

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

RIN 0648–XE436

Marine Mammals; File No. 19309

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

ACTION: Notice; issuance of permit.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that a permit has been issued to the NMFS Marine Mammal Laboratory, 7600 Sand Point Way NE., Seattle, WA 98115–6349 (Responsible Party: John Bengtson, Ph.D.), to conduct research on pinnipeds in Alaska.

ADDRESSES: The permit and related documents are available for review upon written request or by appointment in the 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.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Amy Sloan, (301) 427–8401.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On February 23, 2016, notice was published in the *Federal Register* (89 FR 8942) that the above-named applicant requested a permit to conduct research on pinnipeds. The requested permit has been issued under the authority of the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*), and the regulations governing the taking and importing of marine mammals (50 CFR part 216).

Permit No. 19309 authorizes takes of bearded (*Erignathus barbatus*), harbor (*Phoca vitulina*), ribbon (*Histiophoca fasciata*), ringed (*Phoca hispida hispida*), and spotted seals (*Phoca largha*) in the North Pacific Ocean, Bering Sea, Arctic Ocean, and coastal regions of Alaska. The purposes of the research are to investigate the foraging ecology, population abundance and trends, population structure, habitat requirements, health, vital rates, and effects of natural and anthropogenic factors on these species. Seals may be (1) captured and handled for sampling and deployment of telemetry devices, (2) incidentally harassed annually during capture activities or collection of feces and other samples from haul-out substrate, and (3) harassed during manned and unmanned aerial surveys. Stellar sea lions (*Eumetopias jubatus*) of the Eastern Distinct Population Segment may be taken annually by incidental harassment during harbor seal aerial

surveys. Authorization is provided for unintentional mortalities of each seal species. The permit expires on March 25, 2021.

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

Dated: April 21, 2016.

Julia Harrison,

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–XE583

Magnuson-Stevens Act Provisions; Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Northeast Multispecies Fishery; Approved Monitoring Service Providers

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

ACTION: Notice of approved monitoring service providers.

SUMMARY: NMFS has approved five companies to provide at-sea monitoring services to Northeast multispecies vessels in fishing year 2016. Regulations implementing Amendment 16 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan require third-party at-sea monitoring service providers to apply to, and be approved by, NMFS in a manner consistent with the Administrative Procedure Act in order to be eligible to provide at-sea monitoring services to sectors.

ADDRESSES: Copies of the list of NMFS-approved sector monitoring service providers are available at <http://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/sustainable/species/multispecies/> or by sending a written request to: 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930, Attn: Mark Grant.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mark Grant, Fishery Policy Analyst, (978) 281–9145, fax (978) 281–9135, email Mark.Grant@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Amendment 16 (75 FR 18262; April 9, 2010) to the Northeast Multispecies

Fishery Management Plan (FMP) expanded the sector management program, including requirements to ensure accurate monitoring of sector at-sea catch and dockside landings, and common pool dockside landings. Framework Adjustment 48 to the FMP (Framework 48, 78 FR 26118; May 3, 2013) revised the goals and objectives for sector monitoring programs.

Standards for Approving At-Sea Monitoring Service Providers

Regulations at 50 CFR 648.87(b)(4) describe the criteria for NMFS approval of at-sea monitoring service providers. NMFS is approving service providers for fishing year 2016 (beginning May 1, 2016) based on: (1) Completeness and sufficiency of applications; (2) determination of the applicant's ability to meet the performance requirements of a sector monitoring service provider; and (3) documented successful performance as NMFS-funded providers in fishing year 2015. Northeast multispecies sectors are required to design and implement independent, third-party at-sea monitoring programs in fishing year 2016, and are responsible for the at-sea portion of the costs of these monitoring requirements.

For fishing year 2015, NMFS approved A.I.S., Inc.; East West Technical Services, LLC; MRAG Americas, Inc.; Fathom Research, LLC; and ACD USA Ltd. as service providers. Once approved, providers must be able to document ongoing compliance with performance requirements in order to maintain eligibility (§ 648.87(b)(4)(ii)). NMFS can disapprove any previously approved service provider during the fishing year if the service provider in question ceases to meet the performance standards. NMFS must notify service providers of disapproval in writing.

Approved Monitoring Service Providers

NMFS received complete applications from five companies interested in providing at-sea monitoring services in fishing year 2016; these were the same five service providers that were approved for fishing year 2015. The Regional Administrator has approved all five service providers as eligible to provide at-sea monitoring services in fishing year 2016 because they have met the application requirements, documented an ability to comply with service provider standards, and have been determined to have met the service provider performance criteria: