

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

[I.D. 081997B]

**Gulf of Maine Aquaculture-Pinniped Interaction Task Force**

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

**ACTION:** Notice of availability of report.

**SUMMARY:** In accordance with the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), NMFS submitted a report to Congress regarding pinnipeds interacting in a dangerous or damaging manner with aquaculture resources in the Gulf of Maine. The report, which addressed public comments on an earlier draft, is available to the public upon request.

**ADDRESSES:** Copies of the report are available from Chief, Habitat and Protected Resources Division, NMFS, One Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930, or Chief, Marine Mammal Division, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Scott Sandorf (508)281-9388 or Tom Eagle (301) 713-2322.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

Pursuant to section 120(h) of the MMPA, NMFS convened a Task Force to examine the issues and problems associated with pinniped-aquaculture interactions in the Gulf of Maine. Task Force members were selected from the aquaculture industry, state government, the scientific community, and conservation organizations. The Task Force convened three times for multi-day meetings, visited pen-sites, conducted public hearings, met with salmon growers, conducted surveys, and reviewed literature related to the issue, prior to completion of its report. The report contained Task Force recommendations to mitigate the seal predation, all of which represented the consensus of the Task Force.

NMFS considered the recommendations from the Task Force and prepared a draft report to Congress recommending options available to mitigate the interaction. NMFS published a notice of availability of the draft report and solicited public comments on it (62 FR 12602, March 17, 1997).

NMFS used the public comments in preparing a final report to Congress and forwarded the report to the Department

of Commerce. The Secretary of Commerce transmitted the report to Congress on August 1, 1997. Copies of the report are now available to the public (see ADDRESSES).

Dated: August 21, 1997.

**Hilda Diaz-Soltero,**

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

[FR Doc. 97-22843 Filed 8-26-97; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3510-22-F**

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

[I.D. 081997C]

**International Whaling Commission: Environmental Assessment and Meetings**

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

**ACTION:** Notice of availability of an Environmental Assessment (EA) and change in meeting location.

**SUMMARY:** The Makah Tribe (Tribe) has indicated that it wishes to harvest up to five gray whales per year for subsistence and ceremonial purposes. Within the U.S. Government, whaling is managed by the Department of Commerce, which must therefore consider whether to support the Makah interest in continuing its tradition of whaling. NOAA has prepared a draft EA which weighs the impacts of supporting the Makah interest in whaling and considers alternatives to concurrence. This notice also announces a change in the room where the next IWC Interagency Committee will meet. The first notice of this meeting was published on June 26, 1997 (62 FR 34441).

**DATES:** Written comments must be received on or before September 22, 1997.

**ADDRESSES:** Copies of the draft EA be obtained from the Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1315 East West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910; telephone: 301-713-2332. Comments should be submitted in writing to the same address.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Angela Somma, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1315 East West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Phone: (301) 713-2319.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The Tribe has indicated that it wishes to harvest up to five gray whales per year for

subsistence and ceremonial purposes. Within the U.S. Government, whaling is managed by the Department of Commerce, which must therefore consider whether to support the Makah interest in continuing its tradition of whaling. This EA weighs the impacts of supporting the Makah interest in whaling and considers alternatives to concurrence. The EA analyzes alternatives, including the proposed action. The alternatives are: 1) Support the Tribe's decision to whale after receiving approval from the International Whaling Commission (IWC) [proposed action]; 2) delay consideration of support until after the five-year monitoring program of the eastern Pacific stock of gray whales is complete; 3) persuade the Tribe to engage in alternative activities such as ecotourism instead of whaling; and 4) no action.

NMFS also announces that the Interagency Committee meeting for the IWC will be held September 9, 1997, at 2:00 pm in Room 5215, Herbert C. Hoover Building, Department of Commerce, 14th and Constitution, Washington, DC. The room will be opened at 12:00 pm to permit viewing of U.S. positions papers for the 49th Annual Meeting of the IWC. The Interagency Committee meeting will review recent events relating to the IWC and will review U.S. positions for the 1997 IWC meetings.

Dated: August 20, 1997.

**Hilda Diaz-Soltero,**

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

[FR Doc. 97-22841 Filed 8-26-97; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3510-22-F**

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

[I.D. 080697G]

**ICCAT Advisory Committee; Public Meetings**

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

**ACTION:** Notice of public meetings.

**SUMMARY:** The Advisory Committee to the U.S. Section to the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) and the Highly Migratory Species Management Division of National Marine Fisheries Service announces the schedule of regional public meetings to be held this fall.