

U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), an initial determination has been made that the activity proposed is categorically excluded from the requirement to prepare an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement.

Dated: July 18, 2002.

Eugene T. Nitta,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 062802C]

Small Takes of Marine Mammals Incidental to Specified Activities; Seismic Retrofit of the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge, San Francisco Bay, CA

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

ACTION: Notice of receipt of application and proposed authorization for a small take exemption; request for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS has received a request from the California Department of Transportation (CALTRANS) for a renewal of its Incidental Harassment Authorization (IHA) to take small numbers of marine mammals, by harassment, incidental to seismic retrofit construction of the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge (the Bridge), San Francisco Bay (SFB), CA. Under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), NMFS is requesting comments on its proposal to renew a small take authorization to CALTRANS to incidentally take, by harassment, small numbers of Pacific harbor seals and possibly California sea lions for 1 year.

DATES: Comments and information must be received no later than August 23, 2002.

ADDRESSES: Comments on the application should be addressed to Donna Wieting, Chief, Marine Mammal Conservation Division, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910-3225. Comments cannot be accepted if submitted via e-mail or the Internet. A copy of the application, Environmental Assessment (EA) and/or monitoring reports may be obtained by writing to this address or by telephoning the contact listed here. Publications referenced in this document are

available for viewing, by appointment during regular business hours, at this address.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Kenneth R. Hollingshead, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, (301) 713-2055.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Sections 101(a)(5)(A) and (D) of the MMPA (16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*) direct the Secretary of Commerce 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 and either regulations are issued or, if the taking is limited to harassment, a notice of a proposed authorization is provided to the public for review.

Permission may 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 subsistence uses and that the permissible methods of taking and requirements pertaining to the monitoring and reporting of such takings are set forth. NMFS has defined "negligible impact" in 50 CFR 216.103 as "an impact resulting from the specified activity that cannot be reasonably expected to, and is not reasonably likely to, adversely affect the species or stock through effects on annual rates of recruitment or survival."

Subsection 101(a)(5)(D) of the MMPA established an expedited process by which citizens of the United States can apply for an authorization to incidentally take small numbers of marine mammals by harassment. The MMPA defines "harassment" as:

any act of pursuit, torment, or annoyance which (i) has the potential to injure a marine mammal or marine mammal stock in the wild; or (ii) 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.

Subsection 101(a)(5)(D) establishes a 45-day time limit for NMFS review of an application followed by a 30-day public notice and comment period on any proposed authorizations for the incidental harassment of small numbers of marine mammals. Within 45 days of the close of the comment period, NMFS must either issue or deny issuance of the authorization.

Summary of Request

On May 28, 2002, NMFS received a letter from CALTRANS, requesting reauthorization of an IHA that was first issued to it on December 16, 1997 (62 FR 6704, December 23, 1997), and was renewed on January 8, 2000 (65 FR 2375, January 14, 2000) and September 19, 2001 (66 FR 49165, September 26, 2001). The current IHA expires on September 18, 2002. The renewed authorization request is for the possible harassment of small numbers of Pacific harbor seals (*Phoca vitulina*) and possibly some California sea lions (*Zalophus californianus*), incidental to seismic retrofit construction of the Bridge.

The Bridge is being seismically retrofitted to withstand a future severe earthquake. Construction is scheduled to extend until the year 2005. A detailed description of the work planned is contained in the Final Natural Environmental Study/Biological Assessment for the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge Seismic Retrofit Project (CALTRANS, 1996). Among other things, seismic retrofit work will include excavation around pier bases, hydro-jet cleaning, installation of steel casings around the piers with a crane, installation of micro-piles, and installation of precast concrete jackets. Foundation construction will require approximately 2 months per pier, with construction occurring on more than one pier at a time. In addition to pier retrofit, superstructure construction and tower retrofit work will also be carried out. Because seismic retrofit construction between piers 52 and 57 has the potential to disturb harbor seals hauled out on Castro Rocks, an IHA is warranted. The duration for the seismic retrofit of foundation and towers on piers 52 through 57, which began this year, will take approximately 7 to 8 months to complete.

Description of Habitat and Marine Mammals Affected by the Activity

A description of SFB ecosystem and its associated marine mammals can be found in the original CALTRANS application (CALTRANS 1997) and in CALTRANS (1996). Castro Rocks are a small chain of rocky islands located next to the Bridge and approximately 1500 ft (460 m) north of the Chevron Long Wharf. They extend in a southwesterly direction for approximately 800 ft (240 m) from pier 55. The rocks start at about 55 ft (17 m) from pier 55 (A rock) and end at approximately 250 ft (76 m) from pier 53 (F rock). The chain of rocks is

exposed during low tides and inundated during high tide.

Marine Mammals

General information on harbor seals and other marine mammal species found in Central California waters can be found in Forney et al. (2000, 2001), which are available at the following URL: http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/prot_res/PR2/Stock_Assessment_Program/sars.html Refer to those documents for information on these species. The marine mammals likely to be affected by work in the Bridge area are limited to harbor seals and California sea lions.

The harbor seal is the only marine mammal species expected to be found regularly in the Bridge area. A detailed description of harbor seals was provided in the 1997 notification of proposed authorization (62 FR 46480, September 3, 1997) with corrections and clarifications provided in the notice of IHA issuance (62 FR 67045, December 23, 1997). This information is not repeated here, but may be referenced at the following URLs:

<http://frwebgate4.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/waisgate.cgi?WAISdoc>

ID=9398588449 +1 +0 +0 & WAI Saction =retrieve

<http://frwebgate3.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/waisgate.cgi?WAISdoc>

ID=94045429635 + 0 + 0 + 0 & WAI Saction = retrieve

It should be noted that pups are born in mid- to late-March, peak numbers of pups are observed in early May, and, by the first week in June, all pups are weaned (Kopeck and Harvey, 1995). Estimated pup counts at Castro Rocks were 35 in 1999, 40 in 2000 and 40 in 2001 (A. Bohorquez pers. comm in Green *et al.*, 2001). This represents approximately 22–24 percent of the pups born in SFB.

The California sea lion primarily uses the Central SFB area to feed. California sea lions are periodically observed at Castro Rocks. No pupping or regular haulouts occur in the project area.

Potential Effects on Marine Mammals

The impact to the harbor seals and California sea lions is expected to be disturbance by the presence of workers, construction noise, and construction vessel traffic. Disturbance from these activities is expected to have only a short-term negligible impact to a small number of harbor seals and sea lions. These disturbances will be reduced to the lowest level practicable by implementation of the proposed work restrictions and mitigation measures (see Mitigation).

Marine mammal monitoring under the current and previous IHAs has been conducted at Castro Rocks and at two “control” haul-out locations in SFB, Mowry Slough and Yerba Buena Island (Green et al., 2001, 2002) since 1998. To date, over 10,000 hours of observations have been conducted at these sites with two-thirds of those hours at Castro Rocks. While disturbances can consist of head alerts, approaches to the water, and flushes into the water, only the latter behavior is considered by NMFS to rise to Level B harassment. At Castro Rocks, of all flush disturbances monitored during the day, the major harassment sources were watercraft (e.g. motorboats, sailboats, tankers, kayaks and jet skis) with 0.128 disturbances/hr field time (d/hr); wildlife (seals and birds) with 0.075 d/hr; anthropogenic (debris, workmen on bridge with 0.040 d/hr; and “research” with 0.021 d/hr. Construction activities resulted in 0.0165 d/hr. There were fewer flushes observed at night. For more detailed information on the extent of take by harassment at Castro Rocks by activities other than the requested authorization, refer to Green et al. (2002).

During the work period (August 1 through February 14), the incidental harassment of harbor seals and, on rare occasions, California sea lions is expected to occur on a daily basis upon initiation of the retrofit work. In addition, the number of seals disturbed will vary daily depending upon tidal elevations. Monitoring by Green et al. (2002) indicates that although overall seal numbers each month of the year are not significantly different across years, there are differences in subsite use by seals at Castro Rocks during both the daytime and nighttime. For example, the average number of seals hauled out on Castro Rocks (rocks A and C) during the fall of 2001 (when construction activity was taking place within the area of the haul-out site) was significantly different than the average number of seals hauled out on Castro Rocks during 1998–2000, prior to the construction period. It was noted that fewer seals were using rock A, located closest to the Bridge, and more seals were hauling out on rock C, which was located farther from the Bridge than rock A. The number of seals hauled out on rocks B and E was not significantly different between years while the number hauled out on rocks D and F was greater during the fall of 2000 and 2001 than 1998 and 1999. For a more detailed discussion on the distribution of harbor seals during the work and non-work periods and levels of impact by various natural and anthropogenic disturbance sources, see

Green et al. (2002) which is available upon request (see ADDRESSES).

Whether California sea lions will react to construction noise and move away from the rocks during construction activities is unknown. Sea lions are generally thought to be more tolerant of human activities than harbor seals and are, therefore, less likely to be affected.

Potential Effects on Habitat

Short-term impacts of the activities are expected to result in a temporary reduction in utilization of the Castro Rocks haulout site while work is in progress or until seals acclimate to the disturbance. This will not likely result in any permanent reduction in the number of seals at Castro Rocks. The abandonment of Castro Rocks as a harbor seal haulout and rookery is not anticipated since existing traffic noise from the Bridge, commercial activities at the Chevron Long Wharf used for off-loading crude oil, and considerable recreational boating and commercial shipping that currently occur within the area have not caused long-term abandonment. In addition, mitigation measures and work restrictions are designed to preclude abandonment.

Therefore, as described in detail in CALTRANS (1996), other than the potential short-term abandonment by harbor seals of part or all of Castro Rocks during retrofit construction, no impact on the habitat or food sources of marine mammals are likely from this construction project.

Mitigation

Several mitigation measures to reduce the potential for general noise have been implemented by CALTRANS as part of their activity. General restrictions include: with the exception of the Concrete Trestle Section, no piles will be driven (i.e., no repetitive pounding of piles) on the Bridge between 9 p.m. and 7 a.m.; an imposition of a construction noise limit of 86 dBA at 50 ft (15 m) between 9 p.m. and 7 a.m.; and, a limitation on construction noise levels for 24 hrs/day in the vicinity of Castro Rocks during the pupping/molting restriction period.

To minimize potential harassment of marine mammals, in the current and previous authorizations NMFS required CALTRANS to comply with the following mitigation measures: (1) A February 15 through July 31 restriction on work in the water south of the Bridge center line and retrofit work on the Bridge substructure, towers, superstructure, piers, and pilings from piers 52 through 57; (2) no watercraft will be deployed by CALTRANS employees or contractors, during the

year within the Work/Boat Exclusion Zone (W/BEZ) located between piers 52 and 57, except for when construction equipment is required for seismic retrofitting of piers 52 through 57; and (3) minimize vessel traffic to the greatest extent practicable in the exclusion zone when conducting construction activities between piers 52 and 57. The boundary of the current W/BEZ is rectangular in shape (1700 ft (518 m) by 800 ft (244 m)) and completely encloses Castro Rocks and piers 52 through 57, inclusive. The northern boundary of the W/BEZ is located 300 ft (91 m) from the most northern tip of Castro Rocks, and the southern boundary is located 300 ft (91 m) from the most southern tip of Castro Rocks. The eastern boundary is currently located 300 ft (91 m) from the most eastern tip of Castro Rocks, and the western boundary is currently located 300 ft (91 m) from the most western tip of Castro Rocks. This W/BEZ is restricted as a controlled access area and is marked off with buoys and warning signs for the entire year.

For this proposed IHA, CALTRANS has requested, among other things, that the W/BEZ be modified from its current location so that the eastern boundary is shifted from 100 ft (30.5 m) east of Pier 57 to 100 ft (30.5 m) west of Pier 57. This will maintain a 400-ft (122-m) "buffer," as opposed to the existing 600-ft (183-m) buffer, between the work at Pier 57 and "A" rock. CALTRANS believes that this modification is reasonable based on observed seal behavior during the construction within the W/BEZ that harbor seals adjusted their location preference on Castro Rocks by moving westerly to rocks further from the construction (see discussion previously in this document). However, CALTRANS notes that there has not been a statistically significant change in the total numbers of animals that utilize the Castro Rocks haulout.

In addition to shifting the W/BEZ, CALTRANS is requesting that the period in which work is allowed in the vicinity of Castro Rocks be modified from February 15th to March 1st. CALTRANS is requesting this modification due to unforeseen circumstances affecting the ability of the contractor to the seismic retrofit work on Pier 57. This will allow the contractor to complete the work this coming season and to stay under budget.

The current Closure Period (February 15–July 31) was designed to encompass the entire harbor seals pupping and breeding seasons and nearly the entire molting season at Castro Rocks. Thus, the Closure Period includes the entire pupping season at Castro Rocks and a

substantial pre-pupping period when females are moving into pupping areas (62 FR 67045, December 23, 1997). Because moving the Closure Period from February 15th to March 1st would still provide a two-week window prior to the onset of successful pupping (March 15th), and because NMFS does not find scientific evidence indicating that female harbor seals need a "quiet period" from general noise in order to pup successfully, NMFS has preliminarily determined that shifting the Closure Period from February 15th to March 1st would not have a significant impact on harbor seal pupping.

Finally, CALTRANS has requested that the period in which work is allowed in the vicinity of Castro Rocks be modified from August 1st to a new date of July 16th. As mentioned in previous documents, newborn harbor seal pups are able to swim immediately after birth (Zeiner et al., 1990) and pups are weaned by the first week of June. Therefore terminating the Closure Period on July 16th should not affect pup survival. Under the current and previous authorizations, the July 31st ending date for the Closure Period was established to protect harbor seals during the molting season. However, those documents also noted that it is likely that harbor seals evolved adaptive mechanisms to deal with exposure to the water during the molt. For example, on some harbor seal haul-outs (such as Castro Rocks) during the molting season seals must enter the water once or even twice a day due to tidal fluctuations limiting access to the haul-out. Also, since harbor seals lose hair in patches during the molt, they are never completely hairless and would not be as vulnerable to heat loss in the water during this period compared to other seals (e.g., elephant seals) that lose all their hair at one time. Finally, if the levels of harbor seal disturbance during the molt are relatively high, seals are likely to utilize other local haul-out sites during the molt (DeLong, R., pers. commun. 1997; Hanan, D., pers. commun. 1997; Harvey, J., pers. commun. 1997). Hanan (1996) found that although harbor seals tagged at an isolated southern California haul-out tended to exhibit site fidelity during the molt, some seals were observed molting at other nearby haul-outs. Based on these reasons, NMFS has preliminarily determined that changing the last day of the Closure Period to July 15th should not significantly affect harbor seals in general or molting seals at Castro Rocks in particular.

Monitoring

NMFS will require CALTRANS to continue to monitor the impact of seismic retrofit construction activities on harbor seals at Castro Rocks. Monitoring will be conducted by one or more NMFS-approved monitors. CALTRANS is to monitor at least one additional harbor seal haulout within San Francisco Bay to evaluate whether harbor seals use alternative haulout areas as a result of seismic retrofit disturbance at Castro Rocks.

The monitoring protocol will be divided into the Work Period Phase (app. July 16 through February 28) and the Closure Period Phase (app. March 1 through July 15). During the Work Period Phase and Closure Period Phase, the monitor(s) will conduct observations of seal behavior at least 3 days/week for approximately one tidal cycle each day at Castro Rocks. The following data will be recorded: (1) Number of seals and sea lions on site; (2) date; (3) time; (4) tidal height; (5) number of adults, subadults, and pups; (6) number of individuals with red pelage; (7) number of females and males; (8) number of molting seals; and (9) details of any observed disturbances. Concurrently, the monitor(s) will record general construction activity, location, duration, and noise levels. At least 2 nights/week, the monitor will conduct a harbor seal census after midnight at Castro Rocks. In addition, during the Work Period Phase and prior to any construction between piers 52 and 57, inclusive, the monitor(s) will conduct baseline observations of seal behavior at Castro Rocks and at the alternative site(s) once a day for a period of 5 consecutive days immediately before the initiation of construction in the area to establish pre-construction behavioral patterns. During the Work Period and Closure Period Phases, the monitor(s) will conduct observations of seal behavior and collect appropriate data at the alternative Bay harbor seal haulout at least 3 days/week (Work Period) and 2 days/week (Closure Period), during a low tide.

In addition, NMFS will require that, immediately following the completion of the seismic retrofit construction of the Bridge, the monitor(s) will conduct observations of seal behavior, at Castro Rocks, at least 5 days/week for approximately 1 tidal cycle (high tide to high tide) each day, for one week/month during the months of April, July, October, and January. At least 2 nights/week during this same period, the monitor will conduct an additional harbor seal census after midnight.

Reporting

Under the current and previous IHAs, CALTRANS has provided monitoring reports (Green et al. (2001, 2002). The findings from these reports have been summarized previously in this document.

CALTRANS will provide weekly reports to the Southwest Regional Administrator (Regional Administrator), NMFS, including a summary of the previous week's monitoring activities and an estimate of the number of harbor seals that may have been disturbed as a result of seismic retrofit construction activities. These reports will provide dates, time, tidal height, maximum number of harbor seals ashore, number of adults, sub-adults and pups, number of females/males, number of harbor seals with a red pelage, and any observed disturbances. A description of retrofit activities at the time of observation and any sound pressure levels measurements made at the haulout will also be provided. A draft interim report must be submitted to NMFS by April 30, 2003.

A draft final report must be submitted to the Regional Administrator within 90 days after the expiration of this IHA. A final report must be submitted to the Regional Administrator within 30 days after receiving comments from the Regional Administrator on the draft final report. If no comments are received from NMFS, the draft final report will be considered to be the final report.

CALTRANS will provide NMFS with a follow-up report on the post-construction monitoring activities within 18 months of project completion in order to evaluate whether haulout patterns are similar to the pre-retrofit haul-out patterns at Castro Rocks.

National Environmental Policy Act

In conjunction with the promulgation of regulations implementing section 101(a)(5)(D) of the MMPA, NMFS completed an EA on May 9, 1995, that addressed the impacts on the human environment from issuance of IHAs and the alternatives to that action. NMFS' analysis resulted in a Finding of No Significant Impact. In addition, NMFS prepared an EA in 1997 that concluded that the impacts of CALTRANS' seismic retrofit construction of the Bridge will not have a significant impact on the human environment. Accordingly, this proposed action has not changed significantly from the 1997 action, it is categorical excluded from further NEPA analysis and, therefore, a new EA will not be prepared. A copy of these two relevant EAs are available (see ADDRESSES).

Preliminary Conclusions

NMFS has preliminarily determined that the short-term impact of the seismic retrofit construction of the Bridge, as described in this document, should result, at worst, in the temporary modification in behavior by harbor seals and, possibly, by some California sea lions. While behavioral modifications, including temporarily vacating the haulout, may be made by these species to avoid the resultant visual and acoustic disturbance, this action is expected to have a negligible impact on the animals. In addition, no take by injury and/or death is anticipated, and harassment takes will be at the lowest level practicable due to incorporation of the mitigation measures mentioned previously in this document.

Proposed Authorization

NMFS proposes to renew an IHA to CALTRANS for the potential harassment of small numbers of harbor seals and California sea lions incidental to seismic retrofit construction of the Bridge, provided the previously mentioned mitigation, monitoring, and reporting requirements are incorporated. NMFS has preliminarily determined that the proposed activity would result in the harassment of only small numbers of harbor seals and possibly California sea lions and will have no more than a negligible impact on these marine mammal stocks.

Information Sought

NMFS requests interested persons to submit comments, information, and suggestions concerning this request (see ADDRESSES).

Dated: July 18, 2002.

David Cottingham

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

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COMMITTEE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF TEXTILE AGREEMENTS

Adjustment of Import Limits for Certain Cotton and Man-Made Fiber Textiles and Textile Products Produced or Manufactured in India

July 18, 2002.

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

ACTION: Issuing a directive to the Commissioner of Customs adjusting limits.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 24, 2002.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ross Arnold, International Trade Specialist, Office of Textiles and Apparel, U.S. Department of Commerce, (202) 482-4212. For information on the quota status of these limits, refer to the Quota Status Reports posted on the bulletin boards of each Customs port, call (202) 927-5850, or refer to the U.S. Customs website at <http://www.customs.gov>. For information on embargoes and quota re-openings, refer to the Office of Textiles and Apparel website at <http://otexa.ita.doc.gov>.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

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

The current limits for certain categories are being adjusted for swing and special shift.

A description of the textile and apparel categories in terms of HTS numbers is available in the CORRELATION: Textile and Apparel Categories with the Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States (see **Federal Register** notice 66 FR 65178, published on December 18, 2001). Also see 66 FR 59577, published on November 29, 2001.

James C. Leonard III,

Chairman, Committee for the Implementation of Textile Agreements.

Committee for the Implementation of Textile Agreements

July 18, 2002.

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 November 23, 2001, by the Chairman, Committee for the Implementation of Textile Agreements. That directive concerns imports of certain cotton, man-made fiber, silk blend and other vegetable fiber textiles and textile products, produced or manufactured in India and exported during the twelve-month period which began on January 1, 2002 and extends through December 31, 2002.

Effective on July 24, 2002, you are directed to adjust the current limits for the following categories, as provided for under the Uruguay Round Agreement on Textiles and Clothing:

Category	Adjusted twelve-month limit ¹
Levels in Group I	
219	103,112,557 square meters.
317	35,321,538 square meters.
335/635	1,101,190 dozen.
340/640	3,010,998 dozen.