§ 218.239 Renewal of Letters of Authorization.

(a) A Letter of Authorization issued for the activity identified in §218.230 may be renewed upon:

(1) Notification to NMFS that the activity described in the application submitted under §218.237 will be undertaken and that there will not be a substantial modification to the described activity, mitigation or monitoring undertaken during the upcoming period;

(2) Notification to NMFS of the information identified in §218.237(c);

(3) Timely receipt of the monitoring reports required under §218.236, which have been reviewed by NMFS and determined to be acceptable;

(4) A determination by NMFS that the mitigation, monitoring and reporting measures required under §§218.234,
§ 218.235, and 218.236 and the previous Letter of Authorization were undertaken and will be undertaken during the upcoming period of validity of a renewed Letter of Authorization; and

(5) A determination by NMFS that the level of taking will be consistent with the findings made for the total taking allowable under these regulations.

(b) If a request for a renewal of a Letter of Authorization indicates that a substantial modification to the described work, mitigation, or monitoring will occur, or if NMFS proposes a substantial modification to the Letter of Authorization, NMFS will provide a period of 30 days for public review and comment on the proposed modification. Amending the areas for upcoming SURTASS LFA sonar operations is not considered a substantial modification to the Letter of Authorization.

(c) A notice of issuance or denial of a renewal of a Letter of Authorization will be published in the FEDERAL REGISTER within 30 days of a determination.

§ 218.240 Modifications to Letters of Authorization.

(a) Except as provided in paragraph (b) of this section, no substantial modification (including withdrawal or suspension) to a Letter of Authorization subject to the provisions of this subpart shall be made by NMFS until after notification and an opportunity for public comment has been provided. For purposes of this paragraph, a renewal of a Letter of Authorization, without modification, except for the period of validity and a listing of planned operating areas, or for moving the authorized SURTASS LFA sonar system from one ship to another, is not considered a substantial modification.

(b) If NMFS determines that an emergency exists that poses a significant risk to the well-being of the species or stocks of marine mammals specified in §218.230(b)(1), (2), or (3), NMFS may modify a Letter of Authorization without prior notice and opportunity for public comment. Notification will be published in the FEDERAL REGISTER within 30 days of the action.

§ 218.241 Adaptive management.

NMFS may modify (including through addition or deletion) or augment the existing mitigation or monitoring measures (after consulting with the Navy regarding the practicability of the modifications) if doing so creates a reasonable likelihood of more effectively accomplishing the goals of mitigation and monitoring set forth in the preamble of these regulations. NMFS will provide a period of 30 days for public review and comment if such modifications are substantial. NMFS and the Navy will meet annually (if deemed necessary by either agency) to discuss the monitoring reports, Navy research and development outcomes, current science, and determine whether mitigation or monitoring modifications are appropriate. Below are some of the possible sources of new data that could contribute to the decision to modify the mitigation or monitoring measures:

(a) Results from the Navy’s monitoring from the previous year’s operation of SURTASS LFA sonar.

(b) Compiled results of Navy-funded research and development studies.

(c) Results from specific stranding investigations.

(d) Results from general marine mammal and sound research funded by the Navy or other sponsors.

(e) Any information that reveals marine mammals may have been taken in a manner, extent or number not anticipated by these regulations or subsequent Letters of Authorization.