

Dated: June 28, 2007.

Marta Nammack,

*Acting Chief, Endangered Species Division,
Office of Protected Resources, NOAA's
National Marine Fisheries Service.*

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

**National Oceanic and Atmospheric
Administration**

RIN 0648-XA97

Marine Mammals; File No. 881-1890

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

ACTION: Notice; issuance of permit amendment.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that Permit No. 881-1890 for conduct of research on Steller sea lions (*Eumetopias jubatus*) in Alaska, held by The Alaska SeaLife Center (ASLC), Seward, AK, has been amended.

ADDRESSES: The permit amendment 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; <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/permits/review.htm>; and

Alaska Region, NMFS, P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802-1668; phone (907)586-7221; fax (907)586-7249.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Tammy Adams or Amy Sloan (301)713-2289.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On February 15, 2007, notice was published in the *Federal Register* (72 FR 7420) that a request for a scientific research permit to take Steller sea lions had been submitted by the ASLC. The requested permit was issued on June 18, 2007 (72 FR 35427). An amendment to the subject 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 issued to ASLC authorized activities to conduct population

monitoring and studies on health, nutrition, and foraging behavior of free ranging Steller sea lions in the Gulf of Alaska and the Aleutian Islands (west of 144o West), and on temporarily captive female Steller sea lions at the ASLC. The permit has been amended to allow population monitoring and studies on health, nutrition, and foraging behavior of free ranging Steller sea lions east of 144o West, and on temporarily captive male Steller sea lions at the ASLC.

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) for Steller Sea Lion and Northern Fur Seal Research was prepared to evaluate the potential environmental impacts of awarding grants and issuing permits to facilitate research on these species. Information about the PEIS is available at <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/permits/eis/steller.htm>.

Issuance of the 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 such endangered species; and (3) is consistent with the purposes and policies set forth in section 2 of the ESA.

Dated: June 29, 2007.

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**

[XRIN: 0648-XB21]

**Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management
Council; Public Meetings**

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

ACTION: Notice of Statistical Committee (SSC) meeting via conference call.

SUMMARY: The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) will convene its SSC via conference call to discuss planning of an amendment.

DATES: The conference call will be held on July 26, 2007.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held via conference call and listening stations will be available. For specific locations, see **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION**.

Council address: Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, 2203 North Lois Avenue, Suite 1100, Tampa, FL 33607.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Wayne Swingle, Executive Director, Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council; telephone: (813) 348-1630.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Council is preparing an amendment which will require reductions in the harvest of some grouper based on a recent assessment of gag grouper (SEDAR 10 Assessment and supplemental reviews). The SSC and the Special SSC will review certain aspects of that assessment and provide recommendations to the Council on the appropriate benchmark assessment to use to develop the regulations.

The Council is preparing an amendment which will require persons to obtain a permit from NMFS to participate in aquaculture by constructing an aquaculture facility in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of the Gulf of Mexico. Each application for a permit must comply with many permit conditions related to record keeping and operation of the facility. These permit conditions will assure the facility has a minimal affect on the environment and on other fishery resources. Compliance with the conditions will be evaluated annually for the duration of the permit as the basis for renewal of the permit for the next year.

The conference call will begin at 10 a.m. EDT and conclude no later than 12:30 p.m. EDT.

Listening stations are available at the following locations:

The Gulf Council office (see **ADDRESSES**), and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) offices as follows:

Galveston, TX

4700 Avenue U, Galveston, TX 77551, Contact: Rhonda O'Toole, (409) 766-3500;

St. Petersburg, FL

263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701, Contact: Joyce Mochrie, (727) 824-5301; and

Miami, FL

75 Virginia Beach Dr., Miami, FL 33149, Contact: Alex Chester, (305) 361-4259.

Copies of any related meeting materials can be obtained by calling the Council office at (813) 348-1630.

Special Accommodations

These meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language