

Level of Taking for 2015 Authorizations Period

For the 2015 to 2016 Authorization period, the Navy expects to conduct the same type and amount of routine training, testing, and military operations of SURTASS LFA sonar in the northwest Pacific Ocean and the north-central Pacific Ocean that they requested under the 2012, 2013, and 2014 Authorizations. Similarly, the Navy expects to remain within the annual take estimates analyzed in the Final Rule. We determined that the level of taking by incidental harassment from the activities described in the Authorizations and supporting application is consistent with the findings made for the total taking allowable under the 2012 Final Rule.

Compliance with Mitigation, Monitoring, and Reporting Measures

Based on our review of the Navy's quarterly mission reports, the Navy complied with the required visual, passive, and acoustic monitoring measures in the Final Rule and 2014 Authorizations. The Navy also followed the required shutdown and other protocols for mitigating impacts to marine mammals while conducting operations.

The Navy is also complying with required measures under 50 CFR 218.236(d) to gain and share information on the species. The Navy reports that they are continuing to work on information transfer, declassification and archiving of ambient noise data from the Navy's Integrated Undersea Surveillance System to the public.

Based on the foregoing information and the Navy's application, we determined that the mitigation, monitoring, and reporting measures required under 50 CFR 218.234, .235, and .236 and NMFS' 2014–2015 Authorizations were undertaken and will be undertaken during the period of validity of the renewed 2015–2016 Authorizations.

Adaptive Management

The Final Rule and 2014 Authorizations include an adaptive management framework that allows us to consider new information and to determine (with input from the Navy regarding practicability) if modifications to mitigation and/or monitoring measures are appropriate and practicable. This framework includes a requirement for an annual meeting between NMFS and the Navy, if either agency deems it necessary.

Section 218.241 of the Final Rule describes three scenarios that could

contribute to the decision to modify the mitigation or monitoring measures, including: (a) Results from the Navy's monitoring from the previous year's operation of SURTASS LFA sonar; (b) compiled results of Navy-funded research and development studies; (c) results from specific stranding investigations; (d) results from general marine mammal and sound research funded by the Navy or other sponsors; and (e) any information that reveals marine mammals may have been taken in a manner, extent or number not anticipated by these regulations or subsequent Authorizations. None of the information reviewed by NMFS or the Navy resulted in any modifications to the existing mitigation or monitoring measures at this time.

Consideration of Areas as Potential OBIA's

On December 4, 2014, April 16, 2015, and June 18, 2015, we and the Navy convened Adaptive Management meetings to review and discuss several topics, including: The Navy's mitigation monitoring results; the Navy's efforts in declassifying and transferring marine mammal monitoring data; consideration of possible additional Offshore Biologically Important Areas (OBIA's) under the criteria specified in the Final Rule; and consideration of new information that could potentially inform decisions regarding modifying existing mitigation and/or monitoring measures. Representatives from the U.S. Marine Mammal Commission were also in attendance and participated in December 2014 and April 2015 meetings.

NMFS and the Navy continue to evaluate information relating to areas for potential consideration as OBIA's. All of these areas fall outside the areas in which the Navy may operate under the 2015 Authorizations. None of these areas is located within the Navy's mission areas for the 2015 Authorizations and the Navy will not operate SURTASS LFA sonar in these areas within the timeframes of the 2015–2016 Authorizations. Throughout the effective period of the Final Rule, we will continue consider and discuss with the Navy any relevant new information as it arises related to areas that may qualify as potential OBIA's or any other mitigation for SURTASS LFA sonar.

Authorization

We have issued four Authorizations to the Navy, authorizing the incidental harassment of marine mammals, incidental to operating the four SURTASS LFA sonar systems for

routine training, testing and use during military operations. Issuance of these four Authorizations is based on findings, described in the preamble to the final rule (77 FR 50290, August 20, 2012) and supported by information contained in the Navy's required reports on SURTASS LFA sonar and their application, that the activities described under these four Authorizations will have a negligible impact on marine mammal species or stocks and will not have an unmitigable adverse impact on their availability for taking for subsistence uses.

These Authorizations remain valid through August 14, 2016, provided the Navy remains in conformance with the conditions of the regulations and the LOAs, and the mitigation, monitoring, and reporting requirements described in 50 CFR 218.230 through 218.241 (77 FR 50290, August 20, 2012) and in the Authorizations are undertaken.

Dated: August 6, 2015.

Donna S. Wieting,

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

[FR Doc. 2015–19769 Filed 8–11–15; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–22–P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648–XE090

New England Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

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

ACTION: Notice; public meeting.

SUMMARY: The New England Fishery Management Council (Council) is scheduling a public meeting of its Scientific & Statistical Committee to consider actions affecting New England fisheries in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ). Recommendations from this group will be brought to the full Council for formal consideration and action, if appropriate.

DATES: This meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 1, 2015, beginning at 9 a.m.

ADDRESSES:

Meeting address: The meeting will be held at the Hilton Garden Inn, Boston Logan, 100 Boardman Street, Boston, MA 02128; phone: (617) 567–6789.

Council address: New England Fishery Management Council, 50 Water Street, Mill 2, Newburyport, MA 01950.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Thomas A. Nies, Executive Director, New England Fishery Management Council; telephone: (978) 465-0492.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Agenda Items

The Committee will meet to review recent stock assessment information from the U.S./Canada Transboundary Resource Assessment Committee and information provided by the Council's Groundfish Plan Development Team (PDT) and recommend the overfishing level (OFL) and acceptable biological catch (ABC) for Georges Bank yellowtail flounder for the 2016 fishing year. They will also review information provided by the Council's Skate PDT and recommend the OFL and ABC for the northeast skate complex for fishing years 2016-18 and address other business as necessary.

Although non-emergency issues not contained in this agenda may come before this group for discussion, those issues may not be the subject of formal action during this meeting. Action will be restricted to those issues specifically listed in this notice and any issues arising after publication of this notice that require emergency action under section 305(c) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, provided the public has been notified of the Council's intent to take final action to address the emergency.

Special Accommodations

This meeting is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Thomas A. Nies, Executive Director, at (978) 465-0492, at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: August 7, 2015.

Tracey L. Thompson,

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

[FR Doc. 2015-19804 Filed 8-11-15; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XE089

New England Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

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

ACTION: Notice; public meeting.

SUMMARY: The New England Fishery Management Council (Council) is scheduling a public meeting of its Risk Policy Working Group to consider actions affecting New England fisheries in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ). Recommendations from this group will be brought to the full Council for formal consideration and action, if appropriate.

DATES: This meeting will be held on Thursday, August 27, 2015 at 10 a.m.

ADDRESSES:

Meeting address: The meeting will be held at the Holiday Inn By the Bay, 88 Spring Street, Portland, ME 04101; Telephone: (207) 775-2311; Fax: (207) 772-4017.

Council address: New England Fishery Management Council, 50 Water Street, Mill 2, Newburyport, MA 01950.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Thomas A. Nies, Executive Director, New England Fishery Management Council; telephone: (978) 465-0492.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Agenda items:

The panel will continue the development of a Risk Policy "Road Map," which will address the implementation of the Council's Risk Policy across all Council-managed species; plan future work and address other business as necessary.

Although non-emergency issues not contained in this agenda may come before these groups for discussion, those issues may not be the subject of formal action during this meeting. Action will be restricted to those issues specifically listed in this notice and any issues arising after publication of this notice that require emergency action under section 305(c) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, provided the public has been notified of the Council's intent to take final action to address the emergency.

Special Accommodations

This meeting is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Thomas A. Nies, Executive Director, at (978) 465-0492, at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: August 7, 2015.

Tracey L. Thompson,

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

[FR Doc. 2015-19803 Filed 8-11-15; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XE101

Programmatic Environmental Assessment on the Issuance of Take Authorizations in Cook Inlet, Alaska

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

ACTION: Notice; intent to prepare a Programmatic Environmental Assessment; request for comments.

SUMMARY: The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) announces: Its intent to prepare a Programmatic Environmental Assessment (EA) to analyze the environmental impacts of issuing annual Incidental Take Authorizations (ITAs) pursuant to the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) for the taking of marine mammals incidental to anthropogenic activities in the waters of Cook Inlet, AK, for the 2016 season and; its intent to institute an MMPA authorization cycle wherein companies planning to submit MMPA incidental harassment authorization applications for work to be conducted in Cook Inlet in 2016 do so by no later than October 1, 2015.

DATES: All comments, written statements, and questions regarding the proposed process and preparation of the EA must be received no later than September 11, 2015.

ADDRESSES: Comments on the application should be addressed to Jolie Harrison, 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.young@noaa.gov. Comments sent via email, including all attachments, must not exceed a 25-megabyte file size. NMFS is not responsible for comments sent to addresses other than those provided here.

Instructions: All comments received are a part of the public record and will generally be posted to <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/permits/incidental.htm> without change. 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.