

Chukchi seas; (3) seismic shut-down criteria to protect bowhead and gray whales when inside the 120-dB or 160-dB monitoring-safety zones; and (4) a joint industry cooperative program on marine mammal research in the Chukchi Sea. A copy of the MMS Final PEA for this activity is available upon request and is available online (see **ADDRESSES**).

Preliminary Conclusions

Summary

Based on the information provided in Conoco's application and the MMS PEA, and dependent upon the implementation of the required mitigation and monitoring measures, NMFS has determined that the impact of Conoco conducting seismic surveys in the northeastern Chukchi Sea in 2006 will have a negligible impact on marine mammals and that there will not be any unmitigable adverse impacts to subsistence communities, provided the mitigation measures required under the authorization are implemented and a CAA is implemented.

Potential Impacts on Marine Mammals

NMFS has preliminarily determined that the relatively short-term impact of conducting seismic surveys in the U.S. Chukchi Sea may result, at worst, in a temporary modification in behavior by small numbers of certain species of marine mammals and/or low-level physiological effects (Level B Harassment). While behavioral and avoidance reactions may be made by these species in response to the resultant noise, this behavioral change is expected to have a negligible impact on the affected species and stocks of marine mammals.

While the number of potential incidental harassment takes will depend on the distribution and abundance of marine mammals (which vary annually due to variable ice conditions and other factors) in the area of seismic operations, the number of potential harassment takings is estimated to be relatively small in light of the population size (see Table 1). NMFS anticipates the actual take of individuals to be lower than the numbers depicted in the table because those numbers do not reflect either the implementation of the mitigation numbers or the fact that some animals will avoid the the sound at levels lower than those expected to result in harassment. Additionally, for both ringed seals and bearded seals, the abundance estimates used to calculate the percentages only represent part of the population (which means the estimated percentages are further over

estimates). Further, for ringed seals, the numbers are even lower because the density used for the calculation did not account for the fact that ringed seals are much denser near the shore and ice than they are in the open ocean where the seismic survey is primarily being conducted.

In addition, no take by death and/or serious injury is anticipated, and the potential for temporary or permanent hearing impairment will be avoided through the incorporation of the required mitigation measures described in this document. This determination is supported by (1) the likelihood that, given sufficient notice through slow ship speed and ramp-up of the seismic array, marine mammals are expected to move away from a noise source that it is annoying prior to its becoming potentially injurious; (2) TTS is unlikely until levels above 180 dB re 1 μ Pa are reached; (3) the fact that injurious levels of sound are only likely very close to the vessel; and (4) the likelihood that marine mammal detection ability by trained observers is close to 100 percent during daytime and remains high at night close to the vessel.

Finally, aside from the migration pathway (which has been addressed in this document) no known rookeries, mating grounds, areas of concentrated feeding, or other areas of special significance for marine mammals are known to occur within or near the planned areas of operations during the season of operations.

Potential Impacts on Subsistence Uses of Marine Mammals

NMFS believes that the seismic activity by Conoco in the northern Chukchi Sea in 2006 will not have an unmitigable adverse impact on the subsistence uses of bowhead whales and other marine mammals. This determination is supported by the following: (1) Seismic activities in the Chukchi Sea will not begin until after July 10 by which time the spring bowhead hunt is expected to have ended; (2) the fall bowhead whale hunt in the Beaufort Sea will be governed by a CAA between Conoco and the AEWC and village whaling captains, which includes conditions that will significantly reduce impacts on subsistence uses; (4) while it is possible, but unlikely, that accessibility to belugas during the spring subsistence beluga hunt could be impaired by the survey, very little of the planned survey is within 25 km (15.5 mi) of the Chukchi coast, meaning the vessel will usually be well offshore away from areas where seismic surveys would influence beluga hunting by communities; and (5)

because seals (ringed, spotted, bearded) are hunted in nearshore waters and the seismic survey will remain offshore of the coastal and nearshore areas of these seals, it should not conflict with harvest activities.

Authorization

As a result of these preliminary determinations, NMFS has issued an IHA to Conoco for conducting a seismic survey in the northern Chukchi Sea in 2006, provided the previously mentioned mitigation, monitoring, and reporting requirements are incorporated.

Dated: July 7, 2006.

James H. Lecky,

*Director, Office of Protected Resources,
National Marine Fisheries Service.*

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 072606B]

Caribbean Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

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

ACTION: Notice of public meetings.

SUMMARY: The Caribbean Fishery Management Council (Council) and its Administrative Committee will hold meetings.

DATES: The meetings will be held on August 15-16, 2006. The Council will convene on Tuesday, August 15, 2006, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and the Administrative Committee will meet from 5:15 p.m. to 6 p.m., on that same day. The Council will reconvene on Wednesday, August 16, 2006, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., approximately.

ADDRESSES: The meetings will be held at The Buccaneer Hotel, 5007 Estate Shoys, Lt. 7, St. Croix, Christiansted, U.S.V.I.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Caribbean Fishery Management Council, 268 Munoz Rivera Avenue, Suite 1108, San Juan, Puerto Rico 00918-1920, telephone: (787) 766-5926.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Council will hold its 122nd regular public meeting to discuss the items contained in the following agenda:

August 15, 2006

9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Call to Order

Election of Officials
Adoption of Agenda
Consideration of 121st Council Meeting
Verbatim Transcription
Executive Director's Report
Update on NOAA/NOS Integrated Coral
Reef Ecosystem Mapping Monitoring
Studies in the U.S. Caribbean - Mark
Monaco

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) Puerto
Rico - Maria del Mar Lopez
Update on Research: Trap Impacts on
Coral Reefs and Associated Habitats in
the USVI and Puerto Rico - Ron Hill
International Commission for the
Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT)
- Bill Hogarth
Billfish Strategies P.R. Update - Jamitza
Rodriguez

5:15 p.m. - 6 p.m.

Administrative Committee Meeting
Advisory Panel (AP)/Scientific and
Statistical Committee/Habitat AP
Membership

Budget 2006, 2007
Other Business

August 16, 2006

9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Bycatch Strategies - Milagros Cartagena
Marine Recreational Fishery Statistics
Survey (MRFSS) Report Puerto Rico -
Zulena Cortes
Puerto Rico Fisheries from a Global
Perspective - Manual Valdes-Pizzini
Queen Conch Manual Proposal - Monica
Valle

Enforcement Reports

Puerto Rico
U.S. Virgin Islands
NOAA
U.S. Coast Guard

Administrative Committee
Recommendations (August 15, 2006
meeting)

Meetings Attended by Council Members
and Staff
Other Business
Next Council Meeting

The meetings are open to the public,
and will be conducted in English.
Fishers and other interested persons are
invited to attend and participate with
oral or written statements regarding
agenda issues.

Although non-emergency issues not
contained in this agenda may come
before this group for discussion, those
issues may not be the subject of formal
action during this meeting. Action will
be restricted to those issues specifically
identified in this notice and any issues
arising after publication of this notice
that require emergency action under

section 305(c) of the Magnuson-Stevens
Fishery Conservation and Management
Act, provided the public has been
notified of the Council's intent to take
final action to address the emergency.

Special Accommodations

These meetings are physically
accessible to people with disabilities.
For more information or request for sign
language interpretation and/or other
auxiliary aids, please contact Mr.
Miguel A. Rolon, Executive Director,
Caribbean Fishery Management Council,
268 Munoz Rivera Avenue, Suite 1108,
San Juan, Puerto Rico 00918-2577,
telephone: (787) 766-5926, at least 5
days prior to the meeting date.

Dated: July 26, 2006.

Tracey L. Thompson,

*Acting Director, Office of Sustainable
Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.*
[FR Doc. E6-12231 Filed 7-28-06; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 072606D]

Gulf of Mexico 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 Gulf of Mexico Fishery
Management Council will convene
public meetings.

DATES: The meetings will be held
August 14-17, 2006.

ADDRESSES: These meetings will be held
at the Baton Rouge Marriott, 5500 Hilton
Avenue, Baton Rouge, LA 70808.

Council address: Gulf of Mexico
Fishery Management Council, 2203
North Lois Avenue, Suite 1100, Tampa,
FL 33607.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:
Wayne E. Swingle, Executive Director,
Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management
Council; telephone: (813) 348-1630.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Council

Wednesday, August 16, 2006

12 noon - Convene.

12:15 p.m. - 2:30 p.m. - Receive public
testimony on "A Framework Measure to
Address the Bycatch Reduction
Criterion for Shrimp Trawls in the Gulf
of Mexico West of Cape San Blas,

Florida Under the Fishery Management
Plan for the Shrimp Fishery of the Gulf
of Mexico Including Environmental
Assessment, Regulatory Impact Review,
and Regulatory Flexibility Act Analysis,
as well as exempted fishing permits (if
any).

2:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. - Receive the
Reef Fish Committee Report.

3:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. - Open public
comment period regarding any fishery
issue or concern.

4:30 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. - Convene the
Southeast Data, Assessment, and
Review Panel (SEDAR) Selection
Committee and the Advisory Panel (AP)
Selection Committee (CLOSED
SESSION).

Thursday, August 17, 2006

8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m. - Continue with
the Reef Fish Committee Report.

9:30 a.m. - 9:45 a.m. - Publicly report
the Council action on the SEDAR
Selection Committee and AP Selection
Committee/Council sessions.

9:45 a.m. - 12 noon - Receive the Joint
Reef Fish/Shrimp Committees Report.

1:30 p.m. - 2 p.m. - Receive the
Sustainable Fisheries/Ecosystem
Committee Report.

2 p.m. - 2:15 p.m. - Receive the
Administrative Policy Committee
Report.

2:15 p.m. - 2:45 p.m. - Receive the
Migratory Species Committee Report.

2:45 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. - Receive the
Mackerel Committee Report.

3:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. - Other Business
(Includes miscellaneous written reports
filed under Tabs O, P, Q, and R of
briefing book), as well as any special
announcements.

4:30 p.m. - 4:45 p.m. - Election of
Chairman and Vice Chairman

Committees

Monday, August 14, 2006

8:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. - Conduct an
Orientation Session for new Council
members.

1 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. - The Reef Fish
Management Committee will meet to
receive a report on the Madison-
Swanson and Steamboat Lumps Marine
Protected Areas Monitoring Program by
NMFS and a status report on the
development of an Individual Fishing
Quota (IFQ) system for the grouper
fishery. The Committee will also review
stock assessments for greater amberjack,
vermillion snapper, gray triggerfish, and
gag along with recommendations from
the Scientific and Statistical Committee
(SSC) and Reef Fish AP. The Committee
will also consider scheduling stock
assessment updates for red snapper and
goliath grouper.