimates biological benchmarks, projects future population conditions, and recommends research and monitoring needs. The assessment is independently peer reviewed at the Review Workshop. The product of the Review Workshop is a Summary documenting Panel opinions regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the stock assessment and input data. Participants for SEDAR Workshops are appointed by the Councils having jurisdiction over the stocks assessed, NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office, HMS Management Division, and NOAA Southeast Fisheries Science Center. Participants include data collectors and database managers; stock assessment scientists, biologists, and researchers; constituency representatives including fishermen, environmentalists, and NGO's; International experts; and staff of Councils, Commissions, and state and federal agencies.

SEDAR (Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review) 28 addressed assessments of Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Spanish mackerel and Cobia. During the stock assessment process, Assessment Workshop Panelists determined that assessments of the Gulf stocks of cobia and Spanish mackerel were not complete by the deadline for consideration at the SEDAR 28 Review Workshop. Therefore, the SEDAR Steering Committee modified the approach for these assessments and requested that the Center for Independent Experts (CIE) provide formal written reviews of these stocks conducted by 3 independent experts. The findings of the 3 independent reviewers will be considered by a panel of Gulf Council SSC representatives, which will develop recommendations for consideration by the Gulf Council SSC. The Desk reviews for these species will be provided to the Gulf Council SSC Review Panel approximately one month prior to the workshop.

### **Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council Review Workshop for Spanish Mackerel and Cobia**

Panelists will review modeling methodologies and results for the Gulf of Mexico Spanish Mackerel and Cobia fisheries.

#### **Special Accommodations**

This meeting is accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for auxiliary aids should be directed to the Council office (see **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**) at least 10 business days prior to the meeting.

Dated: March 5, 2013.

**Tracey L. Thompson,**

*Acting Deputy Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.*

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## **DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

### **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

**RIN 0648-XC541**

#### **Marine Mammals; File No. 17411**

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

**ACTION:** Notice; receipt of application.

**SUMMARY:** Notice is hereby given that Dr. Jennifer Burns, University of Alaska Anchorage, Biology Department, Anchorage, AK, has applied in due form for a permit to conduct research on marine mammals in Antarctica.

**DATES:** Written, telefaxed, or email comments must be received on or before April 8, 2013.

**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. 17411 from the list of available applications.

These documents are also available upon written request or by appointment in the following offices:

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; and

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

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](mailto:NMFS.Pr1Comments@noaa.gov). Please include File No. 17411 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:**

Tammy Adams or Amy Sloan, (301)427-8401.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The subject permit is requested under the authority of the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, as amended (MMPA; 16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*), and the regulations governing the taking and importing of marine mammals (50 CFR part 216).

The applicant requests a five-year permit to study three questions: (1) What intrinsic or extrinsic factors determine molt phenology in Weddell seals?; (2) How does late season condition and molt status influence current pregnancy and future parturition rates?; and (3) To what extent might changes in food availability during the austral summer impact molt timing and future reproductive success? To achieve project goals, 24 adult female Weddell seals (*Leptonychotes weddellii*) of known-age and known-reproductive history in the Erebus Bay, Antarctica region will be captured annually for health assessments during reproductive and molt periods each year, to include blood samples, muscle/blubber/skin biopsies, morphometric measurements, and attachment of VHF/TDR/GPS tags. The Weddell seal population will be surveyed for molt status and demographic models: up to 1800 animals of both sexes and any age may be harassed annually during multiple surveys. Up to 10 crabeater seals (*Lobodon carcinophagus*) may be harassed annually during surveys. The applicant also requests unintentional mortality for up to 3 adult female Weddell seals annually, and euthanasia of 1 Weddell seal pup per year.

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), an initial determination has been made that the activity proposed is categorically excluded from the requirement to

prepare an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement.

Concurrent with the publication of this notice in the **Federal Register**, NMFS is forwarding copies of the application to the Marine Mammal Commission and its Committee of Scientific Advisors.

Dated: March 5, 2013.

**P. Michael Payne,**

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

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XC496

#### Takes of Marine Mammals Incidental to Specified Activities; Russian River Estuary Management Activities

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

**ACTION:** Notice; proposed incidental harassment authorization; request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS has received an application from the Sonoma County Water Agency (SCWA) for an Incidental Harassment Authorization (IHA) to take marine mammals incidental to Russian River estuary management activities. Pursuant to the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), NMFS is requesting comments on its proposal to issue an IHA to SCWA to take, by Level B Harassment only, several species of marine mammals during the specified activity.

**DATES:** Comments and information must be received no later than April 8, 2013.

**ADDRESSES:** Comments on the application should be addressed to Michael Payne, Chief, Permits and Conservation Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910. The mailbox address for providing email comments is [ITP.Laws@noaa.gov](mailto:ITP.Laws@noaa.gov). NMFS is not responsible for email comments sent to addresses other than the one provided here. Comments sent via email, including all attachments, must not exceed a 10-megabyte file size.

**Instructions:** All comments received are a part of the public record. All Personal Identifying Information (e.g., name, address) voluntarily submitted by

the commenter may be publicly accessible. Do not submit Confidential Business Information or otherwise sensitive or protected information.

A copy of the application as well as a list of the references used in this document may be obtained by writing to the address specified above, telephoning the contact listed below (see **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**), or visiting the internet at: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/permits/incidental.htm>. Supplemental documents provided by SCWA may be found at the same web address, as can NMFS' Environmental Assessment (2010) and associated Finding of No Significant Impact, prepared pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act. Documents cited in this notice may also be viewed, by appointment only, at the aforementioned physical address.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Ben Laws, 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 published in the **Federal Register** to provide public notice and initiate a 30-day comment period.

Authorization for incidental taking 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, other means of effecting the least practicable impact on the species or stock and its habitat, 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."

Section 101(a)(5)(D) of the MMPA established an expedited process by which citizens of the United States can apply for an authorization to incidentally take small numbers of

marine mammals by Level B harassment as defined below. Section 101(a)(5)(D) establishes a 45-day time limit for NMFS review of an application followed by a 30-day public notice and comment period on any proposed authorizations for the incidental harassment of marine mammals. Within 45 days of the close of the comment period, NMFS must either issue or deny the authorization and publish notice in the **Federal Register** of issuance or denial within 30 days. If authorized, an IHA may be effective for a maximum of one year from date of issuance.

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]."

#### Summary of Request

We received an application on January 17, 2013 from SCWA requesting issuance of an IHA for the taking, by Level B harassment only, of marine mammals incidental to activities conducted in management of the Russian River estuary in Sonoma County, California. This would be the fourth such IHA, if issued. SCWA was first issued an IHA, valid for a period of one year, on April 1, 2010 (75 FR 17382), and was subsequently issued IHAs for incidental take associated with the same activities on April 21, 2011 (76 FR 23306) and April 17, 2012 (77 FR 24471). The proposed activities include management of a naturally-formed barrier beach at the mouth of the river in order to minimize potential for flooding adjacent to the Russian River estuary and enhance habitat for juvenile salmonids, and biological and physical monitoring of the estuary. Flood control-related breaching of barrier beach at the mouth of the river may include artificial breaches, as well as construction and maintenance of a lagoon outlet channel. The latter activity, an alternative management technique conducted to mitigate impacts of flood control on rearing habitat for Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed salmonids, occurs only from May 15 through October 15 (hereafter, the "lagoon management period"). Species known from the haul-out at the mouth of the Russian River or from peripheral haul-outs, and