

Management Council, 50 Water Street, Mill 2, Newburyport, MA 01950; telephone (978) 465-0492.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Paul J. Howard, Executive Director, New England Fishery Management Council, (978) 465-0492.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Tuesday, February 1, 2005

Following introductions, the Council will receive reports from the Council Chairman and Executive Director, the NMFS Regional Administrator, Northeast Fisheries Science Center and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council liaisons, NOAA General Counsel and representatives of the U.S. Coast Guard, NMFS Enforcement and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. The Council will review the Skate Plan Development Team's annual report on the status of the Northeast skate complex, in the context of recent management actions. The Scallop Committee report will occur before the lunch break and will include consideration of a modification to the "broken trip" limit rules in the Sea Scallop Fishery Management Plan. The Council will take final action on Framework Adjustment 17 to the FMP, which includes alternatives that would require some or all vessels with general category scallop permits to carry and operate vessel monitoring system equipment.

Wednesday, February 2, 2005

During the Wednesday morning session, the Council will receive a report from its Research Steering Committee concerning 2005 research priorities and recommendations on NOAA Fisheries experimental fishery permit process and related issues. A Groundfish Committee report will follow, to include a schedule for preparation of the next framework adjustment to the Northeast Multispecies FMP, as well as a list of issues to be addressed; consideration of initial action on a measure to remedy the disapproval of the participation of non-sector vessels in the Closed Area I Hook Gear Haddock Special Access Program; discussion of fishing vessel safety issues relative to the Multispecies FMP; and possible action on planning for the 2005 groundfish assessment updates and independent peer review. The status of the monkfish resource will be addressed at a Stock Assessment Public Review Workshop late in the afternoon on Wednesday.

Thursday, February 3, 2005

The morning session will begin with a summary of the January 5 Council

Executive Committee meeting. Subjects to be covered will include recommendations for a course of action on the recent groundfish/lobster gear conflict, a draft Council conservation and management strategy (including a policy for Special Access Programs), joint fishery management plans and a briefing on the New England Fleet Visioning Project. The Habitat Committee chairman will provide an update on the EFH Omnibus Amendment t2. Council staff will give a presentation on a pilot project to develop ecosystem approaches to fisheries management. Any other outstanding business will be addressed at the end of the day, following the Bycatch Committee Report. That committee will forward recommendations concerning potential actions to reduce the bycatch of the 2003 year class of haddock in various fisheries.

Although other non-emergency issues not contained in this agenda may come before this Council for discussion, those issues may not be the subjects of formal action during this meeting. Council action will be restricted to those issues specifically listed in this notice and any issues arising after publication of this notice that require emergency action under section 305(c) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, provided that the public has been notified of the Council's intent to take final action to address the emergency.

Special Accommodations

This meeting is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Paul J. Howard (see **ADDRESSES**) at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.

Dated: January 10, 2005.

Alan D. Risenhoover,
Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.
[FR Doc. E5-121 Filed 1-12-05; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 010705C]

Western Pacific Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting and Hearing

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

ACTION: Notice of public meeting/public hearing.

SUMMARY: The Western Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) will meet by conference call in January 2005. During the meeting the Council will consider revising the regulatory amendment under the Fishery Management Plan for Pelagic Fisheries of the Western Pacific concerning measures to conserve sea turtles. The Council will also consider whether certain exemptions from the use of long-handled dehookers should be provided for particular small longliners when fishing north of the equator. More specific agenda topics are provided under the **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** section of this notice.

DATES: The Council meeting will be held on January 26, 2005, beginning at 1 p.m. Hawaii-Aleutian standard time and concluding when all business items have concluded. The public hearing will be held during the Council meeting to give the public opportunity to comment.

ADDRESSES: The Council will meet via conference call. The public is invited to participate at the Council office: 1164 Bishop Street, Suite 1400, Honolulu, HI 96813; telephone: (808) 522-8220; fax: 808-522-8226.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Kitty M. Simonds, Executive Director; telephone: 808-522-8220.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

At its 123rd meeting, the Council took final action and recommended that the requirements summarized under Agenda Topics (below) be implemented by a regulatory amendment under the Fishery Management Plan for Pelagic Fisheries of the Western Pacific containing additional measures to conserve sea turtles.

Agenda Topics

1. Operators and owners of longline vessels operating under general permits (vessels registered to general longline permits and those that in the future will be registered to American Samoa limited access longline permits) must annually attend a NMFS Protected Species Workshop - with consideration of mechanisms for remote attendance.

2. Longline vessels operating under general permits must carry and use dip nets, line clippers, and bolt cutters and follow resuscitation and release guidelines for accidentally caught turtles - with an exemption for small longliners (those with a freeboard of 3 feet (0.91 meters) or less) from the requirement to carry and use long-handled line clippers.

3. Non-longline fishing vessels targeting Pacific pelagic management unit species with hooks must remove trailing gear from accidentally caught turtles and follow turtle resuscitation and release guidelines, wherever they fish.

4. Longline vessels operating under general permits must use circle hooks, mackerel-type bait and dehookers, when shallow-setting north of the equator.

During the preparation of an upcoming proposed rule for the regulatory amendment, it was noted that the amendment's text would require turtle handling practices by operators of non-longline pelagic fishing vessels as described in 50 CFR 223.206(d)(1)(i), (ii) and (iii). However the most recent Biological Opinion (BiOp) issued by NMFS for the Western Pacific Pelagic Fisheries on February 24, 2004, directs that these vessel operators use the handling practices described in 50 CFR 660.32(c) and (d), in addition to those described in 50 CFR 223.206(d)(1)(iii). Although the differences are minor, the Council intends to consider revising the regulatory amendment's text to reflect the latter practices so as to be consistent with the February 2004 BiOp.

The Council's regulatory amendment would also require operators of all longline vessels to carry and use long-handled dehookers to release turtles, when fishing north of the equator. Small longliners are exempted from using long-handled line clippers based on concerns that using long-handled line clippers on these small vessels would be unwieldy and could pose a hazard to sea turtles. The Council will therefore consider whether a similar exemption from the use of long-handled dehookers should be provided for these small longliners when fishing north of the equator.

A public hearing will be held during the Council meeting to give the public opportunity to comment before the Council takes action on this agenda item.

Other Business

Although non-emergency issues not contained in this agenda may come before the Council for discussion, those issues may not be the subject of formal Council action during this meeting. Council action will be restricted to those issues specifically listed in this document and to any issue arising after publication of this document that requires emergency action under section 305(c) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, provided that the public has been notified of the Council's intent to take final action to address the emergency.

Special Accommodations

This meeting is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Kitty M. Simonds (see **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**) at least five days prior to the meeting date.

Dated: January 10, 2005.

Alan D. Risenhoover,
Acting Director, Office of Sustainable
Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.
[FR Doc. E5-132 Filed 1-12-05; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 010705B]

Marine Mammals; File Nos. 1072-1771 and 540-1502

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

ACTION: Issuance of permit and permit amendment.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given of the following actions: Dr. Colleen Reichmuth Kastak, Long Marine Laboratory, Institute of Marine Science, University of California at Santa Cruz, 100 Schaffer Road, Santa Cruz, CA 95060, has been issued a scientific research permit (No. 1072-1771-00); and John Calambokidis, Cascadia Research Collective, 218 1/2 West Fourth Avenue, Olympia, WA 98501, has been issued an amendment to scientific research Permit No. 540-1502-00.

ADDRESSES: The permit, permit amendment, and related documents are available for review upon written request or by appointment in the following office(s):

File Nos. 1072-1771 and 540-1502: Permits, Conservation and Education Division, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13705, Silver Spring, MD 20910; phone (301)713-2289; fax (301)713-0376;

File No. 540-1502: Northwest Region, NMFS, 7600 Sand Point Way NE, BIN C15700, Bldg. 1, Seattle, WA 98115-0700; phone (206)526-6150; fax (206)526-6426; and

File Nos. 1072-1771 and 540-1502: Southwest Region, NMFS, 501 West Ocean Blvd., Suite 4200, Long Beach, CA 90802-4213; phone (562)980-4001; fax (562)980-4018.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Amy Sloan or Tammy Adams,
(301)713-2289.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Permit No. 1072-1771-00 has been issued 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).

Permit No. 1072-1771 authorizes continued research designed to evaluate hearing sensitivity, memory, and learning capabilities of up to seven captive pinnipeds (three California sea lions, *Zalophus californianus*; two Pacific harbor seals, *Phoca vitulina*; and two Northern elephant seals, *Mirounga angustirostris*).

The permit amendment (No. 540-1502-01) has been granted under the authority of the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, as amended (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 222-226), and the Fur Seal Act of 1966, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1151 *et seq.*).

The amendment extends the expiration date of the permit from November 30, 2004 to November 30, 2005. No additional takes have been authorized. Mr. Calambokidis is authorized to (1) conduct aerial surveys to determine the abundance and distribution of marine mammals off the coasts of California, Oregon, and Washington; (2) conduct vessel surveys and photographic identification activities to determine the abundance, movements, and population structure of large whales in the North Pacific; (3) collect skin biopsies to determine sex, relatedness, and evaluate stock structure of large whales, especially blue and humpback whales; and (4) conduct tagging activities to examine the diving behavior, feeding, and movements of large whales.

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 activities proposed are categorically excluded from the requirement to prepare an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement.

Issuance of the permit amendment (No. 540-1502-01) as required by the ESA, was based on a finding that such permit amendment: (1) was applied for in good faith; (2) will not operate to the