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

MAY 24 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 North Carolina

LOCATION: Core Sound, North Carolina

SUMMARY: NMFS proposes to issue scientific research Permit No. 15135 to test commercial gillnet gear that may have the potential to eliminate or reduce sea turtle bycatch. The research involves testing large mesh (> 5 inches) commercial gillnets targeting southern flounder *(Paralichthys lethostigma)* in shallow waters of Core Sound, North Carolina. Test nets would be configured with illuminated, green Lindgen-Pitman Electralume lights. Five species of sea turtles may be captured in the nets. Live turtles would be measured, photographed, tagged, and released. The permit would authorize a limited number of turtle mortalities. Individual turtles could experience short-lived harassment, injury or death. However, impacts from the research would be limited to the short timeframe of the project (less than two years) and would be minimal at the population and species levels.

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