

effectiveness of the side panel pockets at retaining escapees.

Species of principal interest in the study include haddock, cod, pollock, American plaice, witch flounder, winter flounder, and hake species. Once caught, these species would be sorted, and then divided into legal and sub-legal size groups. They would then be sub-sampled, measured, and weighed. All legal catch would be retained, while all other remaining catch would be returned to the sea as quickly as practicable. Based on data from previous experimental tows, the researchers anticipate that a total of 20,385 lb (9,246 kg) of fish would be harvested throughout the course of the study, along with 6,390 lb (2,898 kg) of regulatory discards from both the experimental and control nets. All legal-sized fish within the possession limit would be retained and sold, with the proceeds returned to the project for the purpose of enhancing future research.

All at-sea research is proposed to be conducted from the F/V Bad Penny (Permit # 250485, O.N. 617341) from the period between August 1, 2006, and July 31, 2007. The vessel intends to fish in two main areas of the GOM, known as "The Kettles" and "The Three Dories." The vessel would fish exclusively outside of all closed areas. A total of 10 days would be used for testing the experimental trawl, with an anticipated 4, 2-hour tows per day (2 control, 2 experimental). An additional 2 days would be used to evaluate side panel escapement, using the small mesh side pockets. During these escapement trials, the main net codend would remain open, and only fish captured through the side panels would be sampled. The researchers are therefore requesting exemption from a total of 2 NE multispecies DAS to conduct the net escapement trials, in which no fish will be landed.

Based on preliminary review of this project, and in accordance with NOAA Administrative Order 216-6, a Categorical Exclusion (CE) from requirements to prepare either an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or an Environmental Assessment (EA) under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) appears to be justified. The applicant may request minor modifications and extensions to the EFP throughout the year. EFP modifications and extensions may be granted without further notice if they are deemed essential to facilitate completion of the proposed research and have minimal impacts that do not change the scope or impact of the initially approved EFP request.

**Authority:** 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: July 13, 2006.

**James P. Burgess,**

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

[FR Doc. E6-11406 Filed 7-18-06; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3510-22-S**

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 071306F]

#### Marine Mammals; File No. 633-1778

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

**ACTION:** Notice; issuance of permit.

**SUMMARY:** Notice is hereby given that the Center for Coastal Studies, P.O. Box 1036, Provincetown, MA 02657 [Principal Investigator: Julie Robbins] has been issued a permit to conduct scientific research.

**ADDRESSES:** The permit 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)427-2521;

Northeast Region, NMFS, One Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930-2298; phone (978)281-9300; fax (978)281-9394; and

Southeast Region, NMFS, 263 13th Avenue South, Saint Petersburg, Florida 33701; phone (727)824-5312; fax (727)824-5309.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Carrie Hubard or Patrick Opay, (301)713-2289.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** On March 21, 2005, notice was published in the **Federal Register** (70 FR 13481) that a request for a scientific research permit to take various pinniped and cetacean species, including endangered large whales, had been submitted by the above-named organization. The requested permit has been issued under the authority of the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*), the regulations governing the taking and importing of marine mammals (50 CFR part 216), 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 parts 222-226).

The permit holder is authorized to conduct photo-identification and biopsy sampling of a variety of large whale species, with a focus on humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*). Sloughed skin may also be collected and all biological samples may be imported and exported. Several small cetaceans species as well as harbor seals (*Phoca vitulina*) and grey seals (*Halicoerus grypus*) may be incidentally harassed during the research. Activities will be conducted in the U.S. waters of the Gulf of Maine and waters off the U.S. northeast and mid-Atlantic states in the North Atlantic Ocean. The permit expires in 5 years.

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), an environmental assessment was prepared analyzing the effects of the permitted activities. After a Finding of No Significant Impact, the determination was made that it was not necessary to prepare an environmental impact statement.

Issuance of this permit, as required by the ESA, was based on a finding that such permit: (1) was applied for in good faith; (2) will not operate to the disadvantage of any endangered species; and (3) is consistent with the purposes and policies set forth in section 2 of the ESA.

Dated: July 13, 2006.

**P. Michael Payne,**

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

[FR Doc. E6-11445 Filed 7-18-06; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3510-22-S**

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 071006E]

#### Marine Mammals; Photography Permit Application No. 1100-1849

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

**ACTION:** Notice; receipt of application.

**SUMMARY:** Notice is hereby given that Shane Moore, Moore & Moore Films, Box 2980, 1203 Melody Creek Lane, Jackson, Wyoming 83001 has applied in due form for a permit to conduct commercial/educational photography of killer whales (*Orcinus orca*), gray whales (*Eschrichtius robustus*), and

minke whales (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*).

**DATES:** Written, telefaxed, or e-mail comments must be received on or before August 18, 2006.

**ADDRESSES:** The application 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)427-2521; and Alaska Region, NMFS, P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802-1668; phone (907)586-7221; fax (907)586-7249.

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)427-2521, provided the facsimile is confirmed by hard copy submitted by mail and postmarked no later than the closing date of the comment period.

Comments may also be submitted by e-mail. The mailbox address for providing e-mail comments is [NMFS.Pr1Comments@noaa.gov](mailto:NMFS.Pr1Comments@noaa.gov). Include in the subject line of the e-mail comment the following document identifier: File No. 1100-1849

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Kelsey Abbott or Carrie Hubard, (301)713-2289.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The subject permit is requested under the authority of section 104(c)(6) of the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*), the regulations governing the taking and importing of marine mammals (50 CFR part 216). Section 104(c)(6) provides for photography for educational or commercial purposes involving non-endangered and non-threatened marine mammals in the wild. NMFS is currently working on proposed regulations to implement this provision. However, in the meantime, NMFS has received and is processing this request as a "pilot" application for Level B Harassment of non-listed and non-depleted marine mammals for photographic purposes.

The applicant proposes to take 10 killer whales of the Eastern North Pacific Transient stock, 10 gray whales, and 10 minke whales annually by close

approach for filming in the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea. The purpose of this project is to document the behavior of marine animals in the presence of the carcass of a gray or minke whale that was killed by killer whales. The applicant requests authorization to fix a remotely operated video camera in an underwater housing to the sea floor approximately 15 feet from the carcass. The camera would be deployed after the killer whales have left the carcass and would be controlled from a boat approximately 100 yards away. In addition, if killer whales, gray whales, or minke whales pass near the boat, the applicant would submerge a small camera on a pole to take photographs of passing animals. This footage would be shared freely with the scientific community as it may reveal to what extent killer whales continue to feed on submerged kills, how they feed on these carcasses, and document what other animals may benefit from these carcasses as well. Filming activities would occur between April 1 and August 31 of each year. The permit would expire three years from the date of issue.

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 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.

Concurrent with the publication of this notice in the **Federal Register**, NMFS is forwarding copies of this application to the Marine Mammal Commission and its Committee of Scientific Advisors.

Dated: July 13, 2006.

**P. Michael Payne,**

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

[FR Doc. E6-11453 Filed 7-18-06; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3510-22-S**

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 071406E]

### Pacific Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

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

**ACTION:** Notice of public meetings.

**SUMMARY:** The Pacific Fishery Management Council's (Council) Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) will a hold work session, which is open to the public.

**DATES:** The HMSMT work session will be Tuesday, August 8, 2006, from 8:30 a.m. until 5 p.m and on Wednesday, August 9, 2006, beginning at 8:30 a.m. until business is completed.

**ADDRESSES:** The work sessions will be held at the National Marine Fisheries Service, Southwest Fisheries Science Center, Large Conference Room, 8604 La Jolla Shores Drive, Room D-203, La Jolla, CA 92037, telephone: (858) 546-7000.

*Council address:* Pacific Fishery Management Council, 7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 101, Portland, OR 97220-1384.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Dr. Kit Dahl, Pacific Fishery Management Council; telephone: (503) 820-2280.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The topics planned for this HMSMT work session are: (1) develop a preliminary range of alternatives for modification of management measures for the April 1, 2007-March 31, 2009, management period, as authorized under the Fishery Management Plan for U.S. West Coast Fisheries for Highly Migratory Species (HMS FMP); (2) continue work to identify reference points for selected HMS; (3) plan analyses of exempted fishing permits (EFPs) proposed for the 2007 fishing year; (5) develop recommendations for future Council action on a high seas longline fishery; and (6) engage in additional planning related to the annual Stock Assessment Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) document. Time permitting, the HMSMT may also discuss any new information relevant to their previous work characterizing historical effort in the U.S. North Pacific albacore fishery off the West Coast.

Although non-emergency issues not contained in the meeting agendas may be discussed, those issues may not be the subject of formal action during these meetings. Action will be restricted to those issues specifically listed in this document and any issues arising after publication of this document that require emergency action under section 305(c) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, provided the public has been notified of the intent to take final action to address the emergency.

### Special Accommodations

The meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids