

still transient, and considerably before the spring pupping season.

(5) The sounds from energy produced by vibrators used during on-ice seismic programs typically are at frequencies well below those used by ringed seals to communicate (1000 Hz). Thus, ringed seal hearing is not likely to be very good at those frequencies and seismic sounds are not likely to have strong masking effects on ringed seal calls. This effect is further moderated by the quiet intervals between seismic energy transmissions.

(6) There has been no major displacement of seals away from on-ice seismic operations (Frost and Lowry, 1988). Further confirmation of this lack of major response to industrial activity is illustrated by the fact that there has been no major displacement of seals near the Northstar Project. Studies at Northstar have shown a continued presence of ringed seals throughout winter and creation of new seal structures (Williams *et al.*, 2001).

(7) Although seals may abandon structures near seismic activity, studies have not demonstrated a cause and effect relationship between abandonment and seismic activity or biologically significant impact on ringed seals. Studies by Williams *et al.* (2001), Kelley *et al.* (1986, 1988) and Kelly and Quakenbush (1990) have shown that abandonment of holes and lairs and establishment or re-occupancy of new ones is an ongoing natural occurrence, with or without human presence. Link *et al.* (1999) compared ringed seal densities between areas with and without vibroseis activity and found densities were highly variable within each area and inconsistent between areas (densities were lower for 5 days, equal for 1 day, and higher for 1 day in vibroseis area), suggesting other factors beyond the seismic activity likely influenced seal use patterns.

Consequently, a wide variety of natural factors influence this patterns of seal use including time of day, weather, season, ice deformation, ice thickness, accumulation of snow, food availability and predators as well as ring seal behavior and populations dynamics.

(8) In winter, bearded seals are restricted to cracks, broken ice, and other openings in the ice. On-ice seismic operations avoid those areas for safety reasons. Therefore, any exposure of bearded seals to on-ice seismic operations would be limited to distant and transient exposure. Bearded seals exposed to a distant on-ice seismic operation might dive into the water. Consequently, no significant effects on individual bearded seals or their population are expected, and the

number of individuals that might be temporarily disturbed would be very low.

As a result, CPA believes the effects of on-ice seismic are expected to be limited to short-term and localized behavioral changes involving relatively small numbers of seals. NMFS has determined, based on information in the application and EA, that these changes in behavior will have no more than a negligible impact on the affected species or stocks of ringed and bearded seals (NMFS, 1998). Also, the potential effects of the proposed on-ice seismic operations during 2004 are unlikely to have an unmitigable adverse impact on subsistence uses of these two species.

Authorization

NMFS has issued an IHA to take marine mammals, by harassment, incidental to conducting seismic surveys at Cape Halkett to Oliktok Point in the Beaufort Sea in Alaska, provided the previously mentioned mitigation, monitoring, and reporting requirements are incorporated. NMFS has determined that the activity would result in only the harassment of marine mammals; would have no more than a negligible impact on the affected marine mammal stocks; and would not have an unmitigable adverse impact on the availability of species or stocks for subsistence uses.

Dated: February 27, 2004.

P. Michael Payne,

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

[FR Doc. 04-4874 Filed 3-3-04; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-S

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 122001A]

New England Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

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

ACTION: Public meeting.

SUMMARY: The New England Fishery Management Council (Council) will hold a three-day Council meeting on March 23-25, 2004, to consider actions affecting New England fisheries in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

DATES: The meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 23, 2004 beginning at 9:00 a.m. and on Wednesday and Thursday, March 24 and 25, beginning at 8:30 a.m.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held at the Tavern on the Harbor, 30 Western Avenue, Gloucester, MA, 01930; telephone (978)283-4200. Requests for special accommodations should be addressed to the New England Fishery Management Council, 50 Water Street, Mill 2, Newburyport, MA 01950; telephone (978) 465-0492.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Paul J. Howard, Executive Director, New England Fishery Management Council, (978) 465-0492.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Tuesday, March 23, 2004

Following introductions, the Council will receive reports on recent activities from the Council Chairman and Executive Director, the NMFS Regional Administrator, Northeast Fisheries Science Center and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council liaisons, NOAA General Counsel and representatives of the U.S. Coast Guard, NMFS Enforcement and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. During the Herring Committee report to follow, the committee chairman will review the range of alternatives under consideration for inclusion in Amendment 1 to the Herring Fishery Management Plan (FMP). The Council will review recommendations from the Herring Committee, as well as recommendations from the Herring Advisory Panel and Plan Development Team. Alternatives under consideration may address management area boundaries, area-specific Total Allowable Catches (TACs), TAC set-asides and in-season adjustments, a limited access program, a quota allocation and/or days-at-sea program, measures to address fixed gear fisheries, and essential fish habitat and bycatch.

Wednesday, March 24, 2004

During the Wednesday session, the Council will review and possibly approve positions concerning re-authorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Council staff will then summarize the results of the scoping meetings recently convened in anticipation of the development of an Omnibus Essential Fish Habitat Amendment. The Council also will discuss and approve comments on an Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking concerning possible changes to NOAA Fisheries Essential Fish Habitat Guidelines. The Council will use the remainder of the day to consider final action on Framework Adjustment 40 to the Northeast Multispecies FMP. The framework includes management alternatives for

the use of "B" days-at-sea as discussed in Amendment 13 to the FMP. B days are among the effort controls included in the amendment which has not yet been approved by the Secretary of Commerce.

Thursday, March 25, 2004

On Thursday, the Council's Research Steering Committee will report on and ask for approval of a policy that addresses the review and use of new research in the fishery management process. The Council will then review and intends to approve comments on the proposed rule to implement Amendment 10 to the Atlantic Sea Scallop FMP. Following this agenda item the rest of the day will be spent discussing potential improvements to Council process as it concerns committee organization and decision-making, as well as issues related to fleet structure and over-capitalization issues in the groundfish fishery. Any other outstanding business will be addressed at the end of the day.

Although other non-emergency issues not contained in this agenda may come before this Council for discussion, those issues may not be the subjects of formal action during this meeting. Council action will be restricted to those issues specifically listed in this notice and any issues arising after publication of this notice that require emergency action under section 305(c) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, provided that the public has been notified of the Council's intent to take final action to address the emergency.

Special Accommodations

This meeting is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Paul J. Howard (see **ADDRESSES**) at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.

Dated: March 1, 2004.

Peter Fricke,

*Acting Director, Sustainable Fisheries,
National Marine Fisheries Service.*

[FR Doc. 04-4873 Filed 3-3-04; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-S

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 022604A]

Endangered Species; Files No. 1472 and No. 1473

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and

Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Receipt of application.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that the Maritime Aquarium in Norwalk (Ellen Riker, principle investigator), 10 North Water Street, South Norwalk, Connecticut 06854 and the Virginia Living Museum (Lory Scott, principle investigator), 524 J. Clyde Morris Blvd., Newport News, Virginia 23601, have both applied in due form for a permit to take shortnose sturgeon (*Acipenser brevirostrum*) for purposes of enhancement through educational display.

DATES: Written, telefaxed, or e-mail comments must be received on or before April 5, 2004.

ADDRESSES:

The applications and related documents are available for review upon written request or by appointment in the following office(s):

Permits, Conservation and Education Division, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13705, Silver Spring, MD 20910; phone (301)713-2289; fax (301)713-0376; and Northeast Region, NMFS, One Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930-2298; phone (978)281-9200; fax (978)281-9371.

Comments may also be submitted by e-mail. The mailbox address for providing email comments is NMFS.Pr1Comments@noaa.gov. Include in the subject line of the e-mail comment the following document identifier: File No. 1472 and File No. 1473.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Jennifer Jefferies or Amy Sloan, (301)713-2289.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The subject permits are requested under the authority of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA; 16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.) and the regulations governing the taking, importing, and exporting of endangered and threatened species (50 CFR 222-226).

The Maritime Aquarium in Norwalk and the Virginia Living Museum both propose to receive and use 50 individual, captive-bred, non-releaseable shortnose sturgeon for educational display exhibits. These proposed projects of displaying endangered cultured shortnose sturgeon responds directly to a recommendation of the NMFS recovery outline for this species. In addition, the facilities would formulate public education programs and exhibits to increase awareness of the shortnose sturgeon and its status. These proposed projects would educate

the public on shortnose sturgeon life history and the reasons for its declining numbers.

Written comments or requests for a public hearing on this application should be mailed to the Chief, Permits, Conservation and Education Division, F/PR1, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13705, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Those individuals requesting a hearing should set forth the specific reasons why a hearing on this particular request would be appropriate.

Comments may also be submitted by facsimile at (301)713-0376, provided the facsimile is confirmed by hard copy submitted by mail and postmarked no later than the closing date of the comment period.

Dated: February 27, 2004.

Stephen L. Leathery,

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

[FR Doc. 04-4872 Filed 3-3-04; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-S

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION

[OMB Control No. 9000-0006]

Federal Acquisition Regulation; Information Collection; Subcontracting Plans/Subcontracting Report for Individual Contracts (Standard Form 294)

AGENCIES: Department of Defense (DOD), General Services Administration (GSA), and National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

ACTION: Notice of request for public comments regarding an extension to an existing OMB clearance (9000-0006).

SUMMARY: Under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. Chapter 35), the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) Secretariat will be submitting to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) a request to review and approve an extension of a currently approved information collection requirement concerning subcontracting plans/subcontracting reporting for individual contracts (Standard Form 294). The clearance currently expires on June 30, 2004.

Public comments are particularly invited on: Whether this collection of