

Dated: January 15, 2025.

Julia M. Harrison,

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

[FR Doc. 2025-01407 Filed 1-21-25; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0647-XE616]

Fisheries of the Gulf of Mexico; Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review (SEDAR); Public Meeting

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

ACTION: Notice of SEDAR 87 Assessment Webinar VI for Gulf of Mexico White, Pink, and Brown Shrimp.

SUMMARY: The SEDAR 87 assessment process of Gulf of Mexico white, pink, and brown shrimp will consist of a Data Workshop, a series of assessment webinars, and a Review Workshop. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION.**

DATES: The SEDAR 87 Assessment Webinar VI will be held Tuesday, February 11, 2025, from 1 p.m. until 5 p.m., Eastern Time.

ADDRESSES:

Meeting address: The meeting will be held via webinar. The webinar is open to members of the public. Those interested in participating should contact Julie A. Neer at SEDAR (see **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**) to request an invitation providing webinar access information. Please request webinar invitations at least 24 hours in advance of each webinar.

SEDAR address: 4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201, North Charleston, SC 29405.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Julie A. Neer, SEDAR Coordinator; (843) 571-4366; email: Julie.neer@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 multi-step process including: (1) Data Workshop, (2) a series of assessment webinars, and (3) A Review Workshop.

The product of the Data Workshop is a report that compiles and evaluates potential datasets and recommends which datasets are appropriate for assessment analyses. The assessment webinars produce a report that describes the fisheries, evaluates the status of the stock, estimates biological benchmarks, projects future population conditions, and recommends research and monitoring needs. The product of the Review Workshop is an Assessment 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, HMS 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 NGO's; International experts; and staff of Councils, Commissions, and State and Federal agencies.

The items of discussion during the Assessment Webinar VI are as follows:

Participants will review the assessment modeling work to date and provide recommendations to the analytic team.

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

The meeting is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to the Council office (see **ADDRESSES**) at least 5 business days prior to each workshop.

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

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

Dated: January 15, 2025.

Rey Israel Marquez,

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

[FR Doc. 2025-01405 Filed 1-21-25; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648-XE596]

Takes of Marine Mammals Incidental to Specified Activities; Taking Marine Mammals Incidental to the Empire Wind Offshore Wind Energy Project Offshore of New York

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

ACTION: Notice; modification of letter of authorization.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), as amended, its implementing regulations, and NMFS' MMPA Regulations for Taking Marine Mammals Incidental to Construction of the Empire Wind Offshore Wind Project Offshore of New York, notification is hereby given that upon request from Empire Wind, LLC (Empire Wind), NMFS has modified a Letter of Authorization (LOA) issued to Empire Wind for the take of marine mammals incidental to activities associated with construction of the Empire Wind Offshore Wind Energy Project (hereafter known as the "Project") in Federal and State waters offshore New York. Specifically, NMFS has modified the LOA Holder's name as well as mitigation and monitoring measures related to vessel strike avoidance, sound field verification reporting, and requirements for passive acoustic monitoring (PAM). NMFS has also made modifications to additional measures to improve clarify and better align with the Biological Opinion. NMFS has determined that these modifications do not change the findings made for the regulations and does not result in any change in the total estimated number of takes of marine mammals.

DATES: The modified LOA is valid through February 21, 2029.

ADDRESSES: The issued modified LOA may be obtained online at https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/action/incidental-take-authorization-empire-offshore-wind-llc-construction-empire-wind-project-ew1?check_logged_in=1.

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 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.

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 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 as “mitigation”); and requirements pertaining to the monitoring and reporting of such takings.

NMFS promulgated a final rule in the **Federal Register** on February 14, 2024 (89 FR 11342), which governs the incidental take of marine mammals incidental to Empire Wind’s construction of the Project in Federal and State waters offshore New York, 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–0512 and along two export cable routes to sea-to-shore transition points. The rule became effective on February 22, 2024, and is valid through February 21, 2029. The regulations allow NMFS to approve requests for modification to the LOA’s specified activity or the mitigation, monitoring, or reporting measures if NMFS determines the requested change does not change the findings made for promulgation of the regulations and does not result in more than a minor change in the total estimated number of takes (see 50 CFR 217.287(b)).

NMFS issued a LOA to Empire Wind on February 22, 2024, and published a notice of issuance in the **Federal Register** on February 27, 2023 (89 FR 14442). The LOA authorized Empire Wind to take, by harassment, marine mammals incidental to specified

construction activities, specifically impact pile driving of wind turbine generator and offshore substation jacket foundations, vibratory pile driving of cofferdams and goal posts, pneumatic hammering of casing pipes, and high-resolution geophysical vessel-based site characterization surveys, within the specified geographical region.

Summary of Request and Analysis

On December 4, 2024, NMFS received a request from Empire Wind to transfer the LOA to Empire Leaseholder LLC (Empire Leaseholder), an affiliate wholly owned by Empire Wind. To ensure safety during vessel transit, Empire Wind requested for NMFS to modify the LOA safety exemption language to include a provision for allowing deviations from the vessel strike avoidance requirements (LOA measure 3(b)) so Project vessels could maintain safe maneuvering speed when oceanographic, hydrographic, and/or meteorological conditions restrict vessel maneuverability. Empire Wind also requested revisions to the reporting timeline for bubble curtain performance and maintenance report for piles for which abbreviated sound field verification (SFV) monitoring is performed. These provisions will be more practicable and align with the Project’s Biological Opinion, issued on September 8, 2023. In addition, Empire Wind requested for NMFS to allow the Pile Driving Mitigation and Monitoring Plan (PDMMP) to specify the number and location of PAM operators and to allow the PAM Plan to specify PAM operator protocols during foundation pile driving, instead of these requirements being specified in the LOA. NMFS determined none of these changes will affect the amount, the type of take authorized, or our findings as described in the final rule. Therefore, we have modified the attached LOA, specifically measures 3(b), 3(c)(7)(v), and 4(c)(2), thus fulfilling Empire Wind’s request.

In reviewing Empire Wind’s request, NMFS also recognized the need to update additional measures to improve clarity and better align the LOA with the Biological Opinion. NMFS moved the safety exemption for foundation pile driving to the beginning of the foundation pile driving section (LOA measure 3 (c)) to clarify that this measure applies to all foundation pile driving activities. In addition, NMFS modified the language for the maximum hammer energies ((3)(c)(2)) and soft start requirements ((3)(c)(4)) to provide additional flexibility for application of these requirements in the field. NMFS made minor revisions to the language in

the mitigation and monitoring sections to improve the clarity of the requirements. To better align with the Biological Opinion, NMFS made minor revisions to the language in the sound field verification (SFV) monitoring requirements (LOA measures 3(c)(13)). NMFS also clarified the Protected Species Observer (PSO) and PAM Operator experience qualification requirements in section 4(a) of the LOA for foundation installation, cable landfall construction/marina activities, and high-resolution geophysical (HRG) surveys. NMFS’ evaluation of the requested and necessary additional LOA modifications indicated that these modifications would not change the amount or nature of anticipated impacts of activities on marine mammals. Specifically, none of the benefits of any of the mitigation or monitoring measures that have been modified here were considered quantitatively in the analyses (*i.e.*, only the 10-decibel sound attenuation and seasonal restrictions were quantitatively considered such that take numbers were reduced). In consideration of the above, NMFS has determined that these modifications do not result in changes in the total estimated take numbers or otherwise change any of the findings made for the regulations.

Authorization

NMFS has issued a modified LOA to Empire Wind authorizing the take, by harassment, of small numbers of marine mammals incidental to specified construction activities associated with the Project, which includes the modified mitigation, monitoring, and reporting measures discussed herein.

Dated: January 16, 2025.

Kimberly Damon-Randall,

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

[FR Doc. 2025–01469 Filed 1–21–25; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–22–P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648–XE606]

Takes of Marine Mammals Incidental to Specified Activities; Taking Marine Mammals Incidental to the New London Pier Extension Project at the Naval Submarine Base

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