

**DATES:** Comments on this notice must be received by February 28, 2003.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** F. Lamont Heppe, Jr., Program Development & Regulatory Analysis, Rural Utilities Service, USDA, 1400 Independence Ave., SW., STOP 1522, Room 4034 South Building, Washington, DC 20250-1522. Telephone: (202) 720-0736. FAX: (202) 720-4120.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

*Title:* 7 CFR Part 1753, Telecommunications System Construction Policies and Procedures. *OMB Control Number:* 0572-0059. *Type of Request:* Reinstatement of a previously approved collection for which approval has expired.

*Abstract:* In order to facilitate the programmatic interest of the RE Act, and, in order to assure that loans made or guaranteed by RUS are adequately secured, RUS, as a secured lender, has established certain forms for materials, equipment and construction of electric and telecommunications systems. The use of standard forms, construction contracts, and procurement procedures helps assure RUS that appropriate standards and specifications are maintained, RUS' loan security is not adversely affected; and the loan and loan guarantee funds are used effectively and for the intended purposes.

*Estimate of Burden:* Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response.

*Respondents:* Business or other for-profit and non-profit institutions.

*Estimated Number of Respondents:* 150.

*Estimated Number of Responses per Respondent:* 1.

*Estimate Total Annual Burden on Respondents:* 3,011 hours.

Copies of this information collection can be obtained from Dawn Wolfgang, Program Development and Regulatory Analysis, Rural Utilities Service at (202) 720-0812. Comments are invited on (a) whether the collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information will have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of burden including the validity of the methodology and assumption used; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, including through the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other

technological collection techniques on other forms of information technology.

All responses to this notice will be summarized and included in the request for OMB approval. All comments will also become a matter of public record.

Dated: December 23, 2002.

**Curtis M. Anderson,**

*Deputy Administrator as Acting Administrator, Rural Utilities Service.*

[FR Doc. 02-32826 Filed 12-27-02; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3410-15-P**

## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### Rural Utilities Service

#### Information Collection Activity; Comment Request

**AGENCY:** Rural Utilities Service, USDA.

**ACTION:** Notice and request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. chapter 35, as amended), the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) invites comments on this information collection for which RUS intends to request approval from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

**DATES:** Comments on this notice must be received by February 28, 2003.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** F. Lamont Heppe, Jr., Program Development & Regulatory Analysis, Rural Utilities Service, USDA, 1400 Independence Ave., SW., STOP 1522, Room 4034 South Building, Washington, DC 20250-1522. Telephone: (202) 720-0736. FAX: (202) 720-4120.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

*Title:* Telecommunications Field Trials.

*OMB Control Number:* 0572-New.

*Type of Request:* New collection.

*Abstract:* Title 7 CFR 1755.3

prescribes the conditions and provisions of a field trial. A field trial consists of limited filed installation of a qualifying product in closely monitored situations designed to determine, to RUS' satisfaction, the products effectiveness under actual field conditions. Field trials are used only as a means for determining, to RUS' satisfaction, the operational effectiveness of a new or revised product where such experience does not already exist. The field trial process allows manufacturers a means of immediate access to the RUS borrower market, allows RUS borrowers opportunity to immediately utilize advance products, and allows RUS a means to safely, in a controlled manner, obtain necessary information on

technically advanced products which will address the products suitability for use in the harsh environment of rural America.

*Estimate of Burden:* Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 4 hours per response.

*Respondents:* Business or other for-profit and non-profit institutions.

*Estimated Number of Respondents:* 6.

*Estimated Number of Responses per Respondent:* 2.

*Estimate Total Annual Burden on Respondents:* 56 hours.

Copies of this information collection can be obtained from Dawn Wolfgang, Program Development and Regulatory Analysis, Rural Utilities Service at (202) 720-0812. Comments are invited on (a) whether the collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information will have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of burden including the validity of the methodology and assumption used; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, including through the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques on other forms of information technology.

All responses to this notice will be summarized and included in the request for OMB approval. All comments will also become a matter of public record.

Dated: December 23, 2002.

**Curtis M. Anderson,**

*Deputy Administrator as Acting Administrator, Rural Utilities Service.*

[FR Doc. 02-32827 Filed 12-27-02; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3410-15-P**

## ARCHITECTURAL AND TRANSPORTATION BARRIERS COMPLIANCE BOARD

### Meeting

**AGENCY:** Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board.

**ACTION:** Notice of meeting.

**SUMMARY:** The Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board (Access Board) has scheduled its regular business meetings to take place in Washington, DC on Tuesday and Wednesday, January 14-15, 2003, at the times and location noted below.

**DATES:** The schedule of events is as follows:

Tuesday, January 14, 2003

11–12:30 p.m. Technical Programs Committee

2–5 p.m. Passenger Vessels Ad Hoc Committee (Closed Session)

Wednesday, January 15, 2003

9:30–10:30 a.m. Planning and Budget Committee

10:30–Noon Executive Committee

1:30–3:30 p.m. Board Committee

**ADDRESSES:** The meetings will be held at the Marriott at Metro Center Hotel, 775 12th Street, NW., Washington, DC.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** For further information regarding the meetings, please contact Lawrence W. Roffe, Executive Director, (202) 272-0001 (voice) and (202) 272-0082 (TTY).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** At the Board meeting, the Access Board will consider the following agenda items.

Open Meeting

- Executive Director's Report
- Approval of the September 10, 2002 Board Meeting Minutes
- Technical Programs Committee Report
- Planning and Budget Committee Report
- Executive Committee Report

Closed Meeting

- Passenger Vessels Accessibility Guidelines

All meetings are accessible to persons with disabilities. Sign language interpreters and an assistive listening system are available at all meetings. Persons attending Board meetings are requested to refrain from using perfume, cologne, and other fragrances for the comfort of other participants.

**James J. Raggio,**

*General Counsel.*

[FR Doc. 02–32803 Filed 12–27–02; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 8150–01–P**

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 120202A]

#### Small Takes of Marine Mammals Incidental to Specified Activities; Taking of Ringed and Bearded Seals Incidental to On-ice Seismic Activities

**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 a request from ConocoPhillips Alaska Inc. (CPA)

for an authorization to take small numbers of ringed and bearded seals by harassment incidental to conducting on-ice seismic operations in the Beaufort Sea during oil and gas exploration activities. Under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), NMFS is requesting comments on its proposal to authorize CPA to incidentally take, by harassment, small numbers of these two species in the above mentioned area during the winter of 2002/2003.

**DATES:** Comments and information must be received no later than January 29, 2003.

**ADDRESSES:** Comments on the application should be addressed to Donna Wieting, Chief, Marine Mammal Conservation Division, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910–3225. A copy of the application, Environmental Assessment (EA), and/or a list of references used in this document may be obtained by writing to this address or by telephoning one of the contacts listed here.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Kenneth Hollingshead, Office of Protected Resources (301) 713–2322, ext. 128, or Bradley Smith, Alaska Region (907) 271–5006.

**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 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 either regulations are issued or, if the taking is limited to harassment, notice of a proposed authorization is provided to the public for review.

Permission may be granted if NMFS finds that the taking will have no more than 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 taking are set forth.

On April 10, 1996 (61 FR 15884), NMFS published an interim rule establishing, among other things, procedures for issuing incidental harassment authorizations (IHAs) under section 101(a)(5)(D) of the MMPA for activities in Arctic waters. For additional information on the

procedures to be followed for this authorization, please refer either to that document or to 50 CFR 216.107.

#### Description of the Activity

##### Background

Deep seismic surveys use the “reflection” method of data acquisition. Reflection seismic exploration is the process of gathering information about the subsurface of the earth by measuring acoustic (sound or seismic) waves, which are generated on or near the surface. Acoustic waves reflect at boundaries in the earth that are characterized by acoustic impedance contrasts. The acoustic impedance of a rock layer is its density multiplied by its acoustic velocity. Geologists and geophysicists commonly attribute different acoustic impedances to different rock characteristics. Seismic exploration uses a controlled energy source to generate acoustic waves that travel through the earth (including sea ice and water, as well as subsea geologic formations), and then uses ground sensors to record the reflected energy transmitted back to the surface. Energy that is directed into the ground takes on numerous forms. When acoustic energy is generated, compression (p) and shear (s) waves form and travel in and on the earth. The compression and shear waves are affected by the geological formations of the earth as they travel in it and may be reflected, refracted, diffracted or transmitted when they reach a boundary represented by an acoustic impedance contrast.

The basic components of a seismic survey include an energy source (either acoustic or vibratory), which generates a seismic signal; hydrophones or geophones, which receive the reflected signal; and electronic equipment to amplify and record the signal. The number and placement of sensors, the energy sources, the spacing and placement of energy input locations, and the specific techniques of recording reflected energy are broadly grouped as “parameters” of a given exploration program.

In modern reflection seismology, many sensors are used to record each energy input event. The number of sensors in use for each event varies widely according to the type of survey being conducted and the recording equipment available. Common numbers of groups of sensors are 240, 480, and 1040, and some new recording instruments may use as many as 4000 groups of sensors at the same time. The sensors are normally placed in one or more long lines at specified intervals. In North America the common group