



DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648-XF208]

Endangered Species; File No. 20528

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

ACTION: Notice; receipt of application for a permit modification.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, 217 Fort Johnson Road, Charleston, SC 29412 (Bill Post, Responsible Party), has requested a modification to scientific research Permit No. 20528-05.

DATES: Written comments must be received on or before [INSERT DATE 30 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER].

ADDRESSES: The modification request 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. 20528 mod 15 from the list of available applications. These documents are also available upon written request via email to NMFS.Pr1Comments@noaa.gov.

Written comments on this application should be submitted via email to NMFS.Pr1Comments@noaa.gov. Please include File No. 20528 in the subject line of the email comment.

Those individuals requesting a public hearing should submit a written request via email to NMFS.Pr1Comments@noaa.gov. The request should set forth the specific reasons why a hearing on this application would be appropriate.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Erin Markin, Ph.D., or Shasta

McClenahan, Ph.D., (301) 427-8401.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The subject modification to Permit No. 20528-05, issued on November 17, 2023 (88 FR 85880, December 11, 2023) is requested under the authority of 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 parts 222-226).

Permit No. 20528-05 authorizes the permit holder to conduct research on Atlantic (*Acipenser oxyrinchus*) and shortnose (*A. brevirostrum*) sturgeon to determine their presence, status, health, habitat use, and movements in South Carolina waters. Researchers may use gill nets to capture sturgeon to measure, weigh, passive integrated transponder tag (PIT), dart tag, tissue sample, fin ray sample, and photograph prior to release. A subset of sturgeon may receive internal acoustic transmitters, gonad biopsy, and laparoscopy. Early life stages of each species may be lethally sampled to document occurrence of spawning. Up to two sturgeon of each species may unintentionally die annually during sampling activities. The permit holder requests, using the same methods listed above, authorization to: 1) increase the number of adult shortnose sturgeon from 5 to 20, annually, in the Edisto River, 2) capture and conduct research on 20 sub-adult/adult Atlantic sturgeon and 10 sub-adult/adult shortnose sturgeon, annually, in the Winyah Bay system, 3) translocate up to 20 adult shortnose sturgeon annually from the Cooper River to the Santee River for enhancement purposes to improve recruitment and habitat use, 4) perform gastric lavage on a subset (up to 20) sub-adult/adult shortnose sturgeon in Lakes Moultrie/Marion; and 5) capture and conduct research on up to 25 sub-adult/adult Atlantic sturgeon in Lakes Moultrie/Marion. The permit is valid through March 31, 2027.

Dated: September 25, 2025.

Shannon Bettridge,

Chief, Marine Mammal and Sea Turtle Conservation Division,

Office of Protected Resources,

National Marine Fisheries Service.

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