

publicly available at any time. While you may ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

**Sheleen Dumas,**

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

[FR Doc. 2024-15686 Filed 7-16-24; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3510-22-P**

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648-XE042]

#### Takes of Marine Mammals Incidental to Specified Activities; Taking Marine Mammals Incidental to Invenergy Wind Offshore, LLC's Marine Site Characterization Surveys in the New York Bight

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

**ACTION:** Notice; proposed incidental harassment authorization renewal; request for comments on proposed authorization.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS received a request from Invenergy Wind Offshore, LLC (IWO) for the renewal of their currently active incidental harassment authorization (IHA) (hereinafter, the "initial IHA") to take marine mammals incidental to marine site characterization surveys in the New York Bight, specifically within the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) Commercial Lease of Submerged Lands for Renewable Energy Development on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Lease Area OCS-A 0542 (Lease Area) and associated Export Cable Route (ECR) survey area (ECR Area). IWO's specified activities are identical to those included in the initial IHA. The initial IHA expires on July 30, 2024. Pursuant to the Marine Mammal Protection Act, prior to issuing the initial IHA, NMFS requested comments on both the proposed IHA and the potential for renewing the initial authorization if certain requirements were satisfied. The renewal requirements have been satisfied, and NMFS is now providing an additional 15-day comment period to allow for any additional comments on the proposed renewal not previously provided during the initial 30-day comment period.

**DATES:** Comments and information must be received no later than August 1, 2024.

**ADDRESSES:** Comments should be addressed to Jolie Harrison, Chief, Permits and Conservation Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service, and should be submitted via email to [ITP.demarest@noaa.gov](mailto:ITP.demarest@noaa.gov).

**Instructions:** NMFS is not responsible for comments sent by any other method, to any other address or individual, or received after the end of the comment period. Comments, including all attachments, must not exceed a 25-megabyte file size. Attachments to comments will be accepted in Microsoft Word, Excel or Adobe PDF file formats only. All comments received are a part of the public record and will generally be posted online at <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/permit/incidental-take-authorizations-under-marine-mammal-protection-act> without change. All personal identifying information (e.g., name, address) voluntarily submitted by the commenter may be publicly accessible. Do not submit confidential business information or otherwise sensitive or protected information.

Electronic copies of the initial IHA application, renewal request, and supporting documents, including **Federal Register** notices of the initial proposed and final IHA, the initial IHA, and a list of the references cited in this document, may be obtained online at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/marine-mammal-protection/incidental-take-authorizations-other-energy-activities-renewable>. In case of problems accessing these documents, please call the contact listed below.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Austin Demarest, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, (301) 427-8401.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

##### Background

The Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) prohibits the "take" of marine mammals, with certain exceptions. Sections 101(a)(5)(A) and (D) of the MMPA (16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*) direct the Secretary of Commerce (as delegated to NMFS) 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 promulgated or, if the taking is limited to harassment, an incidental harassment authorization is issued.

Authorization for incidental takings shall 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 taking for subsistence uses (where relevant). NMFS must prescribe the permissible methods of taking and other "means of effecting the least practicable adverse impact" on the affected species or stocks and their habitat, paying particular attention to rookeries, mating grounds, and areas of similar significance, and on the availability of such species or stocks for taking for certain subsistence uses (referred to here as "mitigation measures"). NMFS must also prescribe requirements pertaining to monitoring and reporting of such takings. The definition of key terms such as "take," "harassment," and "negligible impact" can be found in the MMPA and NMFS's implementing regulations (see 16 U.S.C. 1362; 50 CFR 216.3; 50 CFR 216.103).

NMFS' regulations implementing the MMPA at 50 CFR 216.107(e) indicate that IHAs may be renewed for additional periods of time not to exceed one year for each reauthorization. In the notice of proposed IHA for the initial IHA, NMFS described the circumstances under which we would consider issuing a renewal for this activity and requested public comment on a potential renewal under those circumstances. Specifically, on a case-by-case basis, NMFS may issue a one-time 1-year renewal of an IHA following notice to the public providing an additional 15 days for public comments when (1) up to another year of identical, or nearly identical, activities as described in the Detailed Description of Specified Activities section of the initial IHA issuance notice is planned or (2) the activities as described in the Description of the Specified Activities and Anticipated Impacts section of the initial IHA issuance notice would not be completed by the time the initial IHA expires and a renewal would allow for completion of the activities beyond that described in the **DATES** section of the notice of issuance of the initial IHA, provided all of the following conditions are met:

1. A request for renewal is received no later than 60 days prior to the needed renewal IHA effective date (recognizing that the renewal IHA expiration date cannot extend beyond 1 year from expiration of the initial IHA);

2. The request for renewal must include the following:

- An explanation that the activities to be conducted under the requested renewal IHA are identical to the

activities analyzed under the initial IHA, are a subset of the activities, or include changes so minor (e.g., reduction in pile size) that the changes do not affect the previous analyses, mitigation and monitoring requirements, or take estimates (with the exception of reducing the type or amount of take); and

- A preliminary monitoring report showing the results of the required monitoring to date and an explanation showing that the monitoring results do not indicate impacts of a scale or nature not previously analyzed or authorized; and

3. Upon review of the request for renewal, the status of the affected species or stocks, and any other pertinent information, NMFS determines that there are no more than minor changes in the activities, the mitigation and monitoring measures will remain the same and appropriate, and the findings in the initial IHA remain valid.

An additional public comment period of 15 days (for a total of 45 days), with direct notice by email, phone, or postal service to commenters on the initial IHA, is provided to allow for any additional comments on the proposed renewal. A description of the renewal process may be found on our website at: <http://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/marine-mammal-protection/incidental-harassment-authorization-renewals>. Any comments received on the potential renewal, along with relevant comments on the initial IHA, have been considered in the development of this proposed IHA renewal and a summary of agency responses to applicable comments is included in this notice. NMFS will consider any additional public comments prior to making any final decision on the issuance of the requested renewal, and agency responses will be summarized in the final notice of our decision.

#### National Environmental Policy Act

This action is consistent with categories of activities identified in Categorical Exclusion B4 (incidental take authorizations with no anticipated serious injury or mortality) of the Companion Manual for NOAA Administrative Order 216–6A, which do not individually or cumulatively have the potential for significant impacts on the quality of the human environment and for which we have not identified any extraordinary circumstances that would preclude this categorical exclusion. Accordingly, NMFS determined that the issuance of the initial IHA qualified to be categorically excluded from further NEPA review.

NMFS has preliminarily determined that the application of this categorical exclusion remains appropriate for this renewal IHA.

#### History of Request

On July 19, 2023, NMFS issued the initial IHA to IWO to take small numbers of marine mammals incidental to site characterization surveys off the coast of New York and New Jersey in the New York Bight (88 FR 47846, July 25, 2023), effective from July 31, 2023 through July 30, 2024. On May 3, 2024, NMFS received a request for the renewal of the initial IHA, which was deemed adequate and complete on May 24, 2024. As described in the application for renewal IHA, the specified activities for which incidental take is requested are identical to those included in the initial authorization. As required, IWO provided a preliminary monitoring report, which shows that it has implemented the required mitigation and monitoring measures and no impacts of a scale or nature not previously analyzed or authorized have occurred as a result of the activities conducted.

#### Description of the Specified Activities and Anticipated Impacts

IWO requested to conduct an additional year of marine site characterization surveys with high-resolution geophysical (HRG) surveys and geotechnical sampling from July 31, 2024 through July 30, 2025. Only HRG surveys are expected to have the potential to cause incidental take of small numbers of marine mammals. The survey will consist of up to 12,818 km of trackline in waters off the coast of New Jersey and New York in the New York Bight, which is within the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) lease area OCS–A 0542 and the associated Export Cable Route (ECR) Area. Hereafter, both the areas are referred to as the Survey Area.

The purpose of IWO's proposed surveys is to provide sufficient data to meet BOEM guidelines and support the development of offshore wind facilities in the Survey Area. Specifically, data collected would support site characterization, siting, and engineering design of offshore wind facilities including turbine generators, offshore substations, submarine cables and data necessary for project review requirements. IWO will have a maximum of 3 vessels surveying concurrently. Underwater sounds produced from sparkers and boomers during IWO's surveys has the potential to result in Level B harassment of 15 species and 16 stocks of marine

mammals. Activities proposed for the IHA renewal are identical in scope, effort, potential harassment to marine mammals, and mitigation measures as the final proposed IHA (88 FR 47846, July 25, 2023).

#### Detailed Description of the Activity

A detailed description of the surveys for which incidental take is proposed here may be found in the **Federal Register** Notices of the initial Proposed IHA (88 FR 32735, May 22, 2023). The location, duration, and nature of the activities, including the types of equipment planned for use, are identical to those described in the previous notices. The proposed renewal would be effective for a period not exceeding 1 year from July 30, 2024.

#### Description of Marine Mammals

A description of the marine mammals in the area of the activities for which authorization of take is proposed here, including information on abundance, status, distribution, and hearing, may be found in the **Federal Register** notice of the proposed IHAs (88 FR 32735, May 22, 2023) for the initial IHA. NMFS has reviewed the monitoring data from the initial IHA, the draft 2023 SARs, which included updates to certain stock abundances since the initial IHA was issued, information on relevant unusual mortality events (UME), and other scientific literature. The draft 2023 SAR updated the population estimate ( $N_{best}$ ) of North Atlantic right whales from 338 to 340 and annual mortality and serious injury from 31.2 to 27.2. The updated population estimate in the draft 2023 SAR is based upon sighting history through December 2021 (89 FR 5495, January 29, 2024). Total annual average observed North Atlantic right whale mortality during the period 2017–2021 was 7.1 animals and annual average observed fishery mortality was 4.6 animals, however, estimates of 27.2 total mortality and 17.6 fishery mortality account for undetected mortality and serious injury (89 FR 5495, January 29, 2024). In October 2023, NMFS released a technical report identifying that the North Atlantic right whale population size based on sighting history through 2022 was 356 whales, with a 95 percent credible interval ranging from 346 to 363 (Linden, 2023).

The population estimates ( $N_{best}$ ) also increased for the North Atlantic stock of sperm whales, the Western North Atlantic Offshore stock of common bottlenose dolphins, Western North Atlantic stocks of Risso's dolphins, Atlantic spotted dolphins, and gray seals. However, abundance estimates slightly decreased for the Western North

Atlantic stocks of common dolphins and harbor porpoises. NMFS has determined there is no new information that affects which species or stocks have the potential to be affected or the pertinent information in the Description of the Marine Mammals in the Area of Specified Activities contained in the supporting documents for the initial IHA.

*Potential Effects on Marine Mammals and Their Habitat*

A description of the potential effects of the specified activity on marine mammals and their habitat for the

activities for which an IHA is proposed here may be found in the Notice of the proposed IHA (88 FR 32735, May 22, 2023) for the initial IHA. NMFS has reviewed the monitoring data from the initial IHA, recent draft stock assessment reports, information on relevant UMEs and other scientific literature and determined that there is no new information that affects our initial analysis of impacts on marine mammals and their habitat.

*Estimated Take*

A detailed description of the methods and inputs used to estimate take for the

specified activity are found in the **Federal Register** Notice of the Final IHA (88 FR 47846, July 25, 2023) for the initial IHA. Specifically, the source levels, days of operation, and marine mammal density/occurrence data applicable to this authorization remain unchanged from the initial IHA. Similarly, the stocks taken, methods of take, and type of take remain unchanged from the initial IHA, as do the number of takes, which are indicated below in table 1.

TABLE 1—ESTIMATED TAKE NUMBER AND TOTAL PROPOSED TAKE BY LEVEL B HARASSMENT

Species	Ensonified area (km <sup>2</sup> )	Density (animals/km <sup>2</sup> )	Estimated take	Total take authorized	Percent of abundance
North Atlantic right whale .....	3,615	0.001748	6	6	<sup>A</sup> 1.76
Humpback whale .....	3,615	0.003657	13	13	0.93
Fin whale .....	3,615	0.004856	18	18	0.26
Sei whale .....	3,615	0.001813	7	7	0.11
Minke whale .....	3,615	0.025476	92	92	0.42
Sperm whale .....	3,615	0.000371	1	2	<sup>A</sup> 0.03
Risso's dolphin .....	3,615	0.002841	10	10	<sup>A</sup> 0.02
Long-finned pilot whale .....	3,615	0.003363	12	15	0.03
Atlantic white-sided dolphin .....	3,615	0.027836	101	101	0.11
Common dolphin .....	3,615	0.245719	888	888	<sup>A</sup> 0.95
Atlantic spotted dolphin .....	3,615	0.011683	42	42	<sup>A</sup> 0.13
Harbor porpoise .....	3,615	0.262904	950	950	<sup>A</sup> 1.11
Common bottlenose dolphin (Offshore Stock) <sup>B</sup> .....	3,164	0.193127	611	611	<sup>A</sup> 0.95
Common bottlenose dolphin (Northern Migratory Coastal Stock) <sup>C</sup> .....	452	1.758553	795	795	11.97
Gray seal .....	3,615	<sup>D</sup> 0.262904	950	950	<sup>A</sup> 0.26
Harbor seal .....	3,615	<sup>D</sup> 0.262904	950	950	1.55

**Note:** Take request based on average group size using sightings data from (CETAP, 1982, Palka *et al.*, 2017, Palka *et al.*, 2021) (see Attachment 3 of the application for the initial IHA).

<sup>A</sup>Based on the 2023 draft marine mammal stock assessment reports (SAR).

<sup>B</sup>The ensonified area for the offshore stock is for greater than 20 m water depth includes all the lease area and portions of the ECR.

<sup>C</sup>The ensonified area for the migratory coastal stock is only the areas of less than 20 m water depth (found only in portions of the ECR).

<sup>D</sup>These each represent 50 percent of a generic seal density value.

<sup>E</sup>This abundance estimate is based on the total stock abundance (including animals in Canada). The NMFS stock abundance estimate for U.S. population is 27,911.

*Description of Proposed Mitigation, Monitoring and Reporting Measures*

The proposed mitigation, monitoring, and reporting measures included as requirements in this proposed IHA are identical to those included in the **Federal Register** notice announcing the issuance of the initial IHA (88 FR 47846, July 25, 2023) and the discussion of the least practicable adverse impact determination included in that document remains applicable and accurate.

**Comments and Responses**

As noted previously, NMFS published a notice of a proposed IHA (88 FR 32735; May 22, 2023) and solicited public comments on both our proposal to issue the initial IHA for marine site characterization surveys off the coast of New York and New Jersey in the New York Bight and on the potential for a renewal IHA, should certain requirements be met.

All public comments were addressed in the notice announcing the issuance of the initial IHA (88 FR 47846, July 25, 2023). Below, we describe how we have addressed, with updated information where appropriate, any comments received that specifically pertain to the renewal of the 2024 IHA.

**Comment:** Oceana raised objections to NMFS' proposed renewal process for potential extension of the 1-year IHA with an abbreviated 15-day public comment period. Oceana recommended that an additional 30-day public comment period is necessary for any IHA renewal request.

**Response:** NMFS' IHA renewal process meets all statutory requirements. In prior responses to comments about IHA renewals (*e.g.*, 84 FR 52464, October 2, 2019; 85 FR 53342, August 28, 2020), NMFS explained the IHA renewal process is consistent with the statutory requirements contained in section 101(a)(5)(D) of the MMPA, and further, promotes NMFS' goals of

improving conservation of marine mammals and increasing efficiency in the MMPA compliance process. Therefore, we intend to continue to implement the existing renewal process.

All IHAs issued, whether an initial IHA or a renewal, are valid for a period of not more than 1 year. The public has 30 days to comment on proposed IHAs, with a cumulative total of 45 days for IHA renewals. The notice of the proposed IHA published in the **Federal Register** on May 22, 2023 (88 FR 32735) provided a 30-day public comment period and made clear that NMFS was seeking comment on the proposed IHA and the potential issuance of an IHA renewal for this survey. As detailed in the **Federal Register** notice for the proposed IHA and on the agency's website, eligibility for renewal is determined on a case-by-case basis, renewals are subject to an additional 15-day public comment period, and the renewal is limited to up to another year of identical or nearly identical activities

as described in the Description of Proposed Activities section of the proposed IHA notice or the activities described in the Description of Proposed Activities section of the proposed IHA notice would not be completed by the time the IHA expires and a renewal would allow for completion of the activities beyond that described in the *Dates and Duration* section of this notice. NMFS' analysis of the anticipated impacts on marine mammals caused by the applicant's activities covers both the initial IHA period and the possibility of a 1-year renewal. Therefore, a member of the public considering commenting on a proposed initial IHA also knows exactly what activities (or subset of activities) would be included in a proposed renewal IHA, the potential impacts of those activities, the maximum amount and type of take that could be caused by those activities, the mitigation and monitoring measures that would be required, and the basis for the agency's negligible impact determinations, least practicable adverse impact findings, small numbers findings, and (if applicable) the no unmitigable adverse impact on subsistence use finding—all the information needed to provide complete and meaningful comments on a possible renewal at the time of considering the proposed initial IHA. Reviewers have the information needed to meaningfully comment on both the immediate proposed IHA and a possible 1-year renewal, should the IHA holder choose to request one.

While there would be additional documents submitted with a renewal request, for a qualifying renewal these would be limited to documentation that NMFS would make available and use to verify that the activities are identical to those in the initial IHA, are nearly identical such that the changes would have either no effect on impacts to marine mammals or decrease those impacts, or are a subset of activities already analyzed and authorized but not completed under the initial IHA. NMFS would also need to confirm, among other things, that the activities would occur in the same location; involve the same species and stocks; provide for continuation of the same mitigation, monitoring, and reporting requirements; and that no new information has been received that would alter the prior analysis. The renewal request would also contain a preliminary monitoring report, in order to verify that effects from the activities do not indicate impacts of a scale or nature not previously analyzed. The additional 15-day public comment period, which

includes NMFS' direct notice to anyone who commented on the proposed initial IHA, provides the public an opportunity to review these few documents, provide any additional pertinent information, and comment on whether they think the criteria for a renewal have been met. Combined together, the 30-day public comment period on the initial IHA and the additional 15-day public comment period on the renewal of the same or nearly identical activities, provides the public with a total of 45 days to comment on the potential for renewal of the IHA.

In addition to the IHA renewal process being consistent with all requirements under section 101(a)(5)(D) of the MMPA, it is also consistent with Congress' intent for issuance of IHAs to the extent reflected in statements in the legislative history of the MMPA. Through the description of the process and express invitation to comment on specific potential renewals in the Request for Public Comments section of each proposed IHA, the description of the process on NMFS' website, further elaboration on the process through responses to comments such as these, posting of substantive documents on the agency's website, and provision of 30 or 45 days for public review and comment on all proposed initial IHAs and renewals respectively, NMFS has ensured that the public is "invited and encouraged to participate fully in the agency's decision-making process," as Congress intended.

For more information, NMFS has published a description of the Renewal process on our website (available at <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/marine-mammal-protection/incidental-harassment-authorization-renewals>).

#### **Preliminary Determinations**

NMFS proposes to authorize incidental take of small numbers of marine mammals from specified activities that are identical to those analyzed in the initial IHA and to require mitigation, monitoring, and reporting measures that are also identical to those in the initial IHA. The number of takes by Level B harassment proposed is equal to that authorized in the initial IHA. In the initial IHA, NMFS determined that IWO's specified activities would have a negligible impact on the affected species and/or stocks and the authorized take for each stock would be small relative to individual stock abundance (less than one third).

NMFS has preliminarily concluded that there is no new information suggesting that our analysis or findings

should change from those reached for the initial IHA. This includes consideration of the estimated abundance of seven stocks decreasing/increasing slightly. Specifically, NMFS is proposing to authorize six takes of North Atlantic right whales by Level B harassment only, and the impacts resulting from the project's activities are neither reasonably expected nor reasonably likely to adversely affect the stock through effects on annual rates of recruitment or survival. Additionally, approximately 1.76 percent of the stock abundance is proposed for take by Level B harassment.

Based on the information and analysis contained here and in the referenced documents, NMFS has determined the following: (1) the required mitigation measures will effect the least practicable impact on marine mammal species or stocks and their habitat; (2) the authorized takes will have a negligible impact on the affected marine mammal species or stocks; (3) the authorized takes represent small numbers of marine mammals relative to the affected stock abundances; (4) IWO's activities will not have an unmitigable adverse impact on taking for subsistence purposes as no relevant subsistence uses of marine mammals are implicated by this action, and; (5) appropriate monitoring and reporting requirements are included.

#### **Endangered Species Act**

Section 7(a)(2) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*) requires that each Federal agency insure that any action it authorizes, funds, or carries out is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any endangered or threatened species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of designated critical habitat. To ensure ESA compliance for the issuance of IHAs, NMFS consults internally whenever we propose to authorize take for endangered or threatened species.

NMFS' Office of Protected Resources is proposing to authorize take of four species of marine mammals that are listed under the ESA (*i.e.*, North Atlantic right whale, fin whale, sei whale, and sperm whale) and has determined these activities fall within the scope of activities analyzed in the NMFS GARFO programmatic consultation regarding geophysical surveys along the U.S. Atlantic coast in the 3 Atlantic renewable energy regions (completed June 29, 2021; revised September 2021).

### Proposed Renewal IHA and Request for Public Comment

As a result of these preliminary determinations, NMFS proposes to issue a renewal IHA to IWO for conducting marine site characterization with HRG surveys off the coast of New York and New Jersey in the New York Bight from July 31, 2024, through July 30, 2025, provided the previously described mitigation, monitoring, and reporting requirements are incorporated. A draft of the proposed and final initial IHA can be found at <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/permit/incidental-take-authorizations-under-marine-mammal-protection-act>. We request comment on our analyses, the proposed renewal IHA, and any other aspect of this notice. Please include with your comments any supporting data or literature citations to help inform our final decision on the request for MMPA authorization.

Dated: July 12, 2024.

**Kimberly Damon-Randall,**

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

[FR Doc. 2024-15706 Filed 7-16-24; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3510-22-P**

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648-XE079]

#### Marine Mammals; File No. 28080

**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 Oregon Coast Aquarium, 2820 SE Ferry Slip Rd., Newport, Oregon 97365 (Responsible Party: James Burke), has applied in due form for a permit to import up to six Pacific harbor seals (*Phoca vitulina richardsi*) for public display.

**DATES:** Written comments must be received on or before August 16, 2024.

**ADDRESSES:** These documents are available upon written request via email to [NMFS.Pr1Comments@noaa.gov](mailto:NMFS.Pr1Comments@noaa.gov).

Written comments on this application should be submitted via email to [NMFS.Pr1Comments@noaa.gov](mailto:NMFS.Pr1Comments@noaa.gov). Please include File No. 28080 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](mailto: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:** Jennifer Skidmore or Courtney Smith, Ph.D., (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 applicant is proposing to import up to six Pacific harbor seals (two males; four females; life-stages ranging from pup to adult) from the Vancouver Aquarium's Marine Mammal Rescue Center, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, for public display purposes at the Oregon Coast Aquarium. In all cases, the seals to be imported will be non-releasable, rehabilitated seals that were found ill and stranded or abandoned within British Columbia, Canada, and deemed non-releasable to the wild. The requested duration of the permit is 5 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: July 10, 2024.

**Amy Sloan,**

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

[FR Doc. 2024-15698 Filed 7-16-24; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3510-22-P**

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### Patent and Trademark Office

[Docket No.: PTO-P-2024-0026]

#### 2024 Guidance Update on Patent Subject Matter Eligibility, Including on Artificial Intelligence

**AGENCY:** Patent and Trademark Office, Department of Commerce.

**ACTION:** Examination guidance.

**SUMMARY:** In accordance with Executive Order 14110 on the "Safe, Secure, and Trustworthy Development and Use of Artificial Intelligence" (October 30,

2023) (Executive Order), the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) is issuing a guidance update on patent subject matter eligibility to address innovation in critical and emerging technologies (ET), especially artificial intelligence (AI). This guidance update will assist USPTO personnel and stakeholders in evaluating the subject matter eligibility of claims in patent applications and patents involving inventions related to AI technology (AI inventions). This update also announces a new set of examples that are intended to assist USPTO personnel in applying the USPTO's subject matter eligibility guidance to AI inventions during patent examination, appeal, and post-grant proceedings. In addition to addressing issues especially relevant to AI inventions, this guidance update addresses feedback from our stakeholders and includes discussions of recent Federal Circuit decisions on patent subject matter eligibility. This guidance update, together with the guidance provided in the Manual of Patent Examining Procedure (MPEP), is to be used by USPTO personnel when applying subject matter eligibility law.

#### **DATES:**

**Applicability date:** This guidance is effective on July 17, 2024.

**Comment deadline date:** Written comments must be received on or before September 16, 2024.

**ADDRESSES:** Comments must be submitted through the Federal eRulemaking Portal at [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov). To submit comments via the portal, enter docket number PTO-P-2024-0026 on the homepage and select "Search." The site will provide a search results page listing all documents associated with this docket. Find a reference to this document and select the "Comment" icon, complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments. Attachments to electronic comments will be accepted in Adobe® portable document format (PDF) or Microsoft Word® format. Because comments will be made available for public inspection, information that the submitter does not desire to make public, such as an address or phone number, should not be included in the comments.

Visit the Federal eRulemaking Portal for additional instructions on providing comments via the portal. If electronic submission of comments is not feasible due to a lack of access to a computer and/or the internet, please contact the USPTO using the contact information below for special instructions.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Carolyn Kosowski, Senior Legal