

Friday, September 25, 2015. Please see the registration instructions in the **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** section below.

ADDRESSES: Written responses to this request for information should be submitted to Dr. Michael Moldover, Sensor Science Division of the Physical Measurement Laboratory at the National Institute of Standards and Technology, 100 Bureau Drive, Mail Stop 8440, Gaithersburg, Maryland 20899, or by electronic mail to Michael.Moldover@nist.gov. The public workshop will be held at NIST's campus in Boulder, Colorado, which is located at 325 Broadway, Boulder, CO 80305, in Building 81, Room 81-1A116. Registration will be available online at <http://www.nist.gov/allevvents.cfm>. Please note the campus admittance instructions under the **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** section of this notice.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For further information, please contact Dr. Michael Moldover by mail to 100 Bureau Drive, Mail Stop 8440, Gaithersburg, Maryland 20899, or by electronic mail to Michael.Moldover@nist.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NIST's Cryogenic Flow Measurement Facility (Facility), located on NIST's campus in Boulder, Colorado, provides the public with the service of calibrating and testing flow meters using a closed loop liquid-nitrogen flow system. The Facility uses a dynamic weighing system to measure liquid mass and to calculate total mass and volume flow rates through a meter under test conditions. All measurements are traceable to the International System of Units using standards maintained at NIST. Upon completion of a meter calibration, NIST provides the customer with a final report, tabulated data, and plots summarizing the results.

The Facility has been in operation at NIST for nearly fifty years under the NIST Quality System (in conformance with ISO/TEC 17025). The calibration of cryogenic flow meters is listed among the NIST Calibration and Measurement Capabilities (CMC) within the key comparison database (KCDB) of the Bureau International des Poids et Mesures (BIPM). While it provides an important and unique service, NIST plans to discontinue the operation of the Cryogenic Flow Measurement Facility in Boulder at the end of September 2015. The Facility's current location will be used for NIST's new Communication Technology Laboratory.

The purpose of this request for information is to determine the level of interest and the needs of the industry

for this type of calibration service. NIST is seeking information that responds to the questions listed below.

(1) What is your opinion of the quality and utility of the calibration services performed by the Facility?

(2) What are the benefits of continuing the calibration services?

(3) What are your ideas about how to collaborate with members of the industry or research organizations to further the research efforts in the field of cryogenic flow measurement, including the development of methods to allow cryogenic flow meters to be calibrated at room temperatures?

(4) What is your opinion of the creation of a new research consortium for cryogenic flow measurement that would be led by NIST?

(5) What is your opinion of the current or future need for the development of dynamic weighing techniques for the calibration of cryogenic flow meters beyond what is currently used by industry?

(6) What is your opinion about whether the Facility should be re-established, either at NIST's campus in Gaithersburg, Maryland, or at a different location?

Multiple responses from the same organization are permitted. No business proprietary information should be included in any correspondence to NIST in response to this request for information. NIST will not treat any information provided in response to this request for information as proprietary information. Any information received by NIST in response to this request may be used to communicate with the responders regarding future projects.

Public Workshop: NIST will hold a public workshop to lead an open discussion with participants regarding the questions listed above. The meeting will be held at NIST's campus in Boulder, Colorado on Monday, September 28, 2015. Participants may attend the public workshop in person or may participate virtually via web conferencing. All participants who wish to attend in person are required to register by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on Friday, September 25, 2015, at <http://www.nist.gov/allevvents.cfm>. There is no registration fee. NIST will provide registered participants with information about how to access NIST's campus in Boulder, Colorado to attend in person and how to access the web conference to participate virtually. For participants attending in person, please note that federal agencies, including NIST, can only accept a state-issued driver's license or identification card for access to federal facilities if such license or identification card is issued by a state

that is compliant with the REAL ID Act of 2005 (Pub. L. 109-13), or by a state that has an extension for REAL ID compliance. NIST currently accepts other forms of federal-issued identification in lieu of a state-issued driver's license. For detailed information, please contact Arvella Musselman at (301) 975-2165 or visit: http://www.nist.gov/public_affairs/visitor/.

Richard Cavanagh,

Acting Associate Director for Laboratory Programs.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XE123

Notice of Availability of a Draft Programmatic Environmental Assessment for Fisheries Research Conducted and Funded by the National Marine Fisheries Service, Northwest Fisheries Science Center

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

ACTION: Notice of availability of a Draft Programmatic Environmental Assessment; request for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces the availability of the "Draft Programmatic Environmental Assessment (DPEA) for Fisheries Research Conducted and Funded by the Northwest Fisheries Science Center (NWFSC)." Publication of this notice begins the official public comment period for this DPEA. The purpose of the DPEA is to evaluate, in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the potential direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of conducting and funding fisheries and ecosystem research along the U.S. West Coast, including the Northern California Large Marine Ecosystem (NCLME), Puget Sound, and the Lower Columbia River Research Area (LCRRA).

DATES: Comments and information must be received no later than September 28, 2015.

ADDRESSES: Comments on the DPEA should be addressed to Kurt Fresh, Manager, Estuarine and Ocean Ecology Program, NMFS, Northwest Fisheries Science Center. The mailbox address for providing physical comments is 2725 Montlake Boulevard, East Seattle, WA

98112. The email address is *Kurt.Fresh@noaa.gov*. NMFS is not responsible for email comments sent to addresses other than the one provided here.

Instructions: NMFS is not responsible for comments sent by any other method, to any other address or individual, or received after the end of the comment period. Comments received electronically, including all attachments, must not exceed a 25-megabyte file size. Attachments to electronic comments will be accepted in Microsoft Word or Excel or Adobe PDF file formats only. 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.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Kurt Fresh, Northwest Fisheries Science Center, NMFS, (206) 860–3200.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Availability

An electronic copy of the DPEA may be obtained by writing to the address specified above (see **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**) or by visiting the internet at: http://www.nwfsc.noaa.gov/news/features/incidental_take_NOA. Documents cited in this notice may also be viewed, by appointment, during regular business hours, at the aforementioned address.

Background

The NWFSC is the research arm of NMFS in the Northwest Region of the Continental United States. The NWFSC conducts research and provides scientific advice to manage fisheries and conserve protected species in the Pacific Ocean (primarily the Continental Shelf Region of the Pacific Coast), Puget Sound, and Lower Columbia River Estuary (below Bonneville Dam). Research is aimed at monitoring fish stock recruitment, survival and biological rates, abundance and geographic distribution of species and stocks, and providing other scientific information needed to improve our understanding of complex marine ecological processes. Primary research activities include: Studies of early marine life and mortality processes of juvenile Pacific salmonids, bottom trawl surveys to support assessments of multiple groundfish species, stock assessments of Pacific hake, studies to support salmon recovery efforts in Puget Sound and the Columbia River Estuary, telemetry studies of numerous species, and extensive cooperative research projects designed to address current or

emerging information needs of the commercial fishing industry such as bycatch reduction efforts. Many research activities also include active acoustic systems, plankton nets, and other oceanographic equipment that provide important data on the status and trends of marine ecosystems important for various fisheries and natural resource management processes.

NMFS has prepared the DPEA under NEPA to evaluate several alternatives for conducting and funding fisheries and ecosystem research activities as the primary Federal action. Additionally in the DPEA, NMFS evaluates a secondary Federal action—also called a “connected action” under 40 CFR 1508.25 of the Council on Environmental Quality’s regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*)—which is the proposed promulgation of regulations and authorization of the take of marine mammals incidental to the fisheries research under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA). Additionally, because the proposed research activities occur in areas inhabited by species of marine mammals, birds, sea turtles, and fish listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) as threatened or endangered, this DPEA evaluates activities that could result in unintentional takes of ESA-listed marine species.

The following four alternatives are evaluated in the DPEA:

1. No-Action/Status Quo Alternative—Conduct Federal Fisheries and Ecosystem Research with Scope and Protocols Similar to Past Effort;
2. Preferred Alternative—Conduct Federal Fisheries and Ecosystem Research (New Suite of Research) with Mitigation for MMPA and ESA Compliance;
3. Modified Research Alternative—Conduct Federal Fisheries and Ecosystem Research (New Suite of Research) with Additional Mitigation; and
4. No Research Alternative—No Fieldwork for Federal Fisheries and Ecosystem Research Conducted or Funded by NWFSC.

The first three alternatives include a program of fisheries and ecosystem research projects conducted or funded by the NWFSC as the primary Federal action. Because this primary action is connected to a secondary Federal action to consider authorizing incidental take of marine mammals under the MMPA, NMFS must identify as part of this evaluation “(t)he means of effecting the least practicable adverse impact on the species or stock and its habitat.” (Section 101(a)(5)(A) of the MMPA [16

U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*]). NMFS must therefore identify and evaluate a reasonable range of mitigation measures to minimize impacts to marine mammals that occur in NWFSC research areas. These mitigation measures are considered as part of the identified alternatives in order to evaluate their effectiveness to minimize potential adverse environmental impacts. The three action alternatives also include mitigation measures intended to minimize potentially adverse interactions with other protected species that occur within the action area. Protected species include all marine mammals, which are covered under the MMPA, all species listed under the ESA, and bird species protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

NMFS is also evaluating a second type of no-action alternative that considers no federal funding for fieldwork on fisheries and ecosystem research activities. This is called the No Research Alternative to distinguish it from the No-Action/Status Quo Alternative. The No-Action/Status Quo Alternative will be used as the baseline to compare all of the other alternatives.

Potential direct and indirect effects on the environment are evaluated under each alternative in the DPEA. The environmental effects on the following resources are considered: physical environment, special resource areas, fish, marine mammals, birds, sea turtles, invertebrates, and the social and economic environment. Cumulative effects of external actions and the contribution of fisheries research activities to the overall cumulative impact on the aforementioned resources is also evaluated in the DPEA for the geographic regions in which NWFSC surveys are conducted.

Information Solicited

NMFS requests comments on the DPEA for Fisheries Research Conducted and Funded by the National Marine Fisheries Service, Northwest Fisheries Science Center. Please include, with your comments, any supporting data or literature citations that may be informative in substantiating your comment.

Dated: August 19, 2015.

Mark Strom,

Deputy Director, Northwest Fisheries Science Center, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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