

Notices

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This section of the FEDERAL REGISTER contains documents other than rules or proposed rules that are applicable to the public. Notices of hearings and investigations, committee meetings, agency decisions and rulings, delegations of authority, filing of petitions and applications and agency statements of organization and functions are examples of documents appearing in this section.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Bureau of Export Administration

Materials Processing Equipment Technical Advisory Committee; Notice of Partially Closed Meeting

The Materials Processing Equipment Technical Advisory Committee will meet on November 17, 1998, 9:00 a.m., Room 1617M-2, in the Herbert C. Hoover Building, 14th Street between Pennsylvania and Constitution Avenues, N.W., Washington, D.C. The Committee advises the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Export Administration with respect to technical questions that affect the level of export controls applicable to materials processing equipment and related technology.

Agenda

General Session

1. Opening remarks by the Chairman
2. Presentation of papers or comments by the public
3. Election of Committee Chairman
4. Update on Wassenaar Arrangement negotiations
5. Discussion on proposal for making Control List Category 2 more "user friendly"

Closed Session

6. Discussion of matters properly classified under Executive Order 12958, dealing with the U.S. export control program and strategic criteria related thereto.

The General Session of the meeting will be open to the public and a limited number of seats will be available. Reservations are not required. To the extent that time permits, members of the public may present oral statements to the Committee. The public may submit written statements at any time before or after the meeting. However, to facilitate distribution of public presentation materials, the Committee suggests that

presenters forward the materials prior to the meeting date to the following address: Ms. Lee Ann Carpenter, Advisory Committees MS:3886C, Bureau of Export Administration, 15th St. & Pennsylvania Ave, N.W., U.S. Department of Commerce, Washington, D.C. 20230.

The Assistant Secretary for Administration, with the concurrence of the General Counsel, formally determined on December 3, 1997, pursuant to section 10(d) of the Federal Advisory Committee Act, as amended, that the series of meetings of the Committee and of any Subcommittees thereof, dealing with the classified materials listed in 5 U.S.C., 552b(c)(1) shall be exempt from the provisions relating to public meetings found in section 10(a)(1) and (a)(3), of the Federal Advisory Committee Act. The remaining series of meetings or portions thereof will be open to the public.

A copy of the Notice of Determination to close meetings or portions of meetings of the Committee is available for public inspection and copying in the Central Reference and Records Inspection Facility, Room 6020, U.S. Department of Commerce, Washington, D.C. 20230. For more information, contact Lee Ann Carpenter on (202) 482-2583.

Dated: October 20, 1998.

Lee Ann Carpenter,
Committee Liaison Officer.

[FR Doc. 98-28628 Filed 10-23-98; 8:45 am]
BILLING CODE 3510-33-M

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 092898C]

Small Takes of Marine Mammals Incidental to Specified Activities; Construction of an Offshore Platform in the Beaufort Sea

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

ACTION: Notice of receipt of application and proposed authorization for a small take exemption; request for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS has received a request from the BP Exploration (Alaska), 900

East Benson Boulevard, Anchorage, AK 99519 (BPXA) for an authorization to take small numbers of marine mammals by harassment incidental to construction of an offshore oil platform and subsea pipeline at Northstar in the Beaufort Sea in state waters. Under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), NMFS is requesting comments on its proposal to authorize BPXA to incidentally take, by harassment, small numbers of marine mammals in the above mentioned area between December 1, 1998, and November 30, 1999.

DATES: Comments and information must be received no later than November 25, 1998.

ADDRESSES: Comments on the application should be addressed to Michael Payne, Chief, Marine Mammal Division, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910-3225. A copy of the application and a list of references used in this document may be obtained by writing to this address or by telephoning one of the contacts listed here. A copy of the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) may be obtained by contacting the U.S. Army Engineer District, Alaska, Regulatory Branch, P.O. Box 898, Anchorage, AK 99506-0898.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Kenneth R. Hollingshead, (301) 713-2055, Brad Smith, (907) 271-5006.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Section 101(a)(5)(A) and (D) of the MMPA (16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*) directs the Secretary of Commerce to allow, upon request, the incidental, but not intentional taking of marine mammals by U.S. citizens who engage in a specified activity (other than commercial fishing) within a specified geographical region if certain findings are made and either regulations are issued or, if the taking is limited to harassment, a notice of a proposed authorization is provided to the public for review.

Permission may be granted if NMFS finds that the taking will have a negligible impact on the species or stock(s) and will not have an unmitigable adverse impact on the availability of the species or stock(s) for subsistence uses and that the permissible methods of taking and requirements pertaining to the

monitoring and reporting of such taking are set forth.

On April 10, 1996 (61 FR 15884), NMFS published an interim rule establishing, among other things, procedures for issuing incidental harassment authorizations (IHAs) under section 101(a)(5)(D) of the MMPA for activities in Arctic waters. For additional information on the procedures to be followed for this authorization, please refer to that document.

Summary of Request

On August 14, 1998, NMFS received an application from BPXA requesting a 1-year authorization for the harassment of small numbers of several species of marine mammals incidental to construction of the Northstar development in the Alaskan Beaufort Sea. While a brief description of the proposed activity is provided here, a more detailed description of the activity and the expected impact can be found in the application and DEIS (see ADDRESSES).

BPXA proposes to produce crude oil from the Northstar Unit, which is located between 2 and 8 miles (mi) (3.2 and 12.9 kilometers (km)) offshore from Pt. Storkersen, AK. This unit is adjacent to the Prudhoe Bay industrial complex and is approximately 54 mi (87 km) northeast of Nuiqsut, a Native Alaskan community. The proposed construction activity during the period of the proposed incidental harassment authorization includes the construction of three ice roads, one from either West Dock or Pt. McIntyre to a gravel mine site, a second from a gravel mine site to Seal Island and a third from the shore crossing of the pipeline following the pipeline route to Seal Island; the construction of a gravel island work surface for drilling and oil production facilities; and two pipelines, one to transport crude oil and one for gas for field injection. NMFS anticipates that this 1-year authorization will not be continued into a second year (if necessary to complete construction) but will instead be followed by a set of regulations and a Letter of Authorization, under section 101(a)(5)(A) of the MMPA, governing incidental takes of marine mammals from construction and operations of the Northstar Development and other offshore oil and gas developments in the U.S. Beaufort Sea. An application for a small take authorization under section 101(a)(5)(A) of the MMPA is under development by BPXA.

Ice-covered Season: Ice road construction will take place during the winter, 1998/99. Ice roads constructed

inside the barrier islands will be bottom-fast while ice roads offshore will be on artificially thickened floating ice. Island construction will be at the location of the existing man-made Seal Island. It is estimated that approximately 16,800 large-volume haul trips between the onshore mine site and a reload area in the vicinity of Egg Island and 28,500 lighter dump truck trips from Egg Island to Seal Island will be necessary to transport construction gravel to Seal Island. An additional 300 truck trips will be necessary to transport concrete-mat slope protection materials to the island.

Two 10-inch (0.25 m) pipelines are planned. The offshore portions will each be 6 mi (9.5 km) in length and will be constructed between January and April, 1999. Both pipelines will be buried together in a common trench and backfilled. Trenching will be done from thickened ice using excavation and construction equipment. This work is expected to be completed by the end of April.

Open-water Season: During the summer 1999, open water season, BPXA expects to transport the drill rig(s) and some of the process and production modules to Seal Island via ocean-going barges. In addition, barges will also be used to support construction during the summer, and helicopters will support drill rig installation until ice roads are constructed next winter. Up to 75 barge trips are expected between Prudhoe Bay and/or Endicott to Seal Island during the open water season (July to September, 1999). By August 31, 1999, all island and pipeline construction and sheet pile and slope protection installation operations are expected to be completed. Operations during September will be limited, and barge transport will be limited to waters west of Cross Island, minimizing the possibility for interference with subsistence hunting.

Some process and camp modules are scheduled to arrive from Anchorage or the Prudhoe Bay area via sealift or local barge service on approximately August 15, 1999, with offloading completed by August 21, 1999. A drill rig is scheduled to be moved by local barge to the island for arrival by September 7, 1999, with offloading completed by September 30, 1999. Construction activities may continue on the island through the autumn and early winter of 1999. Activities on and near the island during the period October through December will depend upon progress up to that time. Some of the construction activities planned for earlier months may need to continue during the autumn.

Description of Habitat and Marine Mammal Affected by the Activity

A detailed description of the Beaufort Sea ecosystem and its associated marine mammals can be found in the DEIS prepared for this authorization (Corps of Engineers (Corps), 1998). This information is not repeated here but will be considered part of the record of decision for this application. A copy of the DEIS is available upon request (see ADDRESSES).

Marine Mammals
The Beaufort/Chukchi Seas support a diverse assemblage of marine mammals, including bowhead whales (*Balaena mysticetus*), gray whales (*Eschrichtius robustus*), beluga (*Delphinapterus leucas*), ringed seals (*Phoca hispida*), spotted seals (*Phoca largha*) and bearded seals (*Erignathus barbatus*). Descriptions of the biology and distribution of these species and of others can be found in several documents (e.g., Hill *et al.*, 1997) including the BPXA application and the DEIS. Please refer to those documents for information on these species. For the purpose of making a determination that the taking by this activity will have no more than a negligible impact on the species or stock(s) of marine mammals and will not have an unmitigable adverse impact on the availability of the species or stock(s) of marine mammals for subsistence uses, NMFS adopts the information contained in these documents as part of its record of decision. In addition to the species mentioned in this paragraph, Pacific walrus and polar bears also have the potential to be taken. Appropriate applications for taking these species under the MMPA have been submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service by BPXA.

Potential Effects on Marine Mammals

Sounds and non-acoustic stimuli will be generated by vehicle traffic, ice-cutting, pipeline construction, offshore trenching, gravel dumping, sheet pile driving, and vessel and helicopter operations. The sounds generated from the construction operations and associated transportation activities will be detectable underwater and/or in air some distance away from the area of the activity, depending upon the nature of the sound source, ambient noise conditions, and the sensitivity of the receptor. At times, some of these sounds are likely to be strong enough to cause an avoidance or other behavioral disturbance reaction by small numbers of marine mammals or to cause masking of signals important to marine mammals. The type and significance of behavioral reaction is likely to depend

on the species and season, and the behavior of the animal at the time of reception of the stimulus, as well as the distance and level of the sound relative to ambient conditions.

In winter and spring, on-ice travel and construction activities will displace some ringed seals along the ice road and pipeline construction corridors. BPXA plans to begin winter construction activities prior to female ringed seals establishing birthing lairs beginning in late March. The noise and general human activity will displace female seals away from activity areas that could negatively affect the female and young, if birth lairs were constructed there. If construction activities are initiated in previously undisturbed areas after March 20, BPXA will be required to survey the area(s) to identify and avoid ringed seal lairs by a minimum of 50 m (164 ft). Due to mitigation and monitoring, it is not expected that any ringed seals will be killed or seriously injured during this time.

During the open-water season, all six species of whales and seals could potentially be exposed to vessel or construction noise and to other stimuli associated with the planned operations. Vessel traffic is known to cause avoidance reactions by whales at certain times (Richardson *et al.*, 1995). Pile driving, helicopter operations, and possibly other activities may also lead to disturbance of small numbers of seals or whales. In addition to disturbance, some limited masking of whale calls or other low-frequency sounds potentially relevant to bowhead whales could occur.

BPXA estimates that up to 219 ringed seals and 1 bearded seal may be incidentally harassed during the ice-covered period. During the open-water season, BPXA estimates that up to 319 ringed seals, 10 spotted seals, 26 bearded seals, 23 bowhead whales, 10 gray whales, and 250 beluga whales may be incidentally harassed. Because of residency, some ringed seals may be taken by harassment more than once during this period. Please refer to the application for the rationale supporting these estimated harassment takes of individual animals.

Impacts on Affected Species

For a discussion on the anticipated effects of ships, boats, aircraft, and construction activities at Northstar on marine mammals, please refer to the application (BPXA, 1998). NMFS proposes to adopt this information as a summarization of the best scientific information available on this subject.

Effects of Activities on Habitat

The Northstar Development area is not known to be an area of concentrated mating or feeding of any marine mammal species. Anticipated impacts by Northstar construction on the habitat include temporarily elevated noise levels, potential bottom disturbance due to additional gravel placement on Seal Island and pipeline trenching activities, and the permanent loss of approximately 86,130 m² (926,250 ft²) of habitat due to island reconstruction. These effects will be localized at the site of the project.

Effects of Activities on Subsistence Needs

The disturbance and potential displacement of bowhead whales and other marine mammals by sounds from vessel traffic and/or on-island construction activities (e.g., impact hammering) are the principle concerns related to subsistence use of the area. The harvest of marine mammals (mainly bowhead whales, ringed seals, and bearded seals) is central to the culture and subsistence economies of the coastal North Slope communities (BPXA, 1998). In particular, if elevated noise levels are displacing migrating bowhead whales farther offshore, this could make the harvest of these whales more difficult and dangerous for hunters. The harvest could also be affected if bowheads become more skittish when exposed to vessel or impact-hammering noise (BPXA, 1998).

Construction activities and associated vessel and aircraft (helicopter) support are expected to begin in December and continue into October 1999, depending upon ice conditions. Few bowhead whales approach the Northstar area before the end of August, and subsistence whaling generally does not begin until after September 1 and occurs in areas well east of the construction site. Therefore, a substantial portion of the Northstar development will be completed when no bowhead whales are nearby and when no whaling is underway. Insofar as possible, vessel and aircraft traffic near areas of particular concern for whaling will be completed by BPXA before the end of August. No impact hammering will occur during the period when subsistence hunting of migrating bowhead whales is underway.

Nuiqsut is the community closest to the area of the proposed activity, and it harvests bowhead whales only during the fall whaling season. In recent years, Nuiqsut whalers typically take zero to four whales each season (BPXA, 1998). Nuiqsut whalers concentrate their

efforts on areas north and east of Cross Island, generally in water depths greater than 20 m (65 ft). Cross Island, the principle field camp location for Nuiqsut whalers, is located approximately 28.2 km (17.5 mi) east of the Northstar construction activity area.

Whalers from the village of Kaktovik search for whales east, north, and west of their village. Kaktovik is located approximately 200 km (124.3 mi) east of Seal Island. The westernmost reported harvest location was about 21 km (13 mi) west of Kaktovik, near 70°10'N, 144°W (Kaleak, 1996). That site is approximately 180 km (112 mi) east of Seal Island.

Whalers from the village of Barrow search for bowhead whales much further from the Northstar area, >250 km (>175 mi) west.

Effects of Northstar construction on migrating bowheads are not expected to extend into the area where Nuiqsut hunters usually search for bowheads. However, it is recognized that it is difficult to determine the maximum distance at which reactions occur (Moore and Clark, 1992). As a result, in order to avoid any unmitigable adverse impact on subsistence needs and to reduce potential interference with the hunt, the timing of various construction activities at Northstar as well as barge and aircraft traffic in the Cross Island area will be addressed in a Communications and Avoidance Agreement between BPXA and North Slope Borough residents. Also, NMFS believes that the monitoring plan proposed by BPXA will provide information that will help resolve uncertainties about the effects of construction noise on the accessibility of bowheads to hunters.

While Northstar activity has some potential to influence subsistence seal hunting activities, the most important sealing area for Nuiqsut hunters is off the Colville delta, extending as far west as Fish Creek and as far east as Pingok Island (BPXA, 1998). Pingok Island is about 24 km (15 mi) west of Northstar. The peak season for seal hunting is during the summer months, but some hunting is conducted on the landfast ice in late spring. In summer, boat crews hunt ringed, spotted and bearded seals (BPXA, 1998). Thus, it is unlikely that construction activity will have a significant negative impact on Nuiqsut seal hunting.

Mitigation

Several mitigation measures have been proposed by BPXA to reduce harassment takes to the lowest level practicable. These include:

(1) BPXA will begin winter construction activities prior to female ringed seals establishing the birthing lair in late March to early April in order to displace seals away from activities that could negatively affect the female and young.

(2) If construction activities are initiated in previously undisturbed areas after March 20, BPXA will survey the area(s) to identify and avoid ringed seal lairs by a minimum of 50 m (164 ft).

(3) BPXA will establish and monitor a 190 dB re 1 μ Pa safety range for seals around the island for those noisier activities.

(4) While whales are unlikely to approach the island during impact hammering or other noisy activities, a 180 dB re 1 μ Pa safety zone will be established and monitored around the island.

(5) If any marine mammals are observed within their respective safety range, operations will cease until such time as the observed marine mammals have left the safety zone.

(6) Project scheduling indicates that impact hammering will not occur during the period for subsistence hunting of westward migrating bowhead whale.

(7) Helicopter flights to support Northstar construction will be limited to a corridor from Seal Island to the mainland, and, except when limited by weather, will maintain a minimum altitude of 1,000 ft (305 m).

Monitoring

Monitoring will employ both marine mammal observations and acoustics measurements and recordings. During the open-water period, monitoring will consist of (1) acoustic measurements of sounds produced by construction activities through hydrophones, seaborne sonobuoys and bottom recorders, and (2) observations of marine mammals from an elevated platform on Seal Island will be made during periods with and without construction underway (see page 94 of application).

During the ice-covered season, BPXA proposes to continue an ongoing (since the spring, 1997) Before-After/Control-Impact Study on the distribution and abundance of ringed seals in relation to development of the offshore oil and gas resources in the central Beaufort Sea. Collection and analysis of data before and after construction is expected to provide a reliable method for assessing the impact of oil and gas activities on ringed seal distribution in the Northstar construction area. Other winter/spring monitoring will include (1) on-ice

searches for ringed seal lairs in areas where construction starts in the mid-March through April period, (2) assessment of abandonment rates for seal holes, and (3) acoustic measurements of sounds and vibrations from construction.

The monitoring plan will be subject to review by NMFS biologists and revised appropriately prior to implementation. Independent peer review is not warranted on the on-ice portion of the plan. This work has been underway since the winter 1997/98 and on-ice monitoring was reviewed during the May, 1998 workshop held in Seattle, WA. The open-water season monitoring plan however will be reviewed next spring at the annual peer-review workshop held in Seattle.

Reporting

BPXA will provide two initial reports on 1998 activities to NMFS within 90 days of completion of each phase of the activity. The first report will be due 90 days after the ice roads are no longer usable or spring aerial surveys are completed, whichever is later. The second report will be forwarded to NMFS 90 days after the formation of ice in the central Alaskan Beaufort Sea. These reports will provide summaries of the dates and locations of construction activities, details of marine mammal sightings, estimates of the amount and nature of marine mammal takes, and any apparent effects on accessibility of marine mammals to subsistence hunters.

A draft final technical report will be submitted to NMFS by April 1, 2000. The final technical report will contain a full description of the methods, results, and interpretation of all monitoring tasks. The draft final report will be subject to peer review before finalized by BPXA.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

On June 12, 1998 (63 FR 32207), the Environmental Protection Agency noted the availability for public review and comment a DEIS prepared by the Corps under NEPA on Beaufort Sea oil and gas development at Northstar. Comments on that document were accepted by the Corps until August 31, 1998 (63 FR 43699, August 14, 1998). NMFS is a cooperating agency, as defined by the Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 CFR 1501.6), on the preparation of this document. This DEIS, which supplements information contained in the application, is considered part of NMFS' record of decision for determining whether the activity proposed for receiving a small

take authorization is having a negligible impact on affected marine mammal stocks and not having an unmitigable adverse impact on subsistence needs. Based upon a review of the Final EIS (FEIS) and the comments received on this proposed authorization, NMFS will (1) adopt the Corp FEIS, (2) amend the Corps FEIS to incorporate relevant comments, suggestions and information, or (3) based upon comments received, prepare and release for comment a draft Environmental Assessment. NMFS will not issue an IHA until its responsibilities under NEPA have been met.

Consultation

Under section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), NMFS will complete formal consultation with the Corps on the Beaufort Sea oil and gas development project at Northstar. NMFS will also consult with itself on the issuance of an incidental harassment authorization for this activity. If an authorization to incidentally harass listed marine mammals is issued under the MMPA, NMFS will issue an Incidental Take Statement under section 7 of the ESA for listed marine mammals.

Conclusions

NMFS has preliminarily determined that the impact of constructing the Northstar Development in the U.S. Beaufort Sea will result, at worst, in a temporary modification in behavior by certain species of cetaceans and pinnipeds. During the ice-covered season, pinnipeds close to the island may be subject to incidental harassment due to the localized displacement from construction of ice roads and from transportation activities on that road. As cetaceans will not be in the area during the ice-covered season, they will not be affected. During the open-water season, the principal construction-related activities will be helicopter traffic, vessel traffic, and some construction activity on Seal Island. Sheet-pile driving is expected to be completed prior to whales being present in the area. Sounds from construction activities on the island are not expected to be detectable more than about 5–10 km (3.1–6.2 mi) offshore of the island. Disturbance to bowhead or beluga whales by on-island activities will be limited to an area substantially less than that distance. Helicopter traffic will be limited to nearshore areas between the mainland and the island and is unlikely to approach or disturb whales. Barge traffic will be located mainly inshore of the whales and will involve vessels moving slowly, in a straight line, and at constant speed. Little disturbance or

displacement of whales by vessel traffic is expected. While behavioral modifications may be made by these species to avoid the resultant noise, this behavioral change is expected to have no more than a negligible impact on the animals.

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 operations, because the proposed activity is in shallow waters inshore of the main migration corridor for bowhead whales and far inshore of the main migration corridor for belugas, the number of potential harassment takings is estimated to be small. In addition, no take by injury and/or death is anticipated, and the potential for temporary or permanent hearing impairment will be avoided through the incorporation of the mitigation measures mentioned in this document. No rookeries, areas of concentrated mating or feeding, or other areas of special significance for marine mammals occur within or near the planned area of operations during the season of operations.

Because bowhead whales are east of the construction area in the Canadian Beaufort Sea until late August/early September, activities at Northstar are not expected to impact subsistence hunting of bowhead whales prior to that date. Appropriate mitigation measures to avoid an unmitigable adverse impact on the availability of bowhead whales for subsistence needs will be the subject of consultation between BPXA and subsistence users.

Also, while construction at Northstar has some potential to influence seal hunting activities by residents of Nuiqsut, because (1) the peak sealing season is during the winter months, (2) the main summer sealing is off the Colville Delta, and (3) the zone of influence from Northstar on belukha and seals is fairly small, NMFS believes that Northstar construction will not have an unmitigable adverse impact on the availability of these stocks for subsistence uses.

Proposed Authorization

NMFS proposes to issue an IHA for the taking of marine mammals incidental to construction of the Northstar development project in the Alaskan Beaufort Sea, provided the previously mentioned mitigation, monitoring, and reporting requirements are incorporated. NMFS has preliminarily determined that the proposed activity would result in the

harassment of only small numbers of bowhead whales, gray whales, belukha whales, ringed seals, bearded seals, and spotted (largha) seals; would have a negligible impact on these marine mammal stocks; and would not have an unmitigable adverse impact on the availability of marine mammal stocks for subsistence uses.

Information Solicited

NMFS requests interested persons to submit comments and information concerning this request (see **ADDRESSES**).

Dated: October 20, 1998.

Hilda Diaz-Soltero,

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

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BILLING CODE 3510-22-F

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 101698H]

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 meeting.

SUMMARY: The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council will convene public meetings.

DATES: The meetings will be held on November 9-12, 1998.

ADDRESSES: These meetings will be held at the Galveston Island Hilton Resort, 5222 Seawall Boulevard, Galveston, TX; telephone: 1-800-475-3386.

Council address: Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, 3018 U.S. Highway 301 North, Suite 1000, Tampa, FL 33619.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Wayne E. Swingle, Executive Director, Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council; telephone: (813) 228-2815.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Council

November 11, 1998

8:30 a.m.—Convene.

9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.—Receive public testimony on red snapper total allowable catch (TAC).

3:00 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.—Receive the Reef Fish Management Committee Report.

November 12, 1998

8:30 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.—Receive the Shrimp Management Committee Report.

9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.—Receive the Joint Reef Fish/Shrimp Committee Report.

10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.—Receive Sustainable Fisheries Committee Report.

11:00 a.m. - 11:15 a.m.—Receive the Migratory Species Committee Report.

11:15 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.—Receive the Personnel Committee Report.

11:30 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.—Receive the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas Advisory Committee Meeting Report.

11:45 a.m. - 12:00 noon—Receive the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) Liaison Report.

12:00 noon - 12:15 p.m.—Receive Enforcement Reports.

12:15 p.m. - 12:45 p.m.—Receive Director's Reports.

12:45 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.—Other business.

November 9, 1998

11:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon—Orientation session for new Council members.

1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.—Convene the Reef Fish Management Committee to review the stock assessment update for red snapper and the recommendations of the Reef Fish Stock Assessment Panel (RFSAP), Socioeconomic Panel, Red Snapper Advisory Panel (RSAP), and the Scientific and Statistical Committee. The committee will develop their recommendations to the Council on TAC for red snapper and possibly other regulatory measures included in the framework procedure of the Reef Fish Fishery Management Plan (FMP), as amended. The recommendations of the Reef Fish Committee will be considered by the Council on Wednesday, November 11, 1998, following public testimony.

November 10, 1998

8:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.—Convene a joint meeting of the Reef Fish and Shrimp Management Committees to review a report entitled "An Alternative View Regarding Appropriate SPR Threshold and Targets for Gulf of Mexico Red Snapper." The Committee will also consider comments on the report by the RFSAP and critiques by other peer reviewers.

10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.—Convene the Shrimp Management Committee to review a protocol for certifying additional bycatch reduction devices (BRDs) developed by NMFS. NMFS will also provide the Committee with an update of the BRD evaluation study and a status report of the certification of the