

Dated: February 24, 2012.

Gwellnar Banks,

Management Analyst, Office of the Chief Information Officer.

[FR Doc. 2012-4779 Filed 2-28-12; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Proposed Information Collection; Comment Request; Report of Whaling Operations

AGENCY: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Department of Commerce, as part of its continuing effort to reduce paperwork and respondent burden, invites the general public and other Federal agencies to take this opportunity to comment on proposed and/or continuing information collections, as required by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995.

DATES: Written comments must be submitted on or before April 30, 2012.

ADDRESSES: Direct all written comments to Jennifer Jessup, Departmental Paperwork Clearance Officer, Department of Commerce, Room 6616, 14th and Constitution Avenue NW., Washington, DC 20230 (or via the Internet at Jjessup@doc.gov).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Requests for additional information or copies of the information collection instrument and instructions should be directed to Melissa Andersen (301) 427-8385 or Melissa.Andersen@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Abstract

This request is for extension of a current information collection.

Native Americans may conduct certain aboriginal subsistence whaling in accordance with the provisions of the International Whaling Commission (IWC). In order to respond to obligations under the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling, and the IWC, captains participating in these operations must submit certain information to the relevant Native American whaling organization about strikes on and catch of whales. Anyone retrieving a dead whale is also required to report. Captains must place a distinctive permanent identification mark on any harpoon, lance, or explosive dart used, and must also provide information on the mark and

self-identification information. The relevant Native American whaling organization receives the reports, compiles them, and submits the information to NOAA.

The information is used to monitor the hunt and to ensure that quotas are not exceeded. The information is also provided to the IWC, which uses it to monitor compliance with its requirements.

II. Method of Collection

Reports may be made by phone or fax. Information on equipment marks must be made in writing. No form is used.

III. Data

OMB Control Number: 0648-0311.

Form Number: None.

Type of Review: Regular submission (extension of a current information collection).

Affected Public: Individuals or households; State, Local, or Tribal Governments.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 51.

Estimated Time Per Response: 30 minutes for reports on whales struck or on recovery of dead whales; 5 minutes for providing the relevant Native American whaling organization with information on the mark and self-identification information; 5 minutes for marking gear; and 5 hours for the relevant Native American whaling organization to consolidate and submit reports.

Estimated Total Annual Burden Hours: 45.

Estimated Total Annual Cost to Public: \$100 in recordkeeping/reporting costs.

IV. Request for Comments

Comments are invited on: (a) Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information shall have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden (including hours and cost) of the proposed collection of information; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on respondents, including through the use of automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

Comments submitted in response to this notice will be summarized and/or included in the request for OMB approval of this information collection; they also will become a matter of public record.

Dated: February 24, 2012.

Gwellnar Banks,

Management Analyst, Office of the Chief Information Officer.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XB042

Marine Mammals; File No. 16325

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

ACTION: Notice; receipt of application.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that Jooke Robbins, Ph.D., Center for Coastal Studies (CCS), 5 Holway Avenue, Provincetown, MA 02657, has applied in due form for a permit to conduct research on humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*), fin whales (*Balaenoptera physalus*), blue whales (*B. musculus*), sei whales (*B. borealis*), minke whales (*B. acutorostrata*), sperm whales (*Physeter macrocephalus*), and killer whales (*Orcinus orca*).

DATES: Written, telefaxed, or email comments must be received on or before March 30, 2012.

ADDRESSES: The application and related documents are available for review by selecting "Records Open for Public Comment" from the *Features* box on the Applications and Permits for Protected Species (APPS) home page, <https://apps.nmfs.noaa.gov>, and then selecting File No. 16325 from the list of available applications.

These documents are also available upon written request or by appointment in the following offices:

Permits and Conservation Division, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13705, Silver Spring, MD 20910; phone (301) 427-8401; fax (301) 713-0376;

Northeast Region, NMFS, 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930; phone (978) 281-9328; fax (978) 281-9394; and

Southeast Region, NMFS, 263 13th Avenue South, Saint Petersburg, FL 33701; phone (727) 824-5312; fax (727) 824-5309.

Written comments on this application should be submitted to the Chief, Permits and Conservation Division, at the address listed above. Comments may also be submitted by facsimile to (301) 713-0376, or by email to NMFS.Pr1Comments@noaa.gov. Please

include the File No. in the subject line of the email comment.

Those individuals requesting a public hearing should submit a written request to the Chief, Permits and Conservation Division at the address listed above. The request should set forth the specific reasons why a hearing on this application would be appropriate.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Joselyd Garcia-Reyes or Carrie Hubbard, (301) 427-8401.

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.*), 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 222-226).

The applicant requests a permit to conduct close vessel approaches; photo-identification and behavioral observations; photogrammetry; collection of exhaled air, feces and sloughed skin; and skin and blubber biopsy sampling import and export of parts; in order to continue a long-term study of North Atlantic humpback whales and to improve understanding of six other species in the North Atlantic (fin, blue, sei, minke, sperm and killer whales). Research would occur in the waters off Maine to Florida and Puerto Rico. The purposes of the research are to: (1) Monitor trends in abundance and vital rates, (2) study movement and habitat use patterns, including individual exchange with other populations, (3) study entanglement rates and human-related impacts, (4) perform genetic investigations into demography and reproductive success, (5) perform hormone-based studies into reproduction and neonatal mortality, and (6) perform stable isotope investigations into foraging ecology and nutritional stress in humpback whales. Research on the other species would focus primarily on population structure, human impacts, and health. Up to 2,100 humpback whales, 250 fin whales, 100 sei whales, and 50 whales from each of the remaining species could be harassed each year during photo-identification activities, and collection of sloughed skin, exhaled mucosa/gases, and/or feces. In addition, 340 humpback whales, 90 fin whales, 70 sei whales, and 30 whales from each of the remaining species could be harassed each year to acquire successful skin and blubber biopsy samples. North Atlantic

right whales (*Eubalaena glacialis*) and 14 other non-listed marine mammals could be incidentally harassed. See the application for specific take numbers by location and species/stock. The permit would be valid for a period of five years.

A draft environmental assessment (EA) has been prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), to examine whether significant environmental impacts could result from issuance of the proposed scientific research permit. The draft EA is available for review and comment simultaneous with the scientific research permit application.

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: February 24, 2012.

Tammy Adams,

Acting Chief, Permits and Conservation Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 2012-4833 Filed 2-28-12; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Deep Seabed Mining: Request for Extension of Exploration Licenses

AGENCY: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of receipt of application to extend Deep Seabed Mining Exploration Licenses USA-1 and USA-4; request for comments.

SUMMARY: Pursuant to the Deep Seabed Hard Mineral Resources Act (DSHMRA; 30 U.S.C. 1401-1473), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has received an application for five-year extensions of Deep Seabed Mining Exploration Licenses USA-1 and USA-4 that are held by the Lockheed Martin Corporation. As part of the application, NOAA also has received an amended exploration plan submitted by Lockheed, which sets forth the exploration activities to be conducted during the extended period of the license.

The USA-1 and USA-4 deep seabed mining licenses were previously issued to Ocean Minerals Company (OMCO), a partnership that included Lockheed. Upon the dissolution of OMCO, all

interests in both licenses were conveyed to Lockheed.

Section 107(a) of DSHMRA provides that the initial term of an exploration license shall be for ten years. 30 U.S.C. 1417. This section further provides that if the licensee has substantially complied with the license and exploration plan and has requested an extension of the license, NOAA shall extend the license, for periods of not more than five years each, on terms, conditions and restrictions consistent with DSHMRA and its supporting regulations.

The terms of licenses USA-1 and USA-4 authorized exploration through 2004. In 2011, Lockheed requested an extension of USA-1 and USA-4. NOAA has determined that it is within the discretion of the agency to consider Lockheed Martin's request to extend these DSHMRA licenses, and that NOAA intends to consider this request under 15 CFR 970.515(b). NOAA notes that the investment and engagement in exploration activities by Lockheed predate the enactment of DSHMRA. Thus, NOAA recognizes that Lockheed qualifies as a pre-enactment explorer under the DSHMRA regulations at 15 CFR 970.101(q). Lockheed has not surrendered its licenses nor otherwise shown any intent to abandon them. The records for these licenses show that Lockheed indicated its intent to extend the licenses in several communications to NOAA. According to LM's application, Lockheed has not undertaken any at-sea exploration activities that would be in violation of the license terms, conditions and restrictions. NOAA finds that the public interest would not be served by requiring Lockheed to reapply for the exploration licenses.

As part of its extension request, Lockheed has submitted an amended exploration plan that discusses activities undertaken to date, together with those activities it would pursue during the next five years. Consistent with exploration plans previously submitted by OMCO in conjunction with earlier extension requests, the exploration proposed by Lockheed will continue to occur in two phases with Phase I being a preparatory stage followed by at-sea exploration during Phase II. Phase I consists of onshore study and analysis, including the selection of suitable survey systems, and the collection of economic, design and environmental data. Phase II would occur in the future, contingent upon changes in market conditions that would support the substantial investment in at-sea exploration, and on the ability of Lockheed Martin to obtain