

ACTION: Notice of SEDAR 77 HMS Hammerhead Sharks Assessment Webinar VIII.

SUMMARY: The SEDAR 77 assessment of the Atlantic stock of hammerhead sharks will consist of a stock identification (ID) process, data webinars/workshop, a series of assessment webinars, and a review workshop. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION**.

DATES: The SEDAR 77 HMS Hammerhead Sharks Assessment Webinar VIII has been scheduled for Tuesday, February 21, 2023, from 11 a.m. until 3 p.m., Eastern Time. The established times may be adjusted as necessary to accommodate the timely completion of discussion relevant to the assessment process. Such adjustments may result in the meeting being extended from or completed prior to the time established by this notice.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held via webinar. The webinar is open to members of the public. Registration for the webinar is available by contacting the SEDAR coordinator via email at Kathleen.Howington@safmc.net.

SEDAR address: South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, 4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201, N Charleston, SC 29405; www.sedarweb.org.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Kathleen Howington, SEDAR Coordinator, 4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201, North Charleston, SC 29405; phone: (843) 571-4371; email: Kathleen.Howington@safmc.net.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, and Caribbean Fishery Management Councils, in conjunction with NOAA Fisheries and the Atlantic and Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commissions, have implemented the Southeast Data, Assessment and Review (SEDAR) process, a multi-step method for determining the status of fish stocks in the Southeast Region. SEDAR is a three-step process including: (1) Data Workshop; (2) Assessment Process utilizing webinars; and (3) Review Workshop. The product of the Data Workshop is a data report which compiles and evaluates potential datasets and recommends which datasets are appropriate for assessment analyses. The product of the Assessment Process is a stock assessment report which describes the fisheries, evaluates the status of the stock, estimates biological benchmarks, projects future population conditions, and recommends research and monitoring needs. The assessment is independently peer

reviewed at the Review Workshop. The product of the Review Workshop is a Summary documenting panel opinions regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the stock assessment and input data. Participants for SEDAR Workshops are appointed by the Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, and Caribbean Fishery Management Councils and NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office, Highly Migratory Species Management Division, and Southeast Fisheries Science Center. Participants include: data collectors and database managers; stock assessment scientists, biologists, and researchers; constituency representatives including fishermen, environmentalists, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs); international experts; and staff of Councils, Commissions, and state and federal agencies.

The items of discussion at the SEDAR 77 HMS Hammerhead Shark Assessment Webinar VIII are as follows: Discuss any leftover data issues that were not cleared up during the data process, answer any questions that the analysts have, and discuss model development and model setup.

Although non-emergency issues not contained in this agenda may come before this group for discussion, those issues may not be the subject of formal action during this meeting. Action will be restricted to those issues specifically identified in this notice 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 intent to take final action to address the emergency.

Special Accommodations

This meeting is accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for auxiliary aids should be directed to the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council office (see **ADDRESSES**) at least 5 business days prior to the meeting.

Note: The times and sequence specified in this agenda are subject to change.

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

Dated: January 30, 2023.

Rey Israel Marquez,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648-XC735]

Marine Mammals; File No. 27038

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

ACTION: Notice; receipt of application.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that the Center for Whale Research (Responsible Party: Michael Weiss, Ph.D.), 355 Smuggler's Cove Road, Friday Harbor, WA 98250, has applied in due form for a permit to conduct research on marine mammals.

DATES: Written, telefaxed, or email comments must be received on or before March 6, 2023.

ADDRESSES: The application and related documents are available for review by selecting "Records Open for Public Comment" from the "Features" box on the Applications and Permits for Protected Species (APPS) home page, <https://apps.nmfs.noaa.gov>, and then selecting File No. 27038 from the list of available applications. These documents are also available upon written request via email to NMFS.Pr1Comments@noaa.gov.

Written comments on this application should be submitted via email to NMFS.Pr1Comments@noaa.gov. Please include File No. 27038 in the subject line of the email comment.

Those individuals requesting a public hearing should submit a written request via email to NMFS.Pr1Comments@noaa.gov. The request should set forth the specific reasons why a hearing on this application would be appropriate.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Shasta McClenahan, Ph.D., 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.*), 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.*), the regulations governing the taking, importing, and exporting of endangered and threatened species (50 CFR parts 222-226), and the Fur Seal Act of 1966, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1151 *et seq.*).

The applicant requests a 5-year permit to monitor the demography, structure, and health of endangered Southern

Resident killer whales (*Orcinus orca*) and opportunistically study other cetaceans in the inland and coastal waters of Washington. Up to 17 additional species of cetaceans may be targeted for research including the following ESA-listed species: blue (*Balaenoptera musculus*), fin (*B. physalus*), gray (Western North Pacific distinct population segment [DPS]; *Eschrichtius robustus*), humpback (Mexico and Central America DPS; *Megaptera novaeangliae*), North Pacific right (*Eubalaena japonica*), sei (*B. borealis*), and sperm (*Physeter macrocephalus*) whales. Researchers would conduct vessel surveys, including unmanned aircraft systems, for counts, photography, photo-identification, photogrammetry, video recording, observations, passive acoustic recording, collection of samples (sloughed skin, feces, and predation remains), and underwater photo/videography. Five species of pinnipeds, including endangered Steller sea lions (Western DPS; *Eumetopias jubatus*), may be harassed during research. See the application for numbers of animals requested by species and procedure.

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: January 30, 2023.

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

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648–XC732]

Magnuson-Stevens Act Provisions; General Provisions for Domestic Fisheries; Application for Exempted Fishing Permits

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

ACTION: Notice; request for comments.

SUMMARY: The Assistant Regional Administrator for Sustainable Fisheries,

Greater Atlantic Region, NMFS, has made a preliminary determination that an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) application contains all of the required information and warrants further consideration. The EFP would allow federally permitted fishing vessels to fish outside fishery regulations in support of exempted fishing activities proposed by the applicant. Regulations under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act require publication of this notification to provide interested parties the opportunity to comment on applications for proposed EFPs.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before February 17, 2023.

ADDRESSES: You may submit written comments by the following method:

- *Email:* nmfs.gar.efp@noaa.gov.

Include in the subject line “6-Inch Gillnet Mesh Exploratory Fishing.”

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Spencer Talmage, Fishery Policy Analyst, Spencer.Talmage@noaa.gov, (978) 281–9232.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The applicant submitted a complete application for an EFP to conduct commercial fishing activities that the regulations would otherwise restrict. This EFP would exempt the participating vessels from the following Federal regulations:

TABLE 1—REQUESTED EXEMPTIONS

Citation	Regulation	Need for exemption
50 CFR 648.80(a)(3)(iv)(B)(1)	Minimum mesh size for Trip Gillnet Vessels in the Gulf of Maine.	Needed to deploy 6-inch gillnet gear in Gulf of Maine.

TABLE 2—PROJECT SUMMARY

Project title	6-Inch Gillnet Mesh Exploratory Fishing.
Applicant	Northeast Sector Services Network.
Project objectives	Evaluate the efficacy of smaller mesh gillnet for haddock, without increasing catch of cod.
Application date	November 22, 2022.
Project period	January 2023—May 31, 2023.
Project location	Gulf of Maine.
Number of vessels	1.
Number of trips	20–30.
Trip duration (days)	2–3.
Total number of days	40–90 days.
Gear type(s)	Gillnet, 6 inch (15.24-cm) mesh.
Number of tows or sets	20–30.
Duration of tows or sets	24 hours.

Project Narrative

The proposed EFP is a continuation of a project conducting exploratory fishing in the Gulf of Maine (GOM) that mimics the structure of the GOM Sink Gillnet Mesh Exemption originally approved for sectors from fishing years 2010 through

2012. In fishing year 2013, NMFS disapproved the exemption due to concerns regarding the status of the GOM haddock stock, which at the time was subject to overfishing and approaching an overfished condition. The proposed EFP would provide preliminary catch data to inform future

studies to test the feasibility of using the 6-inch (15.24-cm) gillnet gear to target haddock while minimizing catch of GOM cod.

From issuance to May 31, 2023, the participating vessel would conduct between 20 and 30 trips under the EFP in the GOM Regulated Mesh Area