



NEWS FROM NOAA

NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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NOAA SEEKS COMMENTS ON PROPOSED INCIDENTAL MARINE MAMMAL HARASSMENT

Company to Dredge in Sea Lion Haul Out Area

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service is seeking comments now through Oct. 2 on the Bay Marina Management Incorporated's (BMMI) proposal to conduct maintenance dredging at Pier 39 in San Francisco, California. The dredging may result in harassment of marine mammals. NOAA is an agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Pier 39 includes multiple docks with berthing slips for recreational boats. One of the three docks around which dredging would be done, the K Dock, is made of special floating platforms that were installed after the original dock was destroyed by the weight of hauled out California sea lions in 1995. Sea lions use these platforms for resting and socializing. Because the noise generated by the dredging activities has the potential to disrupt the behavior patterns of the sea lions in the area, BMMI must request an authorization under the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

While the number of incidental harassment takes will depend on the number of sea lions hauling out in the area at the time of the dredging, NOAA Fisheries believes that the number of potential harassment takings will not have more than a negligible impact on the sea lions.

Pier 39 has accreted sediment at a rate of one foot per year over the last 18 years. The proposed maintenance dredging is necessary to maintain safe navigation depths at the marina, and would remove approximately 13,000 cubic yards of material, to create water depths in the project area to allow for safe passage.

BMMI proposes to dredge the three docks for approximately eight hours a day for one to two weeks in the late fall of 2005 or the summer of 2006. Dredging operations are not authorized closer than 50 feet from the sea lions hauled out on Dock K. To further minimize behavioral disturbance of the sea lions, BMMI plans to use comparatively small dredge equipment, and to gradually begin work at a slight distance away, in a manner that is less likely to startle the pinnipeds. Dredging operations will be shut down in the unlikely event that Steller sea lions, a species listed under the Endangered Species Act, or marine mammal pups of any species are in the area. Monitoring will consist of daily pinniped counts, before, during and after the dredging, as

well as behavioral observations of the sea lions and their reactions to different facets of the dredging operations.

NOAA Fisheries Service will accept comments on the application and proposed authorization through October 2, 2005. Comments should be addressed to:

Steve Leathery, Chief of the Permits, Conservation, and Education Division
Office of Protected Resources, NMFS
1315 East West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Comments may be sent via e-mail to PR1.052405C@noaa.gov. A copy of the application and federal register notice may be obtained by contacting the same office.

NOAA Fisheries Service is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources and their habitats through scientific research, management and enforcement. NOAA Fisheries Service provides effective stewardship of these resources for the benefit of the nation, supporting coastal communities that depend upon them, and helping to provide safe and healthy seafood to consumers and recreational opportunities for the American public.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), NOAA is working with its federal partners and nearly 60 countries to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes.

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On the Web:

NOAA: <http://www.noaa.gov>

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