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

SEP 8 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 Issuance of Two Scientific Research Permits for Aerial and Vessel Surveys of North Atlantic Right Whales

LOCATION: U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone from Florida to Maine

SUMMARY: NMFS proposed to issue two scientific research permits, Nos. 14233 and 14603 to authorize photo-identification, observation, and biopsy sampling of North Atlantic right whales during vessel surveys along the U.S. East coast. The purpose of Permit No. 14233 is to assess population abundance, trends, and human and natural impacts to the species. The purpose of Permit No. 14603 is to document right whale habitat use, food resources, and movement and dive patterns for this species and monitor the species for entanglements and potential vessel interactions. These activities are minimally to non-invasive. Any impacts from these research would be short-term and minimal to the individuals and hence, negligible to the species.

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

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.

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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