

The Final EA and FONSI were developed in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*); NEPA Regulations (40 CFR parts 1500–1508); other Federal laws and regulations; and our policies and procedures for compliance with those laws and regulations.

The subject of our Final EA and FONSI is the submerged lands adjacent to the islands of Farallon de Pajaros (Uracas), Maug, and Asuncion permanently covered by tidal waters up to the mean low water line and extending three miles seaward from the mean high tide line. The submerged lands are among some of the most biologically diverse in the Western Pacific Ocean, with relatively pristine coral reef ecosystems that have been proclaimed objects of scientific interest and reserved for their protection as part of the Islands Unit of the Monument by Presidential Proclamation (PP) 8335 of January 6, 2009.

The submerged lands were excepted from transfer by operation of law (TSLA) to the CNMI Government by PP 9077 of January 15, 2014. PP 9077 also stated that it did not affect the authority of the Secretary of the Interior under the TSLA to convey the excepted submerged lands to CNMI after an agreement has been entered for coordination of management that ensures the protection of the Monument within the excepted area. We developed the agreement (Memorandum of Agreement or MOA) in cooperation with the CNMI Government, DOI, and the Department of Commerce (DOC) as part of our conveyance process and Draft and Final EA.

### Submerged Lands Conveyance Process Draft and Final EA

We released our Draft EA to the public for a 30-day comment period announced in the **Federal Register** (81 FR 26825) on May 4, 2016. We identified two alternatives in the Draft EA and conducted a thorough analysis of their impacts on the human environment. We received comments during the May–June 2016 public comment period; substantive comments and our responses are provided in the Final EA. Comments concerning technical or minor edits were incorporated where relevant into the Final EA.

### Alternatives/Selected Alternative

Alternative 1 was the Current Land Status Alternative (No Action); under it, DOI would not convey the submerged lands, including associated mineral

rights to CNMI, and the Service and NOAA would continue to coordinate management of the submerged lands and associated waters, including fishery-related activities, in consultation with the CNMI Government.

We selected Alternative 2 for implementation in our Finding of No Significant Impact, signed by the Service's Regional Director for the Pacific Region on September 15, 2016. Under this alternative (the Northern Islands Submerged Lands Conveyance Alternative), the parties would sign the MOA, and DOI would convey the submerged lands, including mineral rights, to the CNMI Government through the Patent with a reserved conservation easement.

### Memorandum of Agreement

The MOA was signed by the CNMI Government, DOI, and the Department of Commerce (DOC), on September 22, 2016. The MOA identifies the roles and responsibilities of the CNMI Government, DOI, and DOC, for ensuring the protection of and coordinating the management of the conveyed submerged lands and associated waters. Under the MOA, the Service and NOAA are managing the conveyed submerged lands for the benefit of the CNMI people and in consultation with the CNMI Government.

The MOA provides for the CNMI Government to assume primary responsibility for managing the submerged lands and associated waters, consistent with the purposes and requirements of PP 8335 and PP 9077, by notifying DOI and DOC of its desire to do so. CNMI's management would include the benthic and living marine resources of the associated water column, and subterranean of the submerged lands and the associated mineral rights within. The MOA became effective upon conveyance of the submerged lands, consistent with the requirements of PP 9077. A copy of the MOA is available in the Final EA.

### Congressional Review and Patent

Completing the Draft EA and public comment period, and the Final EA, FONSI, MOA, and Patent, were milestone accomplishments in our conveyance process. After the public comment period ended for the Draft EA, we initiated the Congressional Review (CR) period for the proposed conveyance, in accordance with the process required by subsection 1(c) of the TSLA. The CR period was 60 legislative days, which was initiated by the Secretary of the Interior by describing our proposal in letters to the

House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources and the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, dated June 17, 2016. The CR period was completed on November 14, 2016, thereafter we moved forward with completing the conveyance.

Interior Secretary Sally Jewell executed a Patent conveying the submerged lands from the United States to the CNMI Government on November 29, 2016. Governor Ralph Torres (CNMI) accepted and signed the patent on December 21, 2016. The Patent reserves an easement to ensure that the submerged lands and associated resources conveyed to the CNMI Government are managed and maintained for the protection of the Monument or other federal conservation status, unless such conservation status is withdrawn by an Act of Congress. A copy of the Patent is available in an appendix in the Final EA.

### Public Availability of Documents

A copy of the Final EA/FONSI, which includes copies of the MOA and Patent, are available at the following libraries and through sources identified under **ADDRESSES**.

- Joeten-Kiyu Public Library, Insåtto Street, Susupe, Sa'ipan, MP, 96950–1092.
- Tini'an Municipal Public Library, Riverside Drive, Tinian, MP 96952.
- Antonio Camacho Atalig Memorial Library, Rota Northern Marianas Campus, Tatchog Village, Rota, MP.

### Robyn Thorson,

*Regional Director, Pacific Region, Portland, Oregon.*

[FR Doc. 2017–00404 Filed 1–10–17; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 4333–15–P**

## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### Fish and Wildlife Service

[FW–R7–MM–2017–N002];  
[FXES111607MRG00–178–FF07CMM00]

### Proposed Information Collection; Incidental Take of Marine Mammals During Specified Oil and Gas Industry Activities

**AGENCY:** Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice; request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** We (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) will ask the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to approve the information collection (IC) described below. As required by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 and as part of our continuing efforts to reduce paperwork and respondent

burden, we invite the general public and other Federal agencies to take this opportunity to comment on this IC. This IC is scheduled to expire on March 31, 2017. We may not conduct or sponsor and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

**DATES:** To ensure that we are able to consider your comments on this IC, we must receive them by March 13, 2017.

**ADDRESSES:** Send your comments on the IC to the Information Collection Clearance Officer, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, MS BPHC, 5275 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, VA 22041–3803 (mail); or *tina\_campbell@fws.gov* (email). Please include “1018–0070” in the subject line of your comments.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** To request additional information about this IC, contact Tina Campbell at *tina\_campbell@fws.gov* (email) or 703–358–2676 (telephone).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

**I. Abstract**

This information collection includes requirements associated with specified oil and gas industry activities and their incidental taking of polar bears (*Ursus maritimus*) and Pacific walruses (*Odobenus rosmarus divergens*) in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas. The Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) of 1972, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*), imposed, with certain exceptions, a moratorium on the taking of marine mammals. Section 101(a)(5)(A) of the MMPA directs the Secretary of the

Interior to allow, upon request by citizens of the United States, the taking of small numbers of marine mammals incidental to specified activities (other than commercial fishing) if the Secretary makes certain findings and prescribes specific regulations that, among other things, establish permissible methods of taking.

Applicants seeking to conduct activities must request a Letter of Authorization (LOA) for the specific activity and submit monitoring reports of polar bear and Pacific walrus observations and a final summary report of the monitoring and the impacts of the activity upon polar bears and Pacific walruses to the Secretary. This is a nonform collection. Regulations at 50 CFR 18.27 outline the procedures and requirements for submitting a request. Specific regulations governing authorized activities in the Beaufort Sea are in 50 CFR 18, subpart J. Regulations governing authorized activities in the Chukchi Sea are in 50 CFR 18, subpart I. These regulations provide the applicant with a detailed description of information that we need to evaluate the proposed activity and determine whether or not to issue specific regulations and, subsequently, LOAs. We use the information to verify the findings required to issue incidental take regulations, to decide if we should issue an LOA, and, if issued, what conditions should be in the LOA. In addition, we analyze the information to determine impacts to polar bears and Pacific walruses and the availability of those marine mammals for subsistence purposes of Alaska Natives.

Holders of an LOA seeking to carry out onshore activities in known or suspected polar bear denning habitat during the denning season, must make efforts to locate occupied polar bear dens within and near proposed areas of operation. They may use any appropriate tool, such as, forward-looking infrared (FLIR) imagery and/or polar bear scent-trained dogs in concert with denning habitat maps along the Alaskan coast. In accordance with 50 CFR 18.118(a)(6)(ii)(A) and 18.128(a)(2)(ii), LOA holders must report all observed or suspected polar bear dens to us prior to the initiation of activities. We use this information to determine the appropriate terms and conditions to be used in an individual LOA in order to minimize potential impacts and disturbance to polar bears.

**II. Data**

*OMB Control Number:* 1018–0070.

*Title:* Incidental Take of Marine Mammals during Specified Oil and Gas Industry Activities, 50 CFR 18.27 and 50 CFR 18, Subparts I and J.

*Service Form Number:* None.

*Type of Request:* Extension of a previously approved collection.

*Description of Respondents:* Oil and gas industry companies.

*Respondent's Obligation:* Required to obtain or retain a benefit (incidental take regulations and/or a Letter of Authorization (LOA)).

*Frequency of Collection:* On occasion.

*Estimated Number of Respondents:* 25.

Activity	Number of responses	Completion time per response (hours)	Total annual burden hours
Application for procedural regulations .....	2	150	300
LOA requests .....	25	24	600
Onsite monitoring and observation reports .....	300	1.5	450
Final monitoring report .....	25	10	250
Polar bear den detection survey and report .....	4	50	200
<b>Totals .....</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>.....</b>	<b>1,800</b>

**III. Comments**

We invite comments concerning this information collection on:

- Whether or not the collection of information is necessary, including whether or not the information will have practical utility;
- The accuracy of our estimate of the burden for this collection of information;
- Ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and

• Ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on respondents.

Comments that you submit in response to this notice are a matter of public record. We will include or summarize each comment in our request to OMB to approve this IC. Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment, including your

personal identifying information, may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Dated: January 6, 2017.

**Tina A. Campbell,**

*Chief, Division of Policy, Performance, and Management Programs, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.*

[FR Doc. 2017-00462 Filed 1-10-17; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 4333-15-P**

## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### U.S. Geological Survey

[GX170A030AD0100]

#### Agency Information Collection Activities: Request for Comments

**AGENCY:** U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice of a new information collection, Ecosystems Program Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey.

**SUMMARY:** We (the U.S. Geological Survey) will ask the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to approve the information collection (IC) described below. As required by the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) of 1995, and as part of our continuing efforts to reduce paperwork and respondent burden, we invite the general public and other Federal agencies to take this opportunity to comment on this IC.

**DATES:** To ensure that your comments are considered, we must receive them on or before March 13, 2017.

**ADDRESSES:** You may submit comments on this information collection to the Information Collection Clearance Officer, U.S. Geological Survey, 12201 Sunrise Valley Drive, MS 807, Reston, VA 20192 (mail); (703) 648-7197 (fax); or *gs-info\_collections@usgs.gov* (email). Please reference 'Information Collection 1028-NEW, Ecosystems Program Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey' in all correspondence.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Linn Kwan, Senior Program Officer, Tel. 703.648.4494 or *Email-lkwan@usgs.gov*.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

##### I. Abstract

The survey will be sent to USGS Ecosystems Mission Area stakeholders/partners to provide respondents the opportunity to share their comments, insights and satisfaction of USGS Ecosystems research products, training, and technical assistance. The survey results will be compiled and reported in three new performance measures that are being proposed for FY2018-2022. The survey is voluntary and anonymous. The respondents' identities will only be known if they chose to share that information in the response.

##### II. Data

*OMB Control Number:* 1028-NEW.

*Title:* Ecosystems Program Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey.

*Type of Request:* New information collection.

*Affected Public:* USGS partners at other DOI bureaus, Federal and State agencies, Tribes and Non-governmental Organizations.

*Respondent's Obligation:* None, participation is voluntary.

*Frequency of Collection:* Information will be collected once at the end of each fiscal year.

*Estimated Annual Number of Respondents:* 150

*Estimated Total Number of Annual Responses:* 120

*Estimated Time per Response:* 10 minutes or less to complete the survey.

*Estimated Reporting and Recordkeeping "Non-Hour Cost" Burden:* None.

*Public Disclosure Statement:* The PRA (44 U.S.C. 3501, *et seq.*) provides that an agency may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number and current expiration date.

##### III. Request for Comments

We are soliciting comments as to: (a) Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the agency to perform its duties, including whether the information is useful; (b) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information; (c) ways to enhance the quality, usefulness, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) how to minimize the burden on the respondents, including the use of automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

Please note that the comments submitted in response to this notice are a matter of public record. Before including your personal mailing address, phone number, email address, or other personally identifiable information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment, including your personally identifiable information, may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personally identifiable information from public view, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

**John Thompson,**

*Deputy Chief, CRU.*

[FR Doc. 2017-00444 Filed 1-10-17; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 4338-11-P**

## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### National Indian Gaming Commission

#### Protocol for Categorical Exclusions Supplementing the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations Implementing the Procedural Provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act for Certain National Indian Gaming Commission Actions and Activities

**AGENCY:** The National Indian Gaming Commission, Department of the Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice of proposed action and request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** The National Indian Gaming Commission (NIGC or "the Commission") is amending its protocol for categorical exclusions under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended, Executive Order 11514, as amended, and Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA (40 CFR parts 1500-1508) for certain NIGC actions.

**DATES:** Comments and related material must be post marked no later than 60 days after publication of this notice.

**ADDRESSES:** Please submit your comments by only one of the following means: (1) By mail to: NIGC Attn: Andrew Mendoza, Staff Attorney, C/O Department of the Interior, 1849 C Street NW., Mailstop #1621, Washington, DC 20240; (2) by facsimile to: (202) 632-7066; (3) by email to: *andrew\_mendoza@nigc.gov*.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Andrew Mendoza, Staff Attorney at the National Indian Gaming Commission: 202-632-7003 (not a toll-free number).

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

##### I. Comments Invited

The NIGC encourages interested persons to submit written comments. Persons submitting information concerning the Protocol should include their name, address, and other appropriate contact information. You may submit your information by one of the means listed under **ADDRESSES**. If you submit information by mail or hand delivery, submit them in an unbound format, no larger than 8½ by 11 inches, suitable for copying and electronic filing. If you submit information by mail and would like to know it was received, please enclose a stamped, self-addressed postcard or envelope. The NIGC will consider all comments received during the comment period.