

the above address. All responses to this notice will be summarized and included in the request for OMB approval. All comments will also become a matter of public record.

OMB is required to make a decision concerning the collection(s) of information contained in these proposed regulations between 30 and 60 days after publication of this document in the **Federal Register**. Therefore, a comment to OMB is best assured of having its full effect if OMB receives it within 30 days of publication.

Signed at Washington, DC, on September 21, 1997.

Bruce R. Weber,

Acting Executive Vice President, Commodity Credit Corporation.

[FR Doc. 97-25674 Filed 9-26-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-05-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Economic Development Administration

Notice of Petitions by Producing Firms for Determination of Eligibility To Apply for Trade Adjustment Assistance

AGENCY: Economic Development Administration (EDA), Commerce.

ACTION: To give firms an opportunity to comment.

Petitions have been accepted for filing on the dates indicated from the firms listed below.

LIST OF PETITION ACTION BY TRADE ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE FOR PERIOD 08/21/97-09/17/97

| Firm name | Address | Date Petition Accepted | Project |
|---|---|------------------------|---|
| Voorwood Company | 2350 Barney Street, Anderson, CA 96007 | 08/21/97 | Woodworking and Finishing Equipment. |
| Freeway Corporation | 9301 Allen Drive Cleveland, OH 44125 ... | 08/22/97 | Steel Roller Bearings Assemblies, Washers, and Dimension Stampings. |
| Catahoula Manufacturing, Inc. | 2901 Fourth Street, Jonesville, LA 71343 | 08/25/97 | Fishing Nets. |
| Overhoff Technology Corporation | 1160 U.S. Route 50, Milford, OH 45150 .. | 09/02/97 | Tritium Monitors. |
| New Bedford Panoramex Corporation | 1037 West Ninth Street, Upland, CA 91786. | 09/03/97 | Airfield Navigation Systems. |
| Granite Knitwear, Inc. | P.O. Box 498, Granite Quarry, NC 28072 | 09/08/97 | Tee Shirts for Adults and Youth. |
| Hauser Corporation | 3265 Blue Heron View, Macedon, NY 14502. | 09/08/97 | Auto Transmission Parts and Cases, Auto Gear parts, Water Pump housings, and Misc. Metal parts. |
| Greg Arceneaux Cabinetmakers | 67230 Industry Lane, Covington, LA 70433. | 09/09/97 | Wooden Furniture. |
| Perfect Measuring Tape Company (The) | 1116 Summit Street, Toledo, OH 43604 .. | 09/12/97 | Printed Paper Measuring Tape and Tape Dispensers. |
| Dacor Corporation | 161 Northfield Road, Northfield, IL 60093 | 09/12/97 | Regulators for Scuba diving, Diving instruments for calculating depth, direction, time, etc. |
| Merrick Industries, Inc. | 10 Arthur Drive, Lynn Haven, FL 32444 .. | 09/15/97 | Scales for Continuous Weighing of Goods on conveyors. |
| Alloy Trailers, Inc. | P.O. Box 19208, Spokane, WA 99219 | 09/16/97 | Truck Trailer and Related parts. |

The petitions were submitted pursuant to Section 251 of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C. 2341). Consequently, the United States Department of Commerce has initiated separate investigations to determine whether increased imports into the United States of articles like or directly competitive with those produced by each firm contributed importantly to total or partial separation of the firm's workers, or threat thereof, and to a decrease in sales or production of each petitioning firm.

Any party having a substantial interest in the proceedings may request a public hearing on the matter. A request for a hearing must be received by Trade Adjustment Assistance, Room 7315, Economic Development Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce, Washington, D.C. 20230, no later than the close of business of the

tenth calendar day following the publication of this notice.

The Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance official program number and title of the program under which these petitions are submitted is 11.313, Trade Adjustment Assistance.

Dated: September 19, 1997.

Anthony J. Meyer,

Coordinator, Trade Adjustment and Technical Assistance.

[FR Doc. 97-25714 Filed 9-26-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-24-M

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 091297A]

Marine Mammals; Pinniped Removal Authority

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

ACTION: Notice of extension of letter of authorization.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces approval of a 4-year extension to the Letter of Authorization (LOA) to the State of Washington for the lethal removal of individually identifiable California sea lions that are having significant negative impact on the status and recovery of winter steelhead that migrate through

the Ballard Locks in Seattle, WA. This action is authorized under Section 120 of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA).

ADDRESSES: A copy of the LOA may be obtained by writing to William Stelle, Jr., Administrator, Northwest Region, NMFS, 7600 Sand Point Way NE, Seattle, WA 98115, or to Michael Payne, Chief, Marine Mammal Division, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Joe Scordino (206) 526-6143, or Tom Eagle (301) 713-2322.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Pursuant to Section 120(b) of the MMPA, NMFS initially issued a 3-year Letter of Authorization (LOA) that was valid through June 30, 1997, to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) for the lethal removal of California sea lions that are having significant negative impact on the status and recovery of winter steelhead that migrate through the Ballard Locks in Seattle, WA. Information on Washington's application for lethal removal, the process for considering the application which included formation of a Pinniped-Fishery Task Force (Task Force), and the terms and conditions of the LOA issued to WDFW were published in the **Federal Register** on August 2, 1994 (59 FR 39325), September 27, 1994 (59 FR 49234), January 19, 1995 (60 FR 3841), August 15, 1995 (60 FR 42146), March 26, 1996 (61 FR 13153), and August 26, 1996 (61 FR 43737). Background information on the sea lion-steelhead conflict at the Ballard Locks and findings on the environmental consequences of issuance of the LOA are provided in two Environmental Assessments prepared by NMFS in 1995 and 1996 (available from **ADDRESSES**).

On October 10, 1996, the State of Washington requested that NMFS extend the LOA for an additional 8 years (with a new expiration date of June 30, 2005) citing a need to manage the problem of sea lion predation on winter steelhead beyond June 30, 1997.

The Task Force, which met in September 1996, also submitted a report to NMFS dated October 29, 1996, that recommended the LOA be extended because insufficient time had passed to evaluate the success of management actions at Ballard Locks. The majority of Task Force members recommended that the LOA be extended for 4 years.

Notice of the State's request and the Task Force recommendations and a request for public comments was published in the **Federal Register** on

June 19, 1997 (62 FR 33396). The public comment period closed on July 21, 1997, and seven written comments were received. Five commenters supported an extension of the LOA and two opposed it. A summary of the comments received and responses to the comments is as follows.

Comment 1: Five commenters recommended extension of the LOA for 8 years to provide protection for two steelhead life cycles. One commenter recommended 8 years or until some significant change in status of the steelhead or the sea lions occurs. One commenter stated that 8 years would allow the steelhead stock two full cycles in their rebuilding process and allow time to measure the full benefit of changes which are ongoing at the Locks. Two commenters felt 8 years was a more reasonable time to determine the effectiveness of the program to protect steelhead from sea lions and to determine the success of WDFW efforts regarding steelhead recovery. Another stated that lethal removal of sea lions by WDFW for the next 8 years is needed to preserve and enhance the steelhead run through the Locks.

Response: NMFS agrees that there is a need to extend the LOA in order to continue protecting and enhancing the winter steelhead population and to allow sufficient time to evaluate the effectiveness of lethal removal. NMFS has determined, however, that a 4-year extension is appropriate at this time for providing steelhead continued protection from sea lion predation and allowing for collection of additional information to determine the effectiveness of the authorization. Also, the 4-year period is consistent with the Task Force recommendation.

Comment 2: It is essential that the current sea lion control program continue in order to ensure a reasonable chance of success for the steelhead supplementation program and the ultimate objective of sustainable tribal and sport fisheries in the Lake Washington watershed.

Response: NMFS agrees that reduction of sea lion predation should continue along with programs to monitor sea lion presence and activity in the Locks area and steelhead passage through the fishway. By reducing predation, thereby increasing escapement, WDFW may realize maximum benefit from other efforts contained in their comprehensive plan for steelhead recovery.

Comment 3: Removal of the "repeat offender" sea lions at the Ballard locks has been largely responsible for substantial increase in spawning escapement in 1997. It is essential that

WDFW be permitted to continue with a lethal take authorization over the next several years to allow recovery of the severely depressed steelhead population.

Response: Preliminary data from 1997 indicate reductions in the presence of sea lions at the Locks due to the removal of the "repeat offender" sea lions. The three "repeat offender" sea lions (#17, 45 and 225) that were removed and placed into permanent captivity in 1996, along with one additional animal (#87) were responsible for about 60 percent of the sea lion presence and foraging at the Locks in 1996. Animal #87 was observed at the Locks in the fall of 1996, preying on salmon, but its presence ended abruptly in October. This animal has not been sighted during the 1997 steelhead season and is assumed to be dead. NMFS is concerned, however, that other unmarked sea lions may have developed the same behavior of repeatedly foraging at the Locks during the steelhead run and, therefore, agrees that the LOA should be extended to allow for continued removal of sea lions that may be identified as having significant negative impacts on the recovery of the winter steelhead population. In spite of the reduced sea lion presence in 1997, several unmarked sea lions did continue to enter the Locks area and forage in the presence of the acoustic deterrence devices. Four steelhead were observed killed by one unmarked sea lion in March 1997. It is not known whether the unmarked sea lions observed in 1997 represent "new" sea lions that have developed the predatory behavior, or unmarked sea lions that were present in the past but have yet to be marked for positive identification. Each year, there are a number of sightings of unmarked sea lions at the Locks, and it is unknown whether some of these unmarked sea lions have developed the behavior of repeated occurrence and foraging at the Locks during the steelhead run. Therefore, the sea lion marking program should continue so that individual pinnipeds may continue to be identified and monitored.

Comment 4: Available data indicate that the steelhead population is increasing significantly, and these data support the abolition of the LOA. The number of steelhead passing through the Locks tripled from 234 in 1996 to an estimated 610 in 1997.

Response: NMFS agrees that the 1997 steelhead returns are encouraging. One year's data, however, should not be interpreted as direct evidence of a significant population increase. The steelhead population consists of several year classes that return to spawn after

spending 1–3 years at sea, and the returns from a single year cannot be used to predict the status or trend of the population.

Further, the spawning escapements in 1998 and 1999 are progeny of smaller spawning escapements than the 1997 return, so those escapements may not provide for an increasing trend in the population. Thus, the number returning to spawn in 1997 is not directly dependent upon the number that returned in 1995 or 1996, nor will it affect returns in 1998 and 1999. Additional details of steelhead life history are provided in the Environmental Assessment (EA) prepared for the initial LOA (January 1995) or may be found in the scientific literature (e.g., Shapovalov, L., and A. Taft. 1954. The life histories of the steelhead rainbow trout, *Salmo gairdneri gairdneri*, and silver salmon, *Oncorhynchus kisutch*. California Dept. of Fish and Game, Fish Bulletin No. 98. 375 pp.).

The Task Force recognized the complexity of assessing trends in the steelhead population during their discussions in 1996 and recommended that the LOA be extended because insufficient time had passed to evaluate the success of management actions at Ballard Locks. The Task Force opinions on the extension ranged from no extension to a period of 8 years (two steelhead cycles) with the majority of the Task Force favoring an extension of 4 years (one steelhead cycle). The October 1996 Report of the Task Force acknowledged that efforts to recover the Lake Washington steelhead will be a long-term undertaking and should be continued until such time as: (1) The escapement goal of 1600 fish is reached; or (2) it becomes clear that the process is unlikely to achieve the stated goal.

Comment 5: It is inappropriate for NMFS to consider extending the LOA given existing legal challenges. NMFS should postpone its consideration of the extension pending judicial resolution of legal challenges.

Response: Consistent with Task Force advice, NMFS believes the conditions that warranted the initial LOA (i.e., critically low numbers of returning steelhead) are still apparent. Therefore, the conservation objective of stabilizing and recovering the steelhead run necessitate continued lethal removal authority despite the unresolved status of the legal challenge.

Comment 6: There is no authority in Section 120 of the MMPA to extend the LOA.

Response: Section 120 of the MMPA does not specify any timeframes for authorizations. NMFS initially limited

the LOA to three years so that the authorization would not be “open-ended.” The Task Force, which was established in accordance with Section 120 of the MMPA to evaluate the effectiveness of the authorization, recommended that the LOA be extended because insufficient time had passed to evaluate the success of management actions at Ballard Locks. Based on the Task Force recommendations, the State’s request, and consideration of public comments, NMFS has determined it is appropriate and consistent with the intent of Section 120 of the MMPA to extend the LOA for a discrete period coinciding with 1 steelhead life cycle.

Comment 7: Further review under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is required before an extension can be considered.

Response: NEPA requirements on this action have been fulfilled. The environmental impacts of an extension of the LOA are not different than those evaluated in prior EAs because all aspects of the conditions of the LOA are retained except for the expiration date. For example, the LOA authorized the lethal removal of up to 15 individually identifiable sea lions; up to the present no sea lions have been lethally removed under the LOA (although 3 sea lions were removed from the population and placed in permanent captivity for public display). Further, the proposed extension is within the scope of the Environmental Assessment prepared for the original LOA (NMFS, January 1995) and the supplemental EA prepared for the modified LOA (NMFS, March 1996). The State has requested no changes to the terms and conditions of the current authorization, except for the time period; the number of sea lions authorized for removal, the means of removal and other aspects of the current LOA would not be modified. Likewise, there is no other significant new circumstances or information that would indicate that the conclusions of the previous EAs would change. The environmental consequences of the extension of the authorization are expected to be the same as those previously assessed. Consequently, no further analysis under NEPA is necessary.

Comment 8: Any and all sea lions found southeast of a line between Meadow Point and West Point should be lethally removed.

Response: The LOA only authorizes lethal removal of individually identifiable sea lions that: (1) have been observed by biologists monitoring sea lion predation to have preyed on returning steelhead in the inner bay area

of the Lake Washington Ship Canal (upstream of the railroad bridge); (2) have penetrated the acoustic barrier and have been observed foraging in the ensonified zone during the steelhead run since January 1, 1994, (when the acoustic deterrence program began); and (3) are observed engaging in foraging behavior in the inner bay area (upstream of the railroad bridge) during the current steelhead season between January 1 and May 31 by biologists monitoring sea lion predation at the Locks. NMFS does not intend to change this.

Comment 9: The steelhead run at the Ballard Locks has for too many years been dangerously close to extinction, and it seems appropriate to allow WDFW to continue the program for protecting steelhead and to monitor the situation closely.

Response: NMFS has extended the LOA for lethal removal of individually identifiable California sea lions that are having significant negative impact on the status and recovery of winter steelhead that migrate through the Ballard Locks in Seattle, WA.

NMFS Action

Based on the Task Force recommendations, the State’s request, and consideration of public comments, NMFS has extended the LOA for 4 years to June 30, 2001. No other changes were made to the terms and conditions of the LOA. Copies of the LOA are available upon request (see ADDRESSES).

Dated: September 23, 1997.

Patricia A. Montanio,

Deputy Director, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.
[FR Doc. 97–25778 Filed 9–26–97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–22–F

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 091997C]

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

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

ACTION: Notice of public meeting.

SUMMARY: The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) will convene a public meeting of the Law Enforcement Advisory Panel (AP).

DATES: This meeting will be held on October 15, 1997, from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.