[I.D. 030497D]

Pacific Coast Pinniped Interaction Investigation and Report

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

ACTION: Notice of availability; request for comments.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), NMFS conducted an investigation to determine whether California sea lions and Pacific harbor seals are having a significant negative impact on the recovery of certain salmonid stocks or on the coastal ecosystems of Washington, Oregon, and California. After completion of the report of the scientific investigation (scientific report), NMFS prepared a draft report to Congress to submit recommendations, resulting from discussions with the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC) to address issues and problems identified in the scientific report. The scientific report is complete and available for public information, and the draft report to Congress is available for public review and comment (see **ADDRESSES**).

DATES: Comments on the draft report to Congress must be submitted on or before June 26, 1997.

ADDRESSES: Copies of the scientific report and the draft report to Congress are available from, and written comments should be sent to, William Stelle, Jr., Administrator, NMFS, Northwest Region, 7600 Sand Point Way, NE., BIN C15700, Seattle, WA 98115, Attn: West Coast Pinniped Report, or Michael Payne, Chief, Marine Mammal Division, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910, Attn: West Coast Pinniped Report.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Joe Scordino (206) 526–6143, or Tom Eagle (301) 713–2322.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The MMPA directs the Secretary of Commerce (Secretary) to conduct a scientific investigation to determine if California sea lions and Pacific harbor seals (a) are having a significant negative impact on the recovery of salmonid fishery stocks that have been listed as endangered species or threatened species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), or that the Secretary finds are approaching endangered or threatened status; or (b) are having broader impacts on the coastal ecosystems of Washington, Oregon, and California. After completion of the investigation, NMFS on the behalf of the Secretary is directed to enter into discussions with the PSMFC on behalf of Washington, Oregon, and California, to address any issues or problems identified as a result of the scientific investigation, and to develop recommendations to address such issues or problems. The recommendations from these discussions, along with the scientific report, are to be made available to the public for review and comment for a period of 90 days, and then submitted to Congress.

NMFS established a Working Group to investigate the matters directed by Congress. Because NMFS did not have available resources and there was insufficient time to conduct rigorous field investigations on the issues identified by Congress within the specified 1-year timeframe, the investigation focused on a review of information from past field studies. The Working Group consisted of NMFS and state biologists with expertise in salmonids, marine mammals, and the interactions between them. The Working Group compiled and reviewed all available information on the status and trends of California sea lions, Pacific harbor seals, and the seven species of salmonids found in Washington, Oregon, and California. Members also conducted several additional studies to augment existing information. The Working Group produced the scientific report, ''Investigation of Scientific Information on Impacts of California Sea Lions and Pacific Harbor Seals on Salmonids and on the Coastal Ecosystems of Washington, Oregon and California,'' which has been submitted for publication as a NOAA technical memorandum.

In June 1996, NMFS began discussions with PSMFC and representatives of Washington, Oregon, and California. Over the course of four meetings and numerous conference calls during the last 8 months, two issues were identified from the scientific investigation, and four recommendations were developed.

Issues

The two issues on pinniped impacts on salmonids and west coast ecosystems described in the Report are:

1. California sea lion and Pacific harbor seal populations on the West Coast are increasing while many salmonid populations are decreasing. Salmonid populations that are depressed and declining, especially those that are listed or proposed to be listed under the ESA, can be negatively impacted by expanding pinniped populations and attendant predation.

2. Increasing California sea lion and Pacific harbor seal populations and their expanding distribution are negatively impacting commercial and recreational fisheries, damaging private property, and posing threats to public safety.

Recommendations

The four recommendations in the draft report to Congress are:

1. *Implement site-specific management for California sea lions and Pacific harbor seals*. Establish a framework that would allow state and Federal resource management agencies to immediately address conflicts involving California sea lions and Pacific harbor seals. Any lethal takings would have to be within the Potential Biological Removal levels established by NMFS for all human causes of mortality.

The three components of the framework would be: (a) In situations where California sea lions or Pacific harbor seals are preying on salmonids that are listed or proposed for listing under the ESA, immediate use of lethal removal by state or Federal resource agency officials would be authorized; (b) in situations where California sea lions or Pacific harbor seals are preying on salmonid populations of concern to the state or are impeding passage of these populations during migration as adults or smolts, lethal takes by state or Federal resource agency officials would be authorized if (i) non-lethal deterrence methods are underway and are not fully effective, or (ii) non-lethal methods are not feasible in the particular situation or have proven ineffective in the past; and, (c) in situations where California sea lions or Pacific harbor seals conflict with humans, such as at fishery sites and marinas, lethal removal by state or Federal resource agency officials would be authorized as a last resort when an individual pinniped fails to respond to repeated deterrence attempts, or when repeated deterrence attempts do not affect the behavior of an individual pinniped over the long-term.

2. *Develop safe, effective non-lethal deterrents*. In order to provide an array of options broader than lethal removal to resolve West Coast pinniped problems, there is a pressing need for research on the development and evaluation of deterrent devices and further exploration of other non-lethal removal measures. Potential options need to be evaluated in a concerted, adequately funded effort to address this issue. Research and development of

pinniped deterrence methods should be a research priority for addressing expanding pinniped populations on the West Coast.

3. *Selectively reinstate authority for the intentional lethal taking of California sea lions and Pacific harbor seals by commercial fishermen to protect gear and catch.* Prior to the 1994 Amendments to the MMPA, commercial fishermen were allowed to kill certain pinnipeds as a last resort in order to protect their gear or catch. Although the 1992 NMFS legislative proposal contained provisions to continue such authority, it was not included in the 1994 Amendments to the MMPA. A limited authorization, based on demonstrated need, should be provided to certain commercial fishermen at specified sites to use lethal means, as a last resort, to protect their gear and catch from depredation by California sea lions and Pacific harbor seals until such time that effective non-lethal methods are developed for their specific situation.

4. *Information needs.* An array of additional information is needed to better evaluate and monitor California sea lion and Pacific harbor seal impacts on salmonids and other components of the West Coast ecosystems. Details of such studies are described in the draft report to Congress.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1389(f)

Dated: March 24, 1997.

Hilda Diaz-Soltero,

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

[FR Doc. 97–7885 Filed 3–27–97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–22–F

COMMITTEE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF TEXTILE AGREEMENTS

Amendment of Export Visa Requirements for Certain Man-Made Fiber Products Produced or Manufactured in the People's Republic of China

March 24, 1997.

AGENCY: Committee for the Implementation of Textile Agreements (CITA).

ACTION: Issuing a directive to the Commissioner of Customs amending visa requirements.

EFFECTIVE DATE: April 1, 1997.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jennifer Aldrich, International Trade Specialist, Office of Textiles and Apparel, U.S. Department of Commerce, (202) 482–4212.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Authority: Executive Order 11651 of March 3, 1972, as amended; section 204 of the Agricultural Act of 1956, as amended (7 U.S.C. 1854).

Effective on April 1, 1997, for goods produced or manufactured in China and exported on and after April 1, 1997, a part-category visa will be required for textile products in Category 666–C. For textile products in Category 666, other than 666–C, a 666 visa will be required. During the period April 1, 1997 through April 30, 1997, U.S. Customs Service will accept either the new or the old visa. Goods exported on and after May 1, 1997 shall be denied entry if not visaed as 666 (other than 666–C) or 666–C.

See 60 FR 22567, published on May 8, 1995.

Troy H. Cribb,

Chairman, Committee for the Implementation of Textile Agreements.

Committee for the Implementation of Textile Agreements

March 24, 1997.

Commissioner of Customs,

Department of the Treasury, Washington, DC 20229.

Dear Commissioner: This directive amends, but does not cancel, the directive issued to you on May 3, 1995, by the Chairman, Committee for the Implementation of Textile Agreements. That directive establishes an export visa arrangement for certain cotton, wool, man-made fiber, silk blend, and other vegetable fiber textiles and textile products, produced or manufactured in the People's Republic of China.

Effective on April 1, 1997, goods produced or manufactured in China and exported on and after April 1, 1997, in Category 666 shall require a 666 (other than 666–C) [1] or 666–C [2] visa. During the period April 1, 1997 through April 30, 1997, you are directed to accept either the new or old visa. Goods exported on and after May 1, 1997 shall be denied entry if not visaed as 666 (other than 666–C) or 666–C.

Shipments entered or withdrawn from warehouse according to this directive which are not accompanied by an appropriate export visa shall be denied entry and a new visa must be obtained.

The Committee for the Implementation of Textile Agreements has determined that this action falls within the foreign affairs exception to the rulemaking provisions of 5 U.S.C. 553(a)(1).

Sincerely,

Troy H. Cribb,

Chairman, Committee for the Implementation of Textile Agreements.

[FR Doc. 97–7946 Filed 3–27–97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–DR–F

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Department of the Air Force

Cost Comparison Studies

The Air Force is conducting the following cost comparisons in accordance with OMB Circular A–76, Performance of Commercial Activities.

Installation	State	USAF Project Title
Maxwell AFB	AL	General Library.
Maxwell AFB	AL	Grounds Maintenance.
Clear	AK	Power Production.
Eielson AFB	AK	Miscellaneous Services.
Eielson AFB	AK	Admin Telephone PBX.
Elmendorf AFB	AK	Power Production.
Elmendorf AFB	AK	Military Family Housing Management.
Edwards AFB	CA	Base Supply.
Los Angeles AFS	CA	Communication Functions.
Los Angeles AFS	CA	Publications Distribution Office.
Los Angeles AFS	CA	Education Services.
March AFB	CA	Airfield Operations & Weather.

[1] Category 666: all HTS numbers except 6303.92.2000 (Category 666–C).

[2] Category 666–C: only HTS number 6303.92.2000.