Any party having a substantial interest in these proceedings may request a public hearing on the matter. A written request for a hearing must be submitted to the Trade Adjustment Assistance for Firms Division, Room 7106, Economic Development Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce, Washington, DC 20230, no later than ten (10) calendar days following publication of this notice. Please follow the requirements set forth in EDA’s regulations at 13 CFR 315.9 for procedures to request a public hearing. The Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance official number for the program under which these petitions are submitted is 11.313, Trade Adjustment Assistance for Firms.

Dated: September 17, 2010.

Miriam J. Kearse,
Program Team Lead.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648–XY60
Taking and Importing Marine Mammals; Taking Marine Mammals Incidental to Missile Launch Operations from San Nicolas Island, CA

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

ACTION: Notice; request for comments on proposed revised Letter of Authorization.

SUMMARY: In June, 2009, pursuant to the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), NMFS issued regulations to govern the unintentional taking of marine mammals incidental to U.S. Navy (Navy) missile launch operations, a military readiness activity, from San Nicolas Island (SNI), California, for the period of June 2009 through June 2014. The second Letter of Authorization (LOA) for the incidental take of marine mammals during the described activities and specified timeframes is effective from June 4, 2010, through June 3, 2011. Following issuance of the LOA, the Navy submitted a revised monitoring plan for their activities at SNI. NMFS is proposing to issue a revised LOA, which would incorporate the revised monitoring plan, to replace the one that is currently in effect.

DATES: Comments and information must be received no later than October 25, 2010.

ADDRESSES: Comments on the revised monitoring plan should be addressed to Michael Payne, Chief, Permits, Conservation, and Education Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910. The mailbox address for providing email comments is PR1.0648–XY60@noaa.gov. NMFS is not responsible for email comments sent to addresses other than the one provided here. Comments sent via email, including all attachments, must not exceed a 10-megabyte file size.

Instructions: All comments received are a part of the public record and will generally be posted to http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/permits/incidental.htm without change. All Personal Identifying Information (for example, name, address, etc.) voluntarily submitted by the commenter may be publicly accessible. Do not submit Confidential Business Information or otherwise sensitive or protected information.

A copy of the revised monitoring plan may be obtained by writing to the address specified above, telephoning the contact listed below (see FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT), or visiting the internet at: http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/permits/incidental.htm. Documents cited in this notice may also be viewed, by appointment, during regular business hours, at the aforementioned address.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:
Michelle Magliocca, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 301–713–2289, or Monica DeAngelis, NMFS, 562–980–3232.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Section 101(a)(5)(A) of the MMPA (16 U.S.C. 1361 et seq.) directs the Secretary of Commerce to allow, upon request, the incidental, but not intentional, taking of small numbers of marine mammals by U.S. citizens who engage in a specified activity (other than commercial fishing) within a specified geographical region if certain findings are made and regulations are issued. However, for military readiness activities, the National Defense Authorization Act (Public Law 108–136) removed the “small numbers” and “specified geographical region” limitations. Under the MMPA, the term “take” means to harass, hunt, capture, or kill, or to attempt to harass, hunt, capture, or kill marine mammals.

Authorization may be granted for periods up to 5 years if NMFS finds, after notification and opportunity for public comment, that the taking will have a negligible impact on the species or stock(s) of marine mammals and will not have an unmitigable adverse impact on the availability of the species or stock(s) for subsistence uses. In addition, NMFS must prescribe regulations that include permissible methods of taking and other means of effecting the least practicable adverse impact on the species and its habitat and on the availability of the species for subsistence uses, paying particular attention to rookeries, mating grounds, and areas of similar significance. The regulations must include requirements for monitoring and reporting of such taking.

Regulations governing the taking of Northern elephant seals (Mirounga angustirostris), Pacific harbor seals (Phoca vitulina richardsi), and California sea lions (Zalophus californianus), by harassment, incidental to missile launch operations at SNI, were issued on June 2, 2009, and remain in effect until June 2, 2014 (74 FR 26580). The most recent LOA under these regulations was issued on June 4, 2010 (75 FR 28587). For more detailed information on this action, please refer to these documents. The regulations and LOA include mitigation, monitoring, and reporting requirements for the incidental take of marine mammals during missile launches at SNI.

Northern elephant seals, Pacific harbor seals, and California sea lions are found on various haul-out sites and rookeries on SNI. The current LOA authorizes take of the three pinniped species listed above that may result from the launching of up to 40 missiles from SNI per year. Up to 10 launches per year may occur at night. Nighttime launches will only occur when required by the test objectives, e.g., when testing the Airborne Laser system. The noise generated by Navy activities may result in the incidental harassment of pinnipeds, both behaviorally and in terms of physiological (auditory) impacts. The noise and visual disturbances from missile launches may cause the animals to move towards or enter the water. The current LOA authorizes the following numbers of pinnipeds to be incidentally taken by Level B harassment annually: 474 Northern elephant seals; 467 Pacific harbor seals; and 1,606 California sea lions.

Summary of the Modification

On June 7, 2010, NMFS received a revised monitoring plan for vehicle launches at SNI, California, in association with a LOA issued on June 4, 2010 and in effect through June 3, 2011. The revised monitoring plan was updated to reflect new equipment and procedures proposed by the Navy, along with a proposal to discontinue targeted monitoring of Northern elephant seals. After reviewing the revised monitoring plan, the Marine Mammal Commission (Commission) further recommended that the Navy obtain, analyze, and review existing information regarding potential displacement of Northern elephant seals, Pacific harbor seals, and California sea lions from those rookeries and haul out sites affected by launch activities. NMFS marine mammal surveys from SNI have been reviewed for any indications of decreasing trends in pinniped populations.