

should be directed to M. Jan Saunders, (302) 526-5251, at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.

Dated: July 6, 2015.

Tracey L. Thompson,

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

[FR Doc. 2015-16788 Filed 7-8-15; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XS35

Marine Mammals; File No. 14450

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

ACTION: Notice; receipt of application for permit amendment.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that the NMFS Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC), 75 Virginia Beach Drive, Miami, FL 33149 [Principal Investigator: Dr. Keith Mullin], has applied for an amendment to Scientific Research Permit No. 14450-02.

DATES: Written, telefaxed, or email comments must be received on or before August 10, 2015.

ADDRESSES: The application and related documents are available for review by selecting "Records Open for Public Comment" from the *Features* box on the Applications and Permits for Protected Species home page, <https://apps.nmfs.noaa.gov>, and then selecting File No. 14450 from the list of available applications.

These documents are also available upon written request or by appointment in the Permits and Conservation Division, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13705, Silver Spring, MD 20910; phone (301) 427-8401; fax (301) 713-0376.

Written comments on this application should be submitted to the Chief, Permits and Conservation Division, at the address listed above. Comments may also be submitted by facsimile to (301) 713-0376, or by email to NMFS.Pr1Comments@noaa.gov. Please include the File No. 14450 in the subject line of the email comment.

Those individuals requesting a public hearing should submit a written request to the Chief, Permits and Conservation Division at the address listed above. The request should set forth the specific reasons why a hearing on this application would be appropriate.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jennifer Skidmore or Amy Hapeman, (301) 427-8401.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The subject amendment to Permit No. 14450-02 is requested under the authority of the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*), and the regulations governing the taking and importing of marine mammals (50 CFR part 216).

Permit No. 14450-02, last amended on December 31, 2014, authorizes the SEFSC to take all cetacean species that occur in U.S. and international waters of the Atlantic Ocean, Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea. Activities include aerial and vessel-based line-transect sampling, acoustic sampling, behavioral observations, vessel-based photo-identification, and biopsy sampling. Satellite tagging of ESA-listed large whales is also authorized. Tissue samples collected in other countries may be imported into the U.S. The permit expires on February 28, 2019.

The SEFSC is requesting the permit be amended to authorize satellite tagging of non-ESA listed cetaceans during authorized vessel surveys to support NMFS stock assessments as follows: 40 Bryde's whales (*Balaenoptera edeni*), 40 of each species of short-finned (*Globicephala macrorhynchus*) and long-finned (*Globicephala melas*) pilot whales, and 20 individuals each of the 21 other authorized non-listed cetacean species, annually. Tags would be either suction cup attachments, fully implantable or minimally invasive dart attachments. A maximum of 2 tags could be placed on an animal at one time. Adults of both sexes without calves would be tagged. In addition, the SEFSC is requesting authorization to import and export marine mammal samples from sources (other than currently authorized biopsy sampling) to support the NMFS research on these species.

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), an initial determination has been made that the activities proposed are categorically excluded from the requirement to prepare an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement.

Concurrent with the publication of this notice in the **Federal Register**, NMFS is forwarding copies of the amendment requests to the Marine Mammal Commission and its Committee of Scientific Advisors.

Dated: June 30, 2015.

Julia Harrison,

Chief, Permits and Conservation Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 2015-16779 Filed 7-8-15; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XD825

Marine Mammals; File Nos. 17278 and 17557

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

ACTION: Notice; issuance of permit amendments.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that major amendments have been issued to James Shine, Ph.D., Harvard University School of Public Health, 401 Park Drive, 404H West, Boston, Massachusetts 02215, (Permit No. 17278-01) and the NMFS Forensics Office, 219 Fort Johnson Road, Charleston, SC 29412 (Permit No. 17557-01).

ADDRESSES: The permit amendments and related documents are available for review upon written request or by appointment in the Permits and Conservation Division, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13705, Silver Spring, MD 20910; phone (301) 427-8401; fax (301) 713-0376.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jennifer Skidmore, Amy Sloan, or Malcolm Mohead, (301) 427-8401.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On March 20, 2015, notice was published in the **Federal Register** (80 FR 14907) that requests for amendments to Permit Nos. 17278 and 17557 to import specimens from long-finned pilot whales (*Globicephala melas*; 17278) and scalloped hammerhead sharks (*Sphyrna lewini*; 17557) for scientific research had been submitted by the above-named applicants. The requested permit amendments have been issued under the authority of the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*), the regulations governing the taking and importing of marine mammals (50 CFR part 216), the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA; 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*), and the regulations governing the taking, importing, and exporting of endangered and threatened species (50 CFR parts 222-226), as applicable.

Permit No. 17278 authorizes Dr. Shine to import and receive parts from subsistence-collected long-finned pilot whales (*Globicephala melas*) archived at the Faroese Museum of Natural History, Faroe Islands. The permit, as amended, increases the number of samples authorized to be imported from 15 to 100 animals annually, as well as authorization to conduct analyses of chlorinated and fluorinated organic chemicals using the same samples.

Permit No. 17557 authorizes the NMFS Forensics Office to receive, import, export, transfer, archive, and conduct analyses on marine mammal and ESA-listed species parts under NMFS jurisdiction. The permit has been amended to include scalloped hammerhead sharks (*Sphyrna lewinia*) recently listed under the ESA.

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), a final determination has been made that the activity proposed is categorically excluded from the requirement to prepare an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement.

As required by the ESA, issuance of the permit amendment (Permit No. 17557-01) was based on a finding that such permit: (1) Was applied for in good faith; (2) will not operate to the disadvantage of such endangered species; and (3) is consistent with the purposes and policies set forth in section 2 of the ESA.

Dated: June 26, 2015.

Julia Harrison,

*Chief, Permits and Conservation Division,
Office of Protected Resources, National
Marine Fisheries Service.*

[FR Doc. 2015-16781 Filed 7-8-15; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Patent and Trademark Office

[Docket No.: PTO-P-2015-0026]

United States Patent and Trademark Office and Korean Intellectual Property Office Collaborative Search Pilot Program

AGENCY: United States Patent and Trademark Office, Commerce.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) is initiating a joint Work Sharing Pilot Program with the Korean Intellectual Patent Office (KIPO) to study whether the exchange of search reports between offices for corresponding counterpart applications improves patent quality and facilitates

the examination of patent applications in both offices. In the pilot program, each office will concurrently conduct a prior art search for its corresponding counterpart application. The search report from each office will then be exchanged between offices before either office issues a communication concerning patentability to the applicant. As a result of this exchange of search reports, the examiners in both offices may have a more comprehensive set of references before them when making an initial patentability determination. Each office will accord special status to its counterpart application to first action. First Action Interview (FAI) pilot program procedures will be applied during the examination of the U.S. application and make the Korean search report of record concurrently with the issuance of a Pre-Interview Communication.

DATES: *Effective Date:* September 1, 2015.

Duration: Under the United States-Korean Collaboration Pilot (US-KR CSP) program, the USPTO and KIPO will accept petitions to participate for two years from its effective date. During the pilot program, each office will be limited to granting 400 petitions. The offices may extend the pilot program (with or without modification) for an additional amount of time, if necessary. Both offices reserve the right to terminate the pilot program at any time.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Daniel Hunter, Director of International Work Sharing, Planning, and Implementation, Office of International Patent Cooperation, by telephone at 571-272-8050 regarding the handling of any specific application participating in the pilot. Any questions concerning this notice may be directed to Joseph Weiss, Senior Legal Advisor, Office of Patent Legal Administration, by phone (571) 272-7759. Any inquiries regarding this pilot program can be emailed to csp@uspto.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Background

The USPTO is continually looking for ways to improve the quality of issued patents and to promote work sharing between other Intellectual Property (IP) Offices throughout the world. The USPTO has launched several work sharing pilot programs in recent years (e.g., numerous Patent Prosecution Highway Pilot Programs). In furtherance of promoting interoffice work sharing, the USPTO and KIPO will cooperate in a study to determine whether work sharing between IP offices, in the form of exchanging the results from

independently performed concurrent searches, increases the efficiency and quality of patent examination. This exchange of search reports would occur prior to making determinations regarding patentability. Work sharing benefits applicants by promoting compact prosecution, reducing pendency, and supporting patent quality by reducing the likelihood of inconsistencies in patentability determinations (not predicated upon differences in national patent laws) between IP offices when considering corresponding counterpart applications.

Currently, an application filed in the USPTO with a claim of foreign priority may have a search report and art cited by the foreign office in the priority application provided to applicant during the U.S. application's pendency. After review of the search report and cited art, an applicant may submit an Information Disclosure Statement (IDS) in the U.S. application to provide the information to the USPTO. Often this submission occurs after examination on the merits is already underway in the U.S. application. Upon evaluation of the search report and cited art, the U.S. examiner may determine that the art cited by the foreign office is relevant to patentability and merits further examination before making a final determination on patentability. The delay caused by further examination results in additional costs to an applicant and the USPTO that could have been avoided if the U.S. examiner was in possession of the foreign office's search results before commencing examination of the application. Furthermore, in light of the various expedited examination programs currently in place, the potential exists that a U.S. application may reach final disposition before an applicant is in receipt of a foreign office's search report. Work sharing between intellectual Property (IP) offices in the form of an exchange of search reports may increase efficiency and promote patent examination quality by providing the examiner with both offices' search reports when examination commences. In order to study the benefits of the exchange of search reports between offices, current USPTO examination practice would need to be modified to conduct a search and generate a search report, without issuance of an Office action. The U.S. application also would need to be "made special" pursuant to USPTO procedures to ensure that it could be contemporaneously searched with its corresponding counterpart application.

The USPTO is using the First Action Interview Pilot Program (FAI) in this