

V. Recommendation

[FR Doc. 2025–11228 Filed 6–17–25; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–DS–P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648–XE981]

Magnuson-Stevens Act Provisions; General Provisions for Domestic Fisheries; Application for Exempted Fishing Permits

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

ACTION: Notice; request for comments.

SUMMARY: The Assistant Regional Administrator for Sustainable Fisheries,

Greater Atlantic Region, NMFS, has made a preliminary determination that an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) application contains all of the required information and warrants further consideration. The EFP would allow federally permitted fishing vessels to fish outside fishery regulations in support of exempted fishing activities proposed by the Maine Center for Coastal Fisheries. Regulations under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act require publication of this notification to provide interested parties the opportunity to comment on applications for proposed EFPs.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before July 3, 2025.

ADDRESSES: You may submit written comments by email: nmfs.gar.efp@noaa.gov. Include in the subject line “EGOM Sentinel Survey.” All

comments received are a part of the public record and may be posted for public viewing without change. All personal identifying information (*e.g.*, name, address), confidential business information, or otherwise sensitive information submitted voluntarily by the sender will be publicly accessible. NMFS will accept anonymous comments (enter “anonymous” as the signature if you wish to remain anonymous).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Christine Ford, Fishery Management Specialist, christine.ford@noaa.gov, (978) 281–9185.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The applicant submitted a complete application for an EFP to conduct fishing activities that the regulations would otherwise restrict. This EFP would exempt the participating vessels from the following Federal regulations:

TABLE 1—REQUESTED EXEMPTIONS

| CFR citation | Regulation | Need for exemption |
|---------------------------|--|---|
| 50 CFR 648.4 (a)(1) | Requirement for vessels fishing for, possessing, or landing multispecies finfish to have been issued a valid Federal Northeast (NE) multispecies permit. | To allow the American lobster-permitted vessel to fish for and temporarily possess cod and pollock for biological sampling, and to land a small amount of lethally sampled cod for personal use. |
| § 648.4(a)(5)(iii) | Requirement for vessels fishing for, possessing, or landing Atlantic mackerel to have been issued a valid Federal mackerel vessel permit. | To allow all participating vessels to fish for and temporarily possess Atlantic mackerel for biological sampling. |
| § 648.82(a) | Vessels issued a limited access NE multispecies permit may not fish for, possess, or land regulated species, except during Day(s) at Sea (DAS). | To allow the multispecies Category A vessel to conduct EFP-related activities without having to use a DAS. |
| § 648.83(a) | Restriction against fishing for, possessing, or landing cod or pollock less than 19 inches (48.3 cm). | To allow all participating vessels to sample all sizes of cod and pollock caught during surveys, and to land a small amount of lethally sampled cod for personal use. |
| § 648.86(o)(1) | Regional Administrator Authority to implement possession limits (common pool). | To allow the multispecies Handgear B vessel to catch and retain cod as prescribed by the survey design if the possession limit is reduced or a trimester Total Allowable Catch area is closed as an accountability measure. |

TABLE 2—PROJECT SUMMARY

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Project title | Eastern Gulf of Maine (EGOM) Sentinel Survey. |
| Project start | 07/15/2025. |
| Project end | 10/31/2025. |
| Project objectives | Survey the groundfish, particularly cod, resource in the waters of Eastern Maine, with a focus on evaluating local ecological knowledge of cod distribution for potential inclusion in future stock assessment work. |
| Project location | Bound on the west by Penobscot Bay and on the east by the Canadian border; extends south to the 50 meter (m) bathymetric edge, overlapping with Statistical Areas 511 and 512. |
| Number of vessels | 3. |
| Number of trips | 15. |
| Trip duration (days) | 1. |
| Total number of days | 15. |
| Gear type(s) | Rod and reel jigging. |
| Number of tows or sets | Up to 40 sets per trip; up to 450 sets total. |
| Duration of tows or sets | Up to 5 minutes. |

Project Narrative

This project would continue an ongoing jig survey of the groundfish resource in the Eastern Gulf of Maine

(EGOM), going back to 2011. The Atlantic Cod Stock Assessment Workshop identified cod in Statistical Areas 511 and 512 as a separate biological stock, and, as a result, the

research track has accepted the Sentinel Survey’s inshore jig time series for inclusion as a recruitment index for the EGOM stock unit’s assessment.

The EFP would authorize 3 vessels to conduct random stratified sampling using jig gear from 0–50 m at 36 sites, plus 9 fishermen's choice sites within the study area, for a total of 45 sites. Jig gear consists of a 16- or 26-oz (453.6- or 737.1-gram) Norwegian style diamond jig with three teaser hooks, spaced at 15 inches (38.1 centimeters (cm)) apart. At each site, two anglers would execute five 5-minute jig drops within one hour. Gear would be retrieved upon the first bite or at the 5-minute mark, whichever comes first.

All species captured would be weighed and measured. Photos and fin clips would be collected from all cod, and a subset of cod would have otoliths and stomach samples collected. Catch that are lethally sampled could be landed for personal use. All other catch would be returned to the ocean once sampling is complete. Scientific personnel from Maine Center for Coastal Fisheries would be aboard the vessels to conduct sampling activities. No catch would be landed for sale.

If approved, the applicant may request minor modifications and extensions to the EFP throughout the year. EFP modifications and extensions may be granted without further notice if they are deemed essential to facilitate completion of the proposed research and have minimal impacts that do not change the scope or impact of the initially approved EFP request. Any fishing activity conducted outside the scope of the exempted fishing activity would be prohibited.

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

Dated: June 16, 2025.

Kelly Denit,

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

[FR Doc. 2025–11242 Filed 6–17–25; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–22–P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648–XE273]

Takes of Marine Mammals Incidental to Specified Activities; Taking Marine Mammals Incidental to the Kingston Ferry Trestle Seismic Retrofit Project in Kingston, WA

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

ACTION: Notice; proposed incidental harassment authorization; request for

comments on proposed authorization and possible renewal.

SUMMARY: NMFS has received a request from Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) for authorization to take marine mammals incidental to the Kingston Ferry Terminal Trestle Seismic Retrofit Project in Kingston, WA. Pursuant to the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), NMFS is requesting comments on its proposal to issue an incidental harassment authorization (IHA) to incidentally take marine mammals during the specified activities. NMFS is also requesting comments on a possible one-time, 1-year renewal that could be issued under certain circumstances and if all requirements are met, as described in Request for Public Comments at the end of this notice. NMFS will consider public comments prior to making any final decision on the issuance of the requested MMPA authorization and agency responses will be summarized in the final notice of our decision.

DATES: Comments and information must be received no later than July 18, 2025.

ADDRESSES: Comments should be addressed to the Permits and Conservation Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service and should be submitted via email to ITP.Demarest@noaa.gov. Electronic copies of the application and supporting documents, as well as a list of the references cited in this document, may be obtained online at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/marine-mammal-protection/incidental-take-authorizations-construction-activities>. In case of problems accessing these documents, please call the contact listed below.

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, including all attachments, must not exceed a 25-megabyte file size. All comments received are a part of the public record and will generally be posted online at <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/permit/incidental-take-authorizations-under-marine-mammal-protection-act> without change. 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:

Austin Demarest, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, (301) 427–8401.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The MMPA prohibits the “take” of marine mammals, with certain exceptions. Sections 101(a)(5)(A) and (D) of the MMPA (16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*) direct the Secretary of Commerce (as delegated to NMFS) 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 proposed or, if the taking is limited to harassment, a notice of a proposed IHA is provided to the public for review.

Authorization for incidental takings shall be granted if NMFS finds that the taking will have a negligible impact on the species or stock(s) and will not have an unmitigable adverse impact on the availability of the species or stock(s) for taking for subsistence uses (where relevant). Further, NMFS must prescribe the permissible methods of taking and other “means of effecting the least practicable adverse impact” on the affected species or stocks and their habitat, paying particular attention to rookeries, mating grounds, and areas of similar significance, and on the availability of the species or stocks for taking for certain subsistence uses (referred to in shorthand as “mitigation”); and requirements pertaining to the monitoring and reporting of the takings. The definitions of all applicable MMPA statutory terms used above are included in the relevant sections below and can be found in section 3 of the MMPA (16 U.S.C. 1362) and NMFS regulations at 50 CFR 216.103.

National Environmental Policy Act

To comply with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA; 42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*) and NOAA Administrative Order (NAO) 216–6A, NMFS must review our proposed action (*i.e.*, the issuance of an IHA) with respect to potential impacts on the human environment. This action is consistent with categories of activities identified in Categorical Exclusion B4 (IHAs with no anticipated serious injury or mortality) of the Companion Manual for NAO 216–6A, which do not individually or cumulatively have the potential for significant impacts on the quality of the human environment and for which we have not identified any extraordinary circumstances that would preclude this categorical exclusion. Accordingly, NMFS has preliminarily determined that the issuance of the