

number of animals affected and the nature of the impacts.

#### ESA

Under section 7 of the ESA, NSF and the NMFS, Office of Protected Resources (OPR), Division of Permits, Conservation, and Education have consulted with the NMFS, OPR, Endangered Species Division regarding take of ESA-listed species during this activity and as a result of the issuance of an IHA under section 101(a)(5)(D) of the MMPA for this activity. In a Biological Opinion (BO), NMFS concluded that the 2006 SIO seismic survey in the ETP and the issuance of the associated IHA are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of threatened or endangered species under the jurisdiction of NMFS or destroy or adversely modify any designated critical habitat. NMFS has issued an incidental take statement (ITS) for sperm whales, blue whales, green sea turtles, leatherback turtles, and olive ridley sea turtles, which contains reasonable and prudent measures with implementing terms and conditions to minimize the effects of this take. The terms and conditions of the BO have been incorporated into the SIO IHA.

#### National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

In 2003, NSF prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) for a marine seismic survey by the R/V *Maurice Ewing* in the Hess Deep Area of the ETP. This EA addressed the potential effects of a larger airgun array (10 airguns, total volume 3005 in<sup>3</sup> (49,243 cm<sup>3</sup>)) being operated in the same part of the ocean as is proposed for the R/V *Roger Revelle* in this application. In a Supplemental EA, NMFS reanalyzed the impacts addressed in NSF's 2003 EA as they relate to the issuance of an IHA to SIO in 2006 for their seismic survey of the ETP, and, subsequently, issued a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) on the supplemental EA. Therefore, preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement on this action is not required by section 102(2) of the NEPA or its implementing regulations. A copy of the Supplemental EA and FONSI are available upon request (see **ADDRESSES**).

#### Conclusions

NMFS has determined that the impact of SIO's conducting the seismic survey in the ETP may result, at worst, in a temporary modification in behavior (Level B Harassment) by certain species of marine mammals. This activity is expected to result in no more than a

negligible impact on the affected species or stocks of marine mammals.

For reasons stated previously in this document, this determination is supported by: (1) the likelihood that, given sufficient notice through relatively slow ship speed and ramp-up, marine mammals are expected to move away from a noise source that is annoying prior to its becoming potentially injurious; (2) the fact that marine mammals would have to be closer than 54 m (177 ft) from the vessel to be exposed to levels of sound (180 dB or 190 dB for cetaceans and pinnipeds, respectively) believed to have even a minimal chance of causing TTS, and (3) the likelihood that marine mammal detection ability by trained observers is close to 100 percent during daytime and remains high at night to that distance from the seismic vessel. As a result, no take by injury or death is anticipated, and the potential for temporary or permanent hearing impairment is very low and will be avoided through the incorporation of the proposed mitigation measures mentioned in this document.

NMFS has determined that small numbers of 13 species of cetaceans may be taken by Level B harassment. While the number of incidental harassment takes will depend on the distribution and abundance of marine mammals in the vicinity of the survey activity, the estimated number of potential harassment takings is not expected to be greater than 1.29 percent of the population of any of the stocks affected (see Table 1). In addition, the SIO seismic program will not interfere with any legal subsistence hunts, since seismic operations will not be conducted in the same space and time as the hunts in subsistence whaling and sealing areas and will not adversely affect marine mammals used for subsistence purposes has issued an IHA to SIO for conducting a low-intensity oceanographic seismic survey in the ETP, provided the previously mentioned mitigation, monitoring, and reporting requirements are incorporated. NMFS has determined that the proposed SIO activity would result in the harassment of small numbers of marine mammals; would have no more than a negligible impact on the affected marine mammal stocks; and would not have an unmitigable adverse impact on the availability of species or stocks for subsistence uses.

#### Authorization

NMFS has issued a 1-year IHA to SIO for the take, by harassment, of small numbers of marine mammals incidental to conducting a low-intensity

oceanographic seismic survey in the ETP.

Dated: March 9, 2006.

**Donna Wieting,**

*Deputy Director, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.*  
[FR Doc. 06-2884 Filed 3-23-06; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3510-22-C**

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 022706B]

#### Taking and Importing Marine Mammals; Taking Marine Mammals Incidental to Rocket Launches at Vandenberg Air Force Base, CA

**AGENCY:** National Marine Fisheries Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Commerce.

**ACTION:** Notice; issuance of a Letter of Authorization.

**SUMMARY:** In accordance with the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) and implementing regulations, notification is hereby given that a 1-year letter of authorization (LOA) has been issued to the 30th Space Wing, U.S. Air Force, to harass seals and sea lions incidental to rocket and missile launches on Vandenberg Air Force Base (VAFB), California.

**DATES:** Effective March 17, 2006, through March 16, 2007.

**ADDRESSES:** The LOA and supporting documentation are available by writing to Steve Leathery, Chief, Permits, Conservation, and Education Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910-3225, by telephoning one of the contacts listed here (see **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 and at the Southwest Region, NMFS, 501 West Ocean Boulevard, Suite 4200, Long Beach, CA 90802.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Jolie Harrison, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, (301) 713-2289, or Monica DeAngelis, NMFS, (562) 980-4023.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

##### Background

Section 101(a)(5)(A) of the MMPA (16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*) directs the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to

allow, on 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 regulations are issued. Under the MMPA, the term "taking" means to harass, hunt, capture, or kill or to attempt to harass, hunt, capture or kill marine mammals.

Authorization may be granted for periods up to 5 years if NMFS finds, after notification and opportunity for public comment, that the taking will have a negligible impact on the species or stock(s) of marine mammals and will not have an unmitigable adverse impact on the availability of the species or stock(s) for subsistence uses. In addition, NMFS must prescribe regulations that include permissible methods of taking and other means effecting the least practicable adverse

impact on the species and its habitat and on the availability of the species for subsistence uses, paying particular attention to rookeries, mating grounds, and areas of similar significance. The regulations must include requirements for monitoring and reporting of such taking.

Regulations governing the taking of harbor seals, northern elephant seals, California sea lions, and northern fur seals, by harassment, incidental to missile and rocket launches, aircraft flight test operations, and helicopter operations at VAFB, were issued on February 06, 2004 (69 FR 5720), and remain in effect until February 06, 2009. For detailed information on this action, please refer to that document. These regulations include mitigation, monitoring, and reporting requirements for the incidental taking of marine mammals during rocket launches at VAFB.

### Summary of Request

NMFS received a request for an LOA pursuant to the aforementioned regulations that would authorize, for a period not to exceed one year, take of marine mammals, by harassment, incidental to rocket launches at VAFB.

### Summary of Activity and Monitoring Under the Current LOA

In compliance with the 2005 LOA, VAFB submitted an annual report on the rocket launches at VAFB. A summary of that report (SRS Technologies, 2006) follows.

A total of eight launches were conducted at VAFB between January 1, 2005, and December 31, 2006. The dates, locations, and monitoring required for the launches are summarized in Table 1.

TABLE 1. SUMMARY OF LAUNCHES THAT OCCURRED AT VAFB IN 2005

| Vehicle         | Date   | Time  | Launch Site | Monitoring Conducted              |
|-----------------|--------|-------|-------------|-----------------------------------|
| Minotaur XSS-11 | 11-Apr | 6:35  | SLC-8       | South VAFB.                       |
| Delta II NOAA-N | 20-May | 3:22  | SLC-2       | North VAFB and San Miguel Island. |
| Minuteman III   | 21-Jul | 1:01  | NVAFB       | No.                               |
| Minuteman III   | 25-Aug | 1:01  | NVAFB       | No.                               |
| Minuteman III   | 7-Sep  | 1:01  | NVAFB       | No.                               |
| Minuteman III   | 14-Sep | 1:01  | NVAFB       | No.                               |
| Minotaur STP-R1 | 22-Sep | 19:24 | SLC-8       | No.                               |
| Titan IV B-26   | 19-Oct | 11:05 | SLC-4E      | San Miguel Island.                |

For all four Minuteman III and the one Minotaur STP, launches occurred outside of the harbor seal pupping season and a sonic boom of greater than 1 lbs/ft<sup>2</sup> (psf) was not predicted to occur at San Miguel Island (SMI) as a result of the launch, so biological monitoring was not required or conducted. With the exception of the Delta II, acoustic measurements of all of the vehicles launched in 2005 had previously been taken, and were not required or conducted again.

Though no sonic boom greater than 1 psf was predicted at SMI, the Minotaur XSS-11 was launched during the harbor seal pupping season, and therefore monitoring was required at VAFB. Monitoring was conducted between the Harbor Seal Beach and Flat Iron Rock haul-out sites on South VAFB. Though it was too foggy to see the behavior of the seals present at the moment the rocket was launched, the same number of adult seals and pups were present at the site 3.5 hours after the launch as were present the day prior to the launch, and numbers increased the next day, and were higher again 2 weeks

later. In the days immediately surrounding the launch, a maximum of 25 adult seals and 16 pups were observed.

The Delta II NOAA-N was launched during harbor seal pupping season and a sonic boom greater than 1 psf was predicted to reach SMI, so monitoring was required at SMI and VAFB. On North VAFB, at the Spur Road haul-out site, harbor seal numbers increased the day after the launch and were higher again two weeks later. In the days immediately surrounding the launch, a maximum of 52 adult seals were observed. In the Adam's Cove area of Point Bennett on the western end of SMI, two smaller focal groups of California sea lions composed primarily of adult females were observed. The observer did not hear a sonic boom and saw no visible reaction to the launch by the sea lions (with night vision goggles). In the days immediately surrounding the launch, a maximum of 625 adult sea lions were observed. Similarly, no reaction by elephant seals to the launch was observed at Point Bennett, and the maximum number seen was 256.

A sonic boom greater than 1 psf was predicted to occur at SMI during the Titan IV B-26 launch, however, it occurred outside of the harbor seal pupping season, so no monitoring was required at VAFB. A smaller focal group of California sea lions was monitored at the North-West Cove area of Point Bennett on SMI. The observer did not hear a sonic boom (and acoustic measurements indicated no sonic boom impacted SMI) and saw no visible reaction to the launch by the sea lions. A maximum of 3,157 sea lions (mostly juveniles) were seen in the days surrounding the launch.

In summary, no impacts to any marine mammals on SMI were detected during the launches. On VAFB, there was no evidence of injury or mortality as a result of the launches and numbers of hauled out animals were back to pre-launch levels within one day of both launches monitored.

### Authorization

Accordingly, NMFS has issued an LOA to the 30th Space Wing, U.S. Air Force authorizing the harassment of

marine mammals incidental to rocket launches at VAFB. Issuance of this LOA is based on findings, described in the preamble to the final rule (67 FR 5720, February 6, 2004) and supported by information contained in VAFB's required 2005 annual report, that the activities described under this LOA will have no more than a negligible impact on marine mammal stocks and will not have an unmitigable adverse impact on the availability of the affected marine mammal stocks for subsistence uses.

Dated: March 20, 2006.

**James H. Lecky,**

*Director, Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.*

[FR Doc. E6-4321 Filed 3-23-06; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3510-22-S**

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### Technology Administration

#### Technology Administration Performance Review Board Membership

The Technology Administration Performance Review Board (TA PRB) reviews performance appraisals, agreements, and recommended actions pertaining to employees in the Senior Executive Service and reviews performance-related pay increases for ST-3104 employees. The Board makes recommendations to the appropriate appointing authority concerning such matters so as to ensure the fair and equitable treatment of these individuals.

This notice lists the membership of the TA PRB and supersedes the list published in **Federal Register** Vol. 70, No. 158, pages 48374-48375, on August 17, 2005.

Bruce Borzino (C), Deputy Director, National Technical Information Service, Springfield, VA 22161, Appointment Expires: 12/31/2008, General.

Alan Cookson (C) (Alternate), Deputy Director, Electronics and Electrical Engineering Laboratory, National Institute of Standards and Technology, Gaithersburg, MD 20899, Appointment Expires: 12/31/07, Limited.

Paul Doremus (C), Director of Strategic Planning, Program Planning and Integration, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Silver Spring, MD 20910, Appointment Expires: 12/31/07, Limited.

Cita Furlani (C), Chief Information Officer, National Institute of Standards & Technology, Gaithersburg, MD 20899, Appointment Expires: 12/31/07, Limited.

Patrick Gallagher (C) (Alternate), Director, NIST Center for Neutron

Research, Materials Science and Engineering Laboratory, National Institute of Standards and Technology, Gaithersburg, MD 20899, Appointment Expires: 12/31/07, Limited.

Howard Harary (C), Deputy Director, Manufacturing Engineering Laboratory, National Institute of Standards and Technology, Gaithersburg, MD 20899, Appointment Expires: 12/31/07, Limited.

Patricia Sefcik (C), Senior Director to the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Manufacturing, Manufacturing and Services, International Trade Administration, Washington, DC 20230, Appointment Expires: 12/31/07, General.

Hratch Semerjian (C), Deputy Director, National Institute of Standards and Technology, Gaithersburg, MD 20899, Appointment Expires: 12/31/2008, General.

Dated: March 20, 2006.

**William Jeffrey,**

*Director, National Institute of Standards and Technology, Technology Administration, Department of Commerce.*

[FR Doc. E6-4225 Filed 3-23-06; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3510-22-P**

## DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

### Office of the Secretary

#### Defense Department Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACO WITS); Cancellation of Meeting

**AGENCY:** Department of Defense.

**ACTION:** Notice.

**SUMMARY:** Notice is hereby given of the cancellation of the Defense Department Advisory Committee on Women in the Services business meeting, March 27, 2006, 8:30 a.m. to March 29, 2006, 5 p.m., Embassy Suites Hotel Crystal City—National Airport, 1300 Jefferson Davis Highway, Arlington, VA 22202 which was published in the **Federal Register** on March 14, 2006, 71 FR 13108-13109. The meeting was cancelled due to a lack of quorum.

Dated: March 20, 2006.

**L.M. Bynum,**

*Alternate OSD Federal Register Liaison Officer, DoD.*

[FR Doc. 06-2855 Filed 3-23-06; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 5001-06-M**

## DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

### Department of the Air Force

#### HQ USAF Scientific Advisory Board; Notice of Meeting

**AGENCY:** Department of the Air Force, HQ USAF Scientific Advisory Board.

**ACTION:** Notice of meeting.

**SUMMARY:** Pursuant to Public Law 92-463, notice is hereby given of the forthcoming meeting of the Air Force Scientific Advisory Board. The purpose of the meeting is to present the findings/results of the FY 2006 Technology Options for Improved Air Vehicle Fuel Efficiency quick look study to the assembled SAB. Because contractor-proprietary information will be discussed, this meeting will be closed to the public.

**DATES:** April 10, 2006.

**ADDRESSES:** 221 N. Rampart Boulevard, Las Vegas, NV 89145.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Lt Col Kyle Gresham, Air Force Scientific Advisory Board Secretariat, 1180 Air Force Pentagon, Rm 5D982, Washington DC 20330-1180, (703) 697-4811.

**Bao-Anh Trinh,**

*Air Force Federal Register Liaison Officer.*

[FR Doc. E6-4263 Filed 3-23-06; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 5001-05-P**

## DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

### Department of the Air Force

#### HQ USAF Scientific Advisory Board; Notice of Meeting

**AGENCY:** Department of the Air Force, HQ USAF Scientific Advisory Board.

**ACTION:** Notice of meeting.

**SUMMARY:** Pursuant to Public Law 92-463, notice is hereby given of the forthcoming briefing of the findings/results of the FY 2006 Science and Technology Quality Review of Air Force Research Laboratory. The purpose of the meeting is to brief Air Force leadership on the completeness and balance of Air Force Science and Technology programs. Because contractor-proprietary information will be discussed, this meeting will be closed to the public.

**DATES:** 30 March 2006.

**ADDRESSES:** Pentagon, Washington, DC.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:** Lt. Col. Kyle Gresham, Air Force Scientific Advisory Board Secretariat, 1180 Air Force