

program are subject to Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs".

Limitation of Liability: In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs if these programs are cancelled because of other agency priorities. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to provide special fishing privileges.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA): NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals which are seeking NOAA federal assistance opportunities including special fishing privileges. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website: <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/>, including our NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA, <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216-6-TOC.pdf>, and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations, http://ceq.eh.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc_ceq.htm.

Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, and under their description of their program activities, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems). In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting of an environmental assessment, if NOAA determines an assessment is required. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying and implementing feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for the denial of an application.

Evaluation and Selection Procedures: NOAA published its first omnibus notice announcing the availability of grant funds for both projects and fellowships/scholarship/ internships for Fiscal Year 2004 in the **Federal Register** on June 30, 2003 (68 FR 38678). The evaluation criteria and selection procedures contained in the June 30, 2003 omnibus notice are applicable to

this solicitation. For a copy of the June 30, 2003, omnibus notice please go to: <http://www.ofa.noaa.gov/~amd/SOLINDEX.HTML>.

The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements: The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the **Federal Register** notice of October 1, 2001 (66 FR 49917), as amended by the **Federal Register** notice published on October 30, 2002 (67 FR 66109), are applicable to this solicitation.

Classification

Paperwork Reduction Act: This document contains collection-of-information requirements subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA). The use of Standard Forms 424 and 424A, 424B, SF-LLL, and CD-346 has been approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under the respective control numbers 0348-0043, 0348-0044, 0348-0040, 0348-0046, and 0605-0001. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person is required to respond to, nor shall any person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with, a collection of information subject to the requirements of the PRA unless that collection of information displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Executive Order 12866: This notice has been determined to be not significant for purposes of Executive Order 12866.

Executive Order 13132 (Federalism): It has been determined that this notice does not contain policies with Federalism implications as that term is defined in Executive Order 13132.

Administrative Procedure Act/Regulatory Flexibility Act: Prior notice and an opportunity for public comments are not required by the Administrative Procedure Act or any other law for this notice concerning grants, benefits, and contracts (5 U.S.C. section 553(a)(2)). Because notice and opportunity for comment are not required pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553 or any other law, the analytical requirements of the Regulatory Flexibility Act (5 U.S.C. section 601 *et seq.*) are inapplicable. Therefore, a regulatory flexibility analysis has not been prepared.

Dated: March 04, 2004.

William T. Hogarth,

*Assistant Administrator for Fisheries,
National Marine Fisheries Service.*

[FR Doc. 04-5293 Filed 3-8-04; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-S

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 021704A]

Marine Mammals; File No. 1049-1718

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

ACTION: Receipt of amendment to application for a new permit.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that Kate M. Wynne, University of Alaska Fairbanks, School of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences, 118 Trident Way, Kodiak, Alaska 99615 has submitted an amendment to a permit application to add a request for takes of humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) and fin whales (*Balaenoptera physalis*) by attachment of scientific instruments for the purposes of scientific research.

DATES: Comments or requests for a public hearing must be received at the appropriate address or facsimile (fax) number (see **ADDRESSES**) on or before April 8, 2004.

ADDRESSES: Written comments or requests for a public hearing on these applications should be mailed to the Chief, Permits, Conservation and Education Division, F/PR1, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13705, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Those individuals requesting a hearing should set forth the specific reasons why a hearing on this particular request would be appropriate.

Comments may also be submitted by e-mail. The mailbox address for providing e-mail comments is NMFS.Pr1Comments@noaa.gov. Include in the subject line of the e-mail comment the following document identifier: File No. 1049-1718.

Comments may be submitted by facsimile at (301)713-0376, provided the facsimile is confirmed by hard copy submitted by mail and postmarked no later than the closing date of the comment period.

The permit application 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, (301) 713-2289; and Alaska Region, NMFS, P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802-1668, (907) 586-7221.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jill Lewandowski or Jennifer Jefferies at (301) 713-2289.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The subject permit is requested under the authority of the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, as amended (MMPA; 16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*), the Regulations Governing the Taking and Importing of Marine Mammals (50 CFR 216), the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA; 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*), the regulations governing the taking, importing, and exporting of endangered and threatened species (50 CFR 222–226), and the Fur Seal Act of 1966, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1151 *et seq.*).

The original permit application (file no. 1049–1718) was published in the **Federal Register** on July 18, 2003 (68 FR 42689) and requested a five-year scientific research permit to assess life history parameters of humpback whales, killer whales (*Orcinus orca*), sperm whales (*Physeter macrocephalus*), fin whales, sei whales (*Balaenoptera borealis*), minke whales (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*), and gray whales (*Eschrichtius robustus*). Requested takes included photo-identification, behavioral observation, passive acoustic recording, biopsy sampling, incidental harassment, and collection and/or export of dead parts from the following prey species during killer whale predation studies: humpback, gray, minke, sei, fin and sperm whales, harbor porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*), Dall's porpoise (*Phocoenoides dalli*), harbor seals (*Phoca vitulina*), Pacific white-sided dolphins (*Lagenorhynchus obliquidens*), Northern fur seals (*Callorhinus ursinus*), and Steller sea lions (*Eumetopias jubatus*). All research will take place in Alaskan waters.

The applicant has now amended the application to add a request for 60 annual takes of humpback whales and 60 annual takes of fin whales through the attachment of VHF and TDR tags by suction cup. The applicant has also requested an increase of 270 annual takes by incidental harassment of these two species during tagging activities. In addition, skin cells retained by the suction cup after its release from the whale will be collected for genetic analyses. The newly requested takes are in addition to the takes already requested in the original application and outlined in the paragraph above.

Concurrent with the publication of this notice in the **Federal Register**, NMFS is forwarding copies of this application to the Marine Mammal Commission and its Committee of Scientific Advisors.

Dated: March 3, 2004.

Stephen L. Leathery,
Chief, Permits, Conservation and Education
Division, Office of Protected Resources,
National Marine Fisheries Service.
[FR Doc. 04–5292 Filed 3–8–04; 8:45 am]
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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 030404B]

Strategic Plan for Fisheries Research (2004)

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

ACTION: Notice of availability.

SUMMARY: The NMFS announces the availability of the Strategic Plan for Fisheries Research (2004). The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSFCMA) requires the Secretary of Commerce to develop, triennially, a strategic plan for fisheries research for the subsequent 5 years.

ADDRESSES: Requests for copies of the NMFS Strategic Plan for Fisheries Research (2004) should be directed to Mark Chandler, Research, Analysis, and Coordination Division, Office of Science and Technology, NMFS, NOAA, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Phone: (301) 713–2363. Fax: (301) 713–1875.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mark Chandler at 301–713–2363 ext. 152. e-mail: Mark.Chandler@noaa.gov

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Electronic Access

The NMFS Strategic Plan for Fisheries Research (2004) may be viewed in its entirety on the World Wide Web at <http://www.st.nmfs.gov/st2/index.html>. Section 404 of the MSFCMA requires the Secretary of Commerce to publish in the **Federal Register** a strategic plan for fisheries research for the 5 years immediately following its publication. The MSFCMA requires that the plan address four major areas of research: (1) Research to support fishery conservation and management; (2) conservation engineering research; (3) research on the fisheries; and (4) information management research. The MSFCMA specifies that the plan shall contain a limited number of priority objectives for each of these research areas; indicate goals and timetables; provide a role for commercial fishermen

in such research; provide for collection and dissemination of complete and accurate information concerning fishing activities; and be developed in cooperation with the Councils and affected states.

This plan is based upon and entirely consistent with the overarching NOAA Fisheries Strategic Plan (NFSP) recently released in July 2003. The objectives under each goal in the NMFS Strategic Plan for Fisheries Research (2004) correspond to strategies in the NFSP.

The scope of the NMFS Strategic Plan for Fisheries Research (2004) is solely fisheries research to support the MSFCMA. It does not include the regulatory and enforcement components of the NMFS' mission. The NMFS currently conducts a comprehensive program of fisheries research and involves industry and others interested in fisheries in planning and implementing its objectives.

Dated: March 4, 2004.

William Fox, Jr.,
Director, Office of Science and Technology,
National Marine Fisheries Service.
[FR Doc. 04–5294 Filed 3–8–04; 8:45 am]
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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Notice of Proposed Information Collection Requests

AGENCY: Department of Education.
SUMMARY: The Leader, Regulatory Information Management Group, Office of the Chief Information Officer, invites comments on the proposed information collection requests as required by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995.

DATES: Interested persons are invited to submit comments on or before May 10, 2004.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Section 3506 of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. Chapter 35) requires that the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) provide interested Federal agencies and the public an early opportunity to comment on information collection requests. OMB may amend or waive the requirement for public consultation to the extent that public participation in the approval process would defeat the purpose of the information collection, violate State or Federal law, or substantially interfere with any agency's ability to perform its statutory obligations. The Leader, Regulatory Information Management Group, Office of the Chief Information Officer, publishes that notice containing proposed information collection requests prior to submission of these