

§ 217.120

and 217.117 of this chapter may be substantively modified without prior notification and an opportunity for public comment. Notification will be published in the FEDERAL REGISTER within 30 days subsequent to the action.

Subpart M—Taking Marine Mammals Incidental to Seabird Research Activities in Central California

SOURCE: 86 FR 27998, May 25, 2021, unless otherwise noted.

EFFECTIVE DATE NOTE: At 86 FR 27998, May 25, 2021, subpart M was added, effective July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2026.

§ 217.120 Specified activity and specified geographical region.

(a) Regulations in this subpart apply only to the incidental taking of marine mammals during seabird research activities by Point Blue Conservation Science (Point Blue) and those persons it authorizes or funds to conduct activities on its behalf in the areas outlined in paragraph (b) of this section.

(b) The incidental taking of marine mammals by Point Blue may only occur in California on Southeast Farallon Island, Año Nuevo Island, and Point Reyes National Seashore in accordance with a Letter of Authorization (LOA) issued under §§ 216.106 of this chapter and 217.126.

§ 217.121 Effective dates.

Regulations in this subpart are effective from July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2026.

§ 217.122 Permissible methods of taking.

Under LOAs issued pursuant to §§ 216.106 of this chapter and 217.126, the Holder of the LOA (hereinafter “Point Blue”) may incidentally, but not intentionally, take marine mammals within the area described in § 217.120(b) by Level B harassment associated with seabird research activities, provided the activity is in compliance with all terms, conditions, and requirements of the regulations in this subpart and the appropriate LOA.

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§ 217.123 Prohibitions.

Except for the takings contemplated in § 217.120 and authorized by a LOA issued under §§ 216.106 of this chapter and 217.126, it is unlawful for any person to do any of the following in connection with the activities described in § 217.120 may:

(a) Violate, or fail to comply with, the terms, conditions, and requirements of this subpart or a LOA issued under §§ 216.106 of this chapter and 217.126;

(b) Take any marine mammal not specified in such LOA;

(c) Take any marine mammal specified in such LOA in any manner other than as specified in § 217.122;

(d) Take a marine mammal specified in such LOA if NMFS determines such taking results in more than a negligible impact on the species or stocks of such marine mammal; or

(e) Take a marine mammal specified in such LOA if NMFS determines such taking results in an unmitigable adverse impact on the species or stock of such marine mammal for taking for subsistence uses.

§ 217.124 Mitigation requirements.

When conducting the activities identified in § 217.120(a), the mitigation measures contained in any LOA issued under §§ 216.106 of this chapter and 217.126 must be implemented. These mitigation measures shall include but are not limited to the following general conditions:

(a) All persons must slowly approach beaches for boat landings. Boat landings must avoid causing stampede and provide marine mammals with an opportunity to safely enter the water. Vessel strikes are prohibited.

(b) All persons must observe a site from a distance, using binoculars if necessary, to detect any marine mammals prior to approach to determine if mitigation is required (*i.e.*, if pinnipeds are present, researchers must approach with caution, walking slowly, quietly, and close to the ground to avoid surprising any hauled-out marine mammals and to reduce flushing/stampeding of individuals).

(c) All persons must avoid pinnipeds along access ways to sites by locating