UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
PROGRAM PLANNING AND INTEGRATION
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

APR 19 2010

To All Interested Government Agencies and Public Groups:

Under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), an environmental review has been performed on the following action.

TITLE: Environmental Assessment on the Effects of the Issuance of a Scientific Research Permit (File No. 14604) to Conduct Research on Shortnose Sturgeon in the Delaware River, April 2010.

LOCATION: Netting would take place in the tidally influenced portion of the Delaware River between rkm 79 to 215. Researchers would also travel by boat to receivers in the passive telemetry array between rkm 0 to rkm 245.

SUMMARY: The current EA analyzed the effects of shortnose sturgeon research on the environment in the Delaware River where researchers propose to document habitat use, relative abundance, reproduction, juvenile recruitment, temporal and spatial distributions, and reproductive health of the shortnose sturgeon population in the Delaware River and Estuary. The proposed permit requests annual authorization for non-lethal sampling methods on up to 1,000 adult and juvenile shortnose sturgeon. Research activities would include: capturing via gill net, trammel net, and trawl net; measuring and weighing; tagging with PIT and Floy T-bar tags; and sampling tissue for genetic analysis. A subset of 30 adults and 30 juveniles would be tagged with acoustic transmitters. Another subset of 24 adults would be examined internally using laparoscopic techniques and each would potentially also have gonad biopsy and blood sample taken for analyses. Another subset of 20 adults per year would be included in hydroacoustic gear testing. Additionally, lethal collection of up to 300 eggs and larvae each year (not exceeding 900 over five years) would take place during seasonal spawning activity by artificial substrate, D-frame ichthyoplankton net, and/or epibenthic sled. Finally, one annually, or up to three unintended mortalities or serious harm resulting from research, is requested over the life of the permit.

The proposed action analyzed in the EA would not have significant environmental effects on the target or non-target species; public health and safety would not affected; no unique geographic area would be affected; and the effects of this study would not be highly uncertain, nor would they involve unique or unknown risks. Issuance of this permit would not set a precedent for future actions with significant effects, nor would it represent a decision in principle about a future consideration. There would not be individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts associated with the proposed action, and

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there would not be adverse effects on historic resources. The permit would contain mitigating measures to avoid unnecessary stress to the subject animals.

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL:

James H. Lecky
Director, Office of Protected Resources
National Marine Fisheries Service
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910
(301) 713-2332

The environmental review process led us to conclude this action will not have a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared. A copy of the finding of no significant impact (FONSI) including the supporting EA is enclosed for your information.

Although NOAA is not soliciting comments on this completed EA/FONSI, we will consider any comments submitted assisting us to prepare future NEPA documents. Please submit any written comments to the responsible official named above.

Sincerely,

for Paul N. Doremus, Ph.D.
NOAA NEPA Coordinator

Enclosure