

Headquarters, Visitors Center, 149 Waquoit Highway, Waquoit, Massachusetts 02536.

The New Hampshire Coastal Management Program evaluation site visit will be held September 22–24, 2003. One public meeting will be held. The public meeting will be on Tuesday, September 23, 2003, at 7 p.m., Fish and Game Department Region 3 Meeting Room, 225 Main Street, Durham, New Hampshire 03824.

The Jacques Cousteau/Mullica River National Estuarine Research Reserve evaluation site visit will be held September 22–26, 2003. One public meeting will be held during the week. The public meeting will be on Tuesday, September 23, 2003, at 7 p.m., at the Jacques Cousteau Coastal Education Center, 182 Great Bay Boulevard, Tuckerton, New Jersey 08087.

Copies of states' most recent performance reports, as well as OCRM's notifications and supplemental request letters to the states, are available upon request from OCRM. Written comments from interested parties regarding these Programs are encouraged and will be accepted until 15 days after the last public meeting. Please direct written comments to Ralph Cantral, Chief, National Policy and Evaluation Division, Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management, NOS/NOAA, 1305 East-West Highway, 10th floor, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910. When the evaluations are completed, OCRM will place a notice in the **Federal Register** announcing the availability of the Final Evaluation Findings.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ralph Cantral, Chief, National Policy and Evaluation Division, Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management, NOS/NOAA, 1305 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910, (301) 713–3155, Extension 118.

Federal Domestic Assistance Catalog 11.419, Coastal Zone Management Program Administration

Dated: June 19, 2003.

Jamison S. Hawkins,

Deputy Assistant Administrator for Ocean Services and Coastal Zone Management.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 032603B]

Small Takes of Marine Mammals Incidental to Specified Activities; Taking of California Sea Lions, Pacific Harbor Seals and Northern Elephant Seals Incidental to Research Surveys at San Nicolas Island, Ventura County, CA

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

ACTION: Notice of receipt of application and proposed authorization for a small take exemption; request for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS has received an application from Glenn R. VanBlaricom for an Incidental Harassment Authorization (IHA) to take small numbers of marine mammals, by harassment, incidental to the assessment of black abalone populations at San Nicolas Island (SNI), CA. Under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), NMFS is requesting comments on its proposal to issue a small take authorization to Dr. VanBlaricom for 1 year, renewable upon request on an annual basis.

DATES: Comments and information must be received no later than July 25, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Comments on the application should be addressed to Chief, Marine Mammal Conservation Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910–3225. A copy of the application may be obtained by writing to this address or by telephoning one of the contacts listed here. Comments cannot be accepted if submitted via e-mail or the Internet.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Sarah Hagedorn, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, (301) 713–2322, ext 117; or Christina Fahy, Southwest Regional Office, NMFS, (562) 980–4023.

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 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.

Permission may be granted if NMFS finds that the taking will have a negligible impact on the species or stock(s) and will not have an unmitigable adverse impact on the availability of the species or stock(s) for subsistence uses and that the permissible methods of taking and requirements pertaining to the 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.”

Subsection 101(a)(5)(D) of the MMPA established an expedited process by which citizens of the United States can apply for an authorization to incidentally take small numbers of marine mammals by harassment. Under Section 3(18)(A), 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; 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.

The term “Level A harassment” means harassment described in subparagraph (A)(i). The term “Level B harassment” means harassment described in subparagraph (A)(ii).

Subsection 101(a)(5)(D) establishes a 45-day time limit for NMFS review of an application followed by a 30-day public notice and comment period on any proposed authorizations for the incidental harassment of small numbers of marine mammals. Within 45 days of the close of the comment period, NMFS must either issue or deny issuance of the authorization.

Summary of Request

On January 9, 2003, NMFS received a letter from Glenn R. VanBlaricom, Ph.D., Washington Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, requesting an IHA for the possible harassment of small numbers of California sea lions (*Zalophus californianus*), Pacific harbor seals (*Phoca vitulina*), and northern elephant seals (*Mirounga angustirostris*) incidental to research surveys performed for the purpose of assessing trends over time in black abalone populations at permanent study sites.