

in the Northeast.” The project would test a V-shaped bar with drop chains (V bar will refer to the entire apparatus consisting of bar and chains) attached to the dredge wire to reduce flatfish bycatch while maintaining the catch of sea scallops. The vessels would be temporarily exempt from possession limits and minimum size requirements specified in 50 CFR part 648, subsections B and D through O, for sampling purposes only, and from the scallop observer program requirements at 648.11(g). URI has contracted East West Technical Services (an observer and at-sea monitor service provider) to conduct the at-sea data collection component of this project. All trips would be conducted on LAGC IFQ vessels, and all landed scallop catch would count against the vessels yearly IFQ allocation. Any fishing activity conducted outside of normal fishing operations as allowed under Northeast fishery regulations, 50 CFR part 648, and outside the scope of the exempted fishing activity would be prohibited, including landing fish in excess of a possession limit or below the minimum size.

Six vessels would conduct scallop dredging beginning in June 2017 and continue through April 2018, on approximately 40 trips lasting approximately one day-at-sea (DAS). Within the 40 DAS there would be two pilot DAS in advance of the research DAS to test the design and make any necessary changes, as well as two DAS exclusively for underwater video collection to film fish behavior in relation to the gear. All research trips would complete approximately seven tows per day for a duration of 50 minutes at a standard tow speed between 3.8 to 4.5 knots (or averaging 4.2 knots). Trips would take place in the Southern New England Scallop Dredge Exemption Area where part of the LAGC fleet normally operates.

All tows would be conducted with a single dredge ranging in width from 8 to 10.5 feet (2.4 to 3.2 m) following an alternate paired tow strategy where a pair consists of one control and one experimental tow. Researchers would attach the V bar to the tow cable and anchor the sides to the outer dredge frame with chain and shackles at all connection points for the experimental tows. The V bar will be removed for the control tows. Chains will hang vertically from the V bar to the ocean floor. The chains will be spaced at intervals meant to restrict flatfish from swimming between them. The spacing set up will be determined during the pilot days. Researchers expect that the chains will create a dust cloud designed to keep the

flatfish moving away from the center of the bar towards the sides and out of the dredge path.

Researchers would weigh all scallop catch from both dredges. Samplers would record total weight of bycatch species to the nearest tenth of a pound and individual length measurements to the nearest centimeter. If the volume of the catch is large, samplers would employ subsampling protocols. All bycatch would be returned to the sea as soon as practicable following data collection. Exemption from possession limit and minimum sizes would ensure the vessel is not in conflict with possession regulations while collecting catch data. All catch above possession limits or below minimum sizes would be discarded as soon as practicable following data collection. Exemption from the sea scallop observer program requirements would allow researchers flexibility for catch sampling timing and onboard space accommodations since vessels in the LAGC fleet are typically smaller with limited deck space. We have consulted with the Northeast Fishery Observer Program on the potential exemption. The observer program requirement exemption for this project would not prevent us from achieving observer coverage levels needed in the LAGC scallop fishery.

All research trips would otherwise be conducted in a manner consistent with normal commercial fishing conditions and catch consistent with the LAGC daily possession limit would be retained for sale.

If approved, the applicant may request minor modifications and extensions to the EFP throughout the year. EFP modifications and extensions may be granted without further notice if they are deemed essential to facilitate completion of the proposed research and have minimal impacts that do not change the scope or impact of the initially approved EFP request. Any fishing activity conducted outside the scope of the exempted fishing activity would be prohibited.

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

Dated: May 3, 2017.

Karen H. Abrams,

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

[FR Doc. 2017-09277 Filed 5-5-17; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XF399

Marine Mammals; File No. 21170

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

ACTION: Notice; receipt of application.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that Keith Ellenbogen, Keith Ellenbogen Photography, 795 Carroll St., Brooklyn, NY 11215, has applied in due form for a permit to conduct commercial or educational photography on marine mammals.

DATES: Written, telefaxed, or email comments must be received on or before June 7, 2017.

ADDRESSES: These documents are available upon written request or by appointment in the Permits and Conservation Division, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13705, Silver Spring, MD 20910; phone (301) 427-8401; fax (301) 713-0376.

Written comments on this application should be submitted to the Chief, Permits and Conservation Division, at the address listed above. Comments may also be submitted by facsimile to (301) 713-0376, or by email to NMFS.Pr1Comments@noaa.gov. Please include the File No. in the subject line of the email comment.

Those individuals requesting a public hearing should submit a written request to the Chief, Permits and Conservation Division at the address listed above. The request should set forth the specific reasons why a hearing on this application would be appropriate.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Courtney Smith or Amy Hapeman, (301) 427-8401.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The subject permit is requested under the authority of the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, as amended (MMPA; 16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*), and the regulations governing the taking and importing of marine mammals (50 CFR part 216).

The applicant proposes to film and photograph cetaceans and seals within the U.S. northeast Atlantic waters of the U.S., from the Gulf of Maine (including Cape Cod Bay and Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary) through the New York Bight (Montauk, NY to Cape May, NJ), including the Hudson Canyon. Up to 810 humpback whales (*Megaptera*

novaeangliae, West Indies Distinct Population Segment); 225 long-finned pilot whales (*Globicephala melaleuca*); 225 harbor porpoises (*Phocoena phocoena*); 225 short-beaked common dolphin (*Delphinus delphis*); 225 Risso's dolphins (*Grampus griseus*); 225 bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*); 225 striped dolphins (*Stenella coeruleoalba*); 225 Atlantic white-sided dolphins (*Lagenorhynchus acutus*); 900 harbor seals (*Phoca vitulina*); and 900 grey seals (*Halichoerus grypus*) may be harassed during close approaches by marine vessels and experienced swimmers and divers for photography and filming purposes. The permit is requested for five years.

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: May 3, 2017.

Julia Harrison,

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

[FR Doc. 2017-09299 Filed 5-5-17; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XF385

North Pacific 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 Center of Independent Experts will meet May 22 through May 25, 2017 to review the stock assessment of Gulf of Alaska Pollock.

DATES: The meeting will be held on Monday, May 22, 2017 through Thursday, May 25, 2017, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held at the Alaska Fisheries Science Center, Building 4, Room 2039, 7600 Sand Point Way NE., Seattle, WA 98115.

Council address: North Pacific Fishery Management Council, 605 W. 4th Ave., Suite 306, Anchorage, AK 99501-2252; telephone: (907) 271-2809.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jim Armstrong, NPFMC staff; telephone: (907) 271-2809.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Terms of Reference:

1. Evaluation of the ability of the stock assessment model, with the available data, to provide parameter estimates to assess the current status of pollock in the Gulf of Alaska.

2. Evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses in the stock assessment model for GOA pollock.

3. Review of the use of indices from spatial delta-GLMM models rather than area-swept estimates as abundance indices for the bottom trawl survey.

4. Review of the use of biomass and size composition estimates from the acoustic survey that have been corrected for net selectivity.

5. Potential evaluation of an equivalent walleye pollock assessment model in Stock Synthesis.

Although other non-emergency issues not on the agenda may come before this group for discussion, in accordance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, those issues may not be the subject of formal action during these meetings. Actions of the Council will be restricted to those issues specifically identified in the agenda and any issues arising after publication of this notice that require emergency action under Section 305(c) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, provided the public has been notified of the Council's intent to take action to address the emergency.

Special Accommodations

These meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Shannon Gleason at (907) 271-2809 at least 7 working days prior to the meeting date.

Dated: May 3, 2017.

Tracey L. Thompson,

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

[FR Doc. 2017-09221 Filed 5-5-17; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XF374

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC); Public Meeting

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

ACTION: Notice; public meeting.

SUMMARY: The Science and Statistical Committee (SSC) of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's (Council) will hold a meeting.

DATES: The meeting will be held on Wednesday and Thursday, May 17-18, 2017, beginning at 9 a.m. on May 17 and concluding by 4:30 p.m. on May 18. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for agenda details.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will take place at the Lord Baltimore Hotel, 20 West Baltimore Street, Baltimore, MD 21201; telephone: (410) 539-8400.

Council address: Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, 800 N. State Street, Suite 201, Dover, DE 19901; telephone: (302) 674-2331; Web site: www.mafmc.org.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Christopher M. Moore, Ph.D., Executive Director, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, telephone: (302) 526-5255.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The purpose of this meeting is to make multi-year ABC recommendations for Atlantic surfclam and ocean quahog based upon recently completed benchmark stock assessments for both species. The SSC will also make multiyear ABC specifications for butterfish, *Illex* and longfin squid based on updated stock assessment information or updated landings and survey information. A review of the most recent data and the 2018 Atlantic mackerel ABC will also be conducted. In addition, topics to be discussed include the NEFSC clam dredge survey design, SSC OFL progress report, an update on the 2018 National SSC meeting and the NRCC assessment working group.

A detailed agenda and background documents will be made available on the Council's Web site (www.mafmc.org) prior to the meeting.

Special Accommodations

These meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language