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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648- XB157

Marine Mammals; File No. 14856

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 Bruce R. Mate, Ph.D., Hatfield Marine Science Center, Oregon State University, Newport, OR 97365, has applied for an amendment to Scientific Research Permit No. 14856-02.

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 home page, <https://apps.nmfs.noaa.gov>, and then selecting File No. 14856 Mod 6 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 Carrie Hubbard, (301) 427-8401.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The subject amendment to Permit No. 14856-02 is requested 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 (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*), and the regulations governing the taking, importing, and exporting of endangered and threatened species (50 CFR 222-226).

Permit No. 14856-02, first issued on December 18, 2013 (79 FR 3346), authorizes Dr. Mate to take 66 species of cetaceans and 12 species of pinnipeds in U.S. and international waters worldwide for scientific research. The purposes of the research are to: (1) identify migration routes; (2) identify specific feeding and breeding grounds for each species; (3) characterize local movements and dive habits in both feeding and breeding grounds, and during migration; (4) examine the relationships between movements/dive habits and prey distribution, time of day, geographic location, or physical and biological oceanographic conditions; (5) characterize whale vocalizations; (6) characterize sound pressure levels to which whales are exposed; and (7) gather photo-identification and behavioral information for species and situations where little information has been documented. Researchers are authorized to conduct aerial and vessel

surveys to perform a suite of research activities including: observations, biopsy sampling, implantable and suction-cup tagging, photo-identification, behavioral observation, passive acoustic recording, post-tag monitoring, and/or import, receive or export parts. The permit expires December 31, 2018. Dr. Mate is requesting the permit be amended to increase the number of humpback whales (Megaptera novaeangliae) that may be taken by Level B harassment during surveys from 1,000 to 2,000 animals annually to account for all approaches within 100 yards. No other changes to the permit or manner of research would occur.

A draft supplemental environmental assessment (SEA) has been prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.), to examine whether significant environmental impacts could result from issuance of the proposed scientific research permit. The draft SEA is available for review and comment simultaneous with the scientific research permit application.

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

Dated: March 27, 2015.

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