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

MAR 10 2011

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 Issuance of a Permit [File No. 15415] for Visual Stimuli Research on North Atlantic Right Whales.

LOCATION: North Atlantic Ocean – Northeast United States

SUMMARY: NMFS proposes to issue scientific research Permit No. 15415 to authorize photo-identification, observation, and monitoring of North Atlantic right whales during vessel-based visual trials along the U.S. Northeast coast. The purpose of the research is to evaluate the effectiveness of visual deterrents on right whale behavior to reduce entanglement in fishing gear. These activities are non-invasive. Any impacts from the 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