that would warrant new NEPA documentation. Accordingly, this action is categorically excluded from further review under NOAA Administrative Order 216–6.

Determinations

The anticipated impact of winter seismic activities on the species or stock of ringed and bearded seals is expected to be negligible for the following reasons:

(1) The activity area supports a small proportion (<1 percent) of the ringed and bearded seal populations in the Beaufort Sea.

(2) Most of the winter-run seismic lines will be on ice over shallow water where ringed seals are absent or present in very low abundance. Over 90 percent of the activity area is near shore and/or in water less than 3 m (9.8 ft) deep, which is generally considered poor seal habitat. Moulton *et al.* (2001) reported that only 6 percent of 660 ringed seals observed on ice in the Northstar project area were in water between 0 to 3 m (0 to 9.8 ft) deep.

(3) For reasons of safety and because of normal operational constraints, seismic operators will avoid moderate and large pressure ridges, where seal and pupping lairs are likely to be most numerous.

(4) Many of the on-ice seismic lines and connecting ice roads will be laid out and explored during January and February, when many ringed seals are still transient, and considerably before the spring pupping season.

(5) The sounds from energy produced by vibrators used during on-ice seismic programs typically are at frequencies well below those used by ringed seals to communicate (1000 Hz). Thus, ringed seal hearing is not likely to be very good at those frequencies and seismic sounds are not likely to have strong masking effects on ringed seal calls. This effect is further moderated by the quiet intervals between seismic energy transmissions.

(6) There has been no major displacement of seals away from on-ice seismic operations (Frost and Lowry, 1988). Further confirmation of this lack of major response to industrial activity is illustrated by the fact that there has been no major displacement of seals near the Northstar Project. Studies at Northstar have shown a continued presence of ringed seals throughout winter and creation of new seal structures (Williams *et al.*, 2001).

(7) Although seals may abandon structures near seismic activity, studies have not demonstrated a cause and effect relationship between abandonment and seismic activity or biologically significant impact on ringed seals. Studies by Williams *et al.* (2001), Kelley *et al.* (1986, 1988) and Kelly and Quakenbush (1990) have shown that abandonment of holes and lairs and establishment or re-occupancy of new ones is an ongoing natural occurrence, with or without human presence. Link *et al.* (1999) compared ringed seal densities between areas with and without vibroseis activity and found densities were highly variable within each area and inconsistent between areas (densities were lower for 5 days, equal for 1 day, and higher for 1 day in vibroseis area), suggesting other factors beyond the seismic activity likely influenced seal use patterns. Consequently, a wide variety of natural factors influence patterns of seal use including time of day, weather, season, ice deformation, ice thickness, accumulation of snow, food availability and predators as well as ring seal behavior and population dynamics.

In winter, bearded seals are restricted to cracks, broken ice, and other openings in the ice. On-ice seismic operations avoid those areas for safety reasons. Therefore, any exposure of bearded seals to on-ice seismic operations would be limited to distant and transient exposure. Bearded seals exposed to a distant on-ice seismic operation might dive into the water. Consequently, no significant effects on individual bearded seals or their population are expected, and the number of individuals that might be temporarily disturbed would be very low.

As a result, CPA and NMFS believe the effects of on-ice seismic are expected to be limited to short-term and localized behavioral changes involving relatively small numbers of seals. NMFS has determined, based on information in the application and supporting documents, that these changes in behavior will have no more than a negligible impact on the affected species or stocks of ringed and bearded seals. Also, the potential effects of the on-ice seismic operations during 2005 are unlikely to result in more than small numbers of seals being affected and will not have an unmitigable adverse impact on subsistence uses of these two species.

Authorization

NMFS has issued an IHA to CPA for conducting seismic surveys from Milne Point to the eastern channel of the Colville River in the U.S. Beaufort Sea, provided the previously mentioned mitigation, monitoring, and reporting requirements are incorporated.

Dated: March 29, 2005.

Laurie K. Allen,

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

[FR Doc. 05–6612 Filed 4–1–05; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–22–S

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 032905B]

Caribbean Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

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

ACTION: Notice of public meetings.

SUMMARY: The Caribbean Fishery Management Council (Council) and its Administrative Committee will hold meetings.

DATES: The meetings will be held on May 3 and 4, 2005. The Council will convene on Tuesday, May 3, 2005, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and the Administrative Committee will meet from 5:15 p.m. to 6 p.m. The Council will reconvene on Wednesday, May 4, 2005, from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., approximately.

ADDRESSES: The meetings will be held at Frenchman's Reef and Morning Star Marriott Beach Resort, #5 Estate Bakkeroe, St. Thomas, USVI.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Caribbean Fishery Management Council, 268 Muńoz Rivera Avenue, Suite 1108, San Juan, Puerto Rico 00918–1920, telephone (787) 766–5926.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Council will hold its 118th regular public meeting to discuss the items contained in the following agenda:

May 3, 2005

9 a.m.–5 p.m.

Call to Order
Adoption of Agenda
Consideration of 117th Council Meeting Verbatim Minutes
Executive Director's Report
R/V Nancy Foster USVI Survey Update
Proposed rule for *Acropora palmata/Acropora cervicornis*
SFA Document–Final Action
CFMC Research Needs

5:15 p.m.– 6 p.m.

Administrative Committee Meeting
-AP/SSC/HAP Membership
-Budget 2002, 2003, 2004/05
-Pending travel and Contracts
-Other Business

May 4, 2005

8:30 a.m.–5 p.m.

HMS Presentation–Russel Dunn

Enforcement Reports

-Puerto Rico

-US Virgin Islands

-NOAA

-US Coast Guard

Administrative Committee Recommendations from May 3, 2005

Meetings attended by Council members and staff

Other Business

Next Council Meeting

The meetings are open to the public, and will be conducted in English. Fishers and other interested persons are invited to attend and participate with oral or written statements regarding agenda issues. Although non-emergency issues not contained in this agenda may come before this group for discussion, those issues may not be the subject of formal action during this meeting. Action will be restricted to those issues specifically identified in this notice and any issues arising after publication of this notice that require emergency action under section 305(c) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, provided the public has been notified of the Council's intent to take final action to address the emergency.

Special Accommodations

These meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. For more information or request for sign language interpretation and/other auxiliary aids, please contact Mr. Miguel A. Rolón, Executive Director, Caribbean Fishery Management Council, 268 Muñoz Rivera Avenue, Suite 1108, San Juan, Puerto Rico, 00918–2577, telephone (787) 766–5926, at least five days prior to the meeting date.

Dated: March 30, 2005.

Emily Menashes,

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

[FR Doc. E5–1480 Filed 4–1–05; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–22–S

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 032905C]

Western Pacific Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

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

ACTION: Notice of public meetings.

SUMMARY: The Western Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) will hold meetings of its Pelagics Plan Team (PPT) in Honolulu, HI to discuss fishery issues and develop recommendations for future management.

DATES: The meeting of the PPT will be held on May 3–5, 2005, from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held at the Council Office Conference Room, Western Pacific Fishery Management Council, 1164 Bishop St., Suite 1400, Honolulu, HI 96813; telephone: (808) 522–8220.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Kitty M. Simonds, Executive Director; telephone: (808) 522–8220.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The PPT will meet on May 3–5, 2005, at the Council Conference Room to discuss the following agenda items:

Tuesday May 3, 2005, 8.30 a.m.

1. Introduction
2. Annual Report review

a. Review 2004 Annual Report modules and recommendations

b. 2004 Annual Report region-wide recommendations

Wednesday & Thursday, May 4–5, 2005, 8.30 a.m.

3. Bigeye tuna overfishing
4. Management of Hawaii offshore handline fishery
5. Status of North Pacific Albacore
6. International pelagic fishery management
7. Recreational fisheries
8. Economic research
9. Protected species research and management
10. Other business

The order in which the agenda items are addressed may change. The PPT will meet as late as necessary to complete scheduled business. Although non-emergency issues not contained in this agenda may come before the PPT for discussion, those issues may not be the subject of formal action during these meetings. Plan Team action will be restricted to those issues specifically listed in this document and any issue arising after publication of this document that requires emergency action under section 305(c) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, provided the public has been notified of the Council's intent to take final action to address the emergency.

Special Accommodations

These meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Kitty M. Simonds, (808) 522–8220 (voice) or (808) 522–8226 (fax), at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.

Dated: March 30, 2005.

Emily Menashes,

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

[FR Doc. E5–1482 Filed 4–1–05; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–22–S

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 032805A]

Atlantic Highly Migratory Species; Environmental Assessment; Exempted Fishing Permits

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

ACTION: Notice of availability; request for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces the availability of an Environmental Assessment (EA) prepared pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act to analyze the potential impacts associated with exempting six pelagic longline vessels from existing area closures and other regulations for the purpose of evaluating whether gear modifications and/or various fishing techniques can avoid/reduce bycatch and associated regulatory discards of juvenile highly migratory species (HMS) in the Gulf of Mexico, Florida East Coast, South Atlantic Bight, Mid-Atlantic Bight, and Northeast Coastal statistical areas of the Atlantic Ocean. The EA examines alternatives available to authorize activities otherwise prohibited by regulations for the conduct of scientific research and the investigation of bycatch, consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act), and other relevant Federal laws. NMFS is requesting comments on the alternatives outlined in the EA.

DATES: Written comments on this action must be received no later than 5 p.m., local time, on April 11, 2005.

ADDRESSES: Copies of the EA can be obtained by contacting Heather Stirratt (see **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**) or by viewing the document online at *http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/*.

Comments regarding the EA and issuance of Exempted Fishing Permits