

count, which resulted in negatively-biased Nmin values because not all age classes are represented. The Guidelines for preparing Stock Assessment Reports (NMFS 2016) recommends defining Nmin as the 20th percentile of a log-normal distribution based on an estimate of the number of animals in a stock (which is equivalent to the lower limit of a 60% 2-tailed confidence interval). The Guidelines allow for other approaches to be used to estimate Nmin if they provide an adequate level of assurance that the stock size is equal to or greater than that estimate. Laake *et al.* (2018) did not provide a CV for the estimated population size, so the updated Nmin is based on the lower 95 percent confidence limit. The stock is estimated to be approximately 40 percent above its maximum net productivity level (MNPL = 183,481 animals), and it is therefore considered within the range of its optimum sustainable population. The carrying capacity of the population was estimated at 275,298 animals in 2014 (Laake *et al.* 2018). The total human caused mortality is less than the PBR of 14,011.

Corrections to the 2016 and 2017 SARs

Subsequent to announcing the availability of the final 2016 (82 FR 29039, June 27, 2017) and 2017 (83 FR 32093, July 11, 2018) SARs, we were made aware that the SARs contained some technical errors. In the 2016 North Atlantic right whale SAR, the PBR was listed incorrectly as 1. The correct PBR value for 2016 is 0.9. Similarly, in the 2017 North Atlantic right whale SAR, PBR was listed as 1.4, but the correct value is 0.9. In addition, the 2017 SAR for the WNA Central Florida Coastal Stock of common bottlenose dolphins contained a technical error. In the "Population Size" section, the name of the stock was incorrectly listed as the "Northern" Florida Coastal Stock instead of the "Central" Florida Coastal Stock. We have corrected the errors and posted revised versions of the 2016 and 2017 North Atlantic right whale SARs and 2017 WNA Central Florida Coastal Stock common bottlenose dolphin SAR on the NMFS website (see **ADDRESSES**). With this **Federal Register** notice, we are notifying the public about the revised versions.

References

Carretta, J.V., K.A. Forney, E.M. Oleson, D.W. Weller, A.R. Lang, J. Baker, M.M. Muto, B. Hanson, A.J. Orr, H. Huber, M.S. Lowry, J. Barlow, J.E. Moore, D. Lynch, L. Carswell, and R.L. Brownell Jr. 2018. U.S. Pacific Marine Mammal Stock Assessments: 2017. U.S. Department of

Commerce. NOAA Technical Memorandum NMFS-SWFSC-602. 155 pp.

Daoust, P.-Y., E.L. Couture, T. Wimmer and L. Bourque. 2017. Incident Report: North Atlantic right whale mortality event in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, 2017. Collaborative report produced by: Canadian Wildlife Health Cooperative, Marine Animal Response Society, and Fisheries and Oceans Canada. 256 pp.

Garrison, L.P. and P.E. Rosel. 2017. Partitioning short-finned and long-finned pilot whale bycatch estimates using habitat and genetic information. Southeast Fisheries Science Center, Protected Resources and Biodiversity Division, 75 Virginia Beach Dr., Miami, FL 33140. PRBD Contribution # PRBD-2016-17, 24 pp.

Hayes, S.A., E. Josephson, K. Maze-Foley, P.E. Rosel, B. Byrd, S. Chavez-Rosales, T.V.N. Col, L. Engleby, L.P. Garrison, J. Hatch, A. Henry, S.C. Horstman, J. Litz, M.C. Lyssikatos, K.D. Mullin, C. Orphanides, R.M. Pace, D.L. Palka, M. Soldevilla, and F.W. Wenzel. 2018. U.S. Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Marine Mammal Stock Assessments—2017. NOAA Tech Memo NMFS NE-245; 371 p.

Laake, J.L., M.S. Lowry, R.L. DeLong, S.R. Melin, and J.V. Carretta. 2018. Population growth and status of California sea lions. The Journal of Wildlife Management, DOI: 10.1002/jwmg.21405.

NMFS (National Marine Fisheries Service). 2016. Guidelines for preparing Stock Assessment Reports pursuant to the 1994 Amendments to the MMPA, NMFS Instruction 02-204-01, February 22, 2016. 24 pp.

Rockwood, R.C., J. Calambokidis, and J. Jahncke. 2017. High mortality of blue, humpback and fin whales from modeling of vessel collisions on the U.S. West Coast suggests population impacts and insufficient protection. PLoS ONE 12(8):e0183052.

Dated: September 12, 2018.

Catherine E. Tortorici,

Acting Deputy Director, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 2018-20185 Filed 9-17-18; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XG451

Taking and Importing Marine Mammals; Taking Marine Mammals Incidental to Northwest Fisheries Science Center Fisheries Research

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

ACTION: Notice of issuance of Letter of Authorization.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), as amended, and implementing regulations, notification is hereby given that a Letter of Authorization (LOA) has been issued to the NMFS Northwest Fisheries Science Center (NWFSC) for the take of marine mammals incidental to fisheries research conducted in the Pacific Ocean, including Puget Sound and the Columbia River.

DATES: The authorization is effective from August 27, 2018, through August 28, 2023.

ADDRESSES: The LOA and supporting documentation is available online: www.fisheries.noaa.gov/action/incidental-take-authorization-noaa-fisheries-nwfsc-fisheries-and-ecosystem-research. In case of problems accessing these documents, please call the contact listed below.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ben Laws, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, (301) 427-8401.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Paragraphs 101(a)(5)(A) and (D) of the MMPA (16 U.S.C. 1371(a)(5)(A) and (D)) direct the Secretary of Commerce to allow, upon request, the incidental, but not intentional, taking of small numbers 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.

An authorization for incidental takings shall be granted if NMFS finds that the taking will have a negligible impact on the species or stock(s), will not have an unmitigable adverse impact on the availability of the species or stock(s) for subsistence uses (where relevant), and if the permissible methods of taking and requirements pertaining to the mitigation, monitoring and reporting of such takings are set forth. NMFS has defined "negligible impact" in 50 CFR 216.103 as an impact resulting from the specified activity that cannot be reasonably expected to, and is not reasonably likely to, adversely affect the species or stock through effects on annual rates of recruitment or survival.

Except with respect to certain activities not pertinent here, the MMPA defines "harassment" as: Any act of pursuit, torment, or annoyance which (i)

has the potential to injure a marine mammal or marine mammal stock in the wild (Level A harassment); or (ii) has the potential to disturb a marine mammal or marine mammal stock in the wild by causing disruption of behavioral patterns, including, but not limited to, migration, breathing, nursing, breeding, feeding, or sheltering (Level B harassment).

Summary of Request

On August 10, 2015, we received an adequate and complete request from NWFSC for authorization to take marine mammals incidental to fisheries research activities. On June 13, 2016 (81 FR 38516), we published a notice of proposed rulemaking in the **Federal Register**, requesting comments and information related to the proposed rule for thirty days. The final rule was published in the **Federal Register** on July 27, 2018 (83 FR 36370). For detailed information on this action, please refer to those documents. The regulations include mitigation, monitoring, and reporting requirements for the incidental take of marine mammals during fisheries research activities in the specified geographic region.

NWFSC conducts fisheries research using trawl gear used at various levels in the water column, longlines with multiple hooks, seine nets, and other gear. If a marine mammal interacts with gear deployed by NWFSC, the outcome could potentially be Level A harassment, serious injury (*i.e.*, any injury that will likely result in mortality), or mortality. We pooled the estimated number of incidents of take resulting from gear interactions and assessed the potential impacts accordingly. NWFSC also uses various active acoustic devices in the conduct of fisheries research, and use of these devices has the potential to result in Level B harassment of marine mammals. Level B harassment of pinnipeds hauled out on land may also occur as a result of visual disturbance from vessels conducting NWFSC research. NWFSC is authorized to take individuals of sixteen species by Level A harassment, serious injury, or mortality and of 28 species by Level B harassment.

Authorization

We have issued an LOA to NWFSC authorizing the take of marine mammals incidental to fishery research activities, as described above. Take of marine mammals will be minimized through implementation of the following mitigation measures: (1) Implementation of a “move-on” rule in certain circumstances that is expected to reduce

the potential for physical interaction with marine mammals; (2) use of a marine mammal excluder device in certain trawl nets; and (3) use of acoustic deterrent devices on certain trawl nets. Additionally, the rule includes an adaptive management component that allows for timely modification of mitigation or monitoring measures based on new information, when appropriate. The NWFSC will submit reports as required.

Based on these findings and the information discussed in the preamble to the final rule, the activities described under these LOAs will have a negligible impact on marine mammal stocks and will not have an unmitigable adverse impact on the availability of the affected marine mammal stock for subsistence uses.

Dated: August 27, 2018.

Cathryn E. Tortorici,

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

[FR Doc. 2018–20186 Filed 9–17–18; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–22–P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Submission for OMB Review; Comment Request

The Department of Commerce will submit to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for clearance the following proposal for collection of information under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act.

Agency: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

Title: Aleutian Islands Pollock Fishery Requirements.

OMB Control Number: 0648–0513.

Form Number(s): None.

Type of Request: Regular (extension of a currently approved collection).

Number of Respondents: 1.

Average Hours per Response: 16.

Burden Hours: 16.

Needs and Uses: This request is for extension of a currently approved collection.

Amendment 82 to the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area (FMP) established a framework for the management of the Aleutian Islands subarea (AI) directed pollock fishery. An AI pollock fishery was allocated to the Aleut Corporation, Adak, Alaska, for the purpose of economic development in Adak, Alaska. The Aleut Corporation is identified in Public Law 108–199 as a business

incorporated pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (43 U.S.C. 1601 *et seq.*). Regulations implementing the FMP appear at 50 CFR part 679.

Each year at least 14 days before harvesting pollock or processing pollock in the AI directed pollock fishery, the Aleut Corporation selects harvesting vessels and processors for participation in this fishery. The Aleut Corporation submits its selected participants to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) for approval. On approval, NMFS mails the Aleut Corporation a letter that includes a list of the approved participants. A copy of this letter must be retained on board each participating vessel and on site each shoreside processor at all times.

Affected Public: Business or other for-profit organizations; individuals or households.

Frequency: Annually.

Respondent's Obligation: Mandatory.

This information collection request may be viewed at reginfo.gov. Follow the instructions to view Department of Commerce collections currently under review by OMB.

Written comments and recommendations for the proposed information collection should be sent within 30 days of publication of this notice to OIRA_Submission@omb.eop.gov or fax to (202) 395–5806.

Dated: September 13, 2018.

Sarah Brabson,

NOAA PRA Clearance Officer.

[FR Doc. 2018–20212 Filed 9–17–18; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–22–P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Proposed Information Collection; Comment Request; Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Planning, Protection or Restoration

AGENCY: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Department of Commerce, as part of its continuing effort to reduce paperwork and respondent burden, invites the general public and other Federal agencies to take this opportunity to comment on proposed and/or continuing information collections, as required by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995.

DATES: Written comments must be submitted on or before November 19, 2018.