Individuals requesting a public hearing should submit a written request to the Chief, Permits and Conservation Division at the address listed above. The request should set forth the specific reasons why a hearing on either of these applications would be appropriate.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jennifer Skidmore (File No. 16992) and Amy Sloan (File No. 14535) at 301–427–8401.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The subject permit and permit amendment are requested under the authority of the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, as amended (MMPA; 16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*), and the regulations governing the taking and importing of marine mammals (50 CFR part 216).

File No. 16992: The applicant has requested a five-year permit to continue research activities currently authorized under Permit No. 978–1857. The purpose of this research is to study basic hearing and echolocation in three bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) and one false killer whale (*Pseudorca crassidens*) maintained in captivity at the Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology in Kaneohe, HI. Researchers would conduct hearing measurements using suction cup sensors to monitor electrical signals in the brain in response to sound and echolocation clicks. Temporary threshold shift (TTS) experiments would be conducted on one adult male bottlenose dolphin to provide basic measures of low frequency TTS necessary for establishing regulations for sound levels for navy sonars and geophysical oil exploration arrays. The research is accomplished using trained behaviors in which the animals voluntarily participate and can leave the testing area at any time.

File No. 14535: The applicant requests an amendment to Permit No. 14535–01 (75 FR 58352) to allow the addition of TTS studies to the currently approved research activities for captive pinnipeds held at Long Marine Laboratory in Santa Cruz, CA. This research may be conducted with up to two individuals from each of three species of ice seal: spotted (*Phoca largha*), ringed (*Phoca hispida*), and bearded (*Erignathus barbatus*) seals trained for participation in ongoing behavioral hearing studies. The proposed research will determine the onset of TTS as a result of voluntary exposure to single-pulse noise events similar to those that might be received by seals during seismic testing in arctic waters. This research will provide the first-ever direct information about the noise levels that cause a temporary, recoverable reduction in hearing sensitivity following exposure events in ice seals. Such information will help to fill data gaps on the issue of assessing potential adverse effects of industrial noise on arctic seals. The research is accomplished using trained behaviors in which the animals voluntarily participate and can leave the testing area at any time.

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 activities proposed are categorically excluded from the requirement to prepare an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement.

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

Dated: April 3, 2013.

P. Michael Payne,

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

[FR Doc. 2013–08166 Filed 4–8–13; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–22–P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648–XC599

Marine Mammals; File No. 17845

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

ACTION: Notice; receipt of application.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that Rachel Cartwright, Keiki Kohola Project, 5277 West Wooley Rd., Oxnard, CA 93035, has applied in due form for a permit to conduct research on humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*).

DATES: Written, telefaxed, or email comments must be received on or before May 9, 2013.

ADDRESSES: The application and related documents are available for review by selecting ''Records Open for Public Comment'' from the *Features* box on the Applications and Permits for Protected Species (APPS) home page, *https://apps.nmfs.noaa.gov,* and then selecting File No. 17845 from the list of available applications.

These documents are also available upon written request or by appointment in the following offices: ''See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION**.''

Written comments on this application should be submitted to the Chief, Permits and Conservation Division, at the address listed above. Comments may also be submitted by facsimile to (301) 713–0376, or by email to *NMFS.Pr1Comments@noaa.gov.* Please include the File No. in the subject line of the email comment.

Those individuals requesting a public hearing should submit a written request to the Chief, Permits and Conservation Division at the address listed above. The request should set forth the specific reasons why a hearing on this application would be appropriate.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Kristy Beard or Carrie Hubard, (301) 427–8401.

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 part 216), the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA; 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*), and the regulations governing the taking, importing, and exporting of endangered and threatened species (50 CFR 222–226).

The proposed five-year permit would authorize the level A and B harassment of humpback whales during photo-identification, behavioral follows, and surface and underwater observations in Hawaii, Alaska, and California. The applicant would approach up to 1,047 humpback whales in Hawaii, 630 in Alaska and 480 in California each year. Short-term, non-invasive, suction cup tagging of maternal females would be conducted within Hawaiian waters to document nocturnal behaviors and fine-scale movements and in Californian waters to better understand use of waters around the Santa Barbara Channel and Channel Islands (Anacapa, Santa Cruz and Santa Rosa Islands). Twelve tags would be deployed annually in both Hawaii and California; two attempts would be made to attach a tag to an individual. Surveys would be conducted between December and May each year within Hawaiian waters and for a four to six week period between April and November in Alaskan and Californian waters each year. The purpose of the proposed research is to identify and define critical habitat used by maternal female humpback whales and their calves, across the period from infancy to maturity and independence. Inherent in this goal is the understanding of the functionality of

behavior during this period, with regards to both the maternal female and her calf. This study would provide the information required to ensure that management practices in waters used by maternal females, their calves and maturing juvenile whales are effective and accurately targeted. Opportunistic research on Pacific white-sided dolphins (*Lagenorhynchus obliquidens*), Risso's dolphins (*Grampus griseus*), Dall's porpoise (*Phocoenoides dalli*), blue whales (*Balaenoptera musculus*), killer whales (*Orcinus orca*), minke whales (*B. acutorostrata*), spinner dolphins (*Stenella longirostris*), bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*), and false killer whales (*Pseudorca crassidens*) would also be conducted. Incidental harassment of Steller (*Eumetopias jubatus*) and California sea lions (*Zalophus californianus*) would also occur.

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.

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

Documents may be reviewed in the following locations:

Permits and Conservation Division, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13705, Silver Spring, MD 20910; phone (301) 427–8401; fax (301) 713–0376;

Alaska Region, NMFS, P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802–1668; phone (907) 586–7221; fax (907) 586–7249;

Southwest Region, NMFS, 501 West Ocean Blvd., Suite 4200, Long Beach, CA 90802–4213; phone (562) 980–4001; fax (562) 980–4018; and

Pacific Islands Region, NMFS, 1601 Kapiolani Blvd., Rm 1110, Honolulu, HI 96814–4700; phone (808) 944–2200; fax (808) 973–2941.

Dated: April 3, 2013.

P. Michael Payne,

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

[FR Doc. 2013–08173 Filed 4–8–13; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–22–P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648–XC573

Magnuson-Stevens Act Provisions; General Provisions for Domestic Fisheries; Application for Exempted Fishing Permits

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

ACTION: Notice; request for comments.

SUMMARY: The Assistant Regional Administrator for Sustainable Fisheries, Northeast Region, NMFS (Assistant Regional Administrator), has made a preliminary determination that an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) application contains all of the required information and warrants further consideration. This Exempted Fishing Permit would exempt commercial fishing vessels from whiting possession limits to test an experimental trawl net as a means to reduce winter flounder bycatch in the small-mesh whiting and squid fisheries. The research is being conducted by Cornell University Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County, NY.

Regulations under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act require publication of this notification to provide interested parties the opportunity to comment on applications for proposed EFPs.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before April 24, 2013.

ADDRESSES: You may submit written comments by any of the following methods:

- *Email: nero.efp@noaa.gov.* Include in the subject line ''Comments on CCE Winter Flounder EFP.''
- *Mail:* John K. Bullard, Regional Administrator, NMFS, NE Regional Office, 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930. Mark the outside of the envelope ''Comments on CCE Winter Flounder EFP.''
- *Fax:* (978) 281–9135.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jason Berthiaume, Fishery Management Specialist, 978–281–9177.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) submitted a complete application for an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) on March 13, 2013, to conduct commercial fishing activities that the regulations would otherwise restrict. The EFP would exempt two vessels from the Northeast multispecies whiting possession limit restrictions and would temporarily exempt the vessels from the winter flounder possession and size limits to conduct onboard sampling.

This project proposes to evaluate bottom trawl modifications as a means to reduce winter flounder bycatch in the small-mesh longfin squid and whiting fisheries. To accurately quantify both whiting and squid catch rates, the project coordinators propose to use a 2.125-in (5.4-cm) mesh codend. This project would build upon previous research that also utilized 2.125-in (5.4-cm) mesh, which is the industry standard for the squid fishery. The researchers propose to continue to use a 2.125-in (5.4-cm) mesh codend to maintain consistency in the data. However, due to the number of tows necessary to collect adequate data on the effectiveness of the gear, the catch rates for whiting are expected to be more than the 3,500-lb (1,588-kg) whiting possession limit for a 2.125-in (5.4-cm) mesh codend. To avoid wasteful discarding of whiting and to allow the continued use of 2.125-in (5.4-cm) mesh, the applicant requested an exemption from the whiting possession limit.

Researchers from CCE will work with two commercial fishing vessels to further test the performance of a 12-inch (30.5-cm) drop chain sweep and 7 ft (64.8 cm) of large-mesh belly panel to reduce winter flounder bycatch. The nets will be industry standard small-mesh nets, with the experimental net using a drop chain sweep and large-mesh belly panels. Both nets will use a 2.125-in (5.4-cm) mesh codend to account for any smaller whiting or longfin squid. Whiting, and other legally permitted species within applicable possession limits, will be landed and sold. Winter flounder will be possessed temporarily for scientific workup and will not be landed for commercial sale. Both winter flounder and whiting will be sampled onboard using standard NMFS catch sampling methods.

If approved, the applicant may request minor modifications and extensions to the EFP throughout the year. EFP modifications and extensions may be granted without further notice if they are deemed essential to facilitate completion of the proposed research and have minimal impacts that do not change the scope or impact of the initially approved EFP request. Any fishing activity conducted outside the scope of the exempted fishing activity would be prohibited.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*