

were females. Of those 2,460 processed for LAL, 200 female crabs were measured (inter-ocular distances and prosoma widths), weighed, aged, and tagged to establish baseline morphometrics and ages, prior to being released. An additional 225 female bled animals were tagged for a total of 425 animals or 17.3 percent. The average measurements for the female horseshoe crabs were 167.69 mm for the inter-ocular distance (161.64 mm in 2005); 268.74 mm for the prosoma width (260.4 mm in 2005); and 2.51 kg for the weight (2.08 kg in 2005). The most common encrusting organism observed this year was the slipper shell. Sand tube worms were also noted on many of the animals. Only one crab had a barnacle and bryozoans were not found on any of the shells. It should be noted that many organisms may be removed during the washing/cleaning process prior to blood collection.

Horseshoe crabs were aged in 2006 using Dr. Carl N. Schuster Jr.'s criteria of aging by appearance: female horseshoe crabs - virgin (1.5 percent), young (7.0 percent), young-medium (11.5 percent), medium (75 percent); medium-old (4.5 percent); and old (0.5 percent). Last year's percentages showed the majority of crabs were virgins (65 percent), while this year the majority were medium age (75 percent). This may have occurred because the horseshoe crab specimens were trawled off the coast of Sea Isle City, New Jersey and later in the season than in 2005. The specimens studied last year were trawled in deeper waters off Ocean City, Maryland in August and early September.

In 2006, a total of 425 horseshoe crabs from the Reserve were tagged and released at the water's edge on Highs Beach, New Jersey. The beach was checked frequently, following release, to ensure the crabs had returned to the water. Sixteen live recoveries occurred; two animals from 2003 releases, two from 2004 and 12 from the 2005 releases. Thirteen of the recaptures were observed along the shores of Delaware Bay. Three horseshoe crabs migrated to the Atlantic Ocean. One was observed on the beach in Avalon, New Jersey, another within the Great Bay Inlet, New Jersey and the third crab was found in deep water off the coast of Ocean City, Maryland.

Data collected under the EFP were supplied to NMFS, the Commission, and the State of New Jersey.

Proposed 2006 EFP

Limuli Laboratories proposes to conduct an exempted fishery operation using the same means, methods, and

seasons utilized during the EFPs in 2001–2006, as described below under terms and conditions. Limuli proposes to continue to tag 15 percent of the bled horseshoe crabs as they did in 2006.

The proposed EFP would exempt three commercial vessels from regulations at 50 CFR 697.7(e), which prohibit fishing for horseshoe crabs in the Reserve under § 697.23(f)(1) and prohibit possession of horseshoe crabs on a vessel with a trawl or dredge gear aboard in the same Reserve.

Limuli Laboratories, in cooperation with the State of New Jersey's Division of Fish and Wildlife, submitted an application for an EFP on June 16, 2007. NMFS has made a preliminary determination that the subject EFP contains all the required information and warrants further consideration. NMFS has also made a preliminary determination that the activities authorized under the EFP would be consistent with the goals and objectives of the Federal horseshoe crab regulations and the Commission's Horseshoe Crab ISFMP.

Regulations at 50 CFR 600.745(b)(3)(v) authorize NMFS to attach terms and conditions to the EFP consistent with: the purpose of the exempted fishery, the objectives of horseshoe crab regulations and fisheries management plan, and other applicable law. NMFS is considering adding the following terms and conditions to the EFP:

1. Limiting the number of horseshoe crabs collected in the Reserve to no more than 500 crabs per day and to a total of no more than 10,000 crabs per year;
2. Requiring collections to take place over a total of approximately 20 days during the months of July, August, September, October, and November. Horseshoe crabs are readily available in harvestable concentrations nearshore earlier in the year, and offshore in the Reserve from July through November;
3. Requiring that a 5 1/2 inch (14.0 cm) flounder net be used by the vessel to collect the horseshoe crabs. This condition would allow for continuation of traditional harvest gear and adds to the consistency in the way horseshoe crabs are harvested for data collection;
4. Limiting trawl tow times to 30 minutes as a conservation measure to protect sea turtles, which are expected to be migrating through the area during the collection period, and are vulnerable to bottom trawling;
5. Restricting the hours of fishing to daylight hours only, approximately from 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. to aid law enforcement. NMFS also is considering a requirement that the State of New Jersey Law Enforcement be notified

daily as to when and where the collection will take place;

6. Requiring that the collected horseshoe crabs be picked up from the fishing vessels at docks in the Cape May Area and transported to local laboratories, bled for LAL, and released alive the following morning into the Lower Delaware Bay; and

7. Requiring that any turtle take be reported to NMFS, NERO Assistant Regional Administrator of Protected Resources Division (phone, (978) 281–9328) within 24 hours of returning from the trip in which the incidental take occurred.

Also as part of the terms and conditions of the EFP, for all horseshoe crabs bled for LAL, NMFS is considering a requirement that the EFP holder provide data on sex ratio and daily numbers, and tag 15 percent of the horseshoe crabs harvested. Also, the EFP holder may be required to examine at least 200 horseshoe crabs for: morphometric data, by sex (e.g., interocular (I/O) distance and weight), and level of activity, as measured by a response or by distance traveled after release on a beach.

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

Dated: June 27, 2007.

Alan D. Risenhoover,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648–XB08

Marine Mammals; File Nos. 808–1735 and 1058–1733

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

ACTION: Notice; issuance of permits.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that Andrew Read, Ph.D., Duke University Marine Laboratory, 135 Pivers Island Road, Beaufort, North Carolina 28516 and Mark Baumgartner, Ph.D., MS #33, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute, Woods Hole, Massachusetts, 02543 have been issued permits to conduct research on humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*), blue whales (*Balaenoptera musculus*), fin whales (*Balaenoptera physalus*), sei whales (*Balaenoptera borealis*), and Antarctic minke whales (*Balaenoptera bonaerensis*).

ADDRESSES: The permit and related documents are available for review upon written request or by appointment in the following office(s): Permits, Conservation and Education Division, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13705, Silver Spring, MD 20910; phone (301)713-2289; fax (301)427-2521; Southwest Region, NMFS, 501 West Ocean Blvd., Suite 4200, Long Beach, CA 90802-4213; phone (562)980-4001; fax (562)980-4018; and Northeast Region, NMFS, One Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930-2298; phone (978)281-9300; fax (978)281-9394.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Amy Hapeman or Jaclyn Daly, (301)713-2289.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On April 7, 2004, notice was published in the *Federal Register* (69 FR 18357) that requests for scientific research permits to take the species identified above had been submitted by the above-named individuals. The requested permits have been issued under the authority of the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*), the regulations governing the taking and importing of marine mammals (50 CFR part 216), the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA; 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. 808-1735, issued to Dr. Andrew Read, allows for the take of humpback, blue, fin, sei, and Antarctic minke whales in the Southern Ocean to examine their foraging behavior relative to krill patches. The permit authorizes the close approach of up to 295 humpback whales and 65 of each species of blue, fin, sei, and Antarctic minke whales annually during vessel surveys for photo-identification, behavioral observation, tracking, and incidental harassment. Of these animals, up to 45 humpbacks and 15 of each species of blue, fin, sei, and Antarctic minke whales may be suction-cup tagged annually during surveys. The permit is issued for five years.

Permit No. 1058-1733, issued to Dr. Baumgartner, allows for the take of baleen whale to examine aspects of foraging and diving behaviors in the Southern Ocean as well as to determine the overlap of diving behaviors with the vertical structure of fixed fishing gear in the North Atlantic Ocean. In the Southern Ocean, researchers may closely approach up to 324 of each species of humpback, blue, fin, sei, and Antarctic minke whales annually during

vessel surveys for photo-identification, behavioral observation, tracking, and incidental harassment. Of these animals, up to 108 of each species may be suction-cup tagged annually during surveys. In the North Atlantic, researchers may closely approach up to 324 of each species of humpback, fin, and sei whales annually during vessel surveys for photo-identification, behavioral observation, tracking, and incidental harassment. Of these animals, up to 108 of each species may be suction-cup tagged annually during surveys. The permit is issued for five years.

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), an environmental assessment was prepared analyzing the effects of the permitted activities. After a Finding of No Significant Impact, the determination was made that it was not necessary to prepare an environmental impact statement.

Issuance of the permits, as required by the ESA, was based on a finding that such permits: (1) Were applied for in good faith; (2) will not operate to the disadvantage of such endangered species; and (3) are consistent with the purposes and policies set forth in section 2 of the ESA.

Dated: June 27, 2007.

P. Michael Payne,

Chief, Permits, Conservation and Education Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 050107L]

Incidental Takes of Marine Mammals Incidental to Specified Activities; Low-Energy Marine Seismic Survey in the Northeastern Indian Ocean

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

ACTION: Notice; issuance of incidental harassment authorization.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) regulations, notification is hereby given that NMFS has issued an Incidental Harassment Authorization (IHA) to Scripps Institute of Oceanography (SIO) for the take of marine mammals, by Level B harassment only, incidental to

conducting a low-energy marine seismic survey in the northeastern Indian Ocean during summer 2007.

DATES: Effective from June 20, 2007, through August 31, 2007.

ADDRESSES: A copy of the IHA and the application are available by writing to Michael Payne, Chief, Permits, Conservation, and Education Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910-3225, or by telephoning the contact listed here. A copy of the application containing a list of references used in this document may be obtained by writing to this address, by telephoning the contact listed here (*FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT*) or online at: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/permits/incidental.htm>. Documents cited in this notice may be viewed, by appointment, during regular business hours, at the aforementioned address.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jolie Harrison, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, (301) 713-2289, ext 166.

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.

Authorization 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."

Section 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