

discretionary authority described in section 303(b)(2)(B) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA), where fishing may be restricted in order to protect deep-sea corals from physical damage caused by fishing gear. Such zones would be located within the geographical range of the MSB fishery, as described in the FMP. However, management measures may apply to any MSA-regulated fishing activity within this range. Therefore, any measures pursued under this authority would likely apply to all federally managed fisheries within the geographic range of the MSB fisheries. The geographical range of this fishery includes the coastal and EEZ waters of the U.S. East Coast, with a core fishery management area from North Carolina to Maine.

- Designation of deep-sea corals as a component of EFH or as Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPCs).
- Measures to minimize bycatch of deep-sea coral species.
- Special access programs to provide for continued fishing in or near deep-sea coral areas for specific fisheries or gear types.
- Exploratory fishing programs to allow for future development of new fisheries in a way that protects deep-sea corals.

The Mid-Atlantic Council is seeking comments on the scope of alternatives to be considered in this amendment, as well as general comments or concerns relating to deep-sea coral protections in the mid-Atlantic.

Scoping Meetings

Two scoping meetings to facilitate public comment will be held on the following dates and locations:

1. February 5, 2013, 7–9 p.m., via webinar; connection information to be available at <http://www.mafmc.org/meetings/meetings.htm> or by contacting the Mid-Atlantic Council (see **ADDRESSES**);

2. February 13, 2013, 4 p.m., Embassy Suites Hampton Roads, 1700 Coliseum Drive, Hampton, VA 23666.

Special Accommodations

The scoping meetings are accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aid should be directed to M. Jan Saunders (302–674–2331 ext. 18) at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.

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

Dated: January 9, 2013.

Emily H. Menashes,
Deputy Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648–XC443

Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee

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

ACTION: Notice of open public meeting.

SUMMARY: This notice sets forth the schedule and proposed agenda of a forthcoming meeting of the Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee (MAFAC). The members will discuss and provide advice on issues outlined in the agenda below.

DATES: The meeting is scheduled for January 30, 2013, 3–4 p.m., Eastern Daylight Time.

ADDRESSES: Conference call. Public access is available at 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mark Holliday, (301) 427–8004; email: Mark.Holliday@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The MAFAC was established by the Secretary of Commerce (Secretary), and, since 1971, advises the Secretary on all living marine resource matters that are the responsibility of the Department of Commerce. The complete charter and other information are located online at <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/ocs/mafac/>.

Matters To Be Considered

The Committee is convening to recommend a list of new members to participate on the Recreational Fisheries Working Group for submission to the NOAA Fisheries Assistant Administrator. This agenda is subject to change.

Dated: January 10, 2013.

Samuel D. Rauch III,
Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, performing the functions and duties of the Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648–XB173

Marine Mammals; File No. 16919

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

ACTION: Notice; issuance of permit.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that a permit has been issued to Eye of the Whale (Olga von Ziegesar, Responsible Party and Principal Investigator), P.O. Box 15191, Fitz Creek, AK 99603 to conduct research on humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*).

ADDRESSES: The permit and related documents are available for review upon written request or by appointment in the following offices:

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; and Alaska Region, NMFS, P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802–1668; phone (907)586–7221; fax (907)586–7249.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Amy Hapeman or Carrie Hubard, (301)427–8401.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On May 11, 2012, notice was published in the *Federal Register* (77 FR 27717) that a request for a permit to conduct research on humpback whales had been submitted by the above-named applicant. The requested permit has 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).

The Permit Holder has been issued a five-year scientific research permit to continue a long-term census of humpback whales in Prince William Sound and adjacent waters of Alaska. Researchers are authorized 200 takes annually to closely approach whales by vessel for counts, photo-identification and behavioral observation. The purpose of the work is to better define whale abundance, distribution, reoccurrence of old individuals vs. new individuals, feeding habits, vital rates, associations between animals, and sex of individual whales.