

Issued and signed MBNMS Permits, Amendments and Authorizations (11/24/2021 to 2/3/2022)

***Report created for the
February 18, 2022***

Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council Meeting

MBNMS-2019-033-A1

Permit Type: Research

Permit Holder Name (Affiliation): David Weller (Southwest Fisheries Science Center)

Project Title: Collect aerial images with unmanned aerial systems (UAS) to count gray whales and estimate body condition and nutritional status

Project Location(s): The permitted activity is authorized within the NROZ along the Big Sur coast. The UAS will be launched/landed from the Piedras Blancas Light Station (PBL; 35° 40' N; 121° 17' W) and the Granite Canyon Marine Pollution Studies Laboratory (GCMPSL; 36° 26' N, 121° 55' W). UAS operations areas can extend up to 1000 m (4280 feet) laterally from the launch site for the hexacopter and octocopter at both the PBL and GCMPSL sites and for the vertical take-off and landing (VTOL) fixed-wing at the PBL site. Under a valid Certificate of Authorization (COA) from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the UAS operation area for the VTOL fixed-wing can extend BVLOS and up to approximately 3.7 km (12,150 feet or 2 nautical miles [NM]) from the GCMPSL site.

Permitted Activity: Conducting low overflights within visual line of sight with uncrewed aircraft systems (UAS) at no less than 100 feet (30 meters) above sea level (ASL) and conducting low overflights beyond visual line of sight (BVLOS) at no less than 200 feet (60 meters) within the NOAA regulated overflight zone (NROZ) along the Big Sur coast in order to collect aerial images of gray whales to estimate their body condition and nutritional status.

Permitted dates: January 26, 2022 through October 31, 2024

Comments/Notes: SWFSC has an agreement with Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to carry out the necessary research. SWFSC has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the FAA, allowing them to conduct flights in category G airspace (less than 1200 feet). In early 2021, staff at NOAA Office of Marine and Aviation Operations (OMAO) UxS Operation Center (UxSOC) obtained a COA, on behalf of SWFSC, from the FAA allowing NOAA BVLOS UAS missions out to a horizontal range of approximately 2 nautical miles and vertically up to the limit of Class G airspace at 1199ft AGL (COA 2021-ESA-8187 NOAA BVLOS). SWFSC received a grant from the OMAO to pursue localized beyond BVLOS UAS operations as a way to extend the range and increase the efficiency of UAS large whale survey missions.

MBNMS-2020-035-A1

Permit Type: Education

Permit Holder Names (Affiliation): Lucy Meadows (Titan Productions)

Project Title: Low overflight activities conducted in Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary (MBNMS) under National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) or United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) permits

Project Location(s): offshore NOAA regulated overflight zones in MBNMS and discharge and recovery of a drop camera connected to an UAS can occur throughout MBNMS.

Permitted Activity: Flying one (1) UAS at a time at no less than 20 meters Above Sea Level (ASL) within the offshore NOAA regulated overflight zones (NROZs) for up to 30 days total to

collect aerial images of wildlife in MBNMS as authorized by National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) or United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) permits issued to Titan Productions; and Discharge, if needed, and recovery of a drop camera (i.e. the small underwater camera rig tethered beneath an UAS by a strong cable as described in the permit application) and the attached cable and float to prevent contact between a whale and a drop cam while conducting underwater filming. Only one UAS with a drop camera can be deployed at a location.

Permitted dates: January 21, 2022 through May 31, 2022

Comments/Notes: Acquired or is acquiring other agency permits

MBNMS-2021-034

Permit Type: Research

Permit Holder Name (Affiliation): Jackson Hoeke (MLML)

Project Title: Assessing the seasonal impacts of the introduced sponge, *Hymeniacidon perlevis* (Porifera: Demospongiae), in Elkhorn Slough

Project Location(s): Over the areas within the study site named North Polygon and Kirby Park, which overlap with the NOAA regulated overflight zone (NROZ) above the sanctuary's jurisdictional waters of Elkhorn Slough.

Permitted Activity: Conducting approximately four (4) flights per study site with uncrewed aircraft systems (UAS) at a minimum of 200 feet above ground level (AGL) to collect photographic data to estimate population density of the sponge *Hymeniacidon perlevis*, an introduced species.

Permitted dates: December 10, 2021 and December 10, 2022

Comments/Notes: The permittee has contacted CDFW permit staff. The permittee applied for an ESNERR permit since some of the flights will be over ESNERR jurisdiction and received a letter from David Feliz, Reserve Manager for access of areas to survey invasive sponges in the mud flats and adjacent salt marsh within Elkhorn Slough South Marsh and North Marsh until February 1, 2022.

If you are interested in learning more about a specific permit, amendment or authorization action, please contact:

Sophie De Beukelaer

Permit Coordinator and GIS Specialist
Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary
99 Pacific Street, Building 455A
Monterey CA 93940
Phone: (831) 647-1286
sophie.debeukelaer@noaa.gov