

(TTS) and permanent hearing threshold shifts (PTS). These thresholds replace those currently in use by NOAA.

Updates include a protocol for estimating PTS and TTS onset levels for impulsive (e.g., airguns, impact pile drivers) and non-impulsive (e.g., sonar, vibratory pile drivers) sound sources, the formation of marine mammal functional hearing groups (low-, mid-, and high-frequency cetaceans and otariid and phocid pinnipeds), and the incorporation of marine mammal auditory weighting functions into the calculation of thresholds. These acoustic threshold levels are presented using the dual metrics of cumulative sound exposure level and peak sound pressure level. This document addresses how to combine multiple datasets, as well as how to determine appropriate surrogates when data are not available. While the updated acoustic thresholds are more complex than those previously used by NOAA, they accurately reflect the current state of scientific knowledge regarding the characteristics of sound that have the potential to impact marine mammal hearing sensitivity. Given the specific nature of these updates, it is not possible to compare directly the updated acoustic threshold levels presented in this document with the thresholds previously used by NOAA.

Although NOAA has updated the acoustic threshold levels from those previously used, and these changes may necessitate new methodologies for calculating impacts, the application of the thresholds in the regulatory context under applicable statutes (Marine Mammal Protection Act, Endangered Species Act, and National Marine Sanctuaries Act) remains consistent with past NOAA practice. It is important to note that these updated acoustic threshold levels do not represent the entirety of an impact assessment, but rather serve as one tool (in addition to behavioral impact thresholds, auditory masking assessments, evaluations to help understand the ultimate effects of any particular type of impact on an individual's fitness, population assessments, etc.), to help evaluate the effects of a proposed action on marine mammals and make findings required by our various statutes.

The document is classified as a Highly Influential Scientific Assessment by the Office of Management and Budget. As such, independent peer review is required prior to broad public dissemination by the Federal Government. NOAA conducted a peer review of the updated acoustic threshold levels. Details of the peer review can be found within this

document, and at the following Web site: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/acoustics/>.

A summary of the updated acoustic threshold levels can be found in the main body of the document and additional details are provided in the appendices. Section I provides an introduction to the document and a description of how NOAA addressed uncertainty and data limitations. NOAA's updated acoustic threshold levels for onset of PTS and TTS for marine mammals exposed to underwater sound are presented in Section II. Section III describes how acoustic threshold levels are interpreted under NOAA's statutes. NOAA's plan for periodically updating acoustic threshold levels is presented in Section IV. More details on the marine mammal auditory weighting functions, the development of acoustic threshold levels, the peer review process, and a glossary of acoustic terms can be found in the appendices.

NOAA particularly encourages the public to identify any additional datasets for inclusion in the assessment, and to comment on the appropriateness of the proposed accumulation period for the cumulative sound exposure metric and the proposed low-frequency auditory weighting function for which direct measurements of hearing sensitivity are not available.

Dated: December 19, 2013.

Alan D. Risenhoover,
*Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries,
performing the functions and duties of the
Deputy Assistant Administrator for
Regulatory Programs, National Marine
Fisheries Service.*

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XD049

New England Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

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

ACTION: Notice; public meeting.

SUMMARY: The New England Fishery Management Council (Council) is scheduling a joint public meeting of its Skate Oversight Committee and Skate Advisory Panel on January 15, 2014 to consider actions affecting New England fisheries in the exclusive economic zone

(EEZ). Recommendations from this group will be brought to the full Council for formal consideration and action, if appropriate.

DATES: This meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 15, 2014 at 9:30 a.m.

ADDRESSES: *Meeting address:* The meeting will be held at the Sheraton Harborside, 250 Market Street, Portsmouth, NH 03801; telephone: (603) 431-2300; fax: (603) 433-5649.

Council address: New England Fishery Management Council, 50 Water Street, Mill 2, Newburyport, MA 01950.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Thomas A. Nies, Executive Director, New England Fishery Management Council; telephone: (978) 465-0492.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Skate Oversight Committee and Advisory Panel will review Plan Development Team work on alternatives under consideration and impacts of these alternatives in Framework Adjustment 2 and select preferred alternatives. They will also have a preliminary discussion of the development of future actions for the Skate FMP that include addressing overfishing occurring on thorny skate as well as a discussion of establishing a control date for the wing fishery. Address other business as necessary.

Although non-emergency issues not contained in this agenda may come before this group for discussion, those issues may not be the subject of formal action during this meeting. Action will be restricted to those issues specifically listed in this notice and any issues arising after publication of this notice that require emergency action under section 305(c) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, provided the public has been notified of the Council's intent to take final action to address the emergency.

Special Accommodations

This meeting is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Thomas A. Nies, Executive Director, at (978) 465-0492, at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.

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

Dated: December 23, 2013.

Tracey L. Thompson,

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

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