

fishing operations. Currently, two commercial fishermen have volunteered to participate in the EFP while using hook-and-line gear fishing in South Atlantic Federal waters in depths ranging from 70 ft (21 m) to 600 ft (183 m). If the fishermen encounter a speckled hind, a fin clip would be taken from the harvested speckled hind and shipped to the Marine Genomics Laboratory at Texas A&M University, Corpus Christi, Texas. The sampled fin clip would be used for genetic studies. All sampled speckled hind carcasses would be shipped to the NMFS Southeast Fisheries Science Center for otolith extraction to determine age and growth parameters. The results of the EFP are expected to contribute to improved understanding of speckled hind population structure, genetic diversity, and life history in the U.S. South Atlantic. The EFP results could help support future scientific and management decisions for the speckled hind stock in the South Atlantic.

NMFS finds the application warrants further consideration based on a preliminary review. Possible conditions the agency may impose on the permit, if granted, include but are not limited to, a prohibition on fishing within marine protected areas, marine sanctuaries, or special management zones without additional authorization. A final decision on issuance of the EFP will depend on NMFS' review of public comments received on the application, consultations with the appropriate fishery management agencies of the affected states, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, and the U.S. Coast Guard, and a determination that the activities to be taken under the EFP are consistent with all other applicable laws.

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

Dated: February 22, 2021.

**Jennifer M. Wallace,**

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

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**BILLING CODE 3510-22-P**

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648-XA884]

#### Endangered and Threatened Species; Initiation of 5-Year Review for Cook Inlet Beluga Whale (*Delphinapterus leucas*) Distinct Population Segment

**AGENCY:** National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and

Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

**ACTION:** Notice of initiation of 5-year review; request for information.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS announces its intent to conduct a 5-year review of the endangered Cook Inlet beluga whale (*Delphinapterus leucas*) distinct population segment (DPS). NMFS is required by the Endangered Species Act (ESA) to conduct 5-year reviews to ensure that listing classifications of species are accurate. The 5-year review must be based on the best scientific and commercial data available at the time of the review. We request submission of any such information on the Cook Inlet beluga whale DPS, particularly information on its status, threats, and recovery, that has become available since the previous 5-year review was issued in February 2017.

**DATES:** To allow us adequate time to conduct this review, we must receive your information no later than April 26, 2021. However, we will continue to accept new information about any listed species at any time.

**ADDRESSES:** Submit your information, identified by docket number NOAA-NMFS-2021-0010, by either of the following methods:

- *Federal e-Rulemaking Portal:* Go to [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov). In the Search box, enter the above docket number for this notice. Then, click on the Search icon. On the resulting web page, click the "Comment Now!" icon, complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments.

- *Mail:* Submit written information to Jon Kurland, Assistant Regional Administrator for Protected Resources, Alaska Region NMFS, Attn: Records Office. Mail comments to P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802-1668.

**Instructions:** NMFS may not consider comments or other information if sent by any other method, to any other address or individual, or received after the comment period ends. All comments and information received are a part of the public record and NMFS will post the comments for public viewing on [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov) without change. All personal identifying information (*e.g.*, name, address, etc.), confidential business information, or otherwise sensitive information submitted voluntarily by the sender is publicly accessible. NMFS will accept anonymous comments (enter "N/A" in the required fields if you wish to remain anonymous).

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Jill Seymour, NMFS Alaska Region, [jill.seymour@noaa.gov](mailto:jill.seymour@noaa.gov).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** Section 4(c)(2)(A) of the ESA requires that the Secretary, through NMFS, conduct a review of listed species at least once every 5 years. The regulations in 50 CFR 424.21 require that we publish a notice in the **Federal Register** announcing species currently under active review. Based on such reviews, we determine whether a listed species should be delisted, or be reclassified from endangered to threatened or from threatened to endangered (16 U.S.C. 1533(c)(2)(B)). As described by the regulations in 50 CFR 424.11(e), the Secretary shall delist a species if the Secretary finds that, after conducting a status review based on the best scientific and commercial data available: (1) the species is extinct; (2) the species does not meet the definition of an endangered species or a threatened species; or (3) the listed entity does not meet the statutory definition of a species. Any change in Federal classification would require a separate rulemaking process.

The Cook Inlet beluga whale DPS was listed as endangered under the ESA on October 22, 2008 (73 FR 62919).

Background information on the DPS is available on the NMFS website at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/species/beluga-whale>.

#### Determining if a Species Is Threatened or Endangered

Section 4(a)(1) of the ESA requires that we determine whether a species is endangered or threatened based on one or more of the five following factors: (1) The present or threatened destruction, modification, or curtailment of its habitat or range; (2) overutilization for commercial, recreational, scientific, or educational purposes; (3) disease or predation; (4) the inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms; or (5) other natural or manmade factors affecting its continued existence. Section 4(b) also requires that our determination be made on the basis of the best scientific and commercial data available after conducting a review of the status of the species and after taking into account those efforts, if any, being made by any State or foreign nation to protect such species.

#### Public Solicitation of New Relevant Information

To ensure that the 5-year review is complete and based on the best scientific and commercial data available, we are soliciting new information from the public, governmental agencies, Tribes, the scientific community, industry, environmental entities, and any other

interested parties concerning the status of the listed Cook Inlet beluga whale DPS. Categories of requested information include: (1) Species biology including, but not limited to, population trends, distribution, abundance, demographics, and genetics; (2) habitat conditions including, but not limited to, amount, distribution, suitability, and important features for conservation; (3) status and trends of threats; (4) conservation measures that have been implemented that benefit the species, including monitoring data demonstrating effectiveness of such measures; (5) need for additional conservation measures; and (6) other new information, data, or corrections including, but not limited to, taxonomic or nomenclatural changes and improved analytical methods for evaluating extinction risk.

**Authority:** 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*

Dated: February 22, 2021.

**Angela Somma,**

Chief, Endangered Species Conservation Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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**BILLING CODE 3510-22-P**

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648-XA901]

#### Western Pacific Fishery Management Council; Public Meetings

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

**ACTION:** Notice of public meetings and a partially closed meeting.

**SUMMARY:** The Western Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) will hold its 139th Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), Pelagic and International Standing Committee, Executive and Budget Standing Committee, and 185th Council meetings to take actions on fishery management issues in the Western Pacific Region. A portion of the Council's Executive and Budget Standing Committee meeting will be closed to the public for a briefing on litigation by counsel.

**DATES:** The meetings will be held between March 16 and March 25, 2021. For specific times and agendas, see **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION.**

**ADDRESSES:** The meetings will be held by web conference via WebEx. Instructions for connecting to the web

conference and providing oral public comments will be posted on the Council website at [www.wpcouncil.org](http://www.wpcouncil.org). For assistance with the web conference connection, contact the Council office at (808) 522-8220.

The following venues will be the host sites for the 185th Council meeting: Cliff Pointe, 304 W O'Brien Drive, Hagatna, Guam; BRI Building, Suite 205, Kopa Di Oru St., Garapan, Saipan, CNMI; and, Tedi of Samoa Building Suite 208B, Fagatogo Village, American Samoa.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Kitty M. Simonds, Executive Director, Western Pacific Fishery Management Council; phone: (808) 522-8220.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

All times shown are in Hawaii Standard Time. The 139th SSC meeting will be held between 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. on March 16-18, 2021. The Pelagic and International Standing Committee will be held between 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. on March 22, 2021. The Executive and Budget Standing Committee meeting will be held between 3:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. on March 22, 2021. The portion of the Executive and Budget Standing Committee from 4 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. will be closed to the public in accordance with section 302(i)(3) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA). The 185th Council meeting will be held between 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. on March 23-25, 2021.

Please note that the evolving public health situation regarding COVID-19 may affect the conduct of the March Council and its associated meetings. At the time this notice was submitted for publication, the Council anticipated convening the Council meeting by web conference with host site locations in Guam, CNMI and American Samoa. Council staff will monitor COVID-19 developments and will determine the extent to which in-person public participation at host sites will be allowable consistent with applicable local and federal safety and health guidelines. If public participation will be limited to web conference only or on a first-come-first-serve basis consistent with applicable guidelines, the Council will post notice on its website at [www.wpcouncil.org](http://www.wpcouncil.org).

Agenda items noted as "Final Action" refer to actions that result in Council transmittal of a proposed fishery management plan, proposed plan amendment, or proposed regulations to the U.S. Secretary of Commerce, under sections 304 or 305 of the MSA. In addition to the agenda items listed here, the Council and its advisory bodies will hear recommendations from Council

advisors. An opportunity to submit public comment will be provided throughout the agendas. The order in which agenda items are addressed may change and will be announced in advance at the Council meeting. The meetings will run as late as necessary to complete scheduled business.

Background documents for the 185th Council meeting will be available at [www.wpcouncil.org](http://www.wpcouncil.org). Written public comments on final action items at the 185th Council meeting should be received at the Council office by 5 p.m. HST, March 19, 2021, and should be sent to Kitty M. Simonds, Executive Director; Western Pacific Fishery Management Council, 1164 Bishop Street, Suite 1400, Honolulu, HI 96813, phone: (808) 522-8220 or fax: (808) 522-8226; or email: [info.wpcouncil@noaa.gov](mailto:info.wpcouncil@noaa.gov). Written public comments on all other agenda items may be submitted for the record by email throughout the duration of the meeting. Instructions for providing oral public comments during the meeting will be posted on the Council website. This meeting will be recorded for the purposes of generating the minutes of the meeting.

#### Agenda for the 139th Scientific and Statistical Committee Meeting

Tuesday, March 16, 2021, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

1. Introductions
2. Approval of Draft Agenda and Assignment of Rapporteurs
3. Status of the 138th SSC Meeting Recommendations
4. Report from Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center Director
5. Program Planning and Research
  - A. NMFS Briefing on Executive Order 14008 on Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad
  - B. SSC Three-Year Plan
  - C. Updates to the Pacific Island Stock Assessment Prioritization
  - D. Integration of the 'Catch it Log it' app information into fisheries assessments and monitoring
  - E. Socio-Economic Context for Fisher-Shark Interaction in the Marianas
  - F. Public Comment
  - G. SSC Discussion and Recommendations
6. Island Fisheries
  - A. Main Hawaiian Island (MHI) Deep 7 Bottomfish Fishery
    1. Report on the MHI Deep 7 Bottomfish Western Pacific Stock Assessment Review (WPSAR)
    2. 2021 Deep 7 Bottomfish Stock Assessment Update
    3. Updates to the Acceptable Biological Catch (Action Item)
  - B. Territorial Bottomfish Fisheries