

public meeting is deemed necessary, NMFS will announce details of a public selection meeting in a subsequent **Federal Register** notice.

Once the selection process is complete, NMFS will notify the selected applicants and issue the shark research fishery permits. The shark research fishery permits will be valid only in calendar year 2017. If needed, NMFS will communicate with the shark research fishery permit holders to arrange a captain's meeting to discuss the research objectives and protocols. NMFS held mandatory captain's meetings before observers were placed on vessels since 2013 and expects to hold one again in late 2016 or early 2017. Once the fishery starts, the shark research fishery permit holders must contact the NMFS observer coordinator to arrange the placement of a NMFS-approved observer for each shark research trip. Additionally, selected applicants are expected to allow observers the opportunity to perform their duties as required and assist observers as necessary.

A shark research fishery permit will only be valid for the vessel and owner(s) and terms and conditions listed on the permit, and, thus, cannot be transferred to another vessel or owner(s). Shark research fishery permit holders must carry a NMFS-approved observer in order to land sandbar sharks. Issuance of a shark research permit does not guarantee that the permit holder will be assigned a NMFS-approved observer on any particular trip. Rather, issuance indicates that a vessel may be issued a NMFS-approved observer for a particular trip, and on such trips, may be allowed to harvest Atlantic sharks, including sandbar sharks, in excess of the retention limits described in 50 CFR 635.24(a). These retention limits will be based on available quota, number of vessels participating in the 2017 shark research fishery, the research objectives set forth by the shark board, the extent of other restrictions placed on the vessel, and may vary by vessel and/or location. When not operating under the auspices of the shark research fishery, the vessel would still be able to land LCS, SCS, smoothhound sharks, and pelagic sharks subject to existing retention limits on trips without a NMFS-approved observer.

NMFS annually invites commercial shark permit holders (directed and incidental) to submit an application to participate in the shark research fishery. Permit applications can be found on the HMS Management Division's Web site at <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/compliance/efp/index.html> or by calling (301) 427-8503. Final decisions on the

issuance of a shark research fishery permit will depend on the submission of all required information by the deadline (see **DATES**), and NMFS' review of applicant information as outlined above. The 2017 shark research fishery will start after the opening of the shark fishery and under available quotas as published in a separate **Federal Register** final rule.

Dated: November 15, 2016.

Emily H. Menashes,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XF047

Fisheries of the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic; Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review (SEDAR); Stock Identification (ID) Webinar for Gray Snapper

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

ACTION: Notice of SEDAR 51 Stock ID Webinar for Gray Snapper.

SUMMARY: The SEDAR 51 assessment of the Gray Snapper will consist of a data workshop, a review workshop, and a series of assessment Webinars,

DATES: The SEDAR 51 Stock ID Webinar will be held from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. on December 7, 2016, to view the agenda see **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION**.

ADDRESSES:

Meeting address: The meeting will be held via Webinar. The Webinar is open to members of the public. Those interested in participating should contact Julie A. Neer, at SEDAR (see Contact Information Below) to request an invitation providing Webinar access information. Please request webinar invitations at least 24 hours in advance of each Webinar.

SEDAR address: 4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201, North Charleston, SC 29405.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Julie A. Neer, SEDAR Coordinator; (843) 571-4366. Email: Julie.neer@safmc.net

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Agenda

The Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, and Caribbean Fishery Management Councils, in conjunction with NOAA

Fisheries and the Atlantic and Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commissions have implemented the Southeast Data, Assessment and Review (SEDAR) process, a multi-step method for determining the status of fish stocks in the Southeast Region. SEDAR is a multi-step process including: (1) Data Workshop; (2) Assessment Process utilizing webinars; and (3) Review Workshop. The product of the Data Workshop is a data report that compiles and evaluates potential datasets and recommends which datasets are appropriate for assessment analyses. The product of the Assessment Process is a stock assessment report that describes the fisheries, evaluates the status of the stock, estimates biological benchmarks, projects future population conditions, and recommends research and monitoring needs. The assessment is independently peer reviewed at the Review Workshop. The product of the Review Workshop is a Summary documenting panel opinions regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the stock assessment and input data. Participants for SEDAR Workshops are appointed by the Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, and Caribbean Fishery Management Councils and NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office, HMS Management Division, and Southeast Fisheries Science Center. Participants include data collectors and database managers; stock assessment scientists, biologists, and researchers; constituency representatives including fishermen, environmentalists, and NGO's; International experts; and staff of Councils, Commissions, and state and federal agencies.

The items of discussion in the Stock ID Webinars are as follows:

1. Participants will use review genetic studies, growth patterns, existing stock definitions, prior SEDAR stock ID recommendations, and any other relevant information on *Gray Snapper* stock structure.

2. Participants will make recommendations on biological stock structure and define the unit stock or stocks to be addressed through this assessment.

3. Participants will provide recommendations to address Council management jurisdictions, to support management of the stock or stocks, and specification of management benchmarks and fishing levels by Council jurisdiction in a manner consistent with the productivity measures of the stock.

4. Participants will document work group discussion and recommendations through a Data Workshop working paper for SEDAR 51. Although non-emergency

issues not contained in this agenda may come before this group for discussion, those issues may not be the subject of formal action during this meeting. Action will be restricted to those issues specifically identified in this notice and any issues arising after publication of this notice that require emergency action under section 305(c) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, provided the public has been notified of the intent to take final action to address the emergency.

Special Accommodations

These meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to the Council office (see **ADDRESSES**), at least 3 business days prior to each workshop. Note: The times and sequence specified in this agenda are subject to change.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: November 16, 2016.

Tracey L. Thompson,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XE926

Takes of Marine Mammals Incidental to Specified Activities; Taking Marine Mammals Incidental to the U.S. Air Force Conducting Maritime Weapon Systems Evaluation Program Operational Testing Within the Eglin Gulf Test and Training Range

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

ACTION: Notice; proposed incidental harassment authorization; request for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS (hereinafter, “we”) received an application from the U.S. Department of the Air Force, Headquarters 96th Air Base Wing (Air Force), Eglin Air Force Base (Eglin AFB), requesting an Incidental Harassment Authorization (IHA or Authorization) to take marine mammals, by harassment, incidental to a Maritime Weapon Systems Evaluation Program (Maritime WSEP) within a section of the

Eglin Gulf Test and Training Range in the northern Gulf of Mexico.

Eglin AFB’s Maritime WSEP activities are military readiness activities per the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), as amended by the National Defense Authorization Act of 2004 (NDAA). Per the MMPA, NMFS requests comments on its proposal to issue an Authorization to Eglin AFB to incidentally take, by Level B and Level A harassment, two species of marine mammals, the Atlantic bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) and Atlantic spotted dolphin (*Stenella frontalis*), during the specified activity.

DATES: NMFS must receive comments and information no later than December 21, 2016.

ADDRESSES: Address comments on the application to Jolie Harrison, Chief, Permits and Conservation 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 ITP.Youngkin@noaa.gov. Please include RIN 0648-XE926 in the subject line. Comments sent via email to ITP.Youngkin@noaa.gov, including all attachments, must not exceed a 25-megabyte file size. NMFS is not responsible for email comments sent to addresses other than the one provided in this notice.

Instructions: All submitted comments are a part of the public record, and generally we will post them to <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/permits/incidental/military.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.

To obtain an electronic copy of Eglin AFB’s application, a list of the references used in this document, and Eglin AFB’s Environmental Assessment (EA) titled, “Maritime Weapons System Evaluation Program,” write to the previously mentioned address, telephone the contact listed here (see **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**), or visit the internet at: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/permits/incidental/military.htm>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dale Youngkin, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, (301) 427-8401.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Sections 101(a)(5)(A) and (D) of the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972,

as amended (MMPA; 16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*) direct the Secretary of Commerce to allow, upon request, the incidental, but not intentional, taking of small numbers of marine mammals of a species or population stock, by U.S. citizens who engage in a specified activity (other than commercial fishing) within a specified geographical region if, after NMFS provides a notice of a proposed authorization to the public for review and comment: (1) NMFS makes certain findings; and (2) the taking is limited to harassment.

An Authorization for incidental takings for marine mammals shall be granted if NMFS finds that the taking will have a negligible impact on the species or stock(s), will not have an unmitigable adverse impact on the availability of the species or stock(s) for subsistence uses (where relevant), and if the permissible methods of taking and requirements pertaining to the mitigation, monitoring, and reporting of such taking are set forth. NMFS has defined “negligible impact” in 50 CFR 216.103 as “an impact resulting from the specified activity that cannot be reasonably expected to, and is not reasonably likely to, adversely affect the species or stock through effects on annual rates of recruitment or survival.”

The NDAA (Pub. L. 108-136) removed the “small numbers” and “specified geographical region” limitations indicated earlier and amended the definition of harassment as it applies to a “military readiness activity” to read as follows (section 3(18)(B) of the MMPA): (i) Any act that injures or has the significant potential to injure a marine mammal or marine mammal stock in the wild (Level A Harassment); or (ii) any act that disturbs or is likely to disturb a marine mammal or marine mammal stock in the wild by causing disruption of natural behavioral patterns, including, but not limited to, migration, surfacing, nursing, breeding, feeding, or sheltering, to a point where such behavioral patterns are abandoned or significantly altered (Level B Harassment).

Summary of Request

On February 4, 2016, we issued an Authorization to Eglin AFB to take marine mammals, by harassment, incidental to a Maritime Weapon Systems Evaluation Program (Maritime WSEP) within the Eglin Gulf Test and Training Range (EGTTR) in the Gulf of Mexico from February 4, 2016 through February 3, 2017 (see 81 FR 7307; February 11, 2016). These proposed missions were very similar to previous Maritime WSEP mission activities for which incidental harassment