

Incidental taking shall be allowed if NMFS finds that the taking will have a negligible impact on the species or stock(s) affected and will not have an unmitigable adverse impact on the availability of the species or stock(s) for taking for subsistence uses, 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.”

Except with respect to certain activities not pertinent here, the MMPA defines “harassment” as: “any act of pursuit, torment, or annoyance which (i) has the potential to injure a marine mammal or marine mammal stock in the wild (Level A harassment); or (ii) has the potential to disturb a marine mammal or marine mammal stock in the wild by causing disruption of behavioral patterns, including, but not limited to, migration, breathing, nursing, breeding, feeding, or sheltering (Level B harassment).”

#### Summary of Request

On July 29, 2015, NMFS received an adequate and complete application from TPWD requesting authorization for take of marine mammals incidental to fishery-independent monitoring activities in Texas. The requested regulations would be valid for five years from the date of issuance. The proposed action requires the use of gillnets in Texas bays. Use of gillnets in Texas bays presents a reasonable likelihood of interaction with bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*). Therefore, TPWD requests authorization to incidentally take bottlenose dolphins.

#### Specified Activities

TPWD conducts a long-term standardized fishery-independent monitoring program to assess the relative abundance and size of finfish and shellfish in Texas bays. This program uses gillnets deployed according to a stratified random sample design, with each Texas bay system as an independent stratum. Gillnets are set overnight during ten-week spring and fall sampling seasons, with gillnets set perpendicularly to shore.

#### Information Sought

Interested persons may submit information, suggestions, and comments concerning TPWD’s request (see

**ADDRESSES**). NMFS will consider all information, suggestions, and comments related to the request during the development of proposed regulations governing the incidental taking of marine mammals by TPWD, if appropriate.

Dated: December 27, 2016.

**Donna S. Wieting**,

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

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

**RIN 0648-XF135**

#### Pacific Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

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

**ACTION:** Notice of a public meeting.

**SUMMARY:** The Pacific Fishery Management Council (Pacific Council) is sponsoring a meeting to review new methods proposed to be used in groundfish stock assessments. The meeting is open to the public.

**DATES:** The Groundfish Assessment Methodology Review Meeting will commence at 8:30 a.m. PST, Wednesday, January 25, 2017, and continue until 5 p.m. or as necessary to complete business for the day. The meeting will reconvene on Thursday, January 26, 2017, starting at 8:30 a.m. PST and continue as necessary to complete business for the day.

**ADDRESSES:** On January 25, 2017, the Groundfish Assessment Methodology Review Meeting will be held in the auditorium at the NMFS Northwest Fisheries Science Center, 2725 Montlake Boulevard E, Seattle, WA 98112; telephone: (206) 860-3200. On January 26, 2017, the meeting will be held in the Heritage Room at the Seattle Yacht Club, 1807 East Hamlin Street, Seattle, WA 98112; telephone: (206) 325-1000. The Seattle Yacht Club is next door to the NMFS Northwest Fisheries Science Center.

*Council address:* Pacific Fishery Management Council, 7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 101, Portland, OR 97220-1384; telephone: (503) 820-2280.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Mr. John DeVore, Pacific Council; telephone: (503) 820-2413.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The purpose of the Groundfish Assessment Methodology Review Meeting is to review proposed methods for groundfish stock assessment. The specific methodologies to be reviewed are:

- Use of the Dirichlet multinomial likelihood for compositional data;
- Application of the Generalized Linear Mixed Model (GLMM) with spatial autocorrelation to survey data;
- Application of the GLMM with spatial autocorrelation to fishery catch per unit effort data;
- Revised set of priors for natural mortality;
- Revised prior for steepness; and
- New features in the revised Stock Synthesis software.

Public comments during the meeting will be received from attendees at the discretion of the chair.

Although non-emergency issues not identified in the meeting agenda may come before the meeting participants for discussion, those issues may not be the subject of formal action during this meeting. Formal action at the meeting will be restricted to those issues specifically listed 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 meeting participants’ intent to take final action to address the emergency.

Visitors who are foreign nationals (defined as a person who is not a citizen or national of the United States) will require additional security clearance to access the NMFS Northwest Fisheries Science Center. Foreign national visitors should contact Ms. Stacey Miller at (541) 867-0535 at least two weeks prior to the meeting date to initiate the security clearance process.

#### Special Accommodations

This meeting is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for auxiliary aids should be directed to Mr. Kris Kleinschmidt at 503-820-2425 at least ten days prior to the meeting date.

Dated: January 3, 2017.

**Jeffrey N. Lonergan**,

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

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