

Specified activity means any activity, other than commercial fishing, that takes place in a specified geographical region and potentially involves the taking of small numbers of marine mammals.

Specified geographical region means an area within which a specified activity is conducted and that has certain biogeographic characteristics.

Unmitigable adverse impact means an impact resulting from the specified activity:

(1) That is likely to reduce the availability of the species to a level insufficient for a harvest to meet subsistence needs by:

(i) Causing the marine mammals to abandon or avoid hunting areas;

(ii) Directly displacing subsistence users; or

(iii) Placing physical barriers between the marine mammals and the subsistence hunters; and

(2) That cannot be sufficiently mitigated by other measures to increase the availability of marine mammals to allow subsistence needs to be met.

§ 216.104 Submission of requests.

(a) In order for the National Marine Fisheries Service to consider authorizing the taking by U.S. citizens of small numbers of marine mammals incidental to a specified activity (other than commercial fishing), or to make a finding that an incidental take is unlikely to occur, a written request must be submitted to the Assistant Administrator. All requests must include the following information for their activity:

(1) A detailed description of the specific activity or class of activities that can be expected to result in incidental taking of marine mammals;

(2) The date(s) and duration of such activity and the specific geographical region where it will occur;

(3) The species and numbers of marine mammals likely to be found within the activity area;

(4) A description of the status, distribution, and seasonal distribution (when applicable) of the affected species or stocks of marine mammals likely to be affected by such activities;

(5) The type of incidental taking authorization that is being requested

(i.e., takes by harassment only; takes by harassment, injury and/or death) and the method of incidental taking;

(6) By age, sex, and reproductive condition (if possible), the number of marine mammals (by species) that may be taken by each type of taking identified in paragraph (a)(5) of this section, and the number of times such takings by each type of taking are likely to occur;

(7) The anticipated impact of the activity upon the species or stock of marine mammal;

(8) The anticipated impact of the activity on the availability of the species or stocks of marine mammals for subsistence uses;

(9) The anticipated impact of the activity upon the habitat of the marine mammal populations, and the likelihood of restoration of the affected habitat;

(10) The anticipated impact of the loss or modification of the habitat on the marine mammal populations involved;

(11) The availability and feasibility (economic and technological) of equipment, methods, and manner of conducting such activity or other means of effecting the least practicable adverse impact upon the affected species or stocks, their habitat, and on their availability for subsistence uses, paying particular attention to rookeries, mating grounds, and areas of similar significance;

(12) Where the proposed activity would take place in or near a traditional Arctic subsistence hunting area and/or may affect the availability of a species or stock of marine mammal for Arctic subsistence uses, the applicant must submit either a plan of cooperation or information that identifies what measures have been taken and/or will be taken to minimize any adverse effects on the availability of marine mammals for subsistence uses. A plan must include the following:

(i) A statement that the applicant has notified and provided the affected subsistence community with a draft plan of cooperation;

(ii) A schedule for meeting with the affected subsistence communities to discuss proposed activities and to resolve potential conflicts regarding any

aspects of either the operation or the plan of cooperation;

(iii) A description of what measures the applicant has taken and/or will take to ensure that proposed activities will not interfere with subsistence whaling or sealing; and

(iv) What plans the applicant has to continue to meet with the affected communities, both prior to and while conducting the activity, to resolve conflicts and to notify the communities of any changes in the operation;

(13) The suggested means of accomplishing the necessary monitoring and reporting that will result in increased knowledge of the species, the level of taking or impacts on populations of marine mammals that are expected to be present while conducting activities and suggested means of minimizing burdens by coordinating such reporting requirements with other schemes already applicable to persons conducting such activity. Monitoring plans should include a description of the survey techniques that would be used to determine the movement and activity of marine mammals near the activity site(s) including migration and other habitat uses, such as feeding. Guidelines for developing a site-specific monitoring plan may be obtained by writing to the Director, Office of Protected Resources; and

(14) Suggested means of learning of, encouraging, and coordinating research opportunities, plans, and activities relating to reducing such incidental taking and evaluating its effects.

(b)(1) The Assistant Administrator shall determine the adequacy and completeness of a request and, if determined to be adequate and complete, will begin the public review process by publishing in the FEDERAL REGISTER either:

(i) A proposed incidental harassment authorization; or

(ii) A notice of receipt of a request for the implementation or reimplementation of regulations governing the incidental taking.

(2) Through notice in the FEDERAL REGISTER, newspapers of general circulation, and appropriate electronic media in the coastal areas that may be affected by such activity, NMFS will invite information, suggestions, and

comments for a period not to exceed 30 days from the date of publication in the FEDERAL REGISTER. All information and suggestions will be considered by the National Marine Fisheries Service in developing, if appropriate, the most effective regulations governing the issuance of letters of authorization or conditions governing the issuance of an incidental harassment authorization.

(3) Applications that are determined to be incomplete or inappropriate for the type of taking requested, will be returned to the applicant with an explanation of why the application is being returned.

(c) The Assistant Administrator shall evaluate each request to determine, based upon the best available scientific evidence, whether the taking by the specified activity within the specified geographic region will have a negligible impact on the species or stock and, where appropriate, will not have an unmitigable adverse impact on the availability of such species or stock for subsistence uses. If the Assistant Administrator finds that the mitigating measures would render the impact of the specified activity negligible when it would not otherwise satisfy that requirement, the Assistant Administrator may make a finding of negligible impact subject to such mitigating measures being successfully implemented. Any preliminary findings of "negligible impact" and "no unmitigable adverse impact" shall be proposed for public comment along with either the proposed incidental harassment authorization or the proposed regulations for the specific activity.

(d) If, subsequent to the public review period, the Assistant Administrator finds that the taking by the specified activity would have more than a negligible impact on the species or stock of marine mammal or would have an unmitigable adverse impact on the availability of such species or stock for subsistence uses, the Assistant Administrator shall publish in the FEDERAL REGISTER the negative finding along with the basis for denying the request.