

published soon that provides additional information on how to make written comments.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Christopher M. Moore, Ph.D., Executive Director, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council; telephone: (302) 526-5255. The Council's Web site, www.mafmc.org (see "Upcoming Events") also has details on the meeting locations and background materials. A scoping informational document and presentation recording will be posted to <http://www.mafmc.org/actions/blueline-tilefish> no later than May 26, 2015.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: There will be five scoping meetings with the following dates/times/locations:

1. Monday, June 1, 2015, 6 p.m., Hyatt Place Long Island/East End, 451 E. Main St., Riverhead, NY 11901; telephone: (631) 208-0002.

2. Tuesday, June 2, 2015, 6 p.m., Congress Hall Hotel, 251 Beach Ave., Cape May, NJ 08204; telephone: (888) 944-1816.

3. Tuesday, June 16, 2015, 6 p.m., Dare County Administration Building, Commissioners Meeting Room, 954 Marshall C. Collins Drive, Manteo, NC 27954; telephone: (252) 475-5700.

4. Wednesday, June 17, 2015, 6 p.m., Hilton Virginia Beach Oceanfront, 3001 Atlantic Ave., Virginia Beach, VA 23451; telephone: (757) 213-3000.

5. Thursday, June 18, 2015, 5 p.m., Ocean City Chamber of Commerce, Eunice Q. Sorin Visitor & Conference Center, 12320 Ocean Gateway, Ocean City, MD 21842; telephone: (410) 213-0552.

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) manages blueline tilefish south of Virginia, but there is currently (as of May 11, 2015) no management of blueline tilefish in Federal waters north of North Carolina. Virginia and Maryland have instituted regulations for state waters, but catches in any Federal waters north of North Carolina may be landed from Delaware north without restriction. Blueline tilefish are susceptible to overfishing due to their biology (relatively long-lived, sedentary, slow growing, and late maturing) so the Council is considering developing management measures. These potential measures could be considered via an amendment to the Council's golden tilefish FMP, or a new FMP for blueline tilefish and/or other deep-water fish such as sand tilefish, snowy grouper, and black-bellied rosefish. Management measures could include a definition of the management unit, as well as acceptable biological catches, annual catch limits, trip limits, essential fish habitat, etc.

For waters north of North Carolina, in response to recent catch increases the Council has already requested that NMFS take emergency action to implement a 300 pound (whole weight) commercial trip limit and a seven fish per-person recreational possession limit. This request was the result of a February 25, 2015 Council Meeting, the details of which may be found at: <http://www.mafmc.org/briefing/2015/february-2014-blueline-tilefish-webinar-meeting>. These emergency measures are intended to prevent depletion of blueline tilefish off the Mid-Atlantic on an interim basis (for a maximum of 360 days) while the Council develops long-term management measures through the normal rulemaking process. NMFS has not decided whether and/or how to respond to the Council's request.

Through the SAFMC's Amendment 32 (http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/s_atl/sg/2014/am32/), NMFS implemented a 112 pound (whole weight) commercial trip limit and a one fish per boat per trip recreational trip limit (with a limited season) for the South Atlantic management unit that extends to waters off the North Carolina/Virginia border. The SAFMC has also requested that the Amendment 32 limits be extended north for all Federal waters off the U.S. East Coast via an emergency rule. The outcome of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's and SAFMC's emergency requests was not known at the time this notice was submitted. However, because any emergency rule can only be in effect for a maximum of 360 days, the Council is moving ahead with scoping for an amendment to develop long-term management and conservation measures for blueline tilefish off the Mid-Atlantic through the normal rule-making process.

This is the first and best opportunity for members of the public to raise concerns related to the scope of issues that will be considered in the Amendment. The Council needs your input both to identify management issues and develop effective alternatives. Your comments early in the amendment development process will help us address issues of public concern in a thorough and appropriate manner. Comment topics could include the scope of issues in the amendment, concerns and potential alternatives related to blueline tilefish management, and the appropriate level of environmental analysis. Comments can be made during the scoping hearings as detailed above or in writing once the official NOI publishes. After scoping, the Council plans to develop a range of management alternatives to be

considered and prepare a draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and/or other appropriate environmental analyses. These analyses will consider the impacts of the management alternatives being considered. Following a review of any comments on the draft analyses, the Council will then choose preferred management measures for submission with a Final EIS or Environmental Assessment to the Secretary of Commerce for publishing of a proposed and then final rule, both of which have additional comment periods.

Special Accommodations

These meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aid should be directed to M. Jan Saunders, (302) 526-5251, at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.

Dated: May 12, 2015.

Tracey L. Thompson,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XD895

FY 15 Coastal Ecosystem Resiliency Grants Program

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

ACTION: Notice of funding availability.

SUMMARY: The principal objective of the National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) Coastal Ecosystem Resiliency Grants Program is to implement projects that use a proactive approach to improve or restore coastal habitat to: (1) Strengthen the resilience of our marine or coastal ecosystems to decrease the vulnerability of communities to extreme weather; and (2) support sustainable fisheries and contribute to the recovery of protected resources. See the full Coastal Ecosystem Resiliency Grants Federal Funding Opportunity (FFO), located on Grants.gov as described in the **ADDRESSES** section, for a complete description of program goals and how applications will be evaluated. Note that this funding opportunity is one of two competitions being administered by NOAA to build coastal resilience. The companion competition, the Regional

Coastal Resilience Grants Program, is being administered by NOAA's National Ocean Service to support implementation of actions that directly build resilience of U.S. coastal communities using regional approaches. The Regional Coastal Resilience Grants FFO is expected to be posted in May 2015, and may be found on www.Grants.gov.

DATES: Applications must be postmarked, provided to a delivery service, or received by www.Grants.gov by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on July 2, 2015. Use of a delivery service must be documented with a receipt. No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted. In addition, applicants are advised that they must provide approval from the State Governor as evidenced by a letter or other form of documented correspondence for the proposed project by July 31, 2015. Before awards are made, NOAA will verify that correspondence from the State Governor has been received. See also Section III.C of the Coastal Ecosystem Resiliency Grants FFO.

ADDRESSES: Complete application packages, including required Federal forms and instructions, can be found on www.Grants.gov by searching for Funding Opportunity Number NOAA–NMFS–HCPO–2015–2004410. If a prospective applicant is having difficulty downloading the application forms from www.Grants.gov, contact www.Grants.gov Customer Support at 1–800–518–4726 or support@Grants.gov.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For further information, contact Melanie Gange at (301) 427–8664, or by email at Melanie.Gange@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Statutory Authority: Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act 16 U.S.C. 661, as amended by the Reorganization Plan No. 4 of 1970; Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Reauthorization Act of 2006, 16 U.S.C. 1891a; and Endangered Species Act, 16 U.S.C. 1535.

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA): 11.463.

Program Description

As noted above, the principal objective of the Coastal Ecosystem Resiliency Grants Program is to implement projects that use a proactive approach to improve or restore coastal habitat to: (1) Strengthen the resilience of our marine and coastal ecosystems to decrease the vulnerability of communities to extreme weather; and (2) support sustainable fisheries and contribute to the recovery of protected resources. Applications should

demonstrate how the proposed project will enhance the resiliency of marine and coastal ecosystems to the impacts of extreme weather and changing environmental conditions thereby increasing community resilience and providing habitat to threatened and endangered species listed under the Endangered Species Act (hereafter, Listed Species), fish stocks managed under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (hereafter, Managed Species), or other marine and coastal species with a nexus to NMFS management (such as through the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act, Atlantic Striped Bass Conservation Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act, Coral Reef Conservation Act, or NMFS Species of Concern). Successful applications will (1) identify an issue limiting the resiliency of marine or coastal ecosystems to extreme weather events or changing environmental conditions at the proposed project site; (2) identify the proposed project's outcome goal(s) and describe in detail the actions and on-the-ground restoration to be undertaken to enhance resiliency and reduce risk and; (3) describe the measurable impact on the ecosystem, target species, and surrounding coastal communities to benefit from the proposed habitat restoration project. Applications selected for funding through this solicitation will primarily be funded through cooperative agreements.

Section IV.B. of the FFO describes the suggested information to include in the application narrative. Supplemental Guidance regarding application writing, a checklist to submit a complete application, and FAQs about this solicitation and the Regional Coastal Resilience Grants Program being administered by NOAA's National Ocean Service can be found at www.restoration.noaa.gov/partnerresources and www.habitat.noaa.gov/funding/coastalresiliency.html, respectively. Prospective applicants are strongly encouraged to contact NOAA Restoration Center staff before submitting an application to discuss their NOAA Coastal Ecosystem Resiliency project ideas with respect to technical merit and NOAA's objectives. NOAA will make every effort to respond to prospective applicants on a first come, first served basis. These discussions will not include review of draft proposals or site visits during the application period.

This funding opportunity is one of two FFOs being administered by NOAA to build coastal resilience. The

companion competition, Regional Coastal Resilience Grants Program, is being administered by NOAA's National Ocean Service to undertake activities that build resilience of coastal regions, communities, and economic sectors to the negative impacts from extreme weather events, climate hazards, and changing ocean conditions. The Regional Coastal Resilience Grants FFO is expected to be posted in May of 2015 and may be found on www.grants.gov.

Funding Availability

Total anticipated funding for all awards is up to \$4 million, subject to the availability of appropriations. NOAA anticipates typical awards will range from \$500,000 to \$1 million. NOAA will not accept applications requesting less than \$200,000 or more than \$2 million in Federal funds from NOAA under this solicitation and the exact amount of funds that may be awarded will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA. Any funds provided to successful applicants will be at the discretion of the NOAA Office of Habitat Conservation and the NOAA Grants Management Division (GMD). In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for application preparation costs if programs fail to receive funding or are cancelled because of other agency priorities. Publication of this notice does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds and there is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to make awards for all top-ranked applications. The number of awards to be made as a result of this solicitation will depend on the number of eligible applications received, the amount of funds requested for coastal ecosystem resiliency projects, and the merit and ranking of the applications.

Eligibility

Eligible applicants are institutions of higher education, non-profits, commercial (for profit) organizations, U.S. territories, and state, local and Native American tribal governments. Applications from individuals, Federal agencies, or employees of federal agencies will not be considered. Individuals and Federal agencies are strongly encouraged to work with states, non-governmental organizations, municipal and county governments, and others that are eligible to apply. In addition, NOAA will only award funds to projects that receive and demonstrate approval of the State's Governor to implement the proposed project as evidenced by a letter or other form of

documented correspondence by July 31, 2015. Funds awarded under this program must be matched with non-federal funds (cash or in-kind services) at a 2:1 ratio of Federal-to-non-federal contributions. Applications selected for funding will be bound by the percentage of cost sharing reflected in the award document signed by the NOAA Grants Officer.

Evaluation and Selection Procedures

The general evaluation criteria and selection factors that apply to full applications to this funding opportunity are summarized below. Further information about the evaluation criteria and selection factors can be found in the full FFO announcement in www.Grants.gov (Funding Opportunity Number NOAA-NMFS-HCPO-2015-2004410).

Evaluation Criteria

Reviewers will assign scores to applications ranging from 0 to 100 points based on the following five standard NOAA evaluation criteria and respective weights specified below. Applications that best address these criteria will be most competitive.

1. Importance and Applicability (35 points): This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state or local activities.

2. Technical/Scientific Merit (25 points): This criterion assesses whether the project activity or approach is technically sound, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear goals and objectives.

3. Overall Qualifications of Applicant (10 points): This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to support the proposed award.

4. Project Costs (20 points): This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project's needs and time-frame.

5. Outreach and Education (10 points): NOAA assesses whether the award can deliver a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources.

Review and Selection Process

Applications will undergo an initial administrative review to determine if they are eligible and complete, per Section III of the full FFO posted at www.Grants.gov. Eligible applications will undergo a technical review,

ranking, and selection process by three or more merit reviewers to determine how well they meet the program priorities and evaluation criteria of this solicitation and the mission and goals of NOAA. After the technical review, a panel may meet to make final recommendations to the Selecting Official (SO) regarding which applications best meet the program objectives and priorities (see Sections I.A. and I.B. of the full FFO). The SO anticipates recommending applications for funding in rank order unless an application is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the following selection factors: (1) Availability of funding; (2) Balance/distribution of funds: (a) By geographic area, (b) by type of institutions, (c) by type of partners, (d) by research areas; or (e) by project types; (3) Whether the project duplicates other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other federal agencies; (4) Program priorities and policy factors set out in section I.A. and I.B. of the FFO; (5) An applicant's prior award performance; (6) Partnerships and/or participation of targeted groups; and (7) Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to the NOAA GMD. Hence, awards may not necessarily be made to the highest-scored applications. In addition, as noted above, applicants must provide NOAA with documentation of approval from the State Governor for the proposed project by July 31, 2015 in order to receive an award. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that their application was not among those recommended for funding. Unsuccessful applications submitted in hard copy will be kept on file in accordance with NOAA records requirements and then destroyed.

Intergovernmental Review

Applications submitted under the FFO are subject to the provisions of Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Programs." Any applicant submitting an application for funding is required to complete item 16 on Form SF-424 regarding clearance by the State Single Point of Contact (SPOC). To find out about and comply with a State's process under Executive Order 12372, the names, addresses and phone numbers of participating SPOC's are listed on the Office of Management and Budget's home page at: http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants_spoc.

Limitation of Liability

In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs if these programs fail to receive funding or are cancelled because of other agency priorities. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

National Environmental Policy Act

NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals which are seeking NOAA federal funding opportunities. Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, and under their description of their program activities, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist. Applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting of an environmental assessment, or in identifying and implementing feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for not selecting an application. Further details regarding NOAA's compliance with NEPA can be found in the full Federal Funding Opportunity.

The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements

The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the **Federal Register** notice of December 30, 2014 (79 FR 78390) are applicable to this solicitation.

Paperwork Reduction Act

This document contains collection-of-information requirements subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA). The use of Standard Forms 424, 424A, 424B, and SF-LLL and CD-346 has been approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under the respective control numbers 0348-0043, 0348-0044, 0348-0040, 0348-0046, and 0605-0001. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person is required to, nor shall a person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with, a collection of information subject to the requirements of the PRA unless that collection of information displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Executive Order 12866

This notice has been determined to be not significant for purposes of Executive Order 12866.

Executive Order 13132 (Federalism)

It has been determined that this notice does not contain policies with implications as that term is defined in Executive Order 13132.

**Administrative Procedure Act/
Regulatory Flexibility Act**

Prior notices and an opportunity for public comment are not required by the Administrative Procedure Act or any other law for rules concerning public property, loans, grants, benefits, and contracts (5 U.S.C. 553(a)(2)). Because notice and opportunity for comment are not required pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553 or any other law, the analytical requirements for the Regulatory Flexibility Act (5 U.S.C. 601 *et seq.*) are inapplicable. Therefore, a regulatory flexibility analysis has not been prepared.

Frederick C. Sutter,

*Director, Office of Habitat Conservation,
National Marine Fisheries Service.*

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

RIN 0648-XD870

**Takes of Marine Mammals Incidental to
Specified Activities; Taking Marine
Mammals Incidental to Shallow
Geohazard Survey in the Beaufort Sea,
Alaska**

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

ACTION: Notice; proposed incidental harassment authorization; request for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS received an application from Hilcorp Alaska, LLC. (Hilcorp) for an Incidental Harassment Authorization (IHA) to take marine mammals, by harassment, incidental to shallow geohazard survey in the Beaufort Sea, Alaska. Pursuant to the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), NMFS is requesting comments on its proposal to issue an IHA to Hilcorp to take, by Level B harassment only, 6 species of marine mammals during the specified activity.

DATES: Comments and information must be received no later than June 15, 2015.

ADDRESSES: Comments on the application should be addressed to Jolie Harrison, Chief, Permits and Conservation Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910. The mailbox address for providing email comments is ITP.Guan@noaa.gov. NMFS is not responsible for email comments sent to addresses other than the one provided here. Comments sent via email, including all attachments, must not exceed a 10-megabyte file size.

Instructions: All comments received are a part of the public record and will generally be posted to <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/permits/incidental.htm> without change. All Personal Identifying Information (for example, name, address, etc.) voluntarily submitted by the commenter may be publicly accessible. Do not submit Confidential Business Information or otherwise sensitive or protected information.

A copy of the application, which contains several attachments, including Hilcorp's marine mammal mitigation and monitoring plan (4MP), used in this document may be obtained by writing to the address specified above, telephoning the contact listed below (see **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**), or visiting the Internet at: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/permits/incidental.htm>. Documents cited in this notice may also be viewed, by appointment, during regular business hours, at the aforementioned address.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Shane Guan, 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].

Summary of Request

On December 1, 2014, NMFS received an application from Hilcorp for the taking of marine mammals incidental to shallow geohazard surveys in the Beaufort Sea. After receiving NMFS comments, Hilcorp submitted a revised IHA application on January 5, 2015. In addition, Hilcorp submitted a 4MP on January 21, 2015. NMFS determined that the application was adequate and complete on February 9, 2015.

The proposed activity would occur between July 1 and September 30, 2015. The actual survey is expected to be complete in 45 days, including weather and equipment downtime. Underwater noises generated from the sonar used for the survey are likely to result Level B harassment of individuals of 6 species of marine mammals.

Description of the Specified Activity**Overview**

Hilcorp plans to conduct a shallow geohazard survey and Strudel Scour survey with a transition zone component on state lands, and in federal and state waters of Foggy Island Bay in the Beaufort Sea during the open water season of 2015. The scope of this request is limited to the activities that will be conducted during the 2015 open water evaluation of the proposed Liberty field development.

Dates and Duration

Hilcorp seeks incidental harassment authorization for the period July 1 to September 30, 2015. The survey is expected to take approximately 45 days