



## Incidental Harassment Authorization

The St. George Reef Lighthouse Preservation Society (Society), P.O. Box 577, Crescent City, CA 95531, is hereby authorized under section 101(a)(5)(D) of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (16 U.S.C. 1371(a)(5)(D)) and 50 CFR 216.107, to harass marine mammals incidental to conducting helicopter operations and restoration and maintenance work on the St. George Reef Light Station (Station) on Northwest Seal Rock (NWSR) in the Northeast Pacific Ocean.

1. This Incidental Harassment Authorization (IHA) is valid from February 19, 2017 through February 18, 2018. The Society may not conduct operations from May 1, 2017 through October 31, 2017.

2. This IHA is valid only for activities associated with helicopter operations, lighthouse restoration and maintenance activities, and human presence (See items 2(a) – (d)) on the Station on NWSR (41° 50'24'' N, 124° 22'06'' W) in the Northeast Pacific Ocean.

a. The use of a small, compact, 4-person helicopter with two-bladed main and tail rotors fitted with noise-attenuating blade tip caps to transit to and from NWSR;

b. Restoration activities (*e.g.*, painting, plastering, welding, and glazing) conducted on the Station;

c. Maintenance activities (*e.g.*, bulb replacement and automation of the light system) conducted on the Station; and

d. Emergency repair events (*e.g.*, the failure of the PATON beacon light) outside of the three-day work session.

- e. Human presence

### 3. General Conditions

- a. A copy of this IHA must be in the possession of the Society, its designees, and work crew personnel operating under the authority of this IHA.

- b. The species authorized for taking are the California sea lion (*Zalophus californianus*), Pacific Harbor seal (*Phoca vitulina*), the eastern Distinct Population Segment of Steller sea lion (*Eumetopias jubatus*), and the California stock of northern fur seal (*Callorhinus ursinus*).

- c. The taking, by Level B harassment only, is limited to the species listed in condition 3(b). Authorized take: California sea lion (2880); Steller sea lion (2790); Pacific harbor seal (36); and northern fur seal (18).

- d. The taking by Level A harassment, injury or death of any of the species listed in item 3(b) of the IHA or the taking by harassment, injury or death of any other species of marine mammal is prohibited and may result in the modification, suspension, or revocation of this IHA.

- e. In the case of an emergency repair event (*i.e.*, failure of the PATON beacon light) between May 1, 2017 through October 31, 2017, the Society will consult with the NMFS's West Coast Regional Office (WCRO) at 562-980- 4000 to best determine the timing of an emergency repair trip to the Station.

- a. The WCRO will make a decision regarding when the Society can schedule helicopter trips to the NWSR during the emergency repair time window and will ensure that such operations will have the least practicable adverse impact to marine mammals.

### 4. Mitigation Measures

In order to ensure the least practicable impact on the species listed in condition 3(b), the holder of this IHA is required to:

- a. Conduct restoration and maintenance activities at the Station at a maximum of one session per month between February 19, 2017 and February 18, 2018. Each restoration session will be no more than three days in duration. Maintenance of the light beacon will occur only in conjunction with the monthly restoration activities.
- b. Ensure that helicopter approach patterns to the NWSR will be such that the timing techniques are least disturbing to marine mammals. To the extent possible, the helicopter should approach NWSR when the tide is too high for the marine mammals to haul out on NWSR.
- c. Avoid rapid and direct approaches by the helicopter to the station by approaching NWSR at a relatively high altitude (*e.g.*, 800 - 1,000 ft; 244 - 305 m). Before the final approach, the helicopter shall circle lower, and approach from area where the density of pinnipeds is the lowest. If for any safety reasons (*e.g.*, wind conditions or visibility) such helicopter approach and timing techniques cannot be achieved, the Society must abort the restoration and maintenance session for that day.
- d. Provide instructions to the Society's members, the restoration crew, and if applicable, to tourists, on appropriate conduct when in the vicinity of hauled-out marine mammals. The Society's members, the restoration crew, and if applicable, tourists, will avoid making unnecessary noise while on NWSR and must not view pinnipeds around the base of the Station.
- e. Ensure that the door to the Station's lower platform shall remain closed and barricaded at all times.

## 5. Monitoring

The holder of this IHA is required to:

- a. Have a NMFS-approved experienced biologist be present on the first flight of each day of activities.
- b. Record the date, time, and location (or closest point of ingress) of each visit to the NWSR.
- c. Collect the following information for each visit:
  - i. Information on the numbers (by species) of marine mammals observed during the activities;
  - ii. The estimated number of marine mammals (by species) that may have been harassed during the activities;
  - iii. Any behavioral responses or modifications of behaviors that may be attributed to the specific activities (*e.g.*, flushing into water, becoming alert and moving, rafting); and
  - iv. Information on the weather, including the tidal state and horizontal visibility.
- d. Employ a biologist to document marine mammals hauled out on NWSR.
  - i. Photographs of all marine mammals hauled-out on the island shall be taken at an altitude greater than 300 m (984 ft) during the first arrival flight to NWSR.
  - ii. The Society and/or its designees will forward the photographs to a biologist capable of discerning marine mammal species. The Society shall provide the data to NMFS in the form of a report with a data table, any other significant observations related to marine mammals, and a report of restoration activities (see Reporting). The Society will make available the original photographs to NMFS or to other marine mammal experts upon request for inspection and further analysis.

## 6. Reporting Requirements

Final Report: The holder of this IHA is required to submit a draft monitoring report to the Chief, Permits and Conservation Division, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1315 East West Highway, 13th Floor, Silver Spring, MD 20910, no later than 90 days after the project is completed. The report must contain the following information:

- a. A summary of the dates, times, and weather during all helicopter operations, restoration, and maintenance activities.
- b. Species, number, location, and behavior of any marine mammals, observed throughout all monitoring activities, including any rare or unusual species
- c. An estimate of the number (by species) of marine mammals that are known to have been exposed to visual and acoustic stimuli associated with the helicopter operations, restoration, and maintenance activities.
- d. A description of the implementation and effectiveness of the monitoring and mitigation measures of the IHA and full documentation of methods, results, and interpretation pertaining to all monitoring.
- e. Instances of tag-bearing carcasses of pinnipeds

#### 7. Reporting Prohibited Take

In the unanticipated event that the specified activity clearly causes the take of a marine mammal in a manner prohibited by the IHA (if issued), such as an injury (Level A harassment), serious injury, or mortality (e.g., stampede, etc.), the Society shall immediately cease the specified activities and immediately report the incident to the Permits and Conservation Division, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, at 301-427-8496 or [laura.mccue@noaa.gov](mailto:laura.mccue@noaa.gov), and the Assistant West Coast Regional Stranding Coordinator at 1-866-767-6114.

The report must include the following information:

- Time, date, and location (latitude/longitude) of the incident;
- Name and type of vessel involved;
- Vessel's speed during and leading up to the incident;
- Description of the incident;
- Status of all sound source use in the 24 hours preceding the incident;
- Water depth;
- Environmental conditions (*e.g.*, wind speed and direction, Beaufort sea state, cloud cover, and visibility);
- Description of all marine mammal observations in the 24 hours preceding the incident;
- Species identification or description of the animal(s) involved;
- Fate of the animal(s); and
- Photographs or video footage of the animal(s) (if equipment is available).

The Society shall not resume its activities until we are able to review the circumstances of the prohibited take. We shall work with the Society to determine what is necessary to minimize the likelihood of further prohibited take and ensure Marine Mammal Protection Act compliance. The Society may not resume their activities until notified by us via letter, email, or telephone.

#### 8. Reporting an Injured or Dead Marine Mammal with an Unknown Cause of Death

In the event that the Society discovers an injured or dead marine mammal, and the observer determines that the cause of the injury or death is unknown and the death is relatively recent (*i.e.*, in less than a moderate state of decomposition as we describe in the next paragraph), the Society will immediately report the incident to the Permits and Conservation Division, Office

of Protected Resources, at 301-427-8496 or [laura.mccue@noaa.gov](mailto:laura.mccue@noaa.gov), and the Assistant West Coast Regional Stranding Coordinator at 1-866-767-6114. The report must include the same information identified in the paragraph above this section. Activities may continue while we review the circumstances of the incident. We will work with the Society to determine whether modifications in the activities are appropriate.

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9. Reporting an Injured or Dead Marine Mammal not Related to the Society's Activities

In the event that the Society discovers an injured or dead marine mammal, and the lead visual observer determines that the injury or death is not associated with or related to the authorized activities (*e.g.*, previously wounded animal, carcass with moderate to advanced decomposition, or scavenger damage), the Society will report the incident to the Permits and Conservation Division, Office of Protected Resources, at 301-427-8496 or [laura.mccue@noaa.gov](mailto:laura.mccue@noaa.gov), and the Assistant West Coast Regional Stranding Coordinator at 1-866-767-6114, within 24 hours of the discovery.

The Society's staff will provide photographs or video footage (if available) or other documentation of the stranded animal sighting to us.

10. This IHA may be modified, suspended or withdrawn if the holder fails to abide by the conditions prescribed herein, or if NMFS determines the authorized taking is having a more than a negligible impact on the species or stock of affected marine mammals.

Donna S. Wieting

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Director, Office of Protected Resources,

National Marine Fisheries Service.

FEB 13 2017

Date