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

JUL 19 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: *Finding of No Significant Impact on the Effects of the Issuance of a Modification to a Scientific Research Permit (No. 13330-01) to Conduct Scientific Research on Smalltooth Sawfish in Florida Waters*

LOCATION: Florida coastal waters.

SUMMARY: The current SEA analyzed the effects on the environment in Florida coastal waters by authorizing a modified permit to non-lethally collect data on the biology, distribution and abundance of the endangered smalltooth sawfish. In order to increase tag retention and provide less invasive means of tagging, the applicant requests replacing two tagging methods formerly authorized while excluding one other method. Specifically, plastic rototags used to secure acoustic transmitters will now be replaced with neoprene clasp tags; nylon umbrella darts to secure PAT tags will be now be replaced with dorsal fin harnesses. Lastly, SPOT tags will be excluded as a tagging method in all sampling. Better data collection could provide increased insight into habitat usage pattern and accomplish actions items identified in the recovery plan for the species.

The proposed action analyzed in the SEA would not have significant environmental effects on the target or non-target species; public health and safety would not be affected; no unique geographic area would be affected; and the effects of this study would not be highly uncertain, nor would they involve unique or unknown risks. Issuance of this permit modification would not set a precedent for future actions with significant effects, nor would it represent a decision in principle about a future consideration. There would not be individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts associated with the proposed action, and there would not be adverse effects on historic resources. The permit would also contain mitigating measures to avoid unnecessary stress to the subject animals.

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL:

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The environmental review process led us to conclude 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 EA is enclosed for your information.

Although NOAA is not soliciting comments on this completed SEA/FONSI, we will consider any comments submitted assisting us to prepare future NEPA documents. Please submit any written comments to the responsible official named above.

Sincerely,

Paul N. Doremus, Ph.D.
NOAA NEPA Coordinator

Enclosure