

(*Arctocephalus gazella*), southern elephant seals (*Mirounga leonina*), crabeater seals (*Lobodon carcinophagus*), leopard seals (*Hydrurga leptonyx*), Ross seals (*Ommatophoca rossi*), and Weddell seals (*Leptonychotes weddellii*) for life history studies and census surveys for abundance and distribution of pinnipeds in the South Shetland Islands, Antarctica, as part of a long-term ecosystem monitoring program established in 1986. The applicant also requests permission to import tissue samples collected from any animals captured and from salvaged carcasses of any species of pinniped or cetacean found in the study area.

The applicant requests annual capture of: 200 Antarctic fur seal adults and juveniles; 600 Antarctic fur seal pups; 50 leopard seal adults and juveniles; 50 southern elephant seal adults and juveniles; 100 southern elephant seal pups; 30 Weddell seal adults and juveniles; and 20 Weddell seal pups. Research on captured animals would include tissue sampling, attachment of scientific instruments, application of marks (flipper tags, hair bleach or dye), morphometric measurement, tooth extraction, and stomach content sampling. An additional 23,000 Antarctic fur seals, 1,100 southern elephant seals, 100 crabeater seals, 100 leopard seals, 200 Weddell seals, and 5 Ross seals would be taken annually by harassment during aerial and ground surveys, including behavioral observations and photo-identification. The applicant has requested an annual incidental mortality allowance of: 3 Antarctic fur seal adults or juveniles; 5 Antarctic fur seal pups; 2 leopard seal adults or juveniles; 2 southern elephant seal adults or juveniles; 2 southern elephant seal pups; 2 Weddell seal adults or juveniles; and 2 Weddell seal pups.

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.

Dated: September 26, 2016.

Julia Harrison,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XE889

Nominations to the Marine Mammal Scientific Review Groups

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

ACTION: Notice; request for nominations.

SUMMARY: As required by the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), the Secretary of Commerce established three independent regional scientific review groups (SRGs) to provide advice on a range of marine mammal science and management issues. NMFS has conducted a membership review of the Alaska, Atlantic, and Pacific SRGs, and is soliciting nominations for new members to fill vacancies and gaps in expertise. Nominees should possess demonstrable expertise in the areas specified in this notice, be able to conduct thorough scientific reviews of marine mammal science, and be able to fulfill the necessary time commitments associated with a thorough review of documents and to attend one annual meeting.

DATES: Nominations must be received by October 31, 2016.

ADDRESSES: Nominations can be emailed to Shannon.Bettridge@noaa.gov, or mailed to: Chief, Marine Mammal and Sea Turtle Conservation Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910-3226, Attn: SRGs.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Shannon Bettridge, Office of Protected Resources, 301-427-8402, Shannon.Bettridge@noaa.gov. Information about the SRGs is available at <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/sars/group.htm>.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Section 117(d) of the MMPA (16 U.S.C. 1386(d)) directs the Secretary of Commerce to establish three independent regional SRGs to advise the Secretary (authority delegated to NMFS). The Alaska SRG advises on marine mammals that occur

in waters off Alaska that are under the jurisdiction of the United States. The Pacific SRG advises on marine mammals that occur in waters off the U.S. West Coast, Hawaiian Islands, and the U.S. Territories in the Central and Western Pacific that are under the jurisdiction of the United States. The Atlantic SRG advises on marine mammals that occur in waters off the Atlantic coast, Gulf of Mexico, and U.S. Territories in the Caribbean that are under the jurisdiction of the United States.

SRGs members are highly qualified individuals with expertise in marine mammal biology and ecology, population dynamics and modeling, commercial fishing technology and practices, and stocks taken under section 101(b) of the MMPA. The SRGs provide expert reviews of draft marine mammal stock assessment reports and other information related to the matters identified in section 117(d)(1) of the MMPA, including:

A. Population estimates and the population status and trends of marine mammal stocks;

B. Uncertainties and research needed regarding stock separation, abundance, or trends, and factors affecting the distribution, size, or productivity of the stock;

C. Uncertainties and research needed regarding the species, number, ages, gender, and reproductive status of marine mammals;

D. Research needed to identify modifications in fishing gear and practices likely to reduce the incidental mortality and serious injury of marine mammals in commercial fishing operations;

E. The actual, expected, or potential impacts of habitat destruction, including marine pollution and natural environmental change, on specific marine mammal species or stocks, and for strategic stocks, appropriate conservation or management measures to alleviate any such impacts; and

F. Any other issue which the Secretary or the groups consider appropriate.

SRG members collectively serve as independent advisors to NMFS and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and provide their expert review and recommendations through participation in the SRG. Members attend annual meetings and undertake activities as independent persons providing expertise in their subject areas. Members are not appointed as representatives of professional organizations or particular stakeholder groups, including government entities, and are not permitted to represent or

advocate for those organizations, groups or entities during SRG meetings, discussions and deliberations.

NMFS annually reviews the expertise available on the SRG and identify gaps in the expertise that is needed to provide advice pursuant to section 117(d) of the MMPA. In conducting the reviews, NMFS will attempt to achieve, to the maximum extent practicable, a balanced representation of viewpoints among the individuals on each SRG.

For the Atlantic SRG (including waters off the Atlantic coast, Gulf of Mexico, and U.S. Territories in the Caribbean), NMFS seeks individuals with expertise in one or more of the following areas: Ecological statistics, with emphasis in line-transect theory, abundance estimation, trend analysis, and/or marine mammal bycatch estimation; marine mammal health; fisheries gear and technologies; and pinnipeds.

For the Pacific SRG (including waters off the Pacific coast, Hawaiian Islands and the U.S. Territories in the Central and Western Pacific), NMFS seeks individuals with expertise in one or more of the following areas: Bycatch estimation; quantitative ecology, population dynamics, modeling, and statistics; fishing gear/techniques, particularly for Hawaii and Pacific Islands fisheries; genetics and/or other methods of identifying marine mammal population structure; passive acoustics; abundance estimation, especially distance sampling and mark-recapture methods; and southern sea otters.

For the Alaska SRG, NMFS seeks individuals with expertise in one or more of the following areas: Genetics/population structure; quantitative ecology, modeling, and population dynamics; acoustics; fishing gear and practices; anthropogenic impacts; and ice-associated or Arctic species.

Nominations for new members should be sent to (see **ADDRESSES**) and must be received by October 31, 2016.

Nominations should be accompanied by the individual's curriculum vitae and detailed information regarding how the recommended person meets the minimum selection criteria for SRG members (see below), and how the recommended person would bring needed expertise to the group. Self-nominations are acceptable. The following contact information should accompany each nomination: Nominee's name, address, telephone number, and email address.

When reviewing nominations, NMFS will consider the following criteria:

(1) Ability to make time available for the purposes of the SRG;

(2) Knowledge of the species (or closely related species) of marine mammals in the SRG's region;

(3) Scientific or technical achievement in a relevant discipline, particularly the areas of expertise identified above, to be considered an expert peer reviewer for the topic;

(4) Demonstrated experience working effectively on teams;

(5) Expertise relevant to current and expected needs of the SRG, in particular, expertise required to provide adequate review and knowledgeable feedback on current or developing stock assessment issues, techniques, etc. In practice, this means that each member should have expertise in more than one topic as the species and scientific issues discussed in SRG meetings are diverse; and

(6) No conflict of interest with respect to their duties as a member of the SRG.

An SRG member cannot be a registered Federal lobbyist. Membership is voluntary, and except for reimbursable travel and related expenses, service is without pay. The term of service for SRG members is three years and members may serve up to three consecutive terms if reappointed.

Dated: September 26, 2016.

Donna S. Wieting,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XE912

Fisheries of the U.S. Gulf of Mexico; Southeast Data, Assessment and Review (SEDAR); U.S. Gulf of Mexico Data-Limited Species

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

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The SEDAR 49 assessment of the U.S. Gulf of Mexico Data-Limited Species will consist of a Data Workshop; a series of Assessment Webinars; and a Review Workshop, to view the agenda.

DATES: The SEDAR 49 Review Workshop will begin at 9 a.m. on Tuesday, November 1, 2016, and end at 6 p.m. on Thursday, November 3, 2016, to view the agenda see **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION**.

ADDRESSES:

Meeting address: The SEDAR 49 Review Workshop will be held at the Sonesta Coconut Grove, 2889 McFarlane Road, Miami, FL 33133, 305-529-2828 or 1-800-766-3782.

SEDAR address: South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, 4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201, N. Charleston, SC 29405 or on their Web site, at www.sedarweb.org.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Julie Neer, SEDAR Coordinator; phone 843-571-4366 or toll free 866-SAFMC-10; FAX 843-769-4520; email: Julie.neer@safmc.net.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Agenda

The Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, and Caribbean Fishery Management Councils, in conjunction with NOAA Fisheries and the Atlantic and Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commissions have implemented the Southeast Data, Assessment and Review (SEDAR) process, a multi-step method for determining the status of fish stocks in the Southeast Region. SEDAR is a three step process including: (1) Data Workshop; (2) Assessment Process utilizing webinars; and (3) Review Workshop. The product of the Data Workshop is a data report which compiles and evaluates potential datasets and recommends which datasets are appropriate for assessment analyses. The product of the Assessment Process is a stock assessment report which describes the fisheries, evaluates the status of the stock, estimates biological benchmarks, projects future population conditions, and recommends research and monitoring needs. The assessment is independently peer reviewed at the Review Workshop. The product of the Review Workshop is a Summary documenting panel opinions regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the stock assessment and input data. Participants for SEDAR Workshops are appointed by the Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, and Caribbean Fishery Management Councils and NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office, HMS Management Division, and Southeast Fisheries Science Center. Participants include: Data collectors and database managers; stock assessment scientists, biologists, and researchers; constituency representatives including fishermen, environmentalists, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs); international experts; and staff of Councils, Commissions, and state and federal agencies.

The items of discussion in the Review Workshop agenda are as follows: