

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

[RTID 0648-XE291]

Marine Mammals; File No. 27984

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

ACTION: Notice; receipt of application.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that Jooke Robbins, Ph.D., Center for Coastal Studies, 5 Holway Avenue, Provincetown, MA 02657, has applied in due form for a permit to conduct research on marine mammals.

DATES: Written comments must be received on or before November 29, 2024.

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 home page, <https://apps.nmfs.noaa.gov>, and then selecting File No. 27984 from the list of available applications. These documents are 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. 27984 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: Courtney Smith, Ph.D., or Shasta McClenahan, 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 Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*), and the regulations governing the taking, importing, and exporting of endangered and threatened species (50 CFR parts 222-226).

The applicant proposes to target humpback (*Megaptera novaeangliae*; Gulf of Maine stock/West Indies Distinct Population Segment) and endangered fin (*Balaenoptera physalus*; Western North Atlantic stock) whales for research purposes in the Gulf of Maine

and adjacent waters, and the waters off Georgia and Florida. An additional 12 species of cetaceans and 2 species of pinnipeds may be unintentionally harassed during research, including endangered North Atlantic right (*Eubalaena glacialis*) and sei (*B. borealis*) whales. Marine mammals may be approached during vessel surveys for photo-identification, photogrammetry, underwater photography/videography, counts, unmanned aircraft system operations, behavioral observations, and biological sampling (skin and blubber biopsy, feces, and sloughed skin). Additionally, samples would be imported and exported for analysis and the creation of cell lines. See the application for complete numbers of animals requested by species, age-class, and procedure. The objectives of the research are to continue the long-term study of the biology and ecology of humpback and fin whales by examining population dynamics, movement and habitat use, entanglement and other human impacts, molecular genetics, aging, toxicology, foraging ecology, microbiology, reproduction, and health. The permit would be valid for 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: October 24, 2024.

Amy Sloan,

Acting 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-XE386]

Notice of Availability of a Final Programmatic Environmental Assessment on the Effects of Permitting Translocation of Sturgeon for Scientific Research and Enhancement Under Section 10(a)(1)(A) of the Endangered Species Act

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

ACTION: Notice of availability of final programmatic environmental assessment and finding of no significant impact.

SUMMARY: NOAA has prepared a final programmatic environmental assessment (PEA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended, analyzing the environmental impacts of the NMFS Office of Protected Resources (OPR) proposal to authorize directed take under the sturgeon Endangered Species Act (ESA) permitting program for the translocation of shortnose (*Acipenser brevirostrum*) and Atlantic (*A. oxyrinchus oxyrinchus*) sturgeons for research and enhancement purposes. Based on its finding of no significant impact, NMFS has determined that an environmental impact statement need not be prepared.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Erin Markin, Ph.D., erin.markin@noaa.gov, (301) 427-8416; Malcolm Mohead, malcolm.mohead@noaa.gov, (301) 427-8427.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**Background**

This final PEA analyzes the potential impacts on the natural and human environments for the authorization of directed take of sturgeon by translocation, in scientific research or enhancement permits under section 10(a)(1)(A) of the ESA, to achieve recovery objectives. For the purposes of the sturgeon permitting program, translocation is the intentional capture, holding, handling, transport, and release of individuals within a river system (*e.g.*, translocation of fish across a dam or fish passage) or between river systems within the U.S. historical range of Atlantic and shortnose sturgeon (*i.e.*, Maine to Florida). Under the Proposed Action, NMFS would authorize directed