

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XD711

Marine Mammals; File No. 18881

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

ACTION: Notice; receipt of application.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that the Texas Sealife Center, 14220 South Padre Island Drive, Corpus Christi, TX 78418, [Responsible Party: Tim Tristan], has applied in due form for a permit to conduct research on bottlenose dolphins (Tursiops truncatus).

DATES: Written, telefaxed, or e-mail comments must be received on or before [insert date 30 days after date of publication in the FEDERAL REGISTER].

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 (APPS) home page, <https://apps.nmfs.noaa.gov>, and then selecting File No. 18881 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. 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: Amy Hapeman or Howard Goldstein; phone: (301) 427-8401.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The subject permit is requested under the authority of the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, as amended (MMPA; 16 U.S.C. 1361 et seq.) and the regulations governing the taking and importing of marine mammals (50 CFR part 216).

The applicant requests a five-year permit to conduct research on bottlenose dolphins in the bay, sound, estuary and near-shore coastal waters of Texas in the northwestern Gulf of Mexico. The purpose of the research is to: (1) develop and maintain standardized photo-identification catalogs; (2) characterize fine-scale population structure and dynamics; (3) estimate abundance for strategic stocks; (4) establish baseline patterns of distribution, habitat use, site-fidelity, diet, and contaminant loads; (5) analyze dolphin behavior in relation to anthropogenic activities; and (6) identify potential risks to the population. Proposed methods include vessel surveys for photographic identification, focal follows, behavioral observation, and biopsy sampling.

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 activity proposed is 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 application to the Marine Mammal Commission and its Committee of Scientific Advisors.

Dated: February 6, 2015.

Perry F. Gayaldo, Deputy Director, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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