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

APR 8 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 on Issuance of a Scientific Research Permit for Sea Turtle Research in the Northwest Atlantic Ocean [File No. 15566]

LOCATION: Northwest Atlantic Ocean, in coastal waters between Winyah Bay, SC and St. Augustine, FL

SUMMARY: The proposed action is issuance of a scientific research permit that would authorize sea turtles to be captured by trawl and handled, blood sampled, measured, flipper and passive integrated transponder tagged, photographed, and released. A subsample of animals would be authorized for barnacle, keratin, and fecal sampling, cloacal swabs, ultrasound, and attachment of satellite and/or VHF transmitters. The purpose of this research is to assess temporal change in catch rates, size distributions, sex and genetic ratios, and health of sea turtles. 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 permit would be valid for five years.

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL:

James H. Lecky
Director, Office of Protected Resources
National Marine Fisheries Service
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
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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