

Dated: December 23, 2019.

**Tracey L. Thompson,**

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

[FR Doc. 2019-28201 Filed 12-30-19; 8:45 am]

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648-XV161]

#### Fisheries of the Atlantic; Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review (SEDAR); Public Meeting

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

**ACTION:** Notice of SEDAR 65 Pre-Assessment Webinar for highly migratory species Atlantic Blacktip Shark.

**SUMMARY:** The SEDAR 65 assessment of the Atlantic stock of Blacktip Shark will consist of a series of workshops and webinars: Data Workshop; Assessment Webinars; and a Review workshop.

**DATES:** The SEDAR 65-Pre-assessment Webinar has been scheduled for Thursday, February 13, 2020, from 12 p.m. until 3 p.m., EST.

#### ADDRESSES:

**Meeting address:** The meeting will be held via webinar. The webinar is open to members of the public. Registration is available online at: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/8955867858539392267>.

**SEDAR address:** South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, 4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201, N Charleston, SC 29405; [www.sedarweb.org](http://www.sedarweb.org).

#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Kathleen Howington, SEDAR Coordinator, 4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201, North Charleston, SC 29405; phone: (843) 571-4366; email: [Kathleen.Howington@safmc.net](mailto:Kathleen.Howington@safmc.net).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, and Caribbean Fishery Management Councils, in conjunction with NOAA Fisheries and the Atlantic and Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commissions, have implemented the Southeast Data, Assessment and Review (SEDAR) process, a multi-step method for determining the status of fish stocks in the Southeast Region. SEDAR is a three-step process including: (1) Data Workshop; (2) Assessment Process utilizing webinars; and (3) Review

Workshop. The product of the Data Workshop is a data report which compiles and evaluates potential datasets and recommends which datasets are appropriate for assessment analyses. The product of the Assessment Process is a stock assessment report which describes the fisheries, evaluates the status of the stock, estimates biological benchmarks, projects future population conditions, and recommends research and monitoring needs. The assessment is independently peer reviewed at the Review Workshop. The product of the Review Workshop is a Summary documenting panel opinions regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the stock assessment and input data. Participants for SEDAR Workshops are appointed by the Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, and Caribbean Fishery Management Councils and NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office, Highly Migratory Species Management Division, and Southeast Fisheries Science Center. Participants include: Data collectors and database managers; stock assessment scientists, biologists, and researchers; constituency representatives including fishermen, environmentalists, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs); international experts; and staff of Councils, Commissions, and state and federal agencies.

The items of discussion at the Pre-Assessment webinar are as follows:

- Introduce and discuss model development, model set up, and follow up questions from the data workshop report.

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 identified in this notice and any issues arising after publication of this notice that require emergency action under section 305(c) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, provided the public has been notified of the intent to take final action to address the emergency.

#### Special Accommodations

This meeting is accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for auxiliary aids should be directed to the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council office (see **ADDRESSES**) at least 5 business days prior to the meeting.

**Note:** The times and sequence specified in this agenda are subject to change.

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

Dated: December 23, 2019.

**Tracey L. Thompson,**

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

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648-XQ006]

#### Whaling Provisions; Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling Quotas

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

**ACTION:** Notice; notification of quota for bowhead whales.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS notifies the public of the aboriginal subsistence whaling quota for bowhead whales that it has assigned to the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission (AEWC), and of limitations on the use of the quota deriving from regulations of the International Whaling Commission (IWC). For 2020, the quota is 93 bowhead whales struck. This quota and other applicable limitations govern the harvest of bowhead whales by members of the AEWC.

**DATES:** Effective December 31, 2019.

**ADDRESSES:** Office for International Affairs and Seafood Inspection, National Marine Fisheries Service, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Kristin Rusello, (301) 427-8376.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** Aboriginal subsistence whaling in the United States is governed by the Whaling Convention Act (WCA) (16 U.S.C. 916 *et seq.*). Under the WCA, IWC regulations shall generally become effective with respect to all persons and vessels subject to the jurisdiction of the United States, within 90 days of notification from the IWC Secretariat of an amendment to the IWC Schedule (16 U.S.C. 916k). Regulations that implement the WCA, found at 50 CFR 230.6, require the Secretary of Commerce (Secretary) to publish, at least annually, aboriginal subsistence whaling quotas and any other limitations on aboriginal subsistence whaling deriving from regulations of the IWC.

At the 67th Meeting of the IWC, the Commission set catch limits for aboriginal subsistence use of bowhead whales from the Bering-Chukchi-Beaufort Seas stock. The bowhead and

other aboriginal subsistence whaling catch limits were based on a joint request by Denmark on behalf of Greenland, the Russian Federation, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and the United States, accompanied by documentation concerning the needs of the Native groups.

The IWC set a seven-year block catch limit of 392 bowhead whales landed. For each of the years 2019 through 2025, the number of bowhead whales struck may not exceed 67, with unused strikes from the three prior quota blocks carried forward and added to the annual strike quota of subsequent years, provided that no more than 50 percent of the annual strike limit is added to the strike quota for any one year. At the end of the 2019 harvest, there were 33 unused strikes available for carry-forward, so the combined strike quota set by the IWC for 2020 is 100 (67 + 33).

An arrangement between the United States and the Russian Federation ensures that the total quota of bowhead whales landed and struck in 2020 will not exceed the limits set by the IWC. Under this arrangement, the Russian natives may use no more than seven strikes, and the Alaska natives may use no more than 93 strikes.

Through its cooperative agreement with the AEW, NOAA has assigned 93 strikes to the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission. The AEW will in turn allocate these strikes among the 11 villages whose cultural and subsistence needs have been documented, and will ensure that its hunters use no more than 93 strikes.

At its 67th Meeting, the IWC also provided for automatic renewal of aboriginal subsistence whaling catch limits under certain circumstances. Commencing in 2026, bowhead whale catch limits shall be extended every six years provided: (a) The IWC Scientific Committee advises in 2024, and every six years thereafter, that such limits will not harm the stock; (b) the Commission does not receive a request from the United States or the Russian Federation for a change in the bowhead whale catch limits based on need; and (c) the Commission determines that the United States and the Russian Federation have complied with the IWC's approved timeline and that the information provided represents a status quo continuation of the hunts.

#### Other Limitations

The IWC regulations, as well as the NOAA regulation at 50 CFR 230.4(c), forbid the taking of calves or any whale accompanied by a calf.

NOAA regulations (at 50 CFR 230.4) contain a number of other prohibitions

relating to aboriginal subsistence whaling, some of which are summarized here:

- Only licensed whaling captains or crew under the control of those captains may engage in whaling;
- Captains and crew must follow the provisions of the relevant cooperative agreement between NOAA and a Native American whaling organization;
- The aboriginal hunters must have adequate crew, supplies, and equipment to engage in an efficient operation;
- Crew may not receive money for participating in the hunt;
- No person may sell or offer for sale whale products from whales taken in the hunt, except for authentic articles of Native American handicrafts; and
- Captains may not continue to whale after the relevant quota is taken, after the season has been closed, or if their licenses have been suspended. They may not engage in whaling in a wasteful manner.

Dated: December 23, 2019.

**Alexa Cole,**

*Director, Office for International Affairs and Seafood Inspection, National Marine Fisheries Service.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648-XR059]

#### Takes of Marine Mammals Incidental to Specified Activities; Taking Marine Mammals Incidental to Elkhorn Slough Tidal Marsh Restoration Project, Phase II in California

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

**ACTION:** Notice; proposed incidental harassment authorization; request for comments on proposed authorization and possible renewal.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS has received a request from California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) for authorization to take marine mammals incidental to Elkhorn Slough Tidal Marsh Restoration Project, Phase II in California. Pursuant to the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), NMFS is requesting comments on its proposal to issue an incidental harassment authorization (IHA) to incidentally take marine mammals during the specified activities. NMFS is also requesting comments on a possible one-year renewal that could be issued

under certain circumstances and if all requirements are met, as described in *Request for Public Comments* at the end of this notice. NMFS will consider public comments prior to making any final decision on the issuance of the requested MMPA authorizations and agency responses will be summarized in the final notice of our decision.

**DATES:** Comments and information must be received no later than January 30, 2020.

**ADDRESSES:** Comments should be addressed to Jolie Harrison, Chief, Permits and Conservation Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service. Physical comments should be sent to 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910 and electronic comments should be sent to [ITP.Bonnie.DeJoseph@noaa.gov](mailto:ITP.Bonnie.DeJoseph@noaa.gov).

*Instructions:* NMFS is not responsible for comments sent by any other method, to any other address or individual, or received after the end of the comment period. Comments received electronically, including all attachments, must not exceed a 25-megabyte file size. Attachments to electronic comments will be accepted in Microsoft Word or Excel or Adobe PDF file formats only. All comments received are a part of the public record and will generally be posted online at <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/permit/incidental-take-authorizations-under-marine-mammal-protection-act> without change. All personal identifying information (e.g., name, address) voluntarily submitted by the commenter may be publicly accessible. Do not submit confidential business information or otherwise sensitive or protected information.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Bonnie DeJoseph, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, (301) 427-8401. Electronic copies of the application and supporting documents, as well as a list of the references cited in this document, may be obtained online at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/permit/incidental-take-authorizations-under-marine-mammal-protection-act>. In case of problems accessing these documents, please call the contact listed above.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

##### Background

The MMPA prohibits the “take” of marine mammals, with certain exceptions. Sections 101(a)(5)(A) and (D) of the MMPA (16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*) direct the Secretary of Commerce (as delegated to NMFS) to allow, upon request, the incidental, but not intentional, taking of small numbers of marine mammals by U.S. citizens who