

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 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 original permit application (file no. 1049–1718) was published in the **Federal Register** on July 18, 2003 (68 FR 42689) and requested a five-year scientific research permit to assess life history parameters of humpback whales, killer whales (*Orcinus orca*), sperm whales (*Physeter macrocephalus*), fin whales, sei whales (*Balaenoptera borealis*), minke whales (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*), and gray whales (*Eschrichtius robustus*). Requested takes included photo-identification, behavioral observation, passive acoustic recording, biopsy sampling, incidental harassment, and collection and/or export of dead parts from the following prey species during killer whale predation studies: humpback, gray, minke, sei, fin and sperm whales, harbor porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*), Dall's porpoise (*Phocoenoides dalli*), harbor seals (*Phoca vitulina*), Pacific white-sided dolphins (*Lagenorhynchus obliquidens*), Northern fur seals (*Callorhinus ursinus*), and Steller sea lions (*Eumetopias jubatus*). All research will take place in Alaskan waters.

The applicant has now amended the application to add a request for 60 annual takes of humpback whales and 60 annual takes of fin whales through the attachment of VHF and TDR tags by suction cup. The applicant has also requested an increase of 270 annual takes by incidental harassment of these two species during tagging activities. In addition, skin cells retained by the suction cup after its release from the whale will be collected for genetic analyses. The newly requested takes are in addition to the takes already requested in the original application and outlined in the paragraph above.

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

Dated: March 3, 2004.

Stephen L. Leathery,

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

[FR Doc. 04–5292 Filed 3–8–04; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 030404B]

Strategic Plan for Fisheries Research (2004)

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

ACTION: Notice of availability.

SUMMARY: The NMFS announces the availability of the Strategic Plan for Fisheries Research (2004). The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSFCMA) requires the Secretary of Commerce to develop, triennially, a strategic plan for fisheries research for the subsequent 5 years.

ADDRESSES: Requests for copies of the NMFS Strategic Plan for Fisheries Research (2004) should be directed to Mark Chandler, Research, Analysis, and Coordination Division, Office of Science and Technology, NMFS, NOAA, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Phone: (301) 713–2363. Fax: (301) 713–1875.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mark Chandler at 301–713–2363 ext. 152. e-mail: Mark.Chandler@noaa.gov

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Electronic Access

The NMFS Strategic Plan for Fisheries Research (2004) may be viewed in its entirety on the World Wide Web at <http://www.st.nmfs.gov/st2/index.html>. Section 404 of the MSFCMA requires the Secretary of Commerce to publish in the **Federal Register** a strategic plan for fisheries research for the 5 years immediately following its publication. The MSFCMA requires that the plan address four major areas of research: (1) Research to support fishery conservation and management; (2) conservation engineering research; (3) research on the fisheries; and (4) information management research. The MSFCMA specifies that the plan shall contain a limited number of priority objectives for each of these research areas; indicate goals and timetables; provide a role for commercial fishermen

in such research; provide for collection and dissemination of complete and accurate information concerning fishing activities; and be developed in cooperation with the Councils and affected states.

This plan is based upon and entirely consistent with the overarching NOAA Fisheries Strategic Plan (NFSP) recently released in July 2003. The objectives under each goal in the NMFS Strategic Plan for Fisheries Research (2004) correspond to strategies in the NFSP.

The scope of the NMFS Strategic Plan for Fisheries Research (2004) is solely fisheries research to support the MSFCMA. It does not include the regulatory and enforcement components of the NMFS' mission. The NMFS currently conducts a comprehensive program of fisheries research and involves industry and others interested in fisheries in planning and implementing its objectives.

Dated: March 4, 2004.

William Fox, Jr.,

Director, Office of Science and Technology, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Notice of Proposed Information Collection Requests

AGENCY: Department of Education.

SUMMARY: The Leader, Regulatory Information Management Group, Office of the Chief Information Officer, invites comments on the proposed information collection requests as required by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995.

DATES: Interested persons are invited to submit comments on or before May 10, 2004.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Section 3506 of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. Chapter 35) requires that the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) provide interested Federal agencies and the public an early opportunity to comment on information collection requests. OMB may amend or waive the requirement for public consultation to the extent that public participation in the approval process would defeat the purpose of the information collection, violate State or Federal law, or substantially interfere with any agency's ability to perform its statutory obligations. The Leader, Regulatory Information Management Group, Office of the Chief Information Officer, publishes that notice containing proposed information collection requests prior to submission of these