

from 8:30 a.m. until 3 p.m. on April 20, 2023.

**ADDRESSES:**

*Council address:* South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, 4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201, N Charleston, SC 29405.

*Meeting address:* The meetings will be held at the Town and Country Inn, 2008 Savannah Highway, Charleston, SC 29407; phone: (843) 571-1000. The meetings will also be available via webinar. Registration is required. Webinar registration, an online public comment form, and briefing book materials will be available two weeks prior to the meetings at: <https://safmc.net/scientific-and-statistical-committee-meeting/>.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** John Hadley, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, SAFMC; phone: (843) 571-4366 or toll free: (866) SAFMC-10; fax: (843) 769-4520; email: [john.hadley@safmc.net](mailto:john.hadley@safmc.net).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

**SSC Socio-Economic Panel**

The SEP meeting agenda includes discussing the development of a port meeting series for the king and Spanish mackerel fisheries, the Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) for the snapper grouper fishery in the South Atlantic region, and potential improvements to economic analysis of recreational fisheries. The SEP will also provide feedback on Council research recommendations. The SEP will receive two presentations, one from NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office (SERO) on socio-economic impacts of COVID, and one from NOAA Fisheries Southeast Fishery Science Center (SEFSC) on red snapper discard research. SEP members also will receive updates on recent Council amendments and the Council's Citizen Science Program. The SEP will provide recommendations for SSC and Council consideration.

**Scientific and Statistical Committee**

The SSC meeting agenda includes the review and catch level recommendations for the SEDAR (Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review) 76 Black Sea Bass Operational Assessment, SEDAR 78 Spanish Mackerel Operational Assessment, and SEDAR 68 Atlantic Scamp Operational Assessment. The SSC will review the Council's Research and Monitoring Plan, a new SEFSC landings and discards projections methodology, the deep-water coral distribution model, and a portfolio analysis for ecosystem approaches. The SSC will receive

updates on the South Atlantic Greater Amberjack Research Project, vermillion snapper interim analysis, Southeast Reef Fish Survey 2022 trends report, multi-hook gear analysis, and a pandemic impacts report. The SSC is scheduled to form two new workgroups and will discuss other business as needed.

**Special Accommodations**

These meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for auxiliary aids should be directed to the Council office (see **ADDRESSES**) 5 days prior to the meeting.

**Note:** The times and sequence specified in this agenda are subject to change.

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

Dated: March 21, 2023.

**Rey Israel Marquez,**

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

[FR Doc. 2023-06110 Filed 3-23-23; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3510-22-P**

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

[RTID 0648-XC793]

**Fisheries of the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic; Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review (SEDAR); Public Meeting**

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

**ACTION:** Notice of SEDAR 79 Data Scoping webinar for Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic mutton snapper.

**SUMMARY:** The SEDAR 79 assessment process of Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic mutton snapper will consist of a Data Workshop, and a series of assessment webinars, and a Review Workshop. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION**.

**DATES:** The SEDAR 79 Data Scoping webinar will be held April 13, 2023, from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m., Eastern Time.

**ADDRESSES:**

*Meeting address:* The meeting will be held via webinar. The webinar is open to members of the public. Those interested in participating should contact Julie A. Neer at SEDAR (see **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**) to request an invitation providing webinar access information. Please request webinar invitations at least 24 hours in advance of each webinar.

*SEDAR address:* 4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201, North Charleston, SC 29405.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Julie A. Neer, SEDAR Coordinator; (843) 571-4366; email: [Julie.neer@safmc.net](mailto:Julie.neer@safmc.net).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, and Caribbean Fishery Management Councils, in conjunction with NOAA Fisheries and the Atlantic and Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commissions have implemented the Southeast Data, Assessment and Review (SEDAR) process, a multi-step method for determining the status of fish stocks in the Southeast Region. SEDAR is a multi-step process including: (1) Data Workshop, (2) a series of assessment webinars, and (3) a Review Workshop. The product of the Data Workshop is a report that compiles and evaluates potential datasets and recommends which datasets are appropriate for assessment analyses. The assessment webinars produce a report that describes the fisheries, evaluates the status of the stock, estimates biological benchmarks, projects future population conditions, and recommends research and monitoring needs. The product of the Review Workshop is an Assessment Summary documenting panel opinions regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the stock assessment and input data. Participants for SEDAR Workshops are appointed by the Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, and Caribbean Fishery Management Councils and NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office, HMS Management Division, and 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.

The items of discussion during the Data Scoping webinar are as follows:

Participants will discuss what data may be available for use in the assessment.

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 identified in this notice and any issues arising after publication of this notice that require emergency action under section 305(c) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, provided the public has been

notified of the intent to take final action to address the emergency.

### Special Accommodations

The meeting is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to the Council office (see **ADDRESSES**) at least 5 business days prior to each workshop.

**Note:** The times and sequence specified in this agenda are subject to change.

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

Dated: March 21, 2023.

### Key Israel Marquez,

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

[FR Doc. 2023-06108 Filed 3-23-23; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3510-22-P**

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648-XC840]

#### Taking and Importing Marine Mammals; Taking Marine Mammals Incidental to Geophysical Surveys Related to Oil and Gas Activities in the Gulf of Mexico

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

**ACTION:** Notice of issuance of Letter of Authorization.

**SUMMARY:** In accordance with the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), as amended, its implementing regulations, and NMFS' MMPA Regulations for Taking Marine Mammals Incidental to Geophysical Surveys Related to Oil and Gas Activities in the Gulf of Mexico, notification is hereby given that a Letter of Authorization (LOA) has been issued to CGG for the take of marine mammals incidental to geophysical survey activity in the Gulf of Mexico.

**DATES:** The LOA is effective from May 1, 2023, through December 31, 2023.

**ADDRESSES:** The LOA, LOA request, and supporting documentation are available online at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/action/incidental-take-authorization-oil-and-gas-industry-geophysical-survey-activity-gulf-mexico>. In case of problems accessing these documents, please call the contact listed below (see **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**).

**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 provided to the public for review.

An authorization for incidental takings 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 and requirements pertaining to the mitigation, 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.

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).

On January 19, 2021, we issued a final rule with regulations to govern the unintentional taking of marine mammals incidental to geophysical survey activities conducted by oil and gas industry operators, and those persons authorized to conduct activities on their behalf (collectively “industry operators”), in Federal waters of the U.S. Gulf of Mexico (GOM) over the course of 5 years (86 FR 5322, January 19, 2021). The rule was based on our findings that the total taking from the specified activities over the 5-year period will have a negligible impact on the affected species or stock(s) of marine mammals and will not have an unmitigable adverse impact on the availability of those species or stocks for

subsistence uses. The rule became effective on April 19, 2021.

Our regulations at 50 CFR 217.180 *et seq.* allow for the issuance of LOAs to industry operators for the incidental take of marine mammals during geophysical survey activities and prescribe the permissible methods of taking and other means of effecting the least practicable adverse impact on marine mammal species or stocks and their habitat (often referred to as mitigation), as well as requirements pertaining to the monitoring and reporting of such taking. Under 50 CFR 217.186(e), issuance of an LOA shall be based on a determination that the level of taking will be consistent with the findings made for the total taking allowable under these regulations and a determination that the amount of take authorized under the LOA is of no more than small numbers.

#### Summary of Request and Analysis

CGG plans to conduct a 3D ocean bottom node (OBN) survey over approximately 200 lease blocks in the Walker Ridge and Green Canyon areas of the central GOM, with approximate water depths ranging from 1,000 to 3,200 meters (m). See Section F of the LOA application for a map of the area. CGG anticipates using two dual source vessels, towing airgun array sources consisting of 32 elements, with a total volume of 5,040 cubic inches (in<sup>3</sup>). Please see CGG's application for additional detail.

Consistent with the preamble to the final rule, the survey effort proposed by CGG in its LOA request was used to develop LOA-specific take estimates based on the acoustic exposure modeling results described in the preamble (86 FR 5398, January 19, 2021). In order to generate the appropriate take number for authorization, the following information was considered: (1) survey type; (2) location (by modeling zone);<sup>1</sup> (3) number of days; and (4) season.<sup>2</sup> The acoustic exposure modeling performed in support of the rule provides 24-hour exposure estimates for each species, specific to each modeled survey type in each zone and season.

No 3D OBN surveys were included in the modeled survey types, and use of existing proxies (*i.e.*, 2D, 3D NAZ, 3D WAZ, Coil) is generally conservative for use in evaluation of 3D OBN survey effort, largely due to the greater area

<sup>1</sup> For purposes of acoustic exposure modeling, the GOM was divided into seven zones. Zone 1 is not included in the geographic scope of the rule.

<sup>2</sup> For purposes of acoustic exposure modeling, seasons include Winter (December–March) and Summer (April–November).