

salmon bycatch rates. The ICA utilizes a system of base bycatch rates, assignment of vessels to tiers based on bycatch rates relative to the base rate, a system of closures for vessels in certain tiers, and monitoring and enforcement through private contractual arrangements.

Amendment 84 was adopted by the Council because it was perceived to be relatively simple to implement, with the potential to reduce salmon bycatch rates. Meanwhile, the Council also initiated analysis on this proposed action to further address salmon bycatch issues, and provide additional management measures should ICA members choose not to participate in the ICA in the future.

Proposed Action

The proposed action is to replace the current Chinook and Chum Salmon Savings Areas in the BSAI with new regulatory closures, salmon bycatch limits, or a combination of both based on current salmon bycatch information. These management measures could incorporate current or new bycatch reduction methods. The purpose of the proposed action is to minimize non-Chinook and Chinook salmon bycatch to the extent practicable. The proposed action is necessary to maintain a healthy marine ecosystem, ensure long-term conservation and abundance of salmon, provide maximum benefit to fishermen and communities that depend on these resources, and comply with the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

Alternative Management Measures

NMFS, in consultation with the Council, will evaluate a range of alternative management measures for the BSAI groundfish fisheries. The Council's Salmon Bycatch Workgroup is reviewing the latest scientific information regarding the impacts of salmon interactions with groundfish fisheries and developing alternative salmon bycatch reduction measures. Alternatives may be formulated based on the elements identified here, and those developed through the public scoping and Council processes. Possible alternatives could be constructed from one or more of the following measures:

1. Prohibited Species Catch (PSC) limit Establish a PSC limit for non-Chinook and Chinook salmon bycatch in the CDQ and non-CDQ pollock fisheries. PSC limits could be allocated among pollock fishery sectors or fishery cooperatives. Fishery participants would be required to stop fishing when a PSC limit is reached.
2. Fixed closures Establish one or more salmon savings area closures based on

current salmon bycatch information. These closures would occur on an annual or seasonal basis regardless of salmon bycatch amounts at the time of the closure.

3. Triggered closures Establish one or more salmon savings area closures based on current salmon bycatch information. These closures would occur based on criteria evaluated in the EIS. Criteria could include a threshold salmon bycatch number or rate.
4. PSC accounting period Revise the current PSC accounting period to coincide with the salmon biological year to provide additional protections to salmon in the BSAI. Accounting would begin annually in the "B" season, and continue through the following "A" season.

Additionally, the Council may incorporate the current or a new version of the salmon bycatch reduction ICA into one or more alternatives.

Preliminary Identification of Issues

A principal objective of the scoping and public input process is to identify potentially significant impacts to the human environment that should be analyzed in the EIS. The analysis will evaluate the impacts of the alternatives for all resources, species, and issues that may be directly or indirectly affected by salmon bycatch in the BSAI pollock fisheries. The following components of the biological and physical environment may be evaluated: (1) target and non-target fish stocks, forage fish, and prohibited species, including salmon species; (2) species listed under the ESA and their critical habitat; (3) seabirds; (4) marine mammals; and (5) the ecosystem.

Social and economic impacts also would be considered in terms of the effects that changes to salmon bycatch management measures would have on the following groups of individuals: (1) those who participate in harvesting pollock; (2) those who process and market pollock and pollock products; (3) those who consume pollock products; (4) those who rely on living marine resources caught in the management area, particularly salmon; (5) those who benefit from commercial, subsistence, and recreational salmon fisheries; and (6) fishing communities.

Public Involvement

Scoping is an early and open process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed in an EIS and for identifying the significant issues related to the proposed action. A principal objective of the scoping and public involvement process is to identify a range of reasonable management alternatives

that, with adequate analysis, will delineate critical issues and provide a clear basis for distinguishing among those alternatives and selecting a preferred alternative. Through this notice, NMFS is notifying the public that an EIS and decision-making process for this proposed action have been initiated so that interested or affected people may participate and contribute to the final decision.

NMFS is seeking written public comments on the scope of issues, including potential impacts, and alternatives that should be considered in revising salmon bycatch management measures. Written comments will be accepted at the address above (see **ADDRESSES**). Written comments should be as specific as possible to be the most helpful. Written comments received during the scoping process, including the names and addresses of those submitting them, will be considered part of the public record of this proposal and will be available for public inspection.

The public is invited to participate and provide input at Council and Salmon Bycatch Workgroup meetings where the latest scientific information regarding salmon bycatch in the BSAI groundfish fisheries is reviewed and alternative salmon bycatch reduction measures are developed and evaluated. Notice of future Council and Salmon Bycatch Workgroup meetings will be published in the **Federal Register** and on the Internet at <http://www.fakr.gov>. Please visit this website for more information on this EIS and for guidance on submitting effective public comments.

Dated: December 18, 2007.

James P. Burgess,

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

[FR Doc. E7-24953 Filed 12-21-07; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-S

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XD61

Marine Mammals; File No. 10080

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

ACTION: Notice; issuance of permit.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that Dr. Kathryn A. Ono, Department of Biological Sciences, University of New England, Biddeford, ME, has been

issued a permit to conduct research on marine mammals.

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; and

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

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Tammy Adams or Jaclyn Daly, (301)713-2289.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On October 26, 2007, notice was published in the **Federal Register** (72 FR 60822) that a request for a permit to conduct scientific research on harbor seals (*Phoca vitulina concolor*) and grey seals (*Halichoerus grypus*) in the Gulf of Maine had been submitted by the above-named individual. 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.*), and the regulations governing the taking and importing of marine mammals (50 CFR part 216).

The permit authorizes capture, sampling, and marking activities related to: (1) assessing the state of harbor seal population health; (2) determining movement and diving patterns of weaned harbor seal pups; (3) comparing disease loads, survival, and behavior of rehabilitated harbor seal pups with wild pups; and (4) assessing behavior, population dynamics, and health of grey seals. The permit expires on December 31, 2012.

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), a final determination has been made that the activity proposed is categorically excluded from the requirement to prepare an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement.

Dated: December 18, 2007.

Patrick Opay,

Acting Chief, Permits, Conservation and Education Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.
[FR Doc. E7-24942 Filed 12-21-07; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-S

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XE37

Marine Mammals; File No. 473-1700

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

ACTION: Notice; receipt of application for amendment.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that Janice Straley, University of Alaska, 1332 Seward Ave, Sitka, Alaska 99835, has requested an amendment to scientific research Permit No. 473-1700-01.

DATES: Written, telefaxed, or e-mail comments must be received on or before January 25, 2008.

ADDRESSES: The amendment request 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 request should be submitted 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 amendment 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. Include in the subject line of the e-mail comment the following document identifier: File No. 473-1700.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jaclyn Daly or Amy Sloan, (301)713-2289.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The subject amendment to Permit No. 473-1700-01 is requested 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 (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).

Permit No. 473-1700 was issued to the applicant on June 20, 2004 (69 FR 44514). A minor amendment (No. 473-1700-01) was issued on December 4, 2005 and remains valid through June 30, 2009. The current permit authorizes the permit holder to conduct research on humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*), gray whales (*Eschrichtius robustus*), minke whales (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*), sperm whales (*Physeter macrocephalus*), fin whales (*Balaenoptera physalus*), and killer whales (*Orcinus orca*). Incidental harassment of harbor porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*), Dall's porpoise (*P. dalli*), Atlantic white-sided dolphins (*Lagenorhynchus obliquidens*), Steller sea lions (*Eumetopias jubatus*), harbor seals (*Phoca vitulina*) and Northern fur seals (*Callorhinus ursinus*) is also authorized. Research methods include photo-identification, passive acoustic recording, behavioral observations, suction-cup tagging (including Crittercam), and biopsy. The permit holder requests authorization to increase the number of sperm whales that may be suction-cup tagged to 50 (an increase of 25 animals), attach satellite tags to 20 sperm whales and 20 killer whales, and modify operations of fishing vessel methods which could result in the taking of 40 sperm whales by Level B harassment. All research would be conducted in the Gulf of Alaska. The permit amendment would be effective until the permit expiration date.

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: December 18, 2007.

Patrick Opay,

Acting Chief, Permits, Conservation and Education Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.
[FR Doc. E7-24944 Filed 12-21-07; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-S