and non-listed native fish (particularly salmonids) and the fish community in relation to predator exclusion and removal efforts. Specific study questions will focus on changes in the densities and relative abundances in these native fish and fish community assemblages.

The program will be carried out using three primary methods: (1) An exclusion weir equipped with a live box (or fyke trap) will be used to trap and remove nonnative predatory fish. Native fish will be trapped daily and selectively passed upstream of the weir in order to reduce the potential for in-trap predation and to minimize delays in migration; (2) boat electrofishing is proposed to estimate the abundance of nonnative predators and to conduct predator removals; and (3) survival will be assessed by conducting releases of acoustically tagged hatchery-origin Chinook salmon juveniles upstream of areas where predator removal has occurred.

Although ESA-listed species are not directly targeted by the program, they may be incidentally captured and handled during electrofishing sampling. All efforts will be made to limit electrofishing in areas where juvenile salmonids may be present or rearing. Electrofishing will follow strict guidelines to minimize mortality and established measures will be taken to protect species listed under the ESA. The proposed operation of a weir in the Stanislaus River could impact ESA-listed species by delaying adult upstream migration. Additionally, trapping at the weir may result in the capture of adult ESA-listed species. These effects will be minimized by frequent (at least daily) trap checks at the site and prioritization of ESA-listed species for handling and release prior to other non-listed species.

Authority

Enhancement permits are issued in accordance with section 10(a)(1)(A) of the ESA (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*) and regulations governing listed fish and wildlife permits (50 CFR part 222). NMFS issues permits based on findings that such permits: (1) Are applied for in good faith; (2) if granted and exercised, would not operate to the disadvantage of the listed species that are the subject of the permit; (3) are consistent with the purposes and policies of section 2 of the ESA; (4) further a bona fide and necessary or desirable scientific purpose or enhance the propagation or survival of the endangered species, taking into account the benefits anticipated to be derived on behalf of the endangered species; and additional issuance criteria as listed at 50 CFR 222.308(c)(5–12). The authority to take listed species is subject to conditions set forth in the permit.

Anyone requesting a hearing on an application listed in this notice should set out the specific reasons why a hearing on that application would be appropriate (see **ADDRESSES**). Such hearings are held at the discretion of the Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NMFS.

Public Comments Solicited

NMFS invites the public to comment on the section 10(a)(1)(A) enhancement permit application during a 30-day public comment period beginning on the date of this notice. This notice is provided pursuant to section 10(c) of the ESA (16 U.S.C. 1529(c)). All comments and materials received, including names and addresses, will become part of the administrative record and may be released to the public. We provide this notice in order to allow the public, agencies, or other organizations to review and comment on these documents.

Next Steps

NMFS will evaluate the permit application, associated documents, and comments submitted to determine whether the applications meet the requirements of section 10(a)(1)(A) of the ESA and Federal regulations. The final permit decisions will not be made until after the end of the 30-day public comment period and after NMFS has fully considered all relevant comments received. NMFS will publish notice of its final action in the **Federal Register**.

Dated: March 27, 2018.

Angela Somma,

Chief, Endangered Species Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 2018–06460 Filed 3–29–18; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–22–P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648–XG130

Marine Mammals; File No. 22062

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

ACTION: Notice; receipt of application.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that Patricia Fair, Ph.D., Medical University of South Carolina, Hollings Marine Laboratory, 331 Fort Johnson Road, Charleston, SC 29412, has applied in due form for a permit to receive, import, and export marine mammal parts for scientific research.

DATES: Written, telefaxed, or email comments must be received on or before April 30, 2018.

ADDRESSES: The application and related documents are available for review by selecting ''Records Open for Public Comment'' from the ''Features'' box on the Applications and Permits for Protected Species (APPS) home page, *https://apps.nmfs.noaa.gov,* and then selecting File No. 22062 from the list of available applications.

These documents are also available 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.

Written comments on this application should be submitted to the Chief, Permits and Conservation Division, at the address listed above. Comments may also be submitted by facsimile to (301) 713–0376, or by email to *NMFS.Pr1Comments@noaa.gov.* Please include the File No. 22062 in the subject line of the email comment.

Those individuals requesting a public hearing should submit a written request to the Chief, Permits and Conservation Division at the address listed above. The request should set forth the specific reasons why a hearing on this application would be appropriate.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Shasta McClenahan or Jennifer Skidmore, (301) 427–8401.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The subject permit is requested under the authority of the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, as amended (MMPA; 16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*), and the regulations governing the taking and importing of marine mammals (50 CFR part 216).

The applicant proposes to receive, import, and export biological samples for scientific research from up to 100 bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) annually to study pollutant stressors of dolphins in the El Morro Mangrove and Wildlife Refuge, Ecuador. The requested duration of the permit is 5 years.

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

Concurrent with the publication of this notice in the **Federal Register**, NMFS is forwarding copies of the application to the Marine Mammal Commission and its Committee of Scientific Advisors.

Dated: March 27, 2018.

Julia Harrison,

Chief, Permits and Conservation Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 2018–06498 Filed 3–29–18; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–22–P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Proposed Monterey Peninsula Water Supply Project; Notice of Availability of a Final Environmental Impact Report/ Environmental Impact Statement

AGENCY: Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS), National Ocean Service (NOS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of availability of a final environmental impact report/ environmental impact statement.

SUMMARY: California American Water Company (CalAm) submitted a permit application to NOAA's Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary (MBNMS) to construct and operate a reverse osmosis (RO) desalination facility project (Project) in Monterey County, California. NOAA is conducting the permit review process in accordance with review and consultation requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other applicable statutes. NOAA, as Federal lead agency for purposes of NEPA, and the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), the state lead agency for purposes of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), have prepared a joint final environmental impact review/ environmental impact statement (EIR/ EIS) that analyzes the potential effects on the physical and human environment of the proposed action and alternatives.

DATES: This notice is applicable March 30, 2018.

ADDRESSES: Copies of the FEIR/EIS can be downloaded or viewed on the internet at *https://montereybay.noaa.gov/resourcepro/resmanissues/desal-projects.html.*

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Karen Grimmer at 99 Pacific Ave., Bldg. 455a, Monterey, CA 93940 or *mbnms.comments@noaa.gov.*

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Background

CalAm submitted a permit application for construction and operation of its proposed Monterey Peninsula Water Supply Project (MPWSP or Project). The purpose of the MPWSP is to replace existing water supplies for CalAm's Monterey District service area that have been constrained by legal decisions affecting the Carmel River and Seaside Groundwater Basin water resources. The MPWSP comprises various facilities and improvements, including: A sub-surface seawater intake system; a 9.6-million-gallons-per-day (mgd) reverse osmosis (RO) desalination plant; desalinated water storage and conveyance facilities; and expanded Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) facilities.

The desalination facility would be capable of producing 9.6 million gallons per day (MGD) of potable water on a 46-acre site located north of the City of Marina on unincorporated Monterey County property. The MPWSP proposes ten subsurface slant wells (nine new wells and conversion of an existing test well) to draw seawater from beneath the ocean floor in Monterey Bay to produce the source water for the desalination plant. The subsurface slant wells would be located primarily within the City of Marina, in the active mining area of the CEMEX sand mining facility. The slant wells would be approximately 700 to 1000 feet in length and extend beneath the coastal dunes, sandy beach, and the surf zone, terminating approximately 161 to 356 feet seaward of the Mean High Water line and at a depth of 190 to 210 feet below the seafloor. Up to 24.1 mgd of source water would be needed to produce 9.6 mgd of desalinated product water.

Under the proposed project, the desalination plant would generate approximately 13.98 mgd of brine, including 0.4 mgd of decanted backwash water. The brine would be discharged into Monterey Bay via a 36-inch diameter pipeline to a new connection with the existing Monterey Regional Water Pollution Control Agency's (MRWPCA) outfall and diffuser located offshore.

II. NOAA Proposed Action and Alternatives

NOAA is releasing a final EIR/EIS prepared in accordance with section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 4332(2)(c), and the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA. 40 CFR 1500–1508. NOAA's proposed action would be to authorize the installation of a subsurface seawater intake system, authorize the discharge of brine into MBNMS via an existing outfall pipe, and permit the continued presence of pipelines in MBNMS to transport seawater to or from a desalination facility.

The Final EIR/EIS identifies and assesses potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed project, and identifies six alternatives, plus a no action alternative. Federal agencies would use the EIR/EIS to consider related permits or other approvals for the Project as proposed. NOAA's preferred alternative is Alternative 5a, which is also the environmentally preferred alternative. Alternative 5a would be implemented in conjunction with the Pure Water Monterey Groundwater Replenishment Project (GWR), which would offer the same amount of freshwater as the proposed project through a 6.4 mgd desalination plant and the purchase and extraction of 3,500 afy of GWR Project water from the Seaside Groundwater Basin. Although the combined Alternative 5a and GWR project would result in a larger physical footprint than the proposed action alone, the pairing of Alternative 5a and the GWR project would result in reduced operational energy use and reduced GHG emissions compared to the proposed project. In addition, the combination of Alternative 5a and the GWR Project would result in reduced effects on groundwater levels influenced by fewer slant wells and less volume of pumping compared to the proposed project, and the GWR project would provide water to the Castroville Seawater Intrusion Project that would benefit the groundwater basin. Lastly, Alternative 5a paired with the GWR project would be consistent with the 2016 California Action Plan seeking integrated water supply solutions, the Governor's drought proclamations, the CPUC Water Action Plan goal of promoting water infrastructure investment, the California Ocean Plan, and MBNMS Desalination Guidelines.

III. NEPA Process and Federal Consultations

In accordance with Section 102(2)(C) of NEPA, NOAA published a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an EIS for the proposed project on August 26, 2015 (80 FR 51787). During the EIS scoping meeting held on September 10, 2015, five participants commented publically on the proposed project. Twelve written comments were received throughout the public comment period. The complete written comments are available for