

pilot whale, WNA; Atlantic white-sided dolphin; short-beaked common dolphin; common bottlenose dolphin; Western North Atlantic/offshore ; harbor porpoise, Gulf of Maine/Bay of Fundy; harbor seal, WNA; gray seal, WNA; common bottlenose dolphin, Gulf of Mexico continental shelf; common bottlenose dolphin, Gulf of Mexico eastern coastal; common bottlenose dolphin, Gulf of Mexico Oceanic; common bottlenose dolphin, northern Gulf of Mexico bay, sound and estuary (27 stocks); pantropical spotted dolphin, Gulf of Mexico; and Risso's dolphin Gulf of Mexico. Information on the remaining Atlantic region stocks can be found in the final 2013 reports (Waring *et al.*, 2014).

Most revisions included updates of abundance and/or mortality and serious injury estimates. The status of one stock, Gulf of Maine/Bay of Fundy harbor porpoise, changed from strategic to non-strategic. New survey data provided calculated values of abundance, Nmin, and PBR for the following stocks of common bottlenose dolphin: Gulf of Mexico continental shelf, Gulf of Mexico eastern coastal stock, Gulf of Mexico northern coastal stock, Gulf of Mexico western coastal, Mississippi River Delta, and Mississippi Sound, Lake Borgne, Bay Boudreau.

Pacific Reports

In the Pacific region (waters along the west coast of the United States, within waters surrounding the main and Northwest Hawaiian Islands, and within waters surrounding U.S. territories in the Western Pacific), SARs were revised for 10 stocks under NMFS jurisdiction (5 "strategic" and 5 "non-strategic" stocks) and one was added for the Western North Pacific gray whale (a "strategic" stock). All stocks were reviewed and the following stocks were revised for 2014: Hawaiian monk seal; southern Resident killer whale; false killer whale, Main Hawaiian Islands Insular; false killer whale, Hawaii Pelagic; sperm whale, California/Oregon/Washington; Western North Pacific gray whale; California sea lion; Harbor seal, California; Northern elephant seal, California; Eastern North Pacific gray whale; and false killer whale, Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. Information on the remaining Pacific region stocks can be found in the final 2013 reports (Carretta *et al.*, 2014).

New estimates of abundance for the California/Oregon/Washington stock of sperm whales are based on a Bayesian trend analysis that utilizes previously collected line-transect data (Moore and Barlow, 2014), resulting in a more stable time series of abundance estimates.

Mortality and serious injury estimates of California/Oregon/Washington sperm whales in California drift gillnets are updated, based on pooling additional years of data (>5 years) to reduce bias and improve precision in mean annual bycatch estimates (Carretta and Moore, 2014). The combination of new abundance estimates and pooling of bycatch estimates over a longer time period for this stock of sperm whales results in mean annual bycatch estimates that no longer exceed PBR.

Dated: January 23, 2015.

Wanda Cain,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XD546

Notice of Availability of the Draft NOAA Restoration Center Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement

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

ACTION: Notice of Availability of a Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement; request for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces the availability of the *NOAA Restoration Center Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement*. Publication of this notice begins the public comment period for this Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (DPEIS). The purpose of the DPEIS is to evaluate, in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the potential direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of implementing the alternative programmatic approaches to coastal habitat restoration within the NOAA Restoration Center and other NOAA programs implementing similar habitat restoration activities.

DATES: Interested parties should provide written comments by March 20, 2015.

ADDRESSES: Interested parties that wish to send comments may send an email to rc.compliance@noaa.gov. Interested parties that wish to send comments through regular mail may use the following mailing address: NOAA Restoration Center (F/HC3), ATTN: Restoration DPEIS Comments, 1315 East West Highway, Silver Spring, MD

20910. The NOAA Restoration Center Web site that contains information and updates relevant to this DPEIS can be found at: <http://www.restoration.noaa.gov/environmentalcompliance>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Melanie Gange at 301-427-8664 or via the following email address: rc.compliance@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

In the DPEIS, NOAA proposes to fund or otherwise implement coastal habitat restoration activities through its existing programmatic framework and related procedures. NOAA contains multiple programs that carry out habitat restoration projects throughout the coastal United States, which includes the Great Lakes and territories. Many of these programs are housed within the National Marine Fisheries Service, Office of Habitat Conservation's Restoration Center (NOAA RC). Projects implemented by NOAA vary in terms of their size, complexity, geographic location and NOAA involvement, and often benefit a wide range of habitat types and affect a number of different species. Fish passage, hydrologic/tidal reconnection, shellfish restoration, coral recovery, salt marsh and barrier island restoration, erosion prevention, debris removal, and invasive species removal, are all examples of project types implemented by NOAA through its various programs.

The DPEIS includes a suite of restoration approaches that NOAA proposes will most effectively conserve and restore the coastal and marine resources under NOAA trusteeship. This analysis builds upon and replaces the Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) and Supplemental (SPEA) published in 2002 and 2006, respectively. The analyses in the PEA and SPEA, where relevant, along with NOAA's analyses of individual project impacts, have informed the updated analyses in this DPEIS. NOAA believes that this DPEIS will promote an efficient NEPA compliance process for future NOAA-supported habitat restoration activities, through various programs.

Alternatives: This document provides a programmatic-level environmental analysis to support NOAA's proposal to continue habitat restoration activities involving trust resources throughout the coastal United States. The DPEIS takes a broad look at issues and programmatic-level alternatives (compared to a document for a specific project or action) and provides guidance for future restoration activities to be carried out by NOAA. In addition to

providing a programmatic analysis, NOAA intends to use this document to approve future site-specific actions, including grant actions, so long as the activity being proposed is within the range of alternatives and scope of potential environmental consequences considered within this NEPA analysis. Any future site-specific restoration activities proposed by NOAA that are not within the scope of alternatives or environmental consequences considered in this PEIS will require additional analysis under NEPA.

NOAA has determined that two alternatives are reasonable and meet the purpose and need. These are Alternative 1—Current Management and Alternative 2—Technical Assistance.

“Current Management,” the No Action Alternative, is a comprehensive restoration approach that includes activities such as technical assistance, on-the-ground riverine and coastal habitat restoration activities, and land and water acquisition activities. For programmatic analyses of on-going programs, where program activities are being analyzed as opposed to a single specific project action, the No Action Alternative can be interpreted as “no change from current management” (CEQ 40 Questions, 46 FR 18026 (March 23, 1981). Riverine and coastal habitat restoration activities in this alternative include but are not limited to, fish passage projects; channel, bank and floodplain restoration; buffer area and watershed revegetation; saltmarsh restoration; oyster restoration; marine debris removal; submerged aquatic vegetation restoration; invasive species removal; and coral restoration.

“Technical Assistance” is an alternative approach that includes no on-the-ground restoration, and is limited to activities including project planning, modeling, feasibility studies, engineering and design studies, and permitting activities.

Impacts Analysis: This DPEIS presents NOAA’s restoration activities and their environmental consequences grouped into three categories of restoration activities: Technical assistance; on-the-ground riverine and coastal habitat restoration activities; and land and water acquisition activities. All three of these restoration categories comprise the “Current Management” alternative. Technical assistance activities are typically minimally-intrusive, relatively low-cost and do not require extensive on-the-ground activities to be implemented. On-the-ground restoration activities include all of the physical riverine and coastal restoration that the NOAA RC supports. Land and water acquisition activities

involve transactions of ownership, usage rights, or access. This alternative is anticipated to have typically long-term beneficial and short-term adverse impacts on the affected environment of various magnitudes and intensities, which are described in the DPEIS.

The “Technical Assistance” alternative relies heavily, if not exclusively, on external sources of funding to conduct on-the-ground implementation. NOAA resources would only be focused on advisory or technical assistance aspects of the restoration work. The technical assistance activities would generally cause mostly indirect, long-term beneficial impacts, with short-term adverse impacts for more intrusive monitoring and sampling techniques.

Request for Comment: The publication date of this notice constitutes the start of the comment period under NEPA for the PEIS. NOAA encourages all parties with an interest in or who are affected by habitat restoration activities to provide suggestions and comments. Comments are specifically requested regarding the alternatives, scope of analysis, assessment of impacts, and the process described in Appendix A for determining which future projects are covered by this analysis. For more detailed background information, including program descriptions, restoration project types, and the previously mentioned environmental assessment documents, please visit the NOAA Restoration Center Web site. Interested parties should provide written comments by March 20, 2015.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 661; 16 U.S.C. 1891a.

Dated: January 26, 2015.

Frederick C. Sutter,

*Director, Office of Habitat Conservation,
National Marine Fisheries Service.*

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XD724

Fishing Capacity Reduction Program for the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery

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

ACTION: Notice of loan repayment.

SUMMARY: NMFS issues this notice to inform interested parties that the Oregon coastal Dungeness crab sub-loan in the fishing capacity reduction program for the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery has been repaid. Therefore, buyback fee collections on Oregon coastal Dungeness crab will cease for all landings after December 31, 2014.

DATES: Comments must be submitted on or before 5 p.m. EST February 13, 2015.

ADDRESSES: Send comments about this notice to Paul Marx, Chief, Financial Services Division, NMFS, Attn: Oregon Coastal Dungeness Crab Buyback, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910 (see **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Michael A. Sturtevant at (301) 427-8799 or Michael.A.Sturtevant@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On November 16, 2004, NMFS published a **Federal Register** document (69 FR 67100) proposing regulations to implement an industry fee system for repaying the reduction loan. The final rule was published July 13, 2005 (70 FR 40225) and fee collection began on September 8, 2005. Interested persons should review these for further program details.

The Oregon coastal Dungeness crab sub-loan of the Pacific Coast Groundfish Capacity Reduction (Buyback) loan in the amount of \$1,367,545.28 will be repaid in full upon receipt of buyback fees on landings through December 31, 2014. NMFS has received \$2,117,701.75 to repay the principal and interest on this sub-loan since fee collection began September 8, 2005. Based on buyback fees received to date, landings after December 31, 2014 will not be subject to the buyback fee. Therefore, buyback loan fees will no longer be collected in the Oregon coastal Dungeness crab fishery on future landings.

Buyback fees not yet forwarded to NMFS for Oregon coastal Dungeness crab landings through December 31, 2014 should be forwarded to NMFS immediately. Any overpayment of buyback fees submitted to NMFS will be refunded on a pro-rata basis to the fish buyers/processors based upon best available fish ticket landings data. The fish buyers/processors should return excess buyback fees collected to the harvesters, including buyback fees collected but not yet remitted to NMFS for landings after December 31, 2014. Any discrepancies in fees owed and fees paid must be resolved immediately. After the sub-loan is closed, no further adjustments to fees paid and fees received can be made.