

## § 217.205

## 50 CFR Ch. II (10–1–22 Edition)

not commence until the animal moves outside this zone or it is not detected within 15 minutes of the last sighting.

(3) If a marine mammal is detected within or approaching the Level B harassment zone designated for vibratory pile driving (1,300 m) prior to in-water vibratory pile driving, operations shall not commence until the marine mammal moves outside this zone or it is not detected within 15 minutes of the last sighting.

(4) A “start” technique shall be used at the beginning of each day’s in-water pile driving activities or if pile driving has ceased for more than one hour to allow any marine mammal that may be in the immediate area to leave before piling driving reaches full energy. For vibratory hammers, the soft start requires the holder of the Letter of Authorization to initiate noise from the hammers for 15 seconds at reduced energy followed by 1-minute waiting period and repeat the procedure two additional times. If an impact hammer is used, the soft start requires an initial set of three strikes from the impact hammer at 40 percent energy, followed by a one minute waiting period, then two subsequent 3 strike sets.

(5) In-water pile driving or chipping shall not occur when conditions restrict clear, visible detection of all waters within the appropriate harassment zones or the 200 m safety zone. Such conditions that can impair sightability include, but are not limited to, fog and rough sea state.

(6) In-water piles will be driven with a vibratory hammer to the maximum extent possible (i.e., until a desired depth is achieved or to refusal) prior to using an impact hammer.

(7) In-water impact pile driving shall not occur during the period from two hours before low tide until two hours after low tide.

(8) The following measures apply to all in-water pile driving, except during the “stabbing” phase, and all in-water chipping associated with demolition of the existing dock:

(i) No in-water pile driving (impact or vibratory) or chipping shall occur if any marine mammal is located within 200m of the hammer in any direction. If any marine mammal is sighted within or approaching this 200m safety zone,

pile-driving or chipping must be suspended until the animal has moved outside the 200m safety zone or the animal is not resighted within 15 minutes.

(ii) If a group of more than 5 beluga whales is sighted within the Level B harassment isopleths, in-water pile driving shall be suspended. If the group is not re-sighted within 15 minutes, pile driving may resume.

(iii) If a beluga whale calf or group with a calf is sighted within or approaching a harassment zone, in-water pile driving shall cease and shall not be resumed until the calf or group is confirmed to be outside of the harassment zone and moving along a trajectory away from such zone. If the calf or group with a calf is not re-sighted within 15 minutes, pile driving may resume.

(9) If maximum authorized take is reached or exceeded for a particular species, any marine mammal of that species entering into the harassment or safety isopleths will trigger mandatory in-water pile driving shut down.

(10) For Port of Anchorage operated in-water heavy machinery work other than pile driving or chipping (i.e., dredging, dump scowles, tug boats used to move barges, barge mounted hydraulic excavators, or clamshell equipment used to place or remove material), if a marine mammal comes within 50 m, those operations will cease and vessels will reduce to the slowest speed practicable while still maintaining control of the vessel and safe working conditions.

(11) In the event the Port of Anchorage conducts out-of-water blasting, detonation of charges will be delayed if a marine mammal is detected anywhere within a visible distance from the detonation site.

(12) Additional mitigation measures as contained in a Letter of Authorization.

(b) [Reserved]

### § 217.205 Requirements for monitoring and reporting.

(a) The Holder of a Letter of Authorization issued pursuant to § 216.106 of this chapter and § 217.207, for activities described in § 217.200(a) is required to cooperate with NMFS, and any other

Federal, state or local agency with authority to monitor the impacts of the activity on marine mammals. Unless specified otherwise in the Letter of Authorization, the Holder of the Letter of Authorization must notify the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS, by letter, e-mail, or telephone, at least 2 weeks prior to commencement of seasonal activities and dock demolition possibly involving the taking of marine mammals. If the activity identified in §217.200(a) is thought to have resulted in the mortality or injury of any marine mammals or in any take of marine mammals not identified in §217.202(b), the Holder of the Letter of Authorization must notify the Director, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, or designee, by e-mail or telephone (301-713-2289), within 24 hours of the discovery of the injured or dead animal.

(b) The Holder of a Letters of Authorization must designate qualified, on-site marine mammal observers (MMOs), approved in advance by NMFS, as specified in the Letter of Authorization, to:

(1) Conduct visual marine mammal monitoring at the Port of Anchorage beginning 30 minutes prior to and during all in-water pile driving or chipping and out-of-water blasting.

(2) Record the following information on NMFS-approved marine mammal sighting sheets whenever a marine mammal is detected:

(i) Date and time of initial sighting to end of sighting, tidal stage, and weather conditions (including Beaufort Sea State);

(ii) Species, number, group composition, initial and closest distance to pile driving hammer, and behavior (e.g., activity, group cohesiveness, direction and speed of travel, etc.) of animals throughout duration of sighting;

(iii) Any discrete behavioral reactions to in-water work;

(iv) The number (by species) of marine mammals that have been taken;

(v) Pile driving, chipping, or out of water blasting activities occurring at the time of sighting and if and why shut down was or was not implemented.

(3) Employ a scientific marine mammal monitoring team separate from the on-site MMOs to characterize

beluga whale abundance, movements, behavior, and habitat use around the Port of Anchorage and observe, analyze, and document potential changes in behavior in response to in-water construction work. This monitoring team is not required to be present during all in-water pile driving operations but will continue monitoring one-year post in-water construction. The on-site MMOs and this marine mammal monitoring team shall remain in contact to alert each other to marine mammal presence when both teams are working.

(c) The Holder of a Letter of Authorization must conduct additional monitoring as required under an annual Letter of Authorization.

(d) The Holder of a Letter of Authorization shall submit a monthly report to NMFS' Headquarters Permits, Education and Conservation Division and the Alaska Region, Anchorage for all months in-water pile driving or chipping takes place. This report must contain the information listed in paragraph (b)(2) of this section.

(e) An annual report must be submitted at the time of application for renewal of a Letter of Authorization. This report will summarize all in-water construction activities and marine mammal monitoring from January 1-December 31, annually, and any discernable short or long term impacts from the Marine Terminal Expansion Project.

(f) A final report must be submitted to NMFS upon application for a subsequent incidental take authorization or, if no future authorization is requested, no later than 90 days post expiration of these regulations. This report will:

(1) Summarize the activities undertaken and the results reported in all previous reports;

(2) Assess the impacts to marine mammals from the port expansion project; and

(3) Assess the cumulative impacts on marine mammals.

#### **§217.206 Applications for Letters of Authorization.**

(a) To incidentally take marine mammals pursuant to these regulations, the U.S. citizen (as defined by §216.103 of this chapter) conducting the activity identified in §217.200(a) (the