

**Thursday, September 28, 2023; 8:30 a.m.–5 p.m., EDT**

The Committees will review and discuss the Gulf of Mexico *Gag* Health Check, *Vermilion Snapper* Interim Analysis, Southeast Region Best Scientific Information Available Framework, Incorporating Social Science Theory and Methods into Ecosystem Assessments, and the *Lane Snapper* Updated Catch Analysis, including presentations and background materials for SSC discussions.

The Committees will receive public comment, if any, before addressing any items under Other Business.

—Meeting Adjourns

The meeting will also be broadcast via webinar. You may register for the webinar by visiting [www.gulfcouncil.org](http://www.gulfcouncil.org) and clicking on the SSC meeting on the calendar.

The agenda is subject to change, and the latest version along with other meeting materials will be posted on [www.gulfcouncil.org](http://www.gulfcouncil.org) as they become available.

Although other non-emergency issues not on the agenda may come before the Scientific and Statistical Committees for discussion, in accordance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, those issues may not be the subject of formal action during this meeting. Actions of the Scientific and Statistical Committee will be restricted to those issues specifically identified in the agenda 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 Council's intent to take-action to address the emergency.

### Special Accommodations

These meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aid should be directed to Kathy Pereira, (813) 348–1630, at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.

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

Dated: September 6, 2023.

### Rey Israel Marquez,

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

[FR Doc. 2023–19512 Filed 9–8–23; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3510–22–P**

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

#### Review of Nomination for Mariana Trench National Marine Sanctuary

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

**ACTION:** Notice.

**SUMMARY:** On January 21, 2022, NOAA requested written comments to facilitate the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries' (ONMS) five-year review of the nomination for a proposed Mariana Trench National Marine Sanctuary (NMS). On March 10, 2022, NOAA reopened the public comment period for an additional 45 days, ending on April 25, 2022. In those notices, NOAA requested relevant information as it pertains to its 11 evaluation criteria for inclusion in the inventory of sites eligible to be considered for designation as national marine sanctuaries. NOAA has synthesized the information gathered through the public process, completed an internal analysis, and the ONMS Director has made the determination that the Mariana Trench NMS nomination will be removed from the inventory.

**DATES:** This determination took effect on September 7, 2023.

**ADDRESSES:** Kristina Kekuewa, Pacific Islands Regional Director, NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, 1845 Wasp Blvd., Honolulu, Hawaii 96818, or at [kristina.kekuewa@noaa.gov](mailto:kristina.kekuewa@noaa.gov), or at 808–725–5252.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Kristina Kekuewa, Pacific Islands Regional Director, NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, 1845 Wasp Blvd., Honolulu, Hawaii 96818, or at [kristina.kekuewa@noaa.gov](mailto:kristina.kekuewa@noaa.gov), or at 808–725–5252.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

##### Background Information

In 2014, NOAA issued a final rule re-establishing the sanctuary nomination process (SNP), which details how communities may submit nominations of areas of the marine and Great Lakes environment for NOAA to consider for designation as national marine sanctuaries (79 FR 33851). NOAA moves successful nominations to an inventory of areas that could be considered for national marine sanctuary designation. The final rule re-establishing the SNP included a five-year limit on any nomination added to

the inventory that NOAA does not advance for designation. The nomination for Mariana Trench NMS was accepted to the national inventory on March 13, 2017, and was therefore scheduled to expire in March 2022.

In November 2019, NOAA issued a notice (84 FR 61546) to clarify procedures for evaluating and updating a nomination as it approaches the five-year mark on the inventory of areas that could be considered for national marine sanctuary designation. This notice explained that if a nomination remains responsive to the 11 evaluation criteria for inclusion on the inventory, it may be appropriate to allow the nomination to remain on the inventory for another five years. The notice also established a process for NOAA to consider the continuing viability of nominations nearing the five-year expiration mark. The 11 evaluation criteria can be found at <https://nominate.noaa.gov>.

On January 21, 2022, NOAA published a notice in the **Federal Register** to request written comments to facilitate ONMS' five-year review of the nomination of the Mariana Trench NMS (87 FR 3284). On March 10, 2022, following requests from the public for additional time to comment on the five-year review, NOAA reopened the public comment period for an additional 45 days, ending on April 25, 2022 (87 FR 13709). NOAA requested relevant information pertaining to the 11 evaluation criteria that NOAA applied to evaluate the Mariana Trench NMS nomination for inclusion in the national inventory of areas that NOAA may consider for future designation as a national marine sanctuary. During the two comment periods, 62 online comments were received, and the nominator provided additional information, which NOAA has considered in evaluating the nomination against the criteria. Submitted comments can be found at [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov) (search for Docket Number NOAA–NOS–2022–0005). Additionally, the nominating organization subsequently submitted a letter to NOAA requesting that the nomination be withdrawn and removed from the inventory.

In analyzing this material, particular attention was given to new scientific information about the national significance of natural and cultural resources, increases or decreases in the threats to resources proposed for protection, and changes to the management framework of the area. NOAA also assessed the level of community-based support for the nomination from a broad range of interests.

Following NOAA's review of the relevant information, it was determined that there are still significant threats to the area, and it is still an area of national significance. However, there is not currently demonstrated broad community support for the nomination remaining on the inventory of possible designations. ONMS has also determined that it is not clear, at this time, how a sanctuary designation would supplement or complement existing management and regulatory authorities for the Marianas Trench. Therefore, and in consideration of the nominating organization's request to withdraw the nomination, the ONMS Director has determined the nomination for the Mariana Trench NMS should not remain on the inventory of successful nominations.

*Authority:* 16 U.S.C. 1431 *et seq.*

**John Armor,**

*Director, Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, National Ocean Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.*

[FR Doc. 2023-19380 Filed 9-8-23; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3510-NK-P**

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

[RTID 0648-XD335]

**Marine Mammals; File No. 27426**

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

**ACTION:** Notice; receipt of application.

**SUMMARY:** Notice is hereby given that Oregon State University, Marine Mammal Institute, 2030 Marine Science Drive, Newport, OR 97365 (Responsible Party: Lisa Ballance, Ph.D.), has applied in due form for a permit to conduct research on marine mammals.

**DATES:** Written comments must be received on or before October 11, 2023.

**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. 27426 from the list of available applications. These documents are also available upon written request via email to [NMFS.Pr1Comments@noaa.gov](mailto:NMFS.Pr1Comments@noaa.gov).

Written comments on this application should be submitted via email to

[NMFS.Pr1Comments@noaa.gov](mailto:NMFS.Pr1Comments@noaa.gov). Please include File No. 27426 in the subject line of the email comment.

Those individuals requesting a public hearing should submit a written request via email to [NMFS.Pr1Comments@noaa.gov](mailto:NMFS.Pr1Comments@noaa.gov). The request should set forth the specific reasons why a hearing on this application would be appropriate.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Shasta McClenahan, Ph.D., or Amy Hapeman, (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.*), the regulations governing the taking and importing of marine mammals (50 CFR part 216), the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA; 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*), the regulations governing the taking, importing, and exporting of endangered and threatened species (50 CFR parts 222-226), and the Fur Seal Act of 1966, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1151 *et seq.*).

The applicant requests a 5-year research permit to study abundance, density, distribution, movements, behavior, ecology, health, and stock structure of marine mammals in the Atlantic, Pacific, and Southern Oceans. Research may occur in U.S. and international waters on 72 species of marine mammals, including the following ESA-listed cetaceans: blue (*Balaenoptera musculus*), bowhead (*Balaena mysticetes*), fin (*Balaenoptera physalus*), gray (*Eschrichtius robustus*); Western North Pacific distinct population segment [DPS]), humpback (*Megaptera novaeangliae*; Central America, Mexico, Western North Pacific, and Cape Verde DPSs), killer (*Orcinus orca*; Southern Resident DPS), North Pacific right (*Eubalaena japonica*), Rice's (*Balaenoptera ricei*), sei (*Balaenoptera borealis*), Southern right (*E. australis*), and sperm (*Physeter macrocephalus*) whales. Research for cetaceans would include vessel and aerial surveys (manned and unmanned) for observations, photography, video recordings, thermal imaging, photogrammetry, passive acoustics, echosounders for prey mapping, biological sampling (exhaled air, sloughed skin, feces, and skin and blubber biopsy), and tagging (suction-cup, dart, and deep-implant). Eleven species of pinnipeds may be harassed and opportunistically studied during research including the following ESA-listed species: Steller sea lions (*Eumetopias jubatus*; Western DPS), and bearded (*Erignathus barbatus*), Guadalupe fur (*Arctocephalus*

*townsendi*), Hawaiian monk (*Neomonachus schauinslandi*), ringed (*Phoca hispida*), and spotted (*P. largha*) seals. Parts from all species of cetaceans and pinnipeds (excluding walrus) collected under separate authorizations may be imported, exported, and received annually for scientific research, and secondarily used for curation and education. See the application for complete numbers of animals requested by species and procedure.

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: September 5, 2023.

**Julia M. Harrison,**

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

[FR Doc. 2023-19455 Filed 9-8-23; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3510-22-P**

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

[RTID 0648-XD328]

**Caribbean Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting**

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

**ACTION:** Notice of a public virtual meeting.

**SUMMARY:** The Caribbean Fishery Management Council's (Council) Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) will hold a public virtual meeting to address the items contained in the tentative agenda included in the **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION.**

**DATES:** The SSC public virtual meeting will be held on September 27, 2023, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Eastern Standard Time.

**ADDRESSES:** You may join the SSC public virtual meeting (via Zoom) from a computer, tablet or smartphone by entering the following address: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81086075177?pwd=TIbLb0NjWmZaR2h0b2NEbmpOTWtQT09>.