

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Tammy Adams or Laura Morse, (301) 713-2289.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The subject permit is requested under the authority of the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, as amended (MMPA; 16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*), and the regulations governing the taking and importing of marine mammals (50 CFR part 216).

The applicant requests a five-year permit to conduct scientific research on spotted (*Phoca largha*), ringed (*Phoca hispida*), bearded (*Erignathus barbatus*), and ribbon seals (*Histiophoca fasciata*) in the Bering, Chukchi, and Beaufort seas of Alaska. The purpose of this research is to monitor the status and health of all four species by analyzing samples from the subsistence harvest and by documenting movements and habitat use by tracking animals with satellite transmitters. In addition to sampling harvested seals, the applicant would capture up to 200 individuals of each species per year. Captured seals would be measured and sampled (e.g., blood, blubber, skin, muscle, and whisker), and a subsample of these (120 per year per species) will be fitted with transmitters. The applicant also requests permission to harass non-target seals of each species and authorization for a limited number of research-related mortalities. Results of these studies would be used to monitor the health and status of each of the four species' populations, improve population assessments, and develop mitigation measures to minimize disturbance to these species that are important to the indigenous people of Alaska for subsistence food, materials, and for cultural significance. Samples would be imported from Russia, Canada, Svalbard (Norway) and exported to Canada for analyses.

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 the application to the Marine Mammal Commission and its Committee of Scientific Advisors.

Dated: March 29, 2011.

**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

**RIN 0648-XA339**

#### Marine Mammals; File No. 15271

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

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

**SUMMARY:** Notice is hereby given that James T. Harvey, Moss Landing Marine Laboratories, 8272 Moss Landing Road, Moss Landing, CA 95039 has been issued a permit to conduct research on blue (*Balaenoptera musculus*), fin (*B. physalus*), humpback (*Megaptera novaeangliae*), and gray (*Eschrichtius robustus*) whales.

**ADDRESSES:** The permit and related documents are available for review upon written request or by appointment in the following offices:

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) 713-0376;

Northwest Region, NMFS, 7600 Sand Point Way NE, BIN C15700, Bldg. 1, Seattle, WA 98115-0700; phone (206) 526-6150; fax (206) 526-6426; and

Southwest Region, NMFS, 501 West Ocean Blvd., Suite 4200, Long Beach, CA 90802-4213; phone (562) 980-4001; fax (562) 980-4018.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Kristy Beard or Amy Hapeman, (301) 713-2289.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** On August 31, 2010, notice was published in the **Federal Register** (75 FR 53271) that a request for a permit to conduct research on the species identified above had been submitted by the above-named applicant. 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 five-year permit authorizes research on large whale species off California, Oregon, and Washington; the primary research area is off the Southern California Bight, San Luis Obispo, Monterey Bay, and San Francisco. Researchers are authorized to approach whales for photo-identification and biopsy sampling. A subset of whales may be suction-cup tagged, dart-tagged, or tagged with small implantable tags. The permit also authorizes incidental harassment of California sea lions (*Zalophus californianus*), harbor seals (*Phoca vitulina richardii*), Pacific white-sided dolphins (*Lagenorhynchus obliquidens*), Northern right whale dolphins (*Lissodelphis borealis*), harbor porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*) and short-beaked common dolphins (*Delphinus delphis*).

An environmental assessment (EA) was prepared analyzing the effects of the permitted activities on the human environment in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*). Based on the analyses in the EA, NMFS determined that issuance of the permit would not significantly impact the quality of the human environment and that preparation of an environmental impact statement was not required. That determination is documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), signed on March 24, 2011.

As required by the ESA, issuance of this permit 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: March 29, 2011.

**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

**RIN 0648-XA344**

#### Pacific Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

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