



INCIDENTAL HARASSMENT AUTHORIZATION

The Office of Naval Research (ONR) is hereby authorized under section 101(a)(5)(D) of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA; 16 U.S.C. 1371(a)(5)(D)) to incidentally harass marine mammals, under the following conditions:

1. This incidental harassment authorization (IHA) is valid from the date of issuance to September 13, 2024.
2. This IHA authorizes take incidental to the use of active acoustic sources, as specified in the ONR's IHA application, associated with the Arctic Research Activities project in the Beaufort and eastern Chukchi Seas.
3. General Conditions
 - (a) A copy of this IHA must be in the possession of the Holder of the Authorization (Holder), its designees, lead protected species observers (PSOs), and work crew personnel operating under the authority of this IHA.
 - (b) The species and/or stocks authorized for taking are the beluga whale (*Delphinapterus leucas*; Beaufort Sea and eastern Chukchi Sea stocks) and the ringed seal (*Pusa hispida hispida*; Arctic stock) listed in Table 1. Authorized take, by Level B harassment only, is limited to the species and numbers listed in Table 1.
 - (c) The taking by serious injury or death of any of the species listed in Table 1 or any taking of any other species of marine mammal is prohibited and may result in the modification, suspension, or revocation of this IHA. Any taking exceeding the authorized amounts listed in Table 1 is prohibited and may result in the modification, suspension, or revocation of this IHA.
 - (d) The Holder must ensure that supervisors and crews, the monitoring team, and relevant ONR staff are trained prior to the start of activities subject to this IHA, so that responsibilities, communication procedures, monitoring protocols, and operational procedures are clearly understood. New personnel joining during the project must be trained prior to commencing work.
4. Mitigation Requirements
 - (a) All ships operated by or for the Navy must have personnel assigned to stand watch at all times while underway. Watch personnel must employ visual search techniques using binoculars. While underway using active acoustic sources/towed in-water devices, at least one person with access to binoculars is required to be on watch at all times.

(b) Ship captains and vessel personnel must remain alert at all times, proceed with extreme caution, and operate at a safe speed so that the ship can take proper and effective action to avoid any collisions with marine mammals.

(c) During moored and drifting acoustic source deployment, ONR must implement a mitigation zone of 180 feet (55 meters) around the deployed source. Deployment must cease if a marine mammal is visually detected within the mitigation zone. Deployment may recommence if any one of the following conditions are met:

- (i) The animal is observed exiting the mitigation zone;
- (ii) The animal is thought to have exited the mitigation zone based on its course and speed;
- (iii) The mitigation zone has been clear from any additional sightings for a period of 15 minutes for pinnipeds and 30 minutes for cetaceans.

(d) Ships must avoid approaching marine mammals head-on and must maneuver to maintain a mitigation zone of 500 yards (457 meters) around all observed cetaceans and 200 yards (183 meters) around all other observed marine mammals, provided it is safe to do so.

(e) Activities must cease if a marine mammal species for which take was not authorized, or a species for which authorization was granted but the authorized number of takes have been met, is observed approaching or within the mitigation zone (Table 1). Activities must not resume until the animal is confirmed to have left the area.

(f) Ship captains must maintain at-sea communication with subsistence whalers to avoid conflict of ship transit with hunting activity.

5. Monitoring

The holder of this Authorization is required to conduct marine mammal monitoring during Arctic Research Activities. Monitoring and reporting must be conducted in accordance with the Integrated Comprehensive Monitoring Program (ICMP).

- (a) While underway, all ships must have at least one person trained through the U.S. Navy Marine Species Awareness Training Program on watch during all activities.
- (b) Data Collection
 - (i) Watch personnel must use standardized data collection forms, whether hard copy or electronic. Watch personnel must distinguish between sightings that occur on transit or during deployment of acoustic

sources. Data must be recorded on all days of activities even if marine mammals are not sighted.

- (ii) At the minimum, the following information must be recorded:
1. Vessel name;
 2. Watch personnel names and affiliation;
 3. Effort type (*i.e.*, transit, deployment); and
 4. Environmental conditions (at the beginning of watch personnel shift and whenever conditions changed significantly), including BSS and any other relevant weather conditions including cloud cover, fog, sun glare, and overall visibility to the horizon
- (iii) Upon visual observation of any marine mammal, the following information must be recorded:
1. Date/time of sighting;
 2. Identification of animal (e.g., genus/species, lowest possible taxonomic level, or unidentified) and the composition of the group if there is a mix of species;
 3. Location (latitude/longitude) of sighting;
 4. Estimated number of animals (high/low/best)
 5. Description (as many distinguishing features as possible of each individual seen, including length, shape, color, pattern, scars or markings, shape and size of dorsal fin, shape of head, and blow characteristics);
 6. Detailed behavior observations (*e.g.*, number of blows/breaths, number of surfaces, breaching, spyhopping, diving, feeding, traveling; as explicit and detailed as possible; length of time observed in the harassment zone, note any observed changes in behavior);
 7. Distance from ship to animal;
 8. Direction of animal's travel relative to the vessel
 9. Platform activity at time of sighting (*i.e.*, transit, deployment); and
 10. Weather conditions (*i.e.*, Beaufort Sea State, cloud cover).

- (c) During deployment of acoustic sources or unmanned underwater vehicles (UUVs), visual observation must begin 30 minutes prior to deployment and continue through 30 minutes following the source deployment.

6. Reporting

The holder of this Authorization is required to:

- (a) Submit a draft report to NMFS Office of Protected Resources (OPR) and Alaska Regional (AKR) on all monitoring conducted under the IHA within 90 calendar days of the completion of each research cruise, or sixty days prior to the issuance of any subsequent IHA for this project, whichever comes first. The report must include data regarding acoustic source use, the number of shutdowns during monitoring, any marine mammal sightings (including the marine mammal's location (latitude and longitude)), and the number of individuals of each species observed during source deployment and operation, and their behavior and distance from the project activities. ONR must review all reported information and check information for accuracy and completion prior to submission to NMFS. A final report must be prepared and submitted to NMFS OPR and AKR within thirty days following resolution of comments on the draft report from NMFS.
- (b) If no comments are received from NMFS within 30 days of submission of the draft final report, the draft final report will constitute the final report. If comments are received, a final report must be submitted within 30 days after receipt of comments.
- (c) Reporting injured or dead marine mammals:
 - (i) Discovery of injured or dead marine mammal – In the event that personnel involved in the survey activities discover an injured or dead marine mammal, the ONR must report the incident to the OPR (301-427-8401), NMFS and to the Alaska Regional Stranding Coordinator, NMFS at 877-925-7773 as soon as feasible. The report must include the following information::
 1. Time, date, and location (latitude/longitude) of the first discovery (and updated location information if known and applicable);
 2. Species identification (if known) or description of the animal(s) involved;
 3. Condition of the animal(s) (including carcass condition if the animal is dead);
 4. Observed behaviors of the animal(s), if alive;
 5. If available, photographs or video footage of the animal(s); and

6. General circumstances under which the animal was discovered.
- (ii) Vessel Strike – In the event of a ship strike of a marine mammal by any vessel involved in the activities covered by the authorization, the ONR must report the incident to OPR, NMFS and to the Alaska Regional Stranding Coordinator as soon as feasible. The report must include the following information:
1. Time, date, and location (latitude/longitude) of the incident;
 2. Species identification (if known) or description of the animal(s) involved;
 3. Vessel's speed during and leading up to the incident;
 4. Vessel's course/heading and what operations were being conducted (if applicable);
 5. Status of all sound sources in use;
 6. Description of avoidance measures/requirements that were in place at the time of the strike and what additional measures were taken, if any, to avoid strike;
 7. Environmental conditions (*e.g.*, wind speed and direction, Beaufort sea state, cloud cover, visibility) immediately preceding the strike;
 8. Estimated size and length of animal that was struck;
 9. Description of the behavior of the marine mammal immediately preceding and following the strike;
 10. If available, description of the presence and behavior of any other marine mammals immediately preceding the strike;
 11. Estimated fate of the animal (*e.g.*, dead, injured but alive, injured and moving, blood or tissue observed in the water, status unknown, disappeared); and
 12. To the extent practicable, photographs or video footage of the animal(s).

7. This Authorization may be modified, suspended or revoked if the holder fails to abide by the conditions prescribed herein (including, but not limited to, failure to comply with monitoring or reporting requirements), or if NMFS determines: (1) the authorized taking is likely to have or is having more than a negligible impact on the species or stocks of affected marine mammals, (2) the authorized taking is likely to have or is having an unmitigable adverse impact on the availability of the affected species or stocks for subsistence uses, or (3) the prescribed measures are likely not or are not effecting the least practicable adverse impact on the affected species or stocks and their habitat.

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For Kimberly Damon-Randall,
Director, Office of Protected Resources,
National Marine Fisheries Service.

Date

Table 1. Authorized take numbers, by species and stock, for Level B harassment

Species	Stock	Authorized Take
Beluga Whale (<i>Delphinapterus leucas</i>)	Beaufort Sea	145
	Eastern Chukchi Sea	145
Ringed Seal (<i>Pusa hispida hispida</i>)	Arctic	3,378