during which it would make 20–30 hauls with 6-inch (15.24-cm) mesh gillnet gear. The maximum number of individual nets that could be deployed is 75. Gillnets would be set for a soak of up to 24 hours, and would be actively tended by the vessel (*i.e.,* the vessel would not leave the fishing grounds while nets are deployed).

A Northeast Fisheries at-sea monitor or observer would be deployed on all groundfish trips taken under the EFP. The participating vessel would use the Pre-Trip Notification System to identify groundfish trip taken under the EFP. Trips would be eligible for natural selection for observer coverage for either the Northeast Fisheries Observer Program or the At-Sea Monitoring program. Trips not naturally selected for observer coverage would not be reimbursable from Federal appropriations.

Allowable discards would be discarded at-sea, while all other species would be retained, landed, and processed per normal commercial fishing procedures. Monitors would document all discards of allocated sub-legal catch.

While on EFP trips, the vessel may also occasionally deploy a small amount of longline and 6.5-inch (16.51-cm) mesh gillnet gear, in order to generate catch composition data that could be used to compare the catchability of the 6-inch (15.24-cm) mesh gear with other gears used on a normal fishing trip. The gillnet gear would consist of 12 to 24 nets in a single string, while the longline gear would have between 1,000 and 2,400 hooks. All groundfish catch, including both discards and landings, would be deducted from the appropriate sector allocation.

If approved, the applicant may request minor modifications and extensions to the EFP throughout the year. EFP modifications and extensions may be granted without further notice if they are deemed essential to facilitate completion of the proposed research and have minimal impacts that do not change the scope or impact of the initially approved EFP request. Any fishing activity conducted outside the scope of the exempted fishing activity would be prohibited.

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

Dated: January 30, 2023.

Jennifer M. Wallace,

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

[FR Doc. 2023–02167 Filed 2–1–23; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–22–P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648–XC724]

Marine Mammals; File No. 26919

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

ACTION: Notice; receipt of application.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, 2070 U.S. Highway 278 Southeast, Social Circle, GA 30025 (Responsible Party: Jonathan Ambrose) has applied in due form for a permit to conduct research on cetaceans.

DATES: Written, telefaxed, or email comments must be received on or before March 6, 2023.

ADDRESSES: The application and related documents are available for review by selecting ''Records Open for Public Comment'' from the ''Features'' box on the Applications and Permits for Protected Species (APPS) home page, *https://apps.nmfs.noaa.gov,* and then selecting File No. 26919 from the list of available applications. These documents are also available upon written request via email to *NMFS.Pr1Comments@noaa.gov.*

Written comments on this application should be submitted via email to *NMFS.Pr1Comments@noaa.gov.* Please include File No. 26919 in the subject line of the email comment.

Those individuals requesting a public hearing should submit a written request via email to *NMFS.Pr1Comments@noaa.gov.* The request should set forth the specific reasons why a hearing on this application would be appropriate.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Shasta McClenahan, Ph.D., or Carrie Hubard, (301) 427–8401.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The subject permit is requested under the authority of the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, as amended (MMPA; 16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*), the regulations governing the taking and importing of marine mammals (50 CFR part 216), the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA; 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*), and the regulations governing the taking, importing, and exporting of endangered and threatened species (50 CFR parts 222–226).

The applicant requests a 5-year permit to study endangered North Atlantic right whales (*Eubalaena glacialis*) to monitor the population and its habitat, identify and reduce human causes of mortality and serious injury, and implement the recovery plan. Three species of non-listed cetaceans may be unintentionally harassed and opportunistically studied during research. Researchers would conduct surveys from vessels or aircraft (manned or unmanned) for counts, photography, photo-identification, photogrammetry, thermal imaging, video recording, observations, passive acoustic recording, tracking, underwater photo/videography, and biological sampling (exhaled air, feces, and skin and blubber biopsy). Marine mammal parts may be exported and imported for analysis. See the application for numbers of animals requested by species and procedure.

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), an initial determination has been made that the activity proposed is categorically excluded from the requirement to prepare an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement.

Concurrent with the publication of this notice in the **Federal Register**, NMFS is forwarding copies of the application to the Marine Mammal Commission and its Committee of Scientific Advisors.

Dated: January 30, 2023.

Julia M. Harrison,

Chief, Permits and Conservation Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 2023–02159 Filed 2–1–23; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–22–P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648–XC592]

Taking and Importing Marine Mammals; Taking Marine Mammals Incidental to Geophysical Surveys Related to Oil and Gas Activities in the Gulf of Mexico

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

ACTION: Notice of issuance of Letter of Authorization.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), as amended, its implementing regulations, and NMFS' MMPA Regulations for Taking Marine Mammals Incidental to Geophysical Surveys Related to Oil and Gas Activities in the Gulf of Mexico, notification is hereby given that a Letter