

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. 23639 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: Amy Hapeman or Erin Markin, Ph.D., (301) 427-8401.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The subject modification to Permit No. 23639, issued on September 25, 2020 (85 FR 63524, October 8, 2020) is requested under the authority of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (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).

Permit No. 23639-01 authorizes the permit holder to study the behavior and distributions of green (*Chelonia mydas*), Kemp's ridley (*Lepidochelys kempii*), leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*), and loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*) sea turtles in U.S. waters from Maine through North Carolina. Researchers may capture sea turtles by dip or encirclement net, and perform the following procedures before release: morphometrics, photography, marking, a suite of biological sampling, and transmitter attachment. After release, animals may be temporarily tracked with an underwater remotely operated vehicle (ROV). Leatherbacks may be sighted and tracked by a manned aircraft for subsequent vessel-based research later in the same day involving remote attachment of a suction-cup tag, ROV tracking, and remote passive integrated transponder (PIT) tag scanning. Sea turtles may also be pursued during unsuccessful capture or remote tagging attempts. The permit holder requests authorization to: (1) increase the number of Kemp's ridley sea turtles captured from 15 to 30 annually; (2) increase the number of loggerhead sea turtles captured from 30 to 60 annually; (3) attach up to 2 transmitters (acoustic + satellite or camera tag) at a time on large hard-shelled turtles; and (4) add 2 satellite tag models as alternative tag unit options when tagging hard-shelled turtles. This modification would accommodate new funding to conduct sea turtle surveys

that would inform wind energy development in the Atlantic. The modification would be valid until the permit expires on September 30, 2030.

Dated: July 28, 2023.

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

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648-XD167]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Crab Rationalization Cost Recovery Program

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

ACTION: Notification of fee percentage.

SUMMARY: NMFS publishes notification of a 3 percent fee for cost recovery under the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Crab Rationalization Program. This action is intended to provide holders of crab allocations with the 2023/2024 crab fishing year fee percentage so they can calculate the required cost recovery fee payment, which must be submitted to NMFS by July 31, 2024.

DATES: The Crab Rationalization Program Registered Crab Receiver permit holder is responsible for submitting the fee liability payment to NMFS by July 31, 2024.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Amy Hadfield, (907) 586-7228.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

NMFS Alaska Region administers the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Crab Rationalization Program (Program) in the North Pacific. Fishing under the Program began on August 15, 2005. Regulations implementing the Program can be found at 50 CFR part 680.

The Program is a limited access privilege program authorized by section 313(j) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act). The Program includes a cost recovery provision to collect fees to recover the actual costs directly related to the management, data collection, and enforcement of the Program. The Program is consistent with

the cost recovery provisions included under section 304(d)(2)(A) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. NMFS developed the cost recovery regulations to conform to statutory requirements and to reimburse the agency for the actual costs directly related to the management, data collection, and enforcement of the Program. The cost recovery provision allows collection of 133 percent of the actual management, data collection, and enforcement costs not to exceed 3 percent of the ex-vessel value of crab harvested under the Program. The Program provides that a proportional share of fees charged will be forwarded to the State of Alaska for reimbursement of its share of management and data collection costs for the Program.

A crab allocation holder generally incurs a cost recovery fee liability for every pound of crab landed. Catcher vessel and processor quota shareholders split the cost recovery fees equally with each paying half, while catcher/processor quota shareholders pay the full fee percentage for crab processed at sea. The crab allocations subject to cost recovery include Individual Fishing Quota, Crew Individual Fishing Quota, Individual Processing Quota, Community Development Quota, and the Adak community allocation. The Registered Crab Receiver (RCR) permit holder must collect the fee liability from the crab allocation holder who is landing crab. Additionally, the RCR permit holder must collect their own fee liability for all crab delivered to the RCR. The RCR permit holder is responsible for submitting this payment to NMFS on or before July 31, in the year following the crab fishing year in which landings of crab were made.

The dollar amount of the fee due is determined by multiplying the fee percentage (not to exceed 3 percent) by the ex-vessel value of crab debited from the allocation. Program details may be found in the implementing regulations at 50 CFR 680.44.

Fee Percentage

Each year, NMFS calculates and publishes in the **Federal Register** the fee percentage according to the factors and methodology described at § 680.44(c)(2). The formula for determining the fee percentage is the "direct program costs" divided by "value of the fishery," where "direct program costs" are the direct program costs for the Program for the previous fiscal year, and "value of the fishery" is the ex-vessel value of the catch subject to the crab cost recovery fee liability for the current year. Fee collections for any given year may be less than or greater than the actual costs

and fishery value for that year, as regulations establish the fee percentage in the first quarter of the crab fishing year based on the fishery value and costs in the prior year.

According to the fee percentage formula described above, the estimated percentage of costs to value for the 2022/2023 fishery was 5.93 percent. As this is higher than the maximum fee percentage, the fee percentage will be 3 percent for the 2023/2024 crab fishing year. This is an increase by approximately 0.77 percentage points from the 2022/2023 crab fishing year fee percentage of 2.23 percent (87 FR 41292, July 12, 2022). Direct program costs for managing the fishery increased by approximately 10 percent from 2022/2023 to 2023/2024, while fishery value decreased by approximately 58 percent, resulting in the increased fee percentage. Similar to previous years, the largest direct Program costs were incurred by the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement and the State of Alaska Department of Fish and Game, respectively.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1862; Pub. L. 109–241; Pub. L. 109–479.

Dated: July 28, 2023.

Jennifer M. Wallace,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648–XD192]

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 of Authorization (LOA) has been issued to Anadarko Petroleum Corporation (Anadarko) for the take of marine

mammals incidental to geophysical survey activity in the Gulf of Mexico.

DATES: The LOA is effective from September 1, 2023, through August 31, 2024.

ADDRESSES: The LOA, LOA request, and supporting documentation are available online at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/action/incidental-take-authorization-oil-and-gas-industry-geophysical-survey-activity-gulf-mexico>. In case of problems accessing these documents, please call the contact listed below (see **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Rachel Wachtendonk, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, (301) 427–8401.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Sections 101(a)(5)(A) and (D) of the MMPA (16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*) direct the Secretary of Commerce to allow, upon request, the incidental, but not intentional, taking of small numbers of marine mammals by U.S. citizens who engage in a specified activity (other than commercial fishing) within a specified geographical region if certain findings are made and either regulations are issued or, if the taking is limited to harassment, a notice of a proposed authorization is provided to the public for review.

An authorization for incidental takings shall be granted if NMFS finds that the taking will have a negligible impact on the species or stock(s), will not have an unmitigable adverse impact on the availability of the species or stock(s) for subsistence uses (where relevant), and if the permissible methods of taking and requirements pertaining to the mitigation, monitoring and reporting of such takings are set forth. NMFS has defined “negligible impact” in 50 CFR 216.103 as an impact resulting from the specified activity that cannot be reasonably expected to, and is not reasonably likely to, adversely affect the species or stock through effects on annual rates of recruitment or survival.

Except with respect to certain activities not pertinent here, the MMPA defines “harassment” as: any act of pursuit, torment, or annoyance which (i) has the potential to injure a marine mammal or marine mammal stock in the wild (Level A harassment); or (ii) has the potential to disturb a marine mammal or marine mammal stock in the wild by causing disruption of behavioral patterns, including, but not limited to, migration, breathing, nursing, breeding, feeding, or sheltering (Level B harassment).

On January 19, 2021, we issued a final rule with regulations to govern the unintentional taking of marine mammals incidental to geophysical survey activities conducted by oil and gas industry operators, and those persons authorized to conduct activities on their behalf (collectively “industry operators”), in Federal waters of the U.S. Gulf of Mexico (GOM) over the course of 5 years (86 FR 5322, January 19, 2021). The rule was based on our findings that the total taking from the specified activities over the 5-year period will have a negligible impact on the affected species or stock(s) of marine mammals and will not have an unmitigable adverse impact on the availability of those species or stocks for subsistence uses. The rule became effective on April 19, 2021.

Our regulations at 50 CFR 217.180 *et seq.* allow for the issuance of LOAs to industry operators for the incidental take of marine mammals during geophysical survey activities and prescribe the permissible methods of taking and other means of effecting the least practicable adverse impact on marine mammal species or stocks and their habitat (often referred to as mitigation), as well as requirements pertaining to the monitoring and reporting of such taking. Under 50 CFR 217.186(e), issuance of an LOA shall be based on a determination that the level of taking will be consistent with the findings made for the total taking allowable under these regulations and a determination that the amount of take authorized under the LOA is of no more than small numbers.

Summary of Request and Analysis

Anadarko plans to conduct a 3-Dimensional (3D) ocean bottom node (OBN) survey in the Green Canyon protraction areas, around lease block GC 517. Approximate water depths of the survey area range from 1,000 to 1,500 meters (m). See section F of the LOA application for a map of the area.

Anadarko anticipates using a single source vessel, towing an airgun array consisting of 32 elements, with a total volume of 5,110 cubic inches (in³). Please see Anadarko's application for additional detail.

Consistent with the preamble to the final rule, the survey effort proposed by Anadarko in its LOA request was used to develop LOA-specific take estimates based on the acoustic exposure modeling results described in the preamble (86 FR 5398, January 19, 2021). In order to generate the appropriate take numbers for authorization, the following information was considered: (1) survey type; (2)