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

JUL 14 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 for The Issuance of Scientific Research Permits for Research on Humpback Whales and Other Cetaceans

LOCATION: Pacific Ocean – primarily Alaska and Hawaii
Atlantic Ocean (Mobley permit only)

SUMMARY: The proposed action is issuance of eight five-year scientific research permits and one amendment to a five-year scientific research permit that would authorize aerial surveys, vessel surveys for behavioral observations, photo-identification, underwater photography and videography, collection of sloughed skin and feces, sampling whale blows, passive acoustic recordings, export and re-import of parts, tags attached by suction cup or by implanting darts, barbs, or a portion of the tag into the skin and blubber, biopsy sample collection, and acoustic playbacks on humpback whales and other cetacean species. The purposes of pinniped research are to conduct population assessments to determine abundance, distribution patterns, length frequencies, and breeding densities. Specific objectives for each permit vary, but all would continue long-term research. Impacts from these activities would be short-term and minimal to individual animals and negligible to the species. A biological opinion concluded that the proposed action would not likely jeopardize the continued existence of the species and would not likely destroy or adversely modify designated critical habitat. The permits would be valid for five years; the amendment would expire on June 30, 2013.

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL:

James H. Lecky
Director, Office of Protected Resources
National Marine Fisheries Service
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
1315 East-West Highway, Room 13821
Silver Spring, MD 20910
(301) 713-2332

Printed on Recycled Paper

The environmental review process led us to conclude that 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 environmental assessment (EA) is enclosed for your information.

Although NOAA is not soliciting comments on this completed EA/FONSI we will consider any comments submitted that would assist us in preparing future NEPA documents. Please submit any written comments to the responsible official named above.

Sincerely,

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

Enclosure

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Silver Spring, MD 20910

JUL 14 2010

MEMORANDUM FOR: Paul N. Doremus, Ph.D.
NOAA NEPA Coordinator

FROM: James H. Lecky
Director, Office of Protected Resources

SUBJECT: Finding of No Significant Impact for the Environmental Assessment on the Issuance of Scientific Research Permits for Research on Humpback Whales and Other Cetaceans -- DECISION MEMORANDUM

The attached subject environmental assessment (EA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) are forwarded for your review. The EA and FONSI have been prepared in accordance with the provisions of: (1) NOAA Administrative Order 216-6, Environmental Review Procedures For Implementing The National Environmental Policy Act; and (2) the Council on Environmental Quality's Regulations For Implementing The Procedural Provisions of The National Environmental Policy Act (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508).

Based on the environmental impact analysis within the attached EA, I have determined that no significant environmental impacts will result from the proposed action. I therefore have approved the FONSI for this proposed action. I request your concurrence with the EA and its FONSI. I also recommend, subject to a request from the public, that you release the documents for public review.

1. I concur. _____ 7/14/10.
NOAA NEPA Coordinator Date

2. I do not concur. _____.
NOAA NEPA Coordinator Date

Printed on Recycled Paper