

§216.116

NMFS, the draft report will be considered to be the final comprehensive monitoring report.

§216.116 Applications for Letters of Authorization.

To incidentally take marine mammals pursuant to these regulations, the U.S. citizen (as defined by §216.103) conducting the activity identified in §216.110(a) must apply for and obtain either an initial Letter of Authorization in accordance with §§216.117 or a renewal under §216.118.

§216.117 Letters of Authorization.

(a) A Letter of Authorization, unless suspended or revoked, will be valid for a period of time not to exceed the period of validity of this subpart, subject to annual renewal pursuant to the conditions in §216.118.

(b) Each Letter of Authorization will set forth:

(1) Permissible methods of incidental taking;

(2) Means of effecting the least practicable adverse impact on the species, its habitat, and on the availability of the species for subsistence uses (i.e., mitigation); and

(3) Requirements for mitigation, monitoring and reporting.

(c) Issuance and renewal of the Letter of Authorization will be based on a determination that the total number of marine mammals taken by the activity as a whole will have no more than a negligible impact on the affected species or stock of marine mammal(s).

(d) The U.S. Citizen, i.e., the MBNMS, operating under an LOA must clearly describe in any Sanctuary Authorizations issued to the individuals conducting fireworks displays, any requirements of the LOA for which the individuals conducting fireworks are responsible.

§216.118 Renewal of Letters of Authorization.

(a) A Letter of Authorization issued under §216.106 and §216.117 for the activity identified in §216.110(a) will be renewed annually upon:

(1) Notification to NMFS that the activity described in the application submitted under §216.116 will be undertaken and that there will not be a sub-

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stantial modification to the described work, mitigation or monitoring undertaken during the upcoming 12 months;

(2) Timely receipt of the monitoring reports required under §216.115(b), and the Letter of Authorization issued under §216.117, which has been reviewed and accepted by NMFS; and

(3) A determination by the NMFS that the mitigation, monitoring and reporting measures required under §216.114 and the Letter of Authorization issued under §§216.106 and 216.117, were undertaken and will be undertaken during the upcoming annual period of validity of a renewed Letter of Authorization.

(b) If a request for a renewal of a Letter of Authorization issued under §§216.106 and 216.118 indicates that a substantial modification to the described work, mitigation or monitoring undertaken during the upcoming season will occur, the NMFS will provide the public a period of 30 days for review and comment on the request. Review and comment on renewals of Letters of Authorization are restricted to:

(1) New cited information and data indicating that the determinations made in this document are in need of reconsideration, and

(2) Proposed changes to the mitigation and monitoring requirements contained in these regulations or in the current Letter of Authorization.

(c) A notice of issuance or denial of a renewal of a Letter of Authorization will be published in the FEDERAL REGISTER.

§216.119 Modifications to Letters of Authorization.

(a) Except as provided in paragraph (b) of this section, no substantive modification (including withdrawal or suspension) to the Letter of Authorization by NMFS, issued pursuant to §§216.106 and 216.117 and subject to the provisions of this subpart shall be made until after notification and an opportunity for public comment has been provided. For purposes of this paragraph, a renewal of a Letter of Authorization under §216.118, without modification (except for the period of validity), is not considered a substantive modification.

(b) If the Assistant Administrator determines that an emergency exists that poses a significant risk to the well-being of the species or stocks of marine mammals specified in § 216.110(b), a Letter of Authorization issued pursuant to §§ 216.106 and 216.117 may be substantively modified without prior notification and an opportunity for public comment. Notification will be published in the FEDERAL REGISTER within 30 days subsequent to the action.

Subpart K—Taking of Marine Mammals Incidental to Space Vehicle and Test Flight Activities

SOURCE: 69 FR 5727, Feb. 6, 2004, unless otherwise noted.

EFFECTIVE DATE NOTE: At 69 FR 5727, Feb. 6, 2004, subpart K, consisting of §§ 216.120 through 216.128 were added, effective Feb. 6, 2004, through Feb. 6, 2009.

§ 216.120 Specified activity and specified geographical region.

(a) Regulations in this subpart apply only to the incidental taking of those marine mammals specified in paragraph (b) of this section by U.S. citizens engaged in:

(1) Launching up to 30 space and missiles vehicles each year from Vandenberg Air Force Base, for a total of up to 150 missiles and rockets over the 5-year period of these regulations,

(2) Launching up to 20 rockets each year from Vandenberg Air Force Base, for a total of up to 100 rocket launches over the 5-year period of these regulations,

(3) Aircraft flight test operations, and

(4) Helicopter operations from Vandenberg Air Force Base.

(b) The incidental take of marine mammals on Vandenberg Air Force Base and in waters off southern California, under the activity identified in paragraph (a) of this section, is limited to the following species: Harbor seals (*Phoca vitulina*), California sea lions (*Zalophus californianus*), northern elephant seals (*Mirounga angustirostris*), and northern fur seals (*Callorhinus ursinus*).

§ 216.121 Effective dates.

Regulations in this subpart are effective from February 6, 2004, through February 6, 2009.

§ 216.122 Permissible methods of taking.

(a) Under Letters of Authorization issued pursuant to § 216.106, the 30th Space Wing, U.S. Air Force, its contractors, and clients, may incidentally, but not intentionally, take marine mammals by harassment, within the area described in § 216.120, provided all terms, conditions, and requirements of these regulations and such Letter(s) of Authorization are complied with.

(b) [Reserved]

§ 216.123 Prohibitions.

No person in connection with the activities described in § 216.120 shall:

(a) Take any marine mammal not specified in § 216.120(b);

(b) Take any marine mammal specified in § 216.120(b) other than by incidental, unintentional harassment;

(c) Take a marine mammal specified in § 216.120(b) if such take results in more than a negligible impact on the species or stocks of such marine mammal; or

(d) Violate, or fail to comply with, the terms, conditions, and requirements of these regulations or a Letter of Authorization issued under § 216.106.

§ 216.124 Mitigation.

(a) The activity identified in § 216.120(a) must be conducted in a manner that minimizes, to the greatest extent practicable, adverse impacts on marine mammals and their habitats. When conducting operations identified in § 216.120, the following mitigation measures must be utilized:

(1) All aircraft and helicopter flight paths must maintain a minimum distance of 1,000 ft (305 m) from recognized seal haul-outs and rookeries (e.g., Point Sal, Purisima Point, Rocky Point), except in emergencies or for real-time security incidents (e.g., search-and-rescue, fire-fighting) which may require approaching pinniped rookeries closer than 1,000 ft (305 m).

(2) For missile and rocket launches, holders of Letters of Authorization must avoid, whenever possible,