

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

RIN 0648–XD666

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC); Public Meeting

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

ACTION: Notice of public meeting.

SUMMARY: The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) will receive an overview from the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) about their geological and geophysical (G&G) permitting process in the Atlantic, focusing on regulations and the permitted activities for G&G surveys.

DATES: The meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 20, 2015, from 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. EST, via Internet Webinar.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held via Internet Webinar. To join the Webinar, follow this link and enter the online meeting room: <http://mafmc.adobeconnect.com/januaryboem/>

Council address: Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, 800 North State Street, Suite 201, Dover, DE 19901, telephone: (302) 674–2331.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. Christopher M. Moore, Executive Director, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council; telephone: (302) 526–5255.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: BOEM will give a presentation to the Council that provides an overview of the geological and geophysical (G&G) permitting process in the Atlantic, focusing on regulations and the permitted activities for G&G surveys. BOEM will outline what is included in a complete permit and discuss the coordination process. The outline will also go through the National Environmental Policy Act and internal environmental review processes and discuss the related consultation and coordination, and finally touch on mitigation and operations monitoring. BOEM staff will be available to answer any questions following the presentation.

Special Accommodations

This meeting is accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aid should be directed to

Kathy Collins, (302) 526–5253, at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.

Dated: December 23, 2014.

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–XC228

Takes of Marine Mammals Incidental to Specified Activities; Taking Marine Mammals Incidental to Operation, Maintenance, and Repair of the Northeast Gateway Liquefied Natural Gas Port and the Algonquin Pipeline Lateral Facilities in Massachusetts Bay

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

ACTION: Notice; issuance of an incidental take authorization.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) regulations, notification is hereby given that NMFS has issued an Incidental Harassment Authorization (IHA) to the Northeast Gateway® Energy Bridge™, L.P. (Northeast Gateway or NEG) and Algonquin Gas Transmission, L.L.C. (Algonquin) to take, by harassment, small numbers of 14 species of marine mammals incidental to operating, maintaining, and repairing a liquefied natural gas (LNG) port and the Algonquin Pipeline Lateral (Pipeline Lateral) facilities by NEG and Algonquin, in Massachusetts Bay, between December 22, 2014, through December 21, 2015.

DATES: Effective December 22, 2014, through December 21, 2015.

ADDRESSES: A copy of the original and revised application containing a list of the references used in this document, The Maritime Administration (MARAD), U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) Final Environmental Impact Statement (Final EIS) on the Northeast Gateway Energy Bridge LNG Deepwater Port license application, and other related documents are available for viewing at <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/permits/incidental.htm#applications>.

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

Background

Sections 101(a)(5)(A)(D) of the MMPA (16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*) direct the Secretary of Commerce (Secretary) to allow, upon request, the incidental, but not intentional taking 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 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.”

Section 101(a)(5)(D) of the MMPA established an expedited process by which citizens of the U.S. can apply for a one-year authorization to incidentally take small numbers of marine mammals by harassment, provided that there is no potential for serious injury or mortality to result from the activity. Section 101(a)(5)(D) establishes a 45-day time limit for NMFS review of an application followed by a 30-day public notice and comment period on any proposed authorizations for the incidental harassment of marine mammals. Within 45 days of the close of the comment period, NMFS must either issue or deny the authorization.

Summary of Request

On January 18, 2013, NMFS received an application from Excelerate and Tetra Tech, on behalf of Northeast Gateway and Algonquin, for an authorization to take 14 species of marine mammals by Level B harassment incidental to operations, maintenance, and repair of an LNG port and the Pipeline Lateral facilities in Massachusetts Bay. They are: North Atlantic right whale, humpback whale, fin whale, sei whale, minke whale, long-finned pilot whale, Atlantic white-sided dolphin, bottlenose dolphin, short-beaked common dolphin, killer whale, Risso’s dolphin, harbor porpoise, harbor