

ACTION: Notice of advisory group meetings scheduled in November, 1997.

SUMMARY: The North Pacific Fishery Management Council's (Council) Vessel Bycatch Accountability (VBA) Committee and Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands groundfish plan teams will hold meetings in November in Seattle, WA.

DATES: The VBA Committee will meet Friday, November 14, 1997, beginning at 8:00 a.m.

The groundfish plan teams will meet November 17–21, 1997, beginning at 1:00 p.m. on Monday, November 17.

ADDRESSES: VBA Committee: Nordby Conference Center, Suite A, Fishermen's Terminal, 1711 W. Nickerson, Seattle, WA.

Plan teams: Alaska Fisheries Science Center, 7600 Sand Point Way NE., Building 4, Room 2079, Seattle, WA.

Council address: North Pacific Fishery Management Council, 605 W. 4th Ave., Suite 306, Anchorage, AK 99501–2252.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dave Witherell, telephone: 907–271–2809.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

1. The VBA Committee will further define options of a vessel bycatch accountability program, with emphasis on initial and annual allocations.

2. The groundfish plan teams will review any new stock assessment information and catch statistics, prepare final stock assessment documents for the 1998 groundfish fisheries in the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands, and prepare recommendations for acceptable biological catches for individual species. The teams will also discuss streamlining the process of setting annual total allowable catches and review research needs and priorities.

Although other issues not contained in this agenda may come before the Committee or Plan Teams for discussion, in accordance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, those issues may not be the subject of formal action during the meetings. Committee or Plan Team action will be restricted to those issues specifically identified in the agenda listed in this notice.

Special Accommodations

These meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Helen Allen, 907–271–2809, at least 5 working days prior to the meeting date.

Dated: October 21, 1997.

Richard W. Surdi,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.
[FR Doc. 97–28443 Filed 10-27-97; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 101597C]

Western Pacific Fishery Management Council; Public Meetings

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

ACTION: Notice of public meetings.

SUMMARY: The Western Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) and its committees will hold public meetings in Honolulu, HI. Prior to the Council meeting, the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) will hold its 67th meeting.

DATES: The meetings will be held on November 10–14, 1997. See

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION for specific dates and times.

ADDRESSES: The SSC meeting will be held at the Council office, 1164 Bishop Street, Suite 1400, Honolulu, HI; telephone: (808) 522–8220. The 94th Council meeting will be held at the Ala Moana Hotel, 410 Atkinson Dr., Garden Lanai and Hibiscus Ballroom, Honolulu, HI; telephone: (808) 955–4811.

Council address: Western Pacific Fishery Management Council, 1164 Bishop St., Suite 1400, Honolulu, HI 96813.

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

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The SSC meeting will be held on November 10–11, 1997, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., each day. The Council's Standing Committees will meet on November 12, 1997, as follows:

7:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.—Enforcement
8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.—Crustaceans
9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.—Vessel Monitoring System (VMS)
10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.—Pelagics and Bottomfish

1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.—Indigenous Fishing Rights and Ecosystem & Habitat
3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.—Precious Corals and Executive/Budget & Programming

The full Council will meet on November 13–14, 1997, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., each day.

The SSC and Council will discuss and take final action on an amendment to establish a framework process for future management of precious corals (including public hearings). This will also be the first meeting under the framework procedure for pelagic fishery management changes for the American Samoa longline fishery regarding closed areas and a limited access program.

Other agenda items that the Council will discuss and may take action on include:

1. Pelagic fishery issues, including a) status of longline fisheries in Hawaii and American Samoa, b) international meetings addressing the management arrangements for highly migratory species, and c) protected species interaction/incidental take issues (turtles, sharks, albatross).

2. Bottomfish fishery issues, including a) status of the State's management plan focusing on monitoring and enforcement components, for overfished Main Hawaiian Islands (MHI) onaga and ehu, b) consideration of the Federal management alternatives for the recovery of overfished MHI onaga and ehu including a draft plan amendment, c) draft amendment for the limited access program for the Mau Zone in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI) including a public hearing, and d) update on armorhead fishery in the NWHI;

3. Crustacean fishery issues, including regulatory adjustments for 1998, such as allowing VMS carrying vessels to return directly back to port via the permit subzone, adding the month of May to the closed season of the main Hawaiian Islands lobster fishery within Federal waters, allowing vessels to temporarily leave fishing gear on the banks, opening the season one month earlier on 1 June, creating separate species and fishing bank quotas, providing fishermen with at least 24 hours notice before the close of the fishery, and announcing the harvest guideline 90 days after season closure;

4. Ecosystem and habitat issues, including a) consider the need for a coral reef fishery management plan, b) Essential Fish Habitat amendment and National Environmental Policy Act requirements, and c) Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Farallon de Mendenilla bombing issue;

5. Precious coral issues, including a) status of the fisheries, and b) consistency between state and Federal regulations;

6. Native rights and indigenous fishing issues, including the status of Demonstration Projects and Community Development Programs;

7. Enforcement and VMS issues, including a) reports from the U.S. Coast Guard and NMFS Enforcement, b) status of violations, and c) possible changes to the Council's VMS policy;

8. Program planning and administrative issues, including a) Council milestones for 2000–2003, b) Standard Operating Practices and Procedure revision, c) election of officers, and d) meetings and workshops; and

9. Other business as required.

Although other issues not contained in this agenda may come before this Council for discussion, in accordance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, those issues may not be the subject of formal Council action during this meeting. Council action will be restricted to those issues specifically identified in the agenda listed in this notice.

Special Accommodations

These meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Kitty M. Simonds, (808) 522–8220 (voice) or (808) 522–8226 (fax), at least 5 days prior to meeting date.

Dated: October 21, 1997.

Richard W. Surdi,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.
[FR Doc. 97–28442 Filed 10-27-97; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[102197B]

Marine Mammals; Permit No. 837 (P77–1#67)

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

ACTION: Scientific research permit amendment.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that a request for amendment of scientific research permit no. 837 submitted by The National Marine Mammal Laboratory, Alaska Fisheries Science Center, NMFS, NOAA, 7600 Sand Point Way NE., BIN C15700, Seattle, Washington 98115, has been granted.

ADDRESSES: The amendment and related documents are available for review

upon written request or by appointment in the following office(s):

Permits and Documentation Division, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13130, Silver Spring, MD 20910 (301/713–2289); and

Alaska Region, NMFS, P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802–1668.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On September 12, 1997, notice was published in the **Federal Register** (62 FR 48062) that an amendment of permit no. 837, issued June 4, 1993 (58 FR 33085), had been requested by the above-named organization. The original permit authorized studies on northern fur seals (*Callorhinus ursinus*) over a five-year period on rookeries in the Bering Sea and eastern North Pacific Ocean. The requested amendment has been granted under the authority of the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*), the provisions of § 216.39 of the Regulations Governing the Taking and Importing of Marine Mammals (50 CFR part 216), and the Fur Seal Act of 1966, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1151 *et seq.*).

The permit was amended to authorize the following increased takings of northern fur seals (*Callorhinus ursinus*): To collect biopsy samples from 30 additional females on St. Paul and 30 additional females on St. George Islands. The total number of females to be biopsy sampled on both St. Paul and St. George will increase to 180 (90 on each island).

Dated: October 20, 1997.

Ann Terbush,

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

[FR Doc. 97–28439 Filed 10-27-97; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D.092697B]

Marine Mammals; Scientific Research Permit No. 1016 (P167H)

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

ACTION: Receipt of application for amendment.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that Ann E. Bowles, Ph.D., Senior Research Biologist, Hubbs-Sea World Research Institute, 2595 Ingraham Street, San

Diego, California 92109, has requested an amendment to Permit No. 1016.

DATES: Written comments must be received on or before November 27, 1997.

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

Permits Division, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13130, Silver Spring, MD 20910 (301/713–2289); and

Regional Administrator, Southwest Region, 501 West Ocean Boulevard, Suite 4200, Long Beach, CA 90802–4213 (310/980–4001).

Written data or views, or requests for a public hearing on this request, should be submitted to the Director, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13130, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Those individuals requesting a hearing should set forth the specific reasons why a hearing on this application would be appropriate.

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.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The subject permit is requested under the authority of the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*) and the Regulations Governing the Taking and Importing of Marine Mammals (50 CFR part 216).

Permit No. 1016 authorizes the permittee to harass several species of stranded rehabilitated and permanently captive pinnipeds and small cetaceans in order to measure their interaction with fishing gear and to determine the effect of introducing an auditory stimulus (i.e., pinger) on responses. The research is authorized to be conducted over a five year period. The permittee is now requesting to: add 2 pinger trials and 2 net trials with 14 of the 18 California sea lions (*Zalophus californianus*) currently authorized to be involved in motivational state trials; and increase the number of California sea lions to be used in the naive trials from 30 to 40.

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), an initial determination has been made that the activity proposed is categorically excluded from the requirement to prepare an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement.