

Act, Public Law 104-447 (Act) authorizes a fishing capacity reduction program implementing capacity reduction plans submitted to NMFS by catcher processor subsectors of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) non-pollock groundfish fishery (reduction fishery) as set forth in the Act.

The longline catcher processor subsector (Longline Subsector) is among the catcher processor subsectors eligible to submit to NMFS a capacity reduction plan under the terms of the Act. The longline subsector non-pollock groundfish reduction program's objective was to reduce the number of vessels and permits endorsed for longline subsector of the non-pollock groundfish fishery. All post-reduction fish landings from the reduction fishery are subject to the longline subsector non-pollock groundfish program's fee.

NMFS proposed the implementing notice on August 11, 2006 (71 FR 46364), and published the final notice on September 29, 2006 (71 FR 57696). NMFS allocated the \$35,000,000 reduction loan (A Loan) to the reduction fishery and this loan is repayable by fees from the fishery.

On September 24, 2007, NMFS published in the **Federal Register** (72 FR 54219), the final rule to implement the industry fee system for repaying the non-pollock groundfish program's reduction loan and established October 24, 2007, as the effective date when fee collection and loan repayment began. The regulations implementing the program are located at § 600.1012.

NMFS published a final rule to implement a second \$2,700,000 reduction loan (B Loan) for this fishery in the **Federal Register** on September 24, 2012 (77 FR 58775). The loan was disbursed December 18, 2012 with fee collection of \$0.001 per pound to begin January 1, 2013. This fee is in addition to the A Loan fee.

Purpose

The purpose of this notice is to adjust the fee rate for the reduction fishery in accordance with the framework rule's § 600.1013(b). Section 600.1013(b) directs NMFS to recalculate the fee rate that will be reasonably necessary to ensure reduction loan repayment within the specified 30 year term.

NMFS has determined for the reduction fishery that the current fee rate of Loan A, \$0.020 per pound, is more than that needed to service the loan in 2025. Therefore, NMFS is decreasing the Loan A fee rate to \$0.016 per pound. NMFS has determined \$0.017 per pound is sufficient to ensure timely loan repayment, with an

additional temporary \$0.001 per pound adjustment related to the 2024 Season B rate having been set at \$0.020 per pound rather than \$0.019 per pound. The fee rate for Loan B will remain \$0.001 per pound.

Subsector members may continue to use *Pay.gov* to disburse collected fee deposits at: <https://www.pay.gov/paygov/>.

Please visit the NMFS website for additional information at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/funding-and-financial-services/longline-catcher-processor-subsector-bering-sea-and-aleutian-islands-non-pollock>.

Notice

The new fee rate for the non-pollock groundfish fishery will begin on January 1, 2025.

From and after this date, all subsector members paying fees on the non-pollock groundfish fishery shall begin paying non-pollock groundfish fishery program fees at the revised rate.

Fee collection and submission shall follow previously established methods in § 600.1013 of the framework rule and in the final fee rule published in the **Federal Register** on September 24, 2007 (72 FR 54219).

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1861 *et seq.*; Pub. L. 108-447.

Dated: November 26, 2024.

Brian T. Pawlak,

Chief Financial Officer/Chief Administrative Officer, Director, Office of Management and Budget, National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 2024-28163 Filed 11-29-24; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648-XE341]

Takes of Marine Mammals Incidental to Specified Activities; Taking Marine Mammals Incidental to the Maryland Offshore Wind Project Offshore of Maryland

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, and implementing regulations, notification is hereby given that a Letter of Authorization (LOA) has been issued to US Wind, Inc. (US Wind), for the taking of marine

mammals incidental to the construction of the Maryland Offshore Wind Project (hereafter known as the "Project").

DATES: The LOA is effective from January 1, 2025 through December 31, 2029.

ADDRESSES: The LOA and supporting documentation are available online at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/permit/incidental-take-authorizations-under-marine-mammal-protection-act>. In case of problems accessing these documents, please call the contact listed below (see **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jessica Taylor, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, (301) 427-8401.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The 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, regulations are promulgated (when applicable), and public notice and an opportunity for public comment are provided.

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) and will not have an unmitigable adverse impact on the availability of the species or stock(s) for taking for subsistence uses (where relevant). If such findings are made, NMFS must prescribe the permissible methods of taking; "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 the species or stocks for taking for certain subsistence uses (referred to as "mitigation"); and requirements pertaining to the monitoring and reporting of such takings. The MMPA defines "take" to mean harass, hunt, capture, or kill, or attempt to harass, hunt, capture, or kill any marine mammal (16 U.S.C. 1362(13); 50 CFR 216.103). Level A harassment is defined as any act of pursuit, torment, or annoyance which has the potential to injure a marine mammal or marine mammal stock in the wild (16 U.S.C. 1362(18); 50 CFR 216.3). Level A harassment is defined as any act of

pursuit, torment, or annoyance which has the potential to injure a marine mammal or marine mammal stock in the wild (16 U.S.C. 1362(18); 50 CFR 216.3). Level B harassment is defined as any act of pursuit, torment, or annoyance which 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 (16 U.S.C. 1362(18); 50 CFR 216.3). Section 101(a)(5)(A) of the MMPA and the implementing regulations at 50 CFR part 216, subpart I authorize NMFS to propose and, if appropriate, promulgate regulations and issue associated LOA(s). NMFS promulgated regulations on October 23, 2024 (89 FR 84676) for the taking of marine mammals incidental to the construction of the Maryland Offshore Wind Project offshore of Maryland. The LOA authorizes US Wind, and those persons it authorizes or funds to conduct activities on its behalf, to take marine mammals incidental to specified activities during the construction of the Project and requires them to implement mitigation, monitoring, and reporting requirements.

Summary of Request

On October 23, 2024, NMFS promulgated a final rule (89 FR 84674) responding to a request from US Wind for authorization to take marine mammals (19 species comprising 20 stocks) by Level B harassment (all 20 stocks) and by Level A harassment (5 stocks of the 20 stocks) incidental to construction activities occurring in Federal and State waters off of Maryland, specifically within and around 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 0490 (collectively, "Lease Area") and along two export cable routes to sea-to-shore transition points (collectively referred to as the "Project Area"), over the course of 5 years (January 1, 2025 through December 31, 2029). The final rule included the following specified activities: the installation of up to 114 wind turbine generators (WTGs) on monopile foundations using impact pile driving; the installation of 4 offshore substations (OSSs) on jacket foundations consisting of post-piled pin piles using impact pile driving; the installation of one meteorological tower (Met Tower) on pin piles using impact pile driving; installation and subsequent removal of gravity cells to connect the offshore export cables to onshore facilities

within Delaware Seashore State Park; high-resolution geophysical (HRG) marine site characterization surveys using active acoustic sources; fishery and ecological monitoring surveys; the placement of scour protection; the installation of the export cable routes from OSSs to shore-based converter stations and inter-array cables between turbines by trenching, laying, and burial activities; vessel transit within the specified geographical region to transport crew, supplies, and materials; and WTG operation.

Marine mammals exposed to elevated noise levels during foundation impact pile driving may be taken by Level A harassment, and marine mammals exposed to elevated noise levels during impact pile driving and HRG site characterization surveys may be taken by Level B harassment. No mortality or serious injury of any marine mammal is anticipated or authorized. The number of takes, by species, authorized may be found in table 1 in the LOA, which is available at <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/permit/incidental-take-authorizations-under-marine-mammal-protection-act>.

Authorization

In accordance with the final rule (89 FR 84674, October 23, 2024; see 50 CFR 217.306), NMFS has issued a LOA to US Wind authorizing the take, by harassment, of marine mammals incidental to specified activities within the specified geographical region. As previously stated, no mortality or serious injury of any marine mammal species is anticipated or authorized. The incidental takes authorized herein are the same as those analyzed and authorized in the final rule (89 FR 84674, October 23, 2024). Takes of marine mammals will be minimized through the following planned mitigation and monitoring measures, as applicable for each specified activity: (1) implementation of seasonal pile driving work restrictions; (2) use of multiple NMFS-approved Protected Species Observers (PSOs) to visually observe for marine mammals (with any detection within specifically designated zones triggering a delay or shutdown, as applicable); (3) use of NMFS-approved passive acoustic monitoring (PAM) operators to acoustically detect marine mammals, with a focus on detecting baleen whales (with any detection within designated zones triggering a delay or shutdown, as applicable); (4) implementation of clearance and shutdown zones; (5) use of soft-start upon commencement of impact pile driving and ramp-up of acoustic sources during HRG surveys; (6) use of noise

attenuation technology during foundation pile driving; (7) use of situational awareness monitoring for marine mammal presence; (8) use of sound field verification monitoring; (9) use of PAM within the vessel transit corridor for Project vessels to travel over 10 knots (11.5 miles per hour); and (10) implementation of several vessel strike avoidance measures to avoid vessel strikes, including but not limited to, vessel separation zones between marine mammals and project vessels. Additionally, NMFS may modify the LOA's mitigation, monitoring, or reporting measures, based on new information. US Wind is also required to submit reports, as specified in the final rule.

Based on the findings discussed in the preamble of the final rule, NMFS has determined that the take authorized in the LOA is of small numbers, will have a negligible impact on marine mammal stocks, will not have an unmitigable adverse impact on the availability of the affected marine mammal stock for subsistence uses, and the mitigation measures provide a means of affecting the least practicable adverse impact on the affected stocks and their habitat.

Dated: November 26, 2024.

Kimberly Damon-Randall,

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

[FR Doc. 2024-28215 Filed 11-29-24; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Draft Revised Management Plan for the Narragansett Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

AGENCY: Office for Coastal Management, National Ocean Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Department of Commerce.

ACTION: Request for comments.

SUMMARY: The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is soliciting comments from the public regarding a proposed revision of the management plan for the Narragansett Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (NBNERR). A management plan provides a framework to guide a reserve's programs, track progress toward meeting its goals, and identify potential opportunities or changes in direction. It is also used to guide programmatic evaluations. Management plan revisions are required at least every