

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

[Docket No. 260617–0146; RTID: 0648–XA005]

Notice of Extended Modification to the Special Use Permit (SUP) Category for the Continued Presence of Commercial Submarine Cables Within the National Marine Sanctuary System

AGENCY: Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS), National Ocean Service (NOS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce (DOC).

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: NOAA hereby provides public notice that it is extending the temporary suspension of the special use permit (SUP) category for the continued presence of commercial submarine cables on or within national marine sanctuaries so that, for an additional two-year period until August 16, 2028, the SUP category does not apply to commercial submarine cables in sanctuaries designated after August 16, 2024. NOAA is continuing to evaluate options for permitting submarine cables in sanctuaries, including through a separate rulemaking action.

DATES: The end date of suspension per this notice is August 16, 2028.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Sophie De Beukelaer, NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, 1305 East West Highway, Silver Spring MD 20910, or sophie.debeukelaer@noaa.gov, (831) 583–8755.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**I. Background**

Under the National Marine Sanctuaries Act (NMSA), 16 U.S.C. 1431 *et seq.*, NOAA designates and manages special areas of the marine environment as national marine sanctuaries. Under Section 310 of the NMSA, 16 U.S.C. 1441, NOAA may issue SUPs to establish conditions of access to and use of any sanctuary resource or to promote public use and understanding of a sanctuary resource.

NOAA has established categories of activities subject to the requirements of SUPs. One of the categories of activities is: “The continued presence of commercial submarine cables on or within the submerged lands of any national marine sanctuary.” 78 FR 25957 (May 3, 2013). NOAA’s August 16, 2024 notice (89 FR 66689) modified this SUP category for the continued presence of commercial submarine

cables such that, for a two-year period, the SUP category does not apply to commercial submarine cables in new sanctuaries designated after August 16, 2024. During this suspension, NOAA has not required or issued SUPs for the continued presence of commercial submarine cables on or within the submerged lands of newly designated sanctuaries. However, commercial submarine cables in national marine sanctuaries designated prior to August 16, 2024, continue to be subject to the requirements of this SUP category, including terms and conditions of any currently effective SUPs. Please refer to 89 FR 66689 for a further discussion of the NMSA, SUPs, and NOAA’s need and rationale for establishing a temporary suspension of this SUP category in sanctuaries designated after August 16, 2024.

II. Extension

With this notice, the SUP category for the continued presence of commercial submarine cables continues to be modified so that, for an additional two-year period through August 16, 2028, the SUP category does not apply to commercial submarine cables in sanctuaries designated after August 16, 2024. During this timeframe, the continued presence of commercial submarine cables on or within the submerged lands in newly designated sanctuaries will continue to not be subject to the SUP requirements of section 310 of the NMSA or to 15 CFR 922.31. During this temporary suspension, NOAA will not require or issue SUPs for the continued presence of commercial submarine cables on or within the submerged lands of sanctuaries designated after August 16, 2024.

As discussed in 89 FR 66689, NOAA established this temporary suspension in order to afford NOAA time to evaluate if and how it needs to update the SUP category for the continued presence of commercial submarine cables on or within the submerged lands of any national marine sanctuary and NOAA’s submarine cable permit guidance document. NOAA sought and received public comments on the issues addressed in 89 FR 66689, including the use of the SUP category and potential modifications to it and the submarine cable permit guidance.

At this time, NOAA is continuing to consider the issues discussed in 89 FR 66689, as well as issues identified through public comments. NOAA is continuing to evaluate options for permitting submarine cables in sanctuaries, including through a separate rulemaking action. NOAA will

respond to all comments in a separate notice in the **Federal Register**.

This notice does not alter:

- The applicability of the SUP categories other than the category for the continued presence of commercial submarine cables beneath or on the seabed;

- The applicability of the SUP category for the continued presence of commercial submarine cables beneath or on the seabed in national marine sanctuaries designated prior to August 16, 2024; or

- The applicability of sanctuary permit types other than SUPs to submarine cables in national marine sanctuaries.

Commercial submarine cables in national marine sanctuaries designated prior to August 16, 2024, will continue to be subject to the requirements of this SUP category, including terms and conditions of any currently effective SUPs.

Any activities related to submarine cables that would violate NOAA regulatory prohibitions for national marine sanctuaries designated after August 16, 2024, which may include such activities as cable installation, maintenance, and repair, will still be prohibited unless approved by other NOAA approval mechanisms, such as certifications, authorizations, or general permits.

This suspension period may be subject to further extension, as appropriate, via subsequent notices.

III. Classification**A. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)**

NOAA has concluded this action will not have a significant effect, individually or cumulatively, on the human environment. This action is categorically excluded from the requirement to prepare an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement in accordance with the NOAA Categorical Exclusion G7 in the NOAA NEPA Companion Manual, Appendix E and because there are no extraordinary circumstances precluding the application of this categorical exclusion. Specifically, this action is a notice of an administrative nature, and any future effects of subsequent actions are too broad, speculative, or conjectural to lend themselves to meaningful analysis and will be subject to later NEPA analysis. This action would temporarily pause the issuance of new special use permits for the continued presence of commercial submarine cables on or within the submerged lands of any

national marine sanctuary designated after August 16, 2024. It does not predetermine the outcome of any particular federal action taken by NOAA. Furthermore, individual permit actions taken by NOAA will be subject to additional case-by-case analysis, as required under NEPA, which will be completed as permit applications are submitted for cable projects and activities. In addition, NOAA may, in certain circumstances, consider activities not described above that may require the preparation of an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement. The NEPA analysis would describe the impacts of the full project. NOAA will ensure the appropriate NEPA documentation is prepared prior to taking final action or making any irretrievable or irreversible commitment of agency resources.

B. Paperwork Reduction Act

Notwithstanding any other provisions of the law, no person is required to respond to, nor shall any person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with a collection of information subject to the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA), 44 U.S.C. 3501 *et seq.*, unless that collection of information displays a currently valid Office of Management and Budget (OMB) control number. NOAA has an OMB control number (0648–0141) for the collection of public information related to the processing of ONMS permits across the National Marine Sanctuary System. NOAA does not anticipate that this two-year extension of the suspension of the SUP category for the continued presence of commercial submarine cables will alter the public reporting burden for national marine sanctuaries permits as determined in the previously analyzed and newly updated OMB supporting statement submitted to OMB in October 2024. As such, this action does not necessitate a modification to the information collection approval.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1431 *et seq.*

John Armor,

Director, Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, National Ocean Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[Docket No. 260623–0150; RTID: 0648–XA006]

Evaluation of the California Coastal Management Program; Notice of Public Meetings; Request for Comments

AGENCY: Office for Coastal Management, National Ocean Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Department of Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of public meetings; opportunity to comment.

SUMMARY: The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)'s Office for Coastal Management will hold both an in-person meeting and two virtual public meetings to solicit input for a performance evaluation of the California Coastal Management Program. These meetings are intended to provide the public with the opportunity to add to the input obtained from the previous public meeting held in August 2024. In particular, NOAA seeks any new input from relevant stakeholders regarding spaceport infrastructure, offshore oil production, pipeline maintenance, desalination projects, and undersea cables.

DATES: NOAA will hold an in-person public meeting from 2 p.m. Pacific Time (PT) to 6 p.m. PT on August 10, 2026. For specifics on the location of the in-person public meeting, please see the **ADDRESSES** section. NOAA will hold virtual public meetings from 2 p.m. PT to 5 p.m. PT on August 11 and 12. NOAA will consider all relevant comments received by 11:59 p.m. PT on August 22, 2026.

ADDRESSES: Comments may be submitted by one of the following methods:

- **In-Person Public Meeting:** Provide oral and written comments during the in-person public meeting on August 10, 2026, at 2 p.m. PT to 6 p.m. PT. The public meeting will be held in the Pacific Ballroom, Hilton Santa Monica Hotel and Suites, 1707 4th Street, Santa Monica, CA 90401, and will be recorded to accurately capture the oral comments provided. Any person who wants to speak at the in-person public meeting must be physically present and register by sending an email to czma.california-evaluation@noaa.gov by 11:59 p.m. PT on August 8, 2026. Once the public meeting starts, NOAA will describe the meeting logistics and provide introductory remarks. NOAA will then start the public comment and call on

speakers based on the timing of their registration. Any speakers that do not register by email can sign up on location and will be called upon only after those who registered via email. Each speaker will have three minutes to speak. If a speaker does not respond when their name is called, NOAA will move to the next speaker. At the three-minute mark for each speaker, NOAA will give notice of the time limit and the next speaker will be identified. Speakers cannot allot their time to another speaker. NOAA will adjourn the meeting when all participants have spoken or at 6 p.m. PT, whichever is earlier. The meeting will also be livestreamed. Registration for the livestream is available at: <https://noaabroadcast.adobeconnect.com/euqe1fzqlqysm/event/registration.html>. Comments, however, will not be accepted via livestream. Following the in-person public meeting, NOAA will prepare a written transcript of the meeting, which will be available via email request to czma.california-evaluation@noaa.gov.

- **Virtual Public Meetings:** Provide oral comments during virtual public meetings on August 11 and 12, from 2 p.m. PT to 5 p.m. PT. NOAA will conduct the virtual public meetings via Adobe Connect. Each person who wants to attend either meeting must electronically register by August 10, 2026, at 11:59 p.m. PT. Attendance at each virtual public meeting will be limited to 1,000 individuals; therefore, NOAA requests that individuals attend only one meeting, on either August 11 or 12. To register for either meeting, use the following link: https://noaabroadcast.adobeconnect.com/e23ewcr5d65q/event/event_info.html. Each registered participant will receive an Adobe Connect link for the meeting. Once the virtual public meeting starts, NOAA will describe the meeting logistics and provide introductory remarks. NOAA will then start the public comment part of the meeting and will call on speakers on a first come/first served basis through the raised hand function of Adobe Connect. Each speaker will have three minutes to speak. If a speaker does not respond when their name is called, NOAA will move to the next speaker. At the three-minute mark for each speaker, NOAA will mute that speaker. Speakers cannot allot their time to another speaker. NOAA will adjourn the meeting when all participants have spoken, or at 5 p.m. PT, whichever is earlier. NOAA retains discretion to extend the virtual public meeting if appropriate and feasible. NOAA will record the meeting and make the written transcript