

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

[RTID 0648-XE372]

New England Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

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

ACTION: Notice of public meeting.

SUMMARY: The New England Fishery Management Council (Council) is scheduling a public hybrid meeting of its Groundfish Committee to consider actions affecting New England fisheries in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ). This meeting will be held in-person with a webinar option. Recommendations from this group will be brought to the full Council for formal consideration and action, if appropriate. **DATES:** This meeting will be held on Tuesday, October 29, 2024, at 9 a.m.

ADDRESSES:

Meeting address: This meeting will be held at the Hilton Garden Inn, 100 High Street, Portsmouth, NH 03801; telephone: (603) 431-1499.

Webinar registration URL information: <https://nefmc-org.zoom.us/j/9876543210>

Council address: New England Fishery Management Council, 50 Water Street, Mill 2, Newburyport, MA 01950.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Cate O'Keefe, Executive Director, New England Fishery Management Council; telephone: (978) 465-0492.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**Agenda**

The Groundfish Committee will meet to discuss recommendations from the Recreational Advisory Panel, Groundfish Advisory Panel, and Groundfish Plan Development Team. They will receive an update on development of draft alternatives in Framework Adjustment 69/ Specifications and Management Measures, including potential recommendations to the Council. The Committee will receive an update on development of the Atlantic Cod Management Transition Plan. Other business will be discussed, if necessary.

Although non-emergency issues not contained on the agenda may come before this Council for discussion, those issues may not be the subject of formal action during this meeting. Council action will be restricted to those issues

specifically listed in this notice and any issues arising after publication of this notice that require emergency action under section 305(c) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, provided the public has been notified of the Council's intent to take final action to address the emergency. The public also should be aware that the meeting will be recorded. Consistent with 16 U.S.C. 1852, a copy of the recording is available upon request.

Special Accommodations

This meeting is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Cate O'Keefe, Executive Director, at (978) 465-0492, at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.

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

Dated: October 7, 2024.

Rey Israel Marquez,

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

[FR Doc. 2024-23467 Filed 10-9-24; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration****Agency Information Collection Activities; Submission to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for Review and Approval; Comment Request; Nomination Process for National Marine Sanctuaries**

The Department of Commerce will submit the following information collection request to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for review and clearance in accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, on or after the date of publication of this notice. We invite the general public and other Federal agencies to comment on proposed, and continuing information collections, which helps us assess the impact of our information collection requirements and minimize the public's reporting burden. Public comments were previously requested via the **Federal Register** on April 30, 2024 during a 60-day comment period. This notice allows for an additional 30 days for public comments.

Agency: National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

Title: Nomination Process for National Marine Sanctuaries.

OMB Control Number: 0648-0682.

Form Number(s): None.

Type of Request: Regular submission, revision and extension of a current information collection.

Number of Respondents: 7.

Average Hours per Response: 115 hours per nomination; 8 hours for additional information.

Total Annual Burden Hours: 591.

Needs and Uses: This request is for a revision and extension of an existing information collection necessary to provide the American public an opportunity to nominate marine areas which the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) may consider for designation as a national marine sanctuary, under the National Marine Sanctuaries Act (NMSA). The revision adds a Request for Additional Information to accurately reflect the burden imposed by requesting follow-up information.

National marine sanctuary regulations provide that the public can submit areas of the marine and Great Lakes environments for consideration by NOAA as a national marine sanctuary through the sanctuary nomination process (15 CFR 922.12). Persons wanting to submit nominations for consideration should submit

information on the qualifying criteria and management considerations for the site to be nominated. The Office of National Marine Sanctuaries reviews the submissions, which could result in the nomination being added to an inventory of areas that NOAA may consider for sanctuary designation at some point in the future. Sanctuary designation is a separate public process that would be conducted pursuant to the requirements of the National Marine Sanctuaries Act, and all other applicable laws. This proposed information collection is for national marine sanctuary nominations received pursuant to NOAA regulations that provide that the public may nominate special places of the marine environment through the sanctuary nomination process at 15 CFR 922.12.

Affected Public: Individuals, non-profit institutions; Federal, State, local, government, Native Hawaiian organizations; business or other for-profit organizations.

Frequency: On occasion.

Respondent's Obligation: Required to Obtain or Retain Benefits.

Legal Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1431 *et seq.* This information collection request may be viewed at www.reginfo.gov. Follow the instructions to view the Department of Commerce collections currently under review by OMB.

Written comments and recommendations for the proposed information collection should be submitted within 30 days of the

publication of this notice on the following website www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAMain. Find this particular information collection by selecting “Currently under 30-day Review—Open for Public Comments” or by using the search function and entering either the title of the collection or the OMB Control Number 0648–0682.

Sheleen Dumas,

Departmental PRA Clearance Officer, Office of the Under Secretary for Economic Affairs, Commerce Department.

[FR Doc. 2024–23436 Filed 10–9–24; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648–XE367]

Taking and Importing Marine Mammals; Taking Marine Mammals Incidental to Geophysical Surveys Related to Oil and Gas Activities in the Gulf of Mexico

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

ACTION: Notice; issuance of letter of authorization.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), as amended, its implementing regulations, and NMFS’ MMPA Regulations for Taking Marine Mammals Incidental to Geophysical Surveys Related to Oil and Gas Activities in the Gulf of Mexico (GOM), notification is hereby given that NMFS has issued a Letter of Authorization (LOA) to WesternGeco for the take of marine mammals incidental to geophysical survey activity in the GOM.

DATES: This LOA is effective from October 3, 2024 through November 15, 2024.

ADDRESSES: The LOA, LOA request, and supporting documentation are available online at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/marine-mammal-protection/issued-letters-authorization-oil-and-gas-industry-geophysical-survey>. In case of problems accessing these documents, please call the contact listed below (**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Rachel Wachtendonk, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, (301) 427–8401.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Sections 101(a)(5)(A) and (D) of the MMPA (16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*) 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).

On January 19, 2021, we issued a final rule with regulations to govern the unintentional taking of marine mammals incidental to geophysical survey activities conducted by oil and gas industry operators, and those persons authorized to conduct activities on their behalf (collectively “industry operators”), in U.S. waters of the GOM over the course of 5 years (86 FR 5322). The rule was based on our findings that the total taking from the specified activities over the 5-year period will have a negligible impact on the affected species or stock(s) of marine mammals and will not have an unmitigable adverse impact on the availability of those species or stocks for subsistence uses, and became effective on April 19, 2021.

The regulations at 50 CFR 217.180 *et seq.* allow for the issuance of LOAs to industry operators for the incidental take of marine mammals during geophysical survey activities and prescribe the permissible methods of taking and other means of effecting the least practicable adverse impact on marine mammal species or stocks and their habitat (often referred to as mitigation), as well as requirements pertaining to the monitoring and reporting of such taking. Under § 217.186 (e), issuance of an LOA shall be based on a determination that the level of taking will be consistent with the findings made for the total taking allowable under these regulations and a determination that the amount of take authorized under the LOA is of no more than small numbers.

NMFS subsequently discovered that the 2021 rule was based on erroneous take estimates. We conducted another rulemaking using correct take estimates and other newly available and pertinent information relevant to the analyses supporting some of the findings in the 2021 final rule and the taking allowable under the regulations. We issued a final rule in April 2024, effective May 24, 2024 (89 FR 31488).

The 2024 final rule made no changes to the specified activities or the specified geographical region in which those activities would be conducted, nor to the original 5-year period of effectiveness. In consideration of the new information, the 2024 rule presented new analyses supporting affirmance of the negligible impact determinations for all species, and affirmed that the existing regulations, which contain mitigation, monitoring, and reporting requirements, are consistent with the “least practicable adverse impact” standard of the MMPA.

Summary of Request and Analysis

NMFS issued a LOA to TGS on September 27, 2023, for the take of marine mammals incidental to a 3-dimensional ocean bottom node survey in the Green Canyon, Ewing Bank, and Atwater Valley protraction areas, including approximately 380 lease blocks, effective September 27, 2023, through September 28, 2024. Please see the **Federal Register** notification (88 FR 68106, October 3, 2023) for additional detail regarding the LOA and the planned survey activity.

On December 20, 2023, TGS requested the transfer of the LOA to WesternGeco, its partner in the planned survey effort. WesternGeco confirmed to NMFS that it similarly requested transfer of the LOA. No other changes were requested. The revised LOA remained effective through