

special significance for marine mammals occur within or near south VAFB harbor. This activity is expected to result in no more than a negligible impact on the affected species or stocks.

#### Endangered Species Act (ESA)

This action will not affect species listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) that are under the jurisdiction of NMFS. VAFB formally consulted with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) in 1998 on the possible take of southern sea otters during Boeing's harbor activities at south VAFB. A Biological Opinion was issued in August 2001. FWS recognized that Boeing will restore sea otter habitat (i.e., kelp beds) in the vicinity of the harbor to replace kelp destroyed during dredging and stated that there would not be takes of southern sea otters. In addition, the FWS noting that VAFB has committed to a southern sea otter monitoring program designed to detect the presence and possible disturbance at the VAFB harbor area during dredging activities (see 68 FR 36540, June 18, 2003).

#### National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA)

ENSR International (ENSRI) made a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) determination on August 15, 2001, based on information contained within its Environmental Assessment (EA), that implementation of the subject action is not a major Federal action having significant effects on the environment within the meaning of Executive Order 12114. ENSRI determined therefore, that an environmental impact statement would not be prepared. On April 7, 2004 (69 FR 18353), NMFS noted that ENSRI had prepared an EA for the VAFB harbor activities and made this EA available upon request. In accordance with NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 (Environmental Review Procedures for Implementing the National Environmental Policy Act, May 20, 1999), NMFS has reviewed the information contained in ENSRI's EA and determined that the ENSRI EA accurately and completely describes the proposed action alternative, reasonable additional alternatives, and the potential impacts on marine mammals, endangered species, and other marine life that could be impacted by the preferred alternative and the other alternatives. Therefore, it is not necessary to issue a new EA, supplemental EA or an environmental impact statement for the issuance of an IHA to Boeing for this activity. Based on this review and analysis, NMFS is adopting the ENSRI EA under 40 CFR

1506.3 and has made its own FONSI. A copy of the ENSRI EA and the NMFS FONSI for this activity is available upon request (see ADDRESSES).

#### Authorization

NMFS has issued an IHA to take marine mammals, by harassment, incidental to conducting harbor activities at VAFB to Boeing for a 1-year period, provided the mitigation, monitoring, and reporting requirements are undertaken.

Dated: May 19, 2004.

**Stephen L. Leathery,**

*Acting Director, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.*

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**BILLING CODE 3510-22-S**

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 051904A]

#### Pacific Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

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

**ACTION:** Notice of public meeting.

**SUMMARY:** The Pacific Fishery Management Council's (Council) Ad Hoc Groundfish Trawl Individual Quota Analytical Team (TIQ Analytical Team) will hold a working meeting, which is open to the public.

**DATES:** The TIQ Analytical Team working meeting will begin Tuesday, June 8, 2004 at 8:30 a.m. and may go into the evening until business for the day is completed. The meeting will reconvene from 8 a.m. and continue until business for the day is complete on Wednesday, June 9, 2004.

**ADDRESSES:** The meeting will be held at The University Inn, Orcus Room, 4140 Roosevelt Way NE, Seattle, WA 98105; telephone: (206) 632-5055.

*Council address:* Pacific Fishery Management Council, 7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 200, Portland, OR 97220-1384.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Mr. Jim Seger, Staff Officer (Economist); telephone: (503) 820-2280.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The purpose of the TIQ Analytical Team meeting is to conduct preliminary scoping on the types impacts to be considered and analytical methods used in a groundfish trawl dedicated access privilege Environmental Impact

Statement. Related data collection issues will also be discussed. A panel of independent advisors has been invited to work with the TIQ Analytical Team on these issues during the meeting.

Although non-emergency issues not contained in the TIQ Analytical Team meeting agenda may come before the group for discussion, those issues may not be the subject of formal committee action during these meetings. TIQ Analytical Team action will be restricted to those issues specifically listed in this notice and to any issues arising after publication of this notice requiring emergency action under Section 305(c) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, provided the public has been notified of the group's intent to take final action to address the emergency.

#### Special Accommodations

The meeting is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Ms. Carolyn Porter at (503) 820-2280 at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.

Dated: May 20, 2004.

**Matteo J. Milazzo,**

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

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I. D. 052004C]

#### Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Application for an Exempted Fishing Permit

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

**ACTION:** Notice of receipt of an application for an exempted fishing permit.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS has received an application for an exempted fishing permit (EFP) from the Washington Sea Grant Program (WSGP). If granted, this EFP would authorize the applicant to conduct an experiment to evaluate the integrated weight groundline as a potential seabird avoidance measure in the fall 2004 Pacific cod hook-and-line fishery in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area (BSAI). The project is intended to promote the objectives of the Fishery Management Plan for the Groundfish Fishery of the

Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Area (FMP) by reducing fishery interactions with the endangered short-tailed albatross (*Phoebastria albatrus*) and other seabird species.

**ADDRESSES:** Copies of the EFP application may be requested from Sue Salvesson, Assistant Regional Administrator for Sustainable Fisheries, Alaska Region, NMFS, Attn: Lori Durall by: mail to P. O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802; fax to 907-586-7557; or email to [Lori.Durall@noaa.gov](mailto:Lori.Durall@noaa.gov).

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Kim Rivera, 907-586-7424 or [Kim.Rivera@noaa.gov](mailto:Kim.Rivera@noaa.gov).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** NMFS manages the domestic groundfish fisheries in the BSAI under the FMP. The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) prepared the FMP under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act). Regulations governing the groundfish fisheries of the BSAI appear at 50 CFR parts 600 and 679. The FMP and the implementing regulations at §§ 679.6 and 600.745(b) authorize the issuance of EFPs to allow fishing that would otherwise be prohibited. Procedures for issuing EFPs are contained in the implementing regulations.

NMFS received an application for an EFP from the WSGP. The purpose of this EFP is to authorize experimental fishing using integrated weight groundline to evaluate its effectiveness as a potential new seabird avoidance measure. The application calls for testing integrated weight groundlines against unweighted groundlines, with and without paired streamer lines. This proposed effort follows up on work that was completed in Alaska in 2002, and compliments efforts taking place in other fisheries. Information from this experiment could ultimately result in better and more effective seabird avoidance measures. The hook-and-line fishing industry appears especially interested in this experiment, because it may provide them a better tool with which to avoid the incidental catch of the endangered short-tailed albatross and other seabird species. In addition, potential exists for improved fishing efficiency with better gear handling characteristics and increased target catch rates resulting from getting baited hooks down more quickly. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issued a Biological Opinion (September 2003) that includes a conservation recommendation for NMFS to support research efforts to develop new and novel deterrent technologies such as integrated weight groundlines. This

experiment would fulfill such a recommendation.

The goal of the experiment is to reduce the incidental catch of the endangered short-tailed albatross and other seabird species in ways that are consistent with Magnuson-Stevens Act National Standard 9 which requires conservation and management measures to minimize bycatch and bycatch mortality and that the effects on birds should be considered when selecting these measures. A preliminary WSGP investigation in 2002 evaluated four weightings of integrated weight groundline (25, 50, 75, and 100 g/m). The four weighting treatments were compared to a control of unweighted groundline in the sablefish fishery in the Aleutian Islands and the Pacific cod fishery in the Gulf of Alaska. Preliminary results strongly suggest that 50 g/m line was the optimal weighting. It was the most practical gear in terms of operational performance in mechanical baiting (auto-bait) longline systems and it sank quickly beyond the range of seabirds.

Based on these initial results, WSGP proposes to continue this work by comparing the catch rates of all species, the abundance and behavior of seabirds, and the sink rate of groundlines under three scenarios: 50 g/m integrated weight groundline, and un-weighted groundlines with and without paired streamer lines. Regulations at 50 CFR § 679.24(e)(4)(ii)(c) require the use of paired streamer lines by vessels greater than 55 ft (16.8 m) length overall. Thus, an EFP is necessary to conduct the experimental control treatments that call for the experimental gear to be deployed in the absence of paired streamer lines, to allow fishing in a way that would otherwise be prohibited. Work will take place on two freezer-longliner vessels using auto-bait systems in the Pacific cod fishery in the BSAI during the fall of 2004, and during 2005, if unforeseen circumstances prohibit completion of the work in 2004.

In accordance with § 679.6, NMFS has determined that the application warrants further consideration and has initiated consultation with the Council by forwarding the application to the Council for consultation. The Council will consider the application during its June 9-15, 2004, meeting which will be held at the Benson Hotel in Portland, Oregon. While the applicant has been invited to appear in support of the application, all interested parties may comment on the application at the meeting during public testimony.

The vessels that would conduct the experimental fishing were not identified on the application, but will be identified

on the EFP, once they have been selected for the project. The NMFS Regional Administrator may consider and attach additional terms and conditions to the EFP that are consistent with the purpose of the experiment. Public comment may help determine such conditions.

A copy of the application is available for review from NMFS (see **ADDRESSES**).

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

Dated: May 20, 2004.

**Tracey L. Thompson,**

*Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.*  
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## DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

### Department of the Army

#### **Notice of Availability (NOA) for the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Transformation of the 2nd Brigade, 25th Infantry Division (Light) to a Stryker Brigade Combat Team (SBCT) in Hawaii**

**AGENCY:** Department of the Army, DoD.  
**ACTION:** Notice of Availability.

**SUMMARY:** The Proposed Action includes training to be conducted at Schofield Barracks Military Reservation (SBMR), Dillingham Military Reservation, Kahuku Training Area and Kawaihoa Training Area on the island of Oahu and at Pōhakuloa Training Area on the island of Hawaii. Twenty-eight projects are proposed that would improve the existing support structure and facilities to provide the necessary field training required for an SBCT. These projects include construction of ranges, airfield upgrades, land acquisition, and new equipment such as new and modernized vehicles (namely the Stryker, an eight-wheeled, 20-ton combat vehicle) and weapons systems (105mm cannon, 155 mm howitzer, and 120mm mortar). The number of soldiers and vehicles stationed at SBMR also would increase. The Army would acquire land on the island of Oahu (approximately 1,400 acres) and on the island of Hawaii (approximately 23,000 acres) for training areas and road construction.

**DATES:** The waiting period for the Final EIS will end 30 days after publication of the NOA in the **Federal Register** by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

**ADDRESSES:** Direct questions and/or written comments regarding the Final EIS to, or a request for a copy of the document from, Ms. Cindy Barger, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Honolulu