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

APR 26 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 Protected Species Cooperative Conservation Grant to the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (Award No. NA10NMF4720036) to Conduct Research on Atlantic Sturgeon and Shortnose Sturgeon.

LOCATION: Research would take place in waters of South Carolina, North Carolina, and Georgia.

SUMMARY: The current EA analyzed the effects of the proposed Atlantic and shortnose sturgeon research, which will be conducted in the waters of South Carolina, North Carolina, and Georgia. Specifically, the funded work would be used for: development, installation, and maintenance of an acoustic receiver array to track the movement of shortnose and Atlantic sturgeon in North Carolina (Roanoke, Chowan, Meherrin, and Cape Fear rivers), South Carolina (Savannah, Combahee, Edisto, Cooper, Santee, and Winyah Bay system), and Georgia (Altamaha, Ogeechee and Satilla rivers) rivers, coastal waters, and the Intracoastal Waterway; acoustic and satellite tagging and monitoring the movements of 20 to 30 (of each species) Atlantic sturgeon and shortnose sturgeon each year (i.e., 60 to 90 total per species over the life of the project) to identify and assess the use of spawning and other habitat and interbasin and coastal movements; development and testing of a less invasive procedure for aging of these two species based on relative DNA telomere length from small tissue samples; and participation in multiple types of stakeholder outreach efforts. Such data and information sharing is critical for recovery planning, and in particular, for identifying appropriate management units and actions and critical habitats.

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

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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