

contained in the list of threatened and endangered species, and improved analytical methods, if any. Any new information will be considered during the 5-year review and will also be useful in evaluating the ongoing recovery programs for these whales.

**Authority:** 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*

Dated: March 12, 2012.

**Angela Somma,**

*Chief, Endangered Species Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

**RIN 0648-XB084**

#### Incidental Taking of Marine Mammals; Taking of Marine Mammals Incidental to the Explosive Removal of Offshore Structures in the Gulf of Mexico

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

**ACTION:** Notice; issuance of Letters of Authorization (LOA).

**SUMMARY:** In accordance with the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) and implementing regulations, notification is hereby given that NMFS has issued one-year LOAs to take marine mammals incidental to the explosive removal of offshore oil and gas structures (EROS) in the Gulf of Mexico.

**DATES:** These authorizations are effective from March 16, 2012 through March 15, 2013.

**ADDRESSES:** The application and LOAs are available for review by writing to P. Michael Payne, Chief, Permits and Conservation Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910-3235 or by telephoning the contact listed here (see **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**), or online at: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/permits/incidental.htm>. Documents cited in this notice may be viewed, by appointment, during regular business hours, at the aforementioned address.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Howard Goldstein or Jolie Harrison, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 301-427-8401.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** Section 101(a)(5)(A) of the MMPA (16 U.S.C.

1361 *et seq.*) directs the Secretary of Commerce (who has delegated the authority to NMFS) to allow, upon request, the incidental, but not intentional, taking of small numbers of marine mammals by United States 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. Under the MMPA, the term "take" means to harass, hunt, capture, or kill or to attempt to harass, hunt, capture, or kill any marine mammal.

Authorization for incidental taking, in the form of annual LOAs, may be granted by NMFS for periods up to five years if NMFS finds, after notice and opportunity for public comment, that the total taking over the five-year period 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 (where relevant). 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 (i.e., mitigation), and on the availability of the species for subsistence uses, paying particular attention to rookeries, mating rounds, and areas of similar significance. The regulations also must include requirements pertaining to the monitoring and reporting of such taking.

Regulations governing the taking of marine mammals incidental to EROS were published on June 19, 2008 (73 FR 34875), and remain in effect through July 19, 2013. For detailed information on this action, please refer to that **Federal Register** notice. The species that applicants may take in small numbers during EROS activities are bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*), Atlantic spotted dolphins (*Stenella frontalis*), pantropical spotted dolphins (*Stenella attenuata*), Clymene dolphins (*Stenella clymene*), striped dolphins (*Stenella coeruleoalba*), spinner dolphins (*Stenella longirostris*), rough-toothed dolphins (*Steno bredanensis*), Risso's dolphins (*Grampus griseus*), melon-headed whales (*Peponocephala electra*), short-finned pilot whales (*Globicephala macrorhynchus*), and sperm whales (*Physeter macrocephalus*). NMFS received requests for LOAs from W&T Offshore, Inc. (W&T Offshore) and W&T Energy VI, L.L.C. (W&T Energy) for activities covered by EROS regulations. W&T Offshore and W&T Energy have not conducted any EROS activities to date.

Pursuant to these regulations, NMFS has issued an LOA to W&T Offshore and W&T Energy. Issuance of the LOAs is based on a finding made in the preamble to the final rule that the total taking over the five-year period (with monitoring, mitigation, and reporting measures) will have a negligible impact on the affected species or stock(s) of marine mammals and will not have an unmitigable adverse impact on subsistence uses. NMFS will review reports to ensure that the applicants are in compliance with meeting the requirements contained in the implementing regulations and LOA, including monitoring, mitigation, and reporting requirements.

Dated: March 14, 2012.

**James H. Lecky,**

*Director, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

**RIN 0648-XB098**

#### Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

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

**ACTION:** Council to convene a public meeting.

**SUMMARY:** The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council will convene a meeting of the Socioeconomic Scientific and Statistical Committee.

**DATES:** The meeting will be 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Thursday, April 5, 2012.

**ADDRESSES:** The meeting will be held at the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, 2203 North Lois Avenue, Suite 1100, Tampa, FL 33607; telephone: (813) 348-1630.

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

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Dr. Assane Diagne, Economist; Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council; telephone: (813) 348-1630.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) will convene the Socioeconomic Scientific and Statistical Committee to discuss socioeconomic issues related to allocation and the application of social indicators to