

that body of water, NMFS will investigate the stranding to determine whether a reasonable chance exists that the SHIPS project caused the animal's death. If NMFS determines, based upon a necropsy of the animal(s), that the death was likely due to the seismic source, the survey must cease until procedures are altered to eliminate the potential for future deaths.

### Monitoring

The objectives of the proposed monitoring program will be: To mitigate potential harassment of marine mammals, to document the number of animals of each species present in the vicinity of the sound transmissions, and to evaluate the reactions of marine mammals to these transmissions. In addition, hydrophones will be used to measure sound levels, to correlate mammal behavior with actual, received sound levels. Focused surveys will be conducted in geographic areas of particular concern, especially for gray whales that migrate past the western entrance to the Straits of Juan de Fuca and other members of this species that spend the summer in the survey area (near south Whidbey Island and the Straits of Juan de Fuca), humpback whales near Swiftsure Bank and the waters west of the Straits, harbor porpoise that tend to congregate along western Whidbey Island and elsewhere, and minke whales that frequent shallow banks in the Strait of Juan de Fuca. All species of large whales (humpback, gray, minke, or killer whales) will be photographed to identify the individual using the area.

It should be recognized that, at this time, the monitoring program is unfunded and therefore may need to be modified in the future. However, in order for an IHA to be issued, monitoring will need to be conducted at a level which ensures that the activity will have no more than a negligible impact on marine mammal species or stocks.

### Reporting

The USGS will provide an initial report to NMFS within 90 days of the completion of the 1998 phase of the marine seismic project. This report will provide dates and locations of seismic operations, details of marine mammal sightings, and estimates of the amount and nature of all takes by harassment. A final technical report will be provided by USGS within 1 year of completion of the 1998 phase of the Puget Sound marine seismic project. The final technical report will contain a description of the methods, results, and interpretation of all monitoring tasks.

### Consultation

Under section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, NMFS has begun consultation on the proposed issuance of an incidental harassment authorization. Consultation will be concluded upon completion of the comment period and consideration of those comments in the final determination on issuance of an authorization.

### National Environmental Policy Act

In conjunction with this notice, NMFS has released a draft EA that addresses the impacts on the human environment from issuance of the authorization and the alternatives to the proposed action. A copy of the draft EA is available upon request (see ADDRESSES).

### Conclusions

NMFS has preliminarily determined that the short-term impact of conducting deep crustal marine seismic surveys will result, at worst, in a temporary modification in behavior by certain species of pinnipeds, and possibly some individual cetaceans. While behavioral modifications may be made by certain species of marine mammals to avoid the resultant noise from airgun arrays, this behavioral change is expected to have a negligible impact on the animals.

In addition, no take by injury and/or death is anticipated and takes will be at the lowest level practicable due to incorporation of the mitigation measures mentioned above. No known rookeries, mating grounds, areas of concentrated feeding, or other areas of special significance for marine mammals occur within or near the planned area of operations during the season of operations.

### Proposed Authorization

NMFS proposes to issue an incidental harassment authorization to the USGS for the possible harassment of small numbers of several species of marine mammals incidental to collecting deep-crustal marine seismic data in the Puget Sound/Straits of Juan de Fuca region of Washington State, provided the above-mentioned mitigation, monitoring, and reporting requirements are incorporated. NMFS has preliminarily determined that the proposed activities would result in the harassment of only small numbers of each of several species of marine mammals and will have no more than a negligible impact on these marine mammal stocks.

### Information Solicited

NMFS requests interested persons to submit comments, information, and

suggestions concerning this request (see ADDRESSES).

Dated: September 11, 1997.

**Hilda Diaz-Soltero,**

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

[FR Doc. 97-24674 Filed 9-16-97; 8:45 am]

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 090997E]

### South Atlantic Fishery Management Council; Public Meetings

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

**ACTION:** Notice of public meeting.

**SUMMARY:** The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) will hold a meeting of its Sargassum and Water Column Habitat Sub-Group.

**DATES:** The meeting will be held on October 7-8 1997. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for specific dates and times.

**ADDRESSES:** The meeting will be held at NMFS Southeast Fisheries Science Center, 101 Pivers Island Road, Beaufort, NC.

**Council address:** South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, One Southpark Circle, Suite 306; Charleston, SC 29407-4699.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Susan Buchanan, Public Information Officer; telephone: (803) 571-4366; fax: (803) 769-4520; email: susan.buchanan@noaa.gov

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

### Meeting Dates

*October 7, 1997, 1:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. & October 8, 1997, 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.*

The Sub-Group will meet to review Sargassum habitat and water column information in state, Federal and regional systems, and to discuss fishing and non-fishing threats to these habitats. The Sub-Group will also discuss policy recommendations and research and monitoring needs for these habitats.

Although other issues not contained in this agenda may come before this Sub-Group for discussion, in accordance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, those issues may not be the subject of formal Sub-Group action during this meeting. Sub-Group action will be

restricted to those issues specifically identified in the agenda listed in this notice.

#### Special Accommodations

The meeting is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to the Council office (see ADDRESSES) by September 26, 1997.

Dated: September 10, 1997.

**Bruce C. Morehead,**

*Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.*

[FR Doc. 97-24672 Filed 9-16-97; 8:45 am]

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#### DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

##### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 082797D]

##### 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 July 15, 1997, notice was published in the **Federal Register** (62 FR 37885) 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*): 1) extend shear marking activities authorized in sections A.1 and A.2 to Bogoslof Island; 2) blood sampling of up to 40 pups of the 300 pups authorized in A.3 to be captured and tagged on San Miguel; 3) tissue sampling (i.e., hair, skin, blubber, muscle and liver) of up to 120 already deceased juvenile male seals (60 on St. Paul, 60 on St. George); and 4) capture and recapture of up to 20 adult female seals on Bogoslof Island to study foraging behavior. Each seal will be instrumented with a satellite tag and/or time-depth recorder and VHF transmitter via 5-minute epoxy glue; flipper tagged, weighed, measured, and released. At recapture, the instruments will be removed and the animals will be weighed, measured, administered an enema and released. Some of these seals may be sedated with Valium. At each capture, the seal will be given an intramuscular injection of oxytocin and milk sampled. Up to 2,000 pups and 2,000 non-pups may be incidentally harassed during the course of these activities.

Dated: September 5, 1997.

**Ann D. Terbush**

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

[FR Doc. 97-24641 Filed 9-16-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-F

#### DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

##### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 090997B]

##### Marine Mammals; Permit No. 970 (P557E)

**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. 970 submitted by Scripps Institution of Oceanography, Acoustic Thermometry of Ocean Climate Project, Institute for Geophysics and Planetary Physics, 9500 Gilman

Drive, La Jolla, California 92093-02252, 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 Division, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13130, Silver Spring, MD 20910 (301/713-2289); and

Regional Administrator, Southwest Region, NMFS, 501 West Ocean Boulevard, Suite 4200, Long Beach, CA 90802-4213 (310/980-4001); and

Protected Species Program Manager, Pacific Area Office, NMFS, 2570 Dole Street, Room 106, Honolulu, HI 96822-2396 (808/973-2987).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** 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), the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA; 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*), and the provisions of § 222.25 of the regulations governing the taking, importing, and exporting of endangered fish and wildlife (50 CFR 222.23).

This amendment incorporates into Permit No. 970 refinements to the research protocol, as provided for by Special Condition A.8. of Permit 970.

Issuance of this amendment, as required by the ESA was based on a finding that such permit: (1) Was applied for in good faith; (2) will not operate to the disadvantage of the endangered species which is the subject of this permit; and (3) is consistent with the purposes and policies set forth in section 2 of the ESA.

Dated: September 11, 1997.

**Ann D. Terbush,**

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

[FR Doc. 97-24642 Filed 9-16-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-F

#### DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

##### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 082897F]

##### Marine Mammals; Permit No. 917 (File No. P774#2)

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