

Thompson], has been issued a modification to scientific research Permit No. 1448.

ADDRESSES: The modification 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

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

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Amy Hapeman or Patrick Opay, (301)713-2289.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On September 27, 2006, notice was published in the *Federal Register* (71 FR 56478) that a modification of Permit No. 1448, issued January 9, 2004 (69 FR 3332), had been requested by the above-named organization. The requested modification has been granted 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 modification authorizes the NEFSC to biopsy sample up to 50 of the Kemp's ridley (*Lepidochelys kempii*) sea turtles greater than 25 cm total carapace length that the holder is currently authorized to handle and biologically sample under the existing permit. This research will help confirm observer identifications of sea turtles made by collaborating NOAA researchers for animals that have been already incidentally captured in legal commercial fisheries operating in state waters and the Exclusive Economic Zone in the Northwest Atlantic Ocean.

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

Dated: November 21, 2006.

P. Michael Payne,

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. 101106E]

Endangered and Threatened Species; Recovery Plan for the Hawaiian Monk Seal

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of Availability; request for comments.

SUMMARY: The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) announces the availability for public review of the draft revised Recovery Plan (Plan) for the Hawaiian monk seal (*Monachus schauinslandi*). NMFS is soliciting review and comment on the Plan from the public and all interested parties, and will consider and address all substantive comments received during the comment period.

DATES: Comments on the draft Plan must be received by close of business on January 29, 2007.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments by either of the following methods:

- Mail: Send comments to Chris Yates, Assistant Regional Administrator, Protected Resources Division, Pacific Islands Regional Office, NMFS, Attn: Michelle Yuen, 1601 Kapiolani Blvd., Suite 1110, Honolulu, HI 96814.

- E-mail: hmsplan@noaa.gov. Include in the subject line the following document identifier: Hawaiian Monk Seal Recovery Plan. E-mail comments, with or without attachments, are limited to 5 megabytes.

Interested persons may obtain the Plan for review from the above address or on-line from the NMFS Pacific Islands Region Office website: <http://swr.nmfs.noaa.gov/pir/>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Michelle Yuen (808-944-2243), e-mail: michelle.yuen@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Recovery plans describe actions considered necessary for the conservation and recovery of species listed under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA), as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*). The ESA requires that recovery plans incorporate (1) objective, measurable criteria that, when met, would result in a determination that the species is no longer threatened or endangered; (2) site-specific management actions necessary to

achieve the plan's goals; and (3) estimates of the time required and costs to implement recovery actions. The ESA requires the development of recovery plans for listed species unless such a plan would not promote the recovery of a particular species. NMFS's goal is to restore the endangered Hawaiian monk seal (*Monachus schauinslandi*) population to the point where they are again secure, self-sustaining members of their ecosystem and no longer need the protections of the ESA. NMFS will consider all substantive comments and information presented during the public comment period in the course of finalizing this Recovery Plan.

The Hawaiian monk seal has the distinction of being the only endangered marine mammal species whose entire range, historical and current, lies within the United States of America. The majority of the population of Hawaiian monk seals now occupies the northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI) with six main breeding sub-populations. The species is also found in lower numbers in the main Hawaiian Islands (MHI), where the population size and range both appear to be expanding. The Hawaiian monk seal was listed as a threatened species under the ESA on November 23, 1976 (41 FR 51612). On April 30, 1986 (51 FR 16047), critical habitat was designated at all beach areas, lagoon waters, and ocean waters out to a depth of 10 fathoms around Kure Atoll, Midway, Pearl and Hermes Reef, Lisianski Island, Laysan Island, Gardner Pinnacles, French Frigate Shoals, Necker Island and Nihoa Island; critical habitat was extended to include Maro Reef and waters around all habitat out to the 20-fathom isobath on May 26, 1988. The best estimate of the total population size in 2005 is 1,252 seals.

This current revised plan was written by the Hawaiian Monk Seal Recovery Team at the request of the Assistant Administrator for Fisheries to promote the conservation of the Hawaiian monk seal. The recovery team includes experts on marine mammals from the private sector, academia, and government, as well as experts on endangered species conservation. The goals and objectives of the Plan can be achieved only if a long-term commitment is made to support the actions recommended in the Plan.

The Recovery Plan contains: (1) a comprehensive review of the Hawaiian monk seal population distribution, life history, and habitat use, (2) a threats assessment, (3) conservation efforts, (4) biological and recovery criteria for downlisting and delisting, (4) actions necessary for the recovery of the species, and (5) an implementation

schedule with estimates of time and cost to recovery. The threats assessment finds four levels of threats: (1) Crucial (ongoing and apparent threat at most sites in the NWHI), (2) Significant (ongoing impacts representing the potential for range-wide threats), (3) Serious (potential cause of localized threats), and (4) Moderate (localized impacts possible but not considered a serious or immediate threat). The Crucial threats to Hawaiian monk seals are: food limitation, entanglement, and shark predation. The Significant threats to Hawaiian monk seals are: infectious disease and habitat loss. The Serious threats are: fishery interaction, male aggression, human interaction, and biotoxin. Finally, the Moderate threats to Hawaiian monk seals are: vessel groundings and contaminants.

Criteria for the reclassification of the Hawaiian monk seal are included in the Plan. In summary, Hawaiian monk seals may be reclassified from endangered to threatened when all of the following have been met: (1) aggregate numbers exceed 2,900 total individuals in the NWHI; (2) at least 5 of the 6 main subpopulation in the NWHI are above 100 individuals, and the MHI population is above 500; (3) the survivorship of females in each subpopulation in the NWHI and in the MHI is high enough that, in conjunction with the birth rates in each subpopulation, the calculated population growth rate for each subpopulation is not negative. The population will be considered for a delisting if it continues to qualify for "threatened" classification for 20 consecutive years without new serious risk factors being identified.

Time and cost for recovery actions are contained in the Plan. The recovery program will cost \$52,656,000 for the first 5 fiscal years and \$436,816,000 to full recovery assuming the best case scenario that the population could grow to the stipulated total population size in the NWHI within 12 years, and that the stipulated numbers in the MHI could be reached within 34 years.

In accordance with the 2003 Peer Review Policy as stated in Appendix R of the Interim Endangered and Threatened Species Recovery Planning Guidance, NMFS solicited peer review on the draft Plan concurrent with this public comment period. Reviews were requested from three scientists and managers with expertise in recovery planning, statistical analyses, fisheries, and marine mammals. NMFS anticipates that many of the recommendations that will be made by the reviewers will be addressed and provided in detail in the final Plan.

Public Comments Solicited

NMFS solicits written comments on the draft Revised Recovery Plan. All substantive comments received by the date specified above will be considered prior to final approval of the Plan. NMFS is especially interested in comments on the following areas: (1) the threats assessment; (2) the biological and threats criteria for removing Hawaiian monk seals from the Federal list of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; (3) the recovery strategy and measures; and (4) the estimates of time and cost to implement recovery actions.

Authority

The authority for this action is section 4(f) of the Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).

Dated: November 21, 2006.

Angela Somma,

Chief, Endangered Species Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 082806C]

Endangered and Threatened Species; Recovery Plans

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

ACTION: Extension of public comment period.

SUMMARY: On September 29, 2006, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) announced the availability of the Proposed Upper Columbia Spring Chinook Salmon, Steelhead, and Bull Trout Recovery Plan (Plan) for public review and comment. In this notice, NMFS is extending the public comment period for this proposal to January 29, 2007. NMFS is soliciting review and comments from the public and all interested parties on the spring Chinook salmon and steelhead portions of the Proposed Plan. If comments are received on the bull trout portion of the Plan, NMFS will pass them on to the USFWS. **DATES:** NMFS will consider and address all substantive comments received during the comment period. Comments must be received by January 29, 2007.

ADDRESSES: Please send written comments and materials to Lynn

Hatcher, National Marine Fisheries Service, 304 South Water Street, Ellensburg, WA 98926. Comments may also be submitted by e-mail to: UpperColumbiaPlan.nwr@noaa.gov. Include in the subject line of the e-mail comment the following identifier: "Comments on Upper Columbia Salmon Plan". Comments may be submitted via facsimile (fax) to 503-872-2737.

Persons wishing to review the Plan can obtain an electronic copy (i.e., CD-ROM) from Carol Joyce by calling 503-230-5408 or by e-mailing a request to carol.joyce@noaa.gov, with the subject line "CD-ROM Request for Upper Columbia Salmon Plan". Electronic copies of the Plan are also available online on the NMFS Web site www.nwr.noaa.gov/Salmon-Recovery-Planning/ESA-Recovery-Plans/Draft-Plans.cfm or the Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Board Web site: okanogancounty.org/planning/salmon_recovery.htm.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Lynn Hatcher, NMFS Interior Columbia Salmon Recovery Coordinator (509-962-8911 x223), or Elizabeth Gaar, NMFS Salmon Recovery Division (503-230-5434).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Recovery plans describe actions beneficial to the conservation and recovery of species listed under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA), as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*). The ESA requires that recovery plans incorporate (1) objective, measurable criteria which, when met, would result in a determination that the species is no longer threatened or endangered; (2) site specific management actions necessary to achieve the plan's goals; and (3) estimates of the time required and costs to implement recovery actions. The ESA requires the development of recovery plans for listed species unless such a plan would not promote the recovery of a particular species.

NMFS' goal is to restore endangered and threatened Pacific salmon Evolutionarily Significant Units (ESUs) and steelhead Distinct Population Segments (DPSs) to the point that they are again self sustaining members of their ecosystems and no longer need the protections of the ESA. NMFS believes it is critically important to base its recovery plans on the many state, regional, tribal, local, and private conservation efforts already underway throughout the region. Therefore, the agency supports and participates in locally led collaborative efforts to develop recovery plans, involving local