The Council will hold nine public hearings:

1. April 24, 2017, 5–7 p.m.: The Greater Ocean City Chamber of Commerce, 12320 Ocean Gateway, Ocean City, MD 21842, phone: (410) 213–0144.

2. April 25, 2017, 5–7 p.m.: Holiday Inn by the Bay, 88 Spring St., Portland, ME 04101, phone: (207) 775–2311.


Address for written comments:

Written comments may be sent through mail, email, fax, or online through 11:59 p.m. on Thursday, May 18, 2017.

—Mail to: Dr. Chris Moore, Executive Director, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, 800 North State Street, Suite 201, Dover, DE 19901 (please write “Squid Amendment Comments” on the outside of the envelope)

Fax to: Dr. Chris Moore, Executive Director, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council at 302–674–5399 (please include “Squid Amendment Comments” in the subject line);

Email to: squid@mafnc.org;


The purpose of the meetings and comment period is gather input from the public on the alternatives in the amendment. The objectives of this action are to:

A. Consider the appropriate number of vessels in the directed longfin squid and Illex squid fisheries and design appropriate management measures for permitted vessels. The Council is considering this action because there is considerable latent effort in both fisheries—a relatively small portion of vessels with limited access (“moratorium”) squid permits account for the majority of landings in most years. The Council is concerned that activation of latent permits in the squid fisheries could lead to excessive fishing effort (shortening seasons) on these semelparous, sub-annual species, and increased catch of non-target species.

B. Re-evaluate the management of longfin squid in Trimester 2. The Council is considering this action because the productivity of the longfin squid stock may be negatively impacted if excessive fishing effort in T2, which occurs on the inshore spawning grounds, does not allow sufficient spawning and/or hatching from egg mops. Additional information and relevant background documents are available on the Council’s Web site at http://www.mafnc.org/actions/squid-capacity-amendment. The public hearing document, which describes and analyzes the alternatives, will be posted there by April 18, 2017.

Special Accommodations

These meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aid should be directed to M. Jan Saunders, (302) 526–5251, at least 5 days prior to any meeting date.


Tracey L. Thompson,
Acting Deputy Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 2017–06807 Filed 4–5–17; 8:45 am]
Special Accommodations: These meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for special accommodations may be directed no later than 12:00 p.m. on April 17, 2017, to Dr. Cynthia Decker, SAB Executive Director, SSMC3, Room 11230, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MC 20910; Email: Cynthia.Decker@noaa.gov.

Matters to be Considered: The meeting will include the following topics: (1) Draft Report on Indigenous and Local Ecological Knowledge and NOAA; (2) Proposal for Creation of a High Performance Computing Standing Working Group; (3) Discussion of the Process to Review SAB Standing Working Groups; (4) Discussion of Short-Term Topics for the SAB; (5) Discussion on SAB Transition Materials; and (6) Updates from the Acting NOAA Administrator and Acting Chief Scientist.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. Cynthia Decker, Executive Director, Science Advisory Board, NOAA, Room 11230, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Email: Cynthia.Decker@noaa.gov; or visit the NOAA SAB Web site at http://www.sab.noaa.gov.

Dated: March 31, 2017.

Paul Johnson,
Acting Deputy Chief Financial Officer/CAO, Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

[FR Doc. 2017–06858 Filed 4–5–17; 8:45 am]
BILLING CODE 3510–KD–P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
RIN 0648–XE687
Takes of Marine Mammals Incidental To Specified Activities; Taking Marine Mammals Incidental to a Tidal Marsh Restoration Project

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

ACTION: Notice; issuance of an incidental harassment authorization.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the regulations implementing the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) as amended, notification is hereby given that NMFS has issued an incidental harassment authorization (IHA) to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife—Central Region (CADFW) to incidentally harass, by Level B harassment only, marine mammals during construction activities associated with the tidal marsh restoration project within the Minhoto-Hester Marsh in Elkhorn Slough (Monterey, CA).

DATES: This Authorization is in effect for one year beginning August 1, 2017.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Stephanie Egger, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, (301) 427–8401.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Availability
An electronic copy of the CADFW’s application and supporting documents, as well as a list of the references cited in this document, may be obtained online at: www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/permits/incidental/construction.htm. In case of problems accessing these documents, please call the contact listed above.

National Environmental Policy Act
In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.), NMFS prepared a Supplemental Environmental Assessment (SEA) titled “Final Supplemental Environmental Assessment for the Minhoto-Hester Marsh Restoration Project, Elkhorn Slough, Monterey County, California.” A Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) was signed on November 15, 2016. NMFS considered comments submitted in response to our Federal Register notice of the proposed IHA (81 FR 67297; September 30, 2016) and CADFW’s application as part of the process. All documents are available at the aforementioned Web site.

Background
Sections 101(a)(5)(D) of the MMPA (16 U.S.C. 1361 et seq.) direct the Secretary of Commerce to allow, upon request by U.S. citizens who engage in a specified activity (other than commercial fishing) within a specified geographical region if certain findings are made and either regulations are made or (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 Requests
On June 2, 2016, we received an application from the CADFW for authorization to take marine mammals incidental to construction activities associated with a 47-acre tidal marsh restoration project within the Minhoto-Hester Marsh in Elkhorn Slough (Monterey, CA) (Phase 1). The overall Elkhorn Slough Tidal Marsh Restoration Project will restore a total of 147 acres, however, future phases are not part of this application as they are currently unfunded and present some additional technical challenges. Another IHA request will be made prior to implementation of any proposed future phases. The CADFW submitted revised versions of the application on July 13, 2016, August 2, 2016, August 29, 2016, and a final application on September 6, 2016 which we deemed adequate and complete.

The activity will begin August 1, 2017 and last approximately 11 months with built in buffers for adverse weather and other conditions when work is not possible. Pacific harbor seal (Phoca vitulina richardi) and southern sea otters (Enhydra lutris nereis) are expected to be present during the work. Southern sea otters are managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and will 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.” Section 101(a)(5)(D) of the MMPA established an expedited process by which citizens of the U.S. can apply for an authorization to incidentally take small numbers of marine mammals by harassment. Section 101(a)(5)(D) establishes a 45-day time limit for NMFS’ review of an application followed by a 30-day public notice and comment period on any proposed authorizations for the incidental harassment of marine mammals. Within 45 days of the close of the comment period, NMFS must either issue or deny the authorization. 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).”