

on July 29, 2015 (80 FR 45197). Permit 19400 was issued to ICF consulting on December 23, 2015 and expires on December 31, 2020.

Permit 19400 authorizes ICF consulting to take juvenile CVSR Chinook salmon and SRWR Chinook salmon while conducting a study to investigate if longfin smelt in San Pablo Bay shift their vertical distribution under different environmental and biological conditions. Although this study principally targets longfin smelt, ESA listed Chinook salmon will be encountered during sampling. ICF will collect data that will be useful to local researchers on captured and/or photographed listed Chinook salmon, including abundance, length, and potentially tissue samples. Fish will be sampled using a midwater trawl, however the majority of tows will be conducted with only a video device (*i.e.*, SmeltCam) acting as the codend. Therefore, the majority of take will be observe/harass. The fish camera image program will be able to determine the length, and thereby an estimate of the race/run/listing status, of salmon that pass through the net. In order to verify the results of the SmeltCam, some tows will be conducted with both the video device and a traditional codend. Physically captured juvenile salmonids will be placed in a bucket with aerated water, handled (*i.e.*, measured to fork length and possibly fin tissue sampled for genetic analysis), and released. The researchers are not proposing to kill any of the fish they capture.

Dated: January 12, 2016.

Perry F. Gayaldo,

Deputy Director, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.
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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XE394

Endangered and Threatened Species; Status Update on Preparation of Record of Decision, Mitchell Act Hatcheries Environmental Impact Statement

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

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) released its final Environmental Impact Statement

(EIS) to Inform Columbia River Basin Hatchery Operations and the Funding of Mitchell Act Hatchery Programs in September 2014 (also known as the Mitchell Act Hatchery EIS). This notice serves as an update on preparation of the agency's record of decision (ROD).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: James Dixon, (360) 534-9329 or email: james.dixon@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On September 3, 2004 (69 FR 53892), NMFS announced its intent to prepare an EIS pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*) and to conduct public scoping related to the allocation and distribution of Mitchell Act funds for Columbia River hatchery operations. Subsequently, in 2009, NMFS announced its decision to expand the scope of the EIS to include analysis of the environmental effects of all hatchery programs in the Columbia River Basin, regardless of the hatchery funding source, in a way that would inform future NMFS decisions about Endangered Species Act compliances for all Columbia River hatchery programs (74 FR 10724, March 12, 2009). A draft EIS was published in August 2010 (75 FR 47591, August 6, 2010). The final EIS was published in September 2014 (79 FR 54707, September 12, 2014) with a public review period through November 12, 2014.

NMFS has been preparing its ROD through careful consideration of a range of comments received during public review of the final EIS. NMFS is also considering the anticipated effects of its preferred policy direction on species listed under the Endangered Species Act. It is anticipated that the ROD will be published in 2016.

Dated: January 12, 2016.

Perry F. Gayaldo,

Deputy Director, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.
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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XE348

Endangered Species; File No. 17225

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

ACTION: Notice; receipt of application.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that the NMFS Northeast Fisheries Science Center [Responsible Party: William Karp], 166 Water Street, Woods Hole, MA 02543, has applied in due form for a permit to take Atlantic sturgeon (*Acipenser oxyrinchus oxyrinchus*), loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*), Kemp's ridley (*Lepidochelys kempii*), green (*Chelonia mydas*), hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) and leatherback (*Dermochelys coraicea*) sea turtles for purposes of scientific research.

DATES: Written, telefaxed, or email comments must be received on or before February 16, 2016.

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. 17225 from the list of available applications.

These documents are also available upon written request or by appointment in the 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.

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: Malcolm Mohead or Amy Hapeman, (301) 427-8401.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The subject permit is requested under the authority of 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 applicant requests a five-year permit to conduct research on sea turtles and Atlantic sturgeon in the U.S. Atlantic exclusive economic zone from Massachusetts to Georgia. The purpose of the research is to evaluate bycatch reduction devices for commercial fishing gear to mitigate sea turtle and