

In the past, new research priorities were developed and reviewed by the Council's four stock assessment plan teams, the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), and ultimately the Council, with public input provided at those plan team, SSC, and Council meetings. Going forward, the Council would like receive input and suggestions from the public early in the process of developing new research priorities and is now soliciting input from the public through this request for information (RFI).

Opportunities for the public to suggest research priorities will occur through October 31, 2023, using either the online submission form or the "Comment Now" option available on the Council's eAgenda meeting portal at "Request for Information: Research Priorities Triennial Review." Initial reviews of the submissions will begin in early November 2023 and are expected to continue through early 2024. The document, "Proposed Process for Development of NPFMC Research Priorities," <https://meetings.npfmc.org/CommentReview/DownloadFile?p=fb8df4b1-60d4-47e8-afbf-cf20690b1d93.pdf&fileName=Research%20Priorities%20Process.pdf>, includes additional information regarding the process for research priority development.

The most recent Council research priorities from the April 2021 Research Priorities Triennial Review can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/April-2021-Research-Priorities>.

Council research priority terms and category definitions (critical ongoing monitoring, urgent, important, or strategic) can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/terms-and-category-definitions>.

Request for Information

The scope of public comments is not limited, but questions that may be considered include:

1. Description of suggested research priority for the Council to consider;
2. Description of the fisheries management concern addressed by the suggested research priority;
3. Category of the suggested research priority: critical ongoing monitoring, urgent, important, or strategic;
4. General subject area of suggested research priority: Bering Sea groundfish; Gulf of Alaska groundfish; crab; scallop; halibut; ecosystem related; habitat; local knowledge, traditional knowledge, subsistence; marine birds; marine mammals; bycatch; electronic monitoring; management or policy; or other;

5. Geographical (ecosystem) area that best fits suggested research priority: Bering Sea, Aleutian Islands, Gulf of Alaska, or Arctic; and,

6. Approximate timeline of the suggested research priority.

All new research priority recommendations must be submitted by October 31, 2023, to be considered during this upcoming triennial review. In addition to submitting research priority ideas as part of this request for information, the public will have the opportunity to provide comments to subject area Plan Teams and a subgroup of the Council's SSC. These advisory bodies will meet, tentatively between November 2023 and January 2024, to provide the SSC input on prioritizing specific research needs. Additional opportunities to provide comment on prioritization will occur at the February 2024 SSC meeting and at the April 2024 SSC and Council meetings; however, no new research priority submissions will be accepted during the Plan Team, SSC, and Council meetings. During the April 2024 SSC meeting, a priority list combined across subject areas, consisting of 8 to 12 research priorities, will be developed to present to the Council for the Council's consideration. Once the review is final, the Council will submit its research priorities to the Secretary of Commerce (NOAA) and the AFSC for their consideration in developing research priorities and budgets for the Alaska Region (16 U.S.C. 1852(h)(7)(C)).

Public Comment

Responses to this request are voluntary. Respondents need not reply to all questions. All responses are part of the public record and will be posted on a public website. Therefore, confidential business information, copyrighted information, or personally identifiable information (e.g., name, address) should not be submitted in response to this request. NOAA and the Council will not pay for any information or administrative costs that you may incur in responding to this RFI, or for the use of any information contained in the response. The documents and information submitted in response to this RFI become the property of the U.S. Government and will not be returned.

Dated: July 10, 2023.

Kelly Denit,

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

[FR Doc. 2023-14924 Filed 7-13-23; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Finding of No Significant Impact and Final Environmental Assessment for the Funding, Procurement, and Operation of NOAA Small Uncrewed Aircraft Systems

AGENCY: Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce (DOC).

ACTION: Notice of issuance and availability.

SUMMARY: NOAA's Uncrewed Systems Research Transition Office (UxSRTO) in OAR announces the issuance and availability of a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) and a Final Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Funding, Procurement, and Operation of NOAA Small Uncrewed Aircraft Systems (UAS). The environmental review process led us to conclude that the proposed action will not have a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.

ADDRESSES: The Final EA and FONSI are available online at <https://orta.research.noaa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/PEA-for-NOAA-Small-UAS-and-FONSI-Signed-May-2023.pdf>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Bryan Cole, Director, NOAA Uncrewed Systems Research Transition Office Email: bryan.cole@noaa.gov or (831) 601-2107.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: A draft of the EA was published in the **Federal Register** (88 FR 9872) for a 30-day comment period, from February 15, 2023 to March 17, 2023. No comments were received. The proposed action analyzed in the EA is the funding, procurement, and operation of small UAS platforms in any environment for which NOAA has a mission and potential need for UAS resources to help meet related mission objectives.

For purposes of the assessment, the use of the term "small UAS" follows suit with the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) definition of "small unmanned aircraft" (14 CFR 107.3), which weigh "less than 55 pounds on takeoff, including everything that is on board or otherwise attached to the aircraft". The geographic scope of the action area includes the airspace ranging from just above the surface (for launch and recovery), extending upward to an operational altitude of

approximately 400 ft above ground level (AGL) for a majority of applications, but may also include operational altitudes up to as high as 100,000 ft mean sea level (MSL) for a few others.

The analysis in the EA is at a programmatic level, and it evaluates the potential environmental consequences from a broad perspective (*i.e.*, multiple types of small UAS platforms used to supplement, enhance, or replace a variety of existing methods of data collection). The EA specifies procedures for confirming that the impacts of site-specific actions considered pursuant to the proposed action are consistent with predictions for the proposed action.

In all applicable scenarios reviewed, the proposed action would yield no more than negligible impacts to any specific resource, and would not result in significant impacts overall.

The EA and FONSI were prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*) and Council on Environmental Quality implementing regulations (40 CFR parts 1500–1508), as well as NOAA's procedures for compliance with NEPA as specified in the Companion Manual to NOAA Administrative Order 216–6A.

David Holst,

Chief Financial Officer/Administrative Officer, Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

[FR Doc. 2023–14951 Filed 7–13–23; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648–XD031]

Takes of Marine Mammals Incidental to Specified Activities; Taking Marine Mammals Incidental to City of Cordova Harbor Rebuild Project, Cordova, Alaska

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

ACTION: Notice; proposed incidental harassment authorizations; request for comments on proposed authorizations and possible renewal.

SUMMARY: NMFS has received a request from the City of Cordova (Cordova) for authorization to take marine mammals incidental to the pile driving and removal activities over two years associated with the Cordova Harbor

rebuild project in Cordova, Alaska. Pursuant to the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), NMFS is requesting comments on its proposal to issue two incidental harassment authorizations (IHAs) to incidentally take marine mammals during the specified activities. NMFS is also requesting comments on possible one-time, one-year renewals for each IHA that could be issued under certain circumstances and if all requirements are met, as described in Request for Public Comments at the end of this notice. NMFS will consider public comments prior to making any final decision on the issuance of the requested MMPA authorizations and agency responses will be summarized in the final notice of our decision.

DATES: Comments and information must be received no later than August 14, 2023.

ADDRESSES: Comments should be addressed to Jolie Harrison, Chief, Permits and Conservation Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service and should be submitted via email to ITP.wachtendonk@noaa.gov. Electronic copies of the application and supporting documents, as well as a list of the references cited in this document, may be obtained online at: www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/marine-mammal-protection/incidental-take-authorizations-construction-activities. In case of problems accessing these documents, please call the contact listed above.

Instructions: NMFS is not responsible for comments sent by any other method, to any other address or individual, or received after the end of the comment period. Comments, including all attachments, must not exceed a 25-megabyte file size. All comments received are a part of the public record and will generally be posted online at www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/marine-mammal-protection/incidental-take-authorizations-construction-activities without change. All personal identifying information (*e.g.*, name, address) voluntarily submitted by the commenter may be publicly accessible. Do not submit confidential business information or otherwise sensitive or protected information.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Rachel Wachtendonk, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, (301) 427–8401.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The MMPA prohibits the “take” of marine mammals, with certain

exceptions. Sections 101(a)(5)(A) and (D) of the MMPA (16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*) direct the Secretary of Commerce (as delegated to NMFS) 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 proposed or, if the taking is limited to harassment, a notice of a proposed IHA is provided to the public for review.

Authorization for incidental takings shall be granted if NMFS finds that the taking will have a negligible impact on the species or stock(s) and will not have an unmitigable adverse impact on the availability of the species or stock(s) for taking for subsistence uses (where relevant). Further, NMFS must prescribe the permissible methods of taking and other “means of effecting the least practicable adverse impact” on the affected species or stocks and their habitat, paying particular attention to rookeries, mating grounds, and areas of similar significance, and on the availability of the species or stocks for taking for certain subsistence uses (referred to in shorthand as “mitigation”); and requirements pertaining to the mitigation, monitoring and reporting of the takings are set forth. The definitions of all applicable MMPA statutory terms cited above are included in the relevant sections below.

National Environmental Policy Act

To comply with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA; 42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*) and NOAA Administrative Order (NAO) 216–6A, NMFS must review our proposed action (*i.e.*, the issuance of an IHA) with respect to potential impacts on the human environment.

This action is consistent with categories of activities identified in Categorical Exclusion B4 (IHAs with no anticipated serious injury or mortality) of the Companion Manual for NOAA Administrative Order 216–6A, which do not individually or cumulatively have the potential for significant impacts on the quality of the human environment and for which we have not identified any extraordinary circumstances that would preclude this categorical exclusion. Accordingly, NMFS has preliminarily determined that the issuance of the proposed IHA qualifies to be categorically excluded from further NEPA review.

We will review all comments submitted in response to this notice prior to concluding our NEPA process