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

To All Interested Government Agencies and Public Groups: JUL 22 2011

Under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), an environmental review has been performed on the following action.

TITLE: Environmental Assessment on the Effects of the Issuance of a Scientific Research Permit File No. 15552 for the Southeast Fisheries Science Center Observer Program to Conduct Sea Turtle Research from Specimens Taken in Commercial Fisheries

LOCATION: Southeastern Atlantic Ocean, Gulf of Mexico, and Caribbean Sea

SUMMARY: The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) proposes to issue scientific research permit No. 15552 to NMFS Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC). The purpose of the research is to monitor the take of ESA-listed sea turtle species by observed commercial fisheries and collect data which would estimate by-catch and its effects on sea turtle sub-populations. The permit would authorize SEFSC observers to collect data on juvenile, sub-adult, and adult sea turtles incidentally captured in commercial fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico and the Southeast coast of the United States. The research would contribute to the understanding of the pelagic ecology of these species, permit more complete models of their population dynamics, and allow more reliable assessments of commercial fishery impacts. The effects to sea turtles would be short-term and minimal and would allow the collection of valuable information that could help NMFS' efforts to recover sea turtles and better manage human activities.

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL:

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

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